

# The Way Forward Emerging Strategies For Crime Victims Of Color: Shaping the Future of Protective Structures

JACKI CHERNICOFF: Good afternoon, or good morning, everyone, depending on where you're joining us from today. Thank you for joining our virtual session, The Way Forward: Emerging Strategies for Crime Victims of Color, Shaping the Future of Protective Structures. For those of you who have joined us before, welcome back. And for those of you who are joining us for the first time, we're really glad that you're here.

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.

With that, I want to turn things over to Zoe Flowers, who will introduce herself and the panelists for today's discussion. Thanks again for joining us.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you, Jacki. This is Zoe Flowers. And I first want to thank everyone for joining the call today, for participating with me in the chat already. We are very much looking forward to an interactive and exciting conversation. So let me go ahead and introduce the folks that you will be hearing from today, all right?

So let's see here. All right. So first I want to introduce Purvi Shah. Some of you all may remember Purvi from the webinar we did, I think it was two weeks ago now, and she 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, *Seeding Generations*, and you will be able to have access to that resource in the chat later on in the call.

So that work spurred New York City community-based interventions for people who cause harm and abuse. She is also the author of two books. One is called *Terrain Tracks* and the other is called *Miracle Marks*. I have both of those books. They are wonderful. I will also drop those in the chat so that you can pick those up. And 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, which I am wearing today in honor of Purvi, as I always do when we train together, and her raucous laughter and seeking justice. So if anyone wants to find out more about Purvi, which I'm sure you will after this call, you can follow her on @purvipoets.

So the next person up is Annika Leonard. Wherever Annika feels called to create spaces where deep healing can occur, particularly

in the lives of Black women, femmes, girls, and youth, so that is where you will find Annika. On a national level, Annika has participated in the ACE-DV Leadership Forum of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence and has been consulted with the National Resource Center on Sexual Violence under several projects, including the 2018 SART protocol and the Sexual Assault Demonstration Initiative project.

Annika has served as the chair of the Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, where her organization, Priceless Unite LLC, operates as a sexual assault service provider in the city of Milwaukee. Annika has a Bachelor of Science in Human Services and a Master's of Business Administration from Cardinal Stritch University. Her continued studies and 15 plus experience honoring and holding space for people most impacted by violence allow her to present offerings in the form of workshops, keynotes, and guiding us to be in alignment with our truth through her organization Priceless Unite. Annika has developed a unique, culturally specific curriculum for Black youth that cultivates their self-awareness, leadership, and wellness to bring about deep radical and cultural solutions to ending violence.

Next up we have Lorientte Castelle. Lorientte is the Director of Prevention at the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Lorientte has been an advocate and activist working to address gender-based violence for over two decades. She joined

the team at the New York State Coalition in 1998 and split her time between the coalition and the Pennsylvania Coalition from 2011 through 2013. And Lorientie did that in order to launch a prevention initiative in Pennsylvania.

So sorry. There's some noise going on outside my window. I hope it's not too disruptive.

Miss Castelle has the honor of working with several national organizations across the US, including a Train the Trainer consultant for the National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health. She is a trainer and consultant to Major League Baseball Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Council, which was convened by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. And she worked to create an online resource called Prevent IPV: Tools for Social Change.

As the director of the New York Coalition and former principal investigator for a statewide prevention project with the Centers for Disease Control for over a decade, she is responsible for promoting best practices for preventing and responding to domestic violence. And that is Lorientie. So you all are definitely in for a treat.

And our certainly last, but not least, panelist is Maria Del Rosario Franco-Rahman. And she envisions a loving, harmonious world where healing and liberation resound and we all thrive. And when

you hear Maria, when you hear her lovely voice, you are definitely going to get it. That is definitely what she embodies.

Maria 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 service providers and our fellow communities on the margins.

Her 15 years of service to survivors of gender-based violence includes direct services to undocumented domestic violence survivors at a Latinx culturally-specific transitional shelter, offering holistic healing retreats to survivors and service providers, and she currently serves as a consultant for the Women of Color Network, and teaching artists with Critical Mass Dance Company. Maria is a Xicana moving through the world, honoring her ancestors and the coming generations con todo corazon.

And I am your gracious host for this conversation, and my name is Zoe Flowers. And I am also a consultant with the Women of Color Network. I have been working in the field of domestic and sexual violence for 20 years, and all of my information will be in the chat, and so I'm going to start this conversation.

We felt like we wanted to do this series because we wanted to raise different issues, keeping in mind what is happening globally and what is happening here nationally. We wanted to present a series of conversations to you all.

So I'm not going to talk anymore I am going to ask Annika to answer this first question. And this question is how does our ancestral wisdom inform the way we think about protective structures today? So again, the question is how does our ancestral wisdom inform the way we think about protective structures today? So Annika, please go ahead and take it over.

ANNIKA LEONARD: OK. Hi, everyone. My name is Annika Leonard, as Zoe has stated. And I would like to just begin with lighting a candle. And this candle is being lit for every person who has experienced violence, whether they are in the United States or elsewhere. And this is violence that is institutional. It's violence that is systemic. It's violence that's in our households.

And so I light this candle on behalf of those who can no longer speak for themselves, and for those of us who are still out here advocating and raising up their experiences. So I felt called to do that. And if you have a minute, just take a minute and just digest that, and then also say a prayer of your own.

And so when the question is raised around protective structures, I think that many people think of protective structures as places

like hospitals, schools, the justice system, things of that nature. And I think that a lot of communities of color do not see those institutions as protective. Those very institutions has a history of causing harm within our communities. And so when I think of protective structures, I think of people in my neighborhood. I think of people who have offered nontraditional services and just on the spot services in times of crisis to people who they've never encountered before, just strangers on the streets.

So one of the things that I wanted to kind of point out is that many of the institutions have been harmful to marginalized communities, and they also have not been accessible to a number of our community members as well.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much for that opening, for lighting the candle, and for what you have already shared. We are going to pause for a moment so that we can switch interpreters.

ANNIKA LEONARD: This is Annika. And I am just listing off some of the ways that marginalized communities have not been protected in what we call protective structures. And so in having lived experiences shared with me from my siblings who are gender nonconforming and transgendered, and pretty much every community on the gender spectrum that is not straight and heterosexual, have been impacted by being rendered invisible through intake forms, through mis-gendering, and things of that nature.

I'll focus today on two things in particular. One is the institution of health care and the other is the institution of criminal justice, and a number of ways that communities of color, particularly, have been harmed by the medical profession. It comes when we are not informed and cannot give consent to some of the things that happened to us while we were seeking services from these institutions.

So a couple of things that I would like to add are experiments that have been done on Black women in terms of when Black women were enslaved in this country. And the father, air quotes, of modern day medicine did horrific experiments on African-American women and African women who were slaves, and said that basically, they did not need any sort of anesthesia because it was too much trouble to go through and it wasn't worth it. And so we have the person who is known for creating the spectrum that we are used to have vaginal exams experimenting, and that spectrum is only here because of the pain that Black women endured.

We also have examples in which Indigenous tribes were intentionally infected with smallpox. We have situations where the Tuskegee experiments were taking place over the span of 40 years. Black men in Alabama were intentionally given syphilis just so that the medical profession could then see what the long-term



impact of syphilis was. They had no idea. They could not give informed consent to have this done to them.

When we think about our sisters in Puerto Rico, and also within the North America, we see a lot of forced sterilization. And actually, it's within our Indigenous First Nations communities, Black communities, and also, like I said, actually all communities where women and people who give birth have been experimented on and given birth control, which then had adverse effects on them, and they had no recourse on this.

And what we've seen is we've seen and we've heard about a number of these instances. A lot of us just have a feeling in our gut like, no, I don't want to go to the hospital because we remember in our DNA how we have been treated at hospitals. We think about what's happening with COVID, and a lot of communities of color, they don't trust what the government is saying, and therefore, there's more harm being done.

And the harm being done is that we are not being-- well, let me reframe that. We are told that we quarantine. We are told that there are a lot of things that we need to do in order to stay safe. But we're told all of these things from a government that has intentionally harmed us over and over again. And so those are some of the things that I wanted to mention in terms of protective structures that are not so protective when it comes to certain communities.

And so one thing that I will end with, the author of Medical Apartheid, Harriet Washington, quoted in her book that people tend to underestimate the extent and the breadth of this. Washington says, "There is no sphere of American medicine that has not been touched by the use of research of African-Americans." so I wanted to just add that quote and then describe the picture that you all see before you.

This picture is from my womb ceremony, my womb healing ceremony. In the picture, you'll see the legs of chairs, which are positioned in a circular pattern. On one end of the table, you'll see the tip of a Black shoe and gray pants legs of a person who joined me in the ceremony. There is a rectangular table with a teal tablecloth sitting on top of a purple carpet. On the far end of the table there are eucalyptus leaves between a white candle and a wood-carved hand uplifting the egg.

ZOE FLOWERS: Annika, I'm sorry. This is Zoe. Hang on one second, please. We just want to make sure that this is accessible to everyone, this photo. I am sharing a photo. So I actually stopped sharing the photo, Annika. So can you go ahead and just talk about the photo and why you used it because I want to make sure that there are no captions on this PowerPoint so that it is accessible.

ANNIKA LEONARD: OK. So should I continue, or should I start over?

ZOE FLOWERS: Yes. No, you can talk about the intention of the altar and why you all are doing it in that way.

ANNIKA LEONARD: OK. So the image is of an altar, and this also was a part of a womb ceremony. I have experienced a lot of anti-Blackness in terms of my reproductive health. And in 2018, I was told that I needed to have a hysterectomy. And I had a hard time accepting the fact that I needed to have a hysterectomy at such a young age knowing that the only reason I had to have this hysterectomy is because of anti-Blackness in the medical community.

A group of my sisters got together, and we celebrated my womb, and they aided me in helping to release it. And this picture, to me, is the epitome of a protective structure. This picture brought everything, the ancestral wisdom, the knowledge that was shared with me during my time where I needed great healing to happen. The picture represents so many aspects of who I am and who I have yet to become. I shared this picture because I'm very grateful that there are people who still practice our cultural ways of healing.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much. This is Zoe, and I just want to give people one last look at the photo. And maybe we will circle around again at the end so that they can see what you were talking about. I did drop it into a Word document so you all

can see it. So when the protective structures do not protect us, we create our own. So thank you, Annika.

I'm going to turn it over to Purvi now. And Purvi, just so you know, I'm going to put your picture in a Word doc as well so that those captions won't come up and get confusing. So the question is, how does our ancestral wisdom inform the way we think about protective structures today?

PURVI SHAH: Thank you, Zoe. And thank you, Annika, for bringing us in with light and also the circle of embodied wisdom. And I think-- as I was listening to you, I thought about, again, this concept of sisterhood, and of course, sister is also a non-binary construct, which is what does it mean to give support? What does it mean to have accompaniment? What does it mean to have a peer support group as opposed to, say, a western therapeutic or even punitive model? And so what does it actually mean to heal on our own terms?

And when I think of Sakhi for South Asian Women, which is where I began a lot of my work around intimate violence, this is so connected to the name because sakhi means woman friend in a number of South Asian languages. And so I really go back to the question of what does it mean to be a friend? What does it mean to offer support? And I think, Annika, your story really just brought that into focus in a very concrete way.

When I also think about the work in our field, I think about the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center and their terminology, as with other Indigenous communities, of using the term relative. So instead of saying that we're working with these clients or with survivors, they are talking about the way in which they're working with their relatives. And to also acknowledge again that part of the protection and support that they're offering is in the context of trauma from colonialism, trauma from colonization, trauma from the various kinds of violences that have been experienced.

So one of the speakers that we had had at our Women of Color Network Economic Policy and Leadership convenings was Linda EagleSpeaker, who was the elder in residence at the time at the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center. And she said, as Native Americans, we heal in ceremony. We must value our spirits.

And so when we think about protective structures in our work, it makes me also think of, again, this soul level, this spirit level, this way in which how do we actually heal history? How do we heal the generations before and the descendants that are to come? How do we see ourselves as ancestors?

I also think-- and Annika really laid out in terms of reproductive justice-- it made me think of the work of Sister Song and their definition that reproductive justice is the human right to maintain

personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities. And what I think is really highlighted there is this idea that we are not individuals only, but we are in community.

And so that makes me lead into the picture that I had selected for this conversation, which is about confronting violence at a community level. So the picture that I put is from the photographer Fariba Alam, who helped document some of our work at Sakhi during our 15th anniversary. And then we made a short film of that, and that film is called What Creates Change, and I can drop a link to that film in just a few minutes.

ZOE FLOWERS: Purvi, this is Zoe. Hang on one second. I'm going to pull up the photo, and as I do, that we are going to switch interpreters.

Thank you, Purvi, and. Thank you to everyone for your patience. Please go on.

PURVI SHAH: Thank you, Zoe. So this picture is from a community parade. And at Sakhi we used to participate, when we were allowed to, in the India Day Parade, the Pakistan Day Parade, various community events, because we understood that the community was the solution to ending violence. And Sakhi actually emerged, as many organizations in our communities have emerged, because we knew that mainstream responses, i.e.

just shelter or just leaving someone, did not necessarily fit our families, our communities, even what legal options were available as, perhaps, immigrants or folks who may not have access their own financial resources, and so we knew we needed other options.

And in this picture, we see some volunteers in front of a sign that says, we will not tolerate abuse. And when we first began participating in marches and doing marches and rallies, a lot of community members didn't know what to do. And there were a number of folks who also said, oh, there's no abuse in our community. There was a lot of denial.

And we persisted, and eventually, during my 15 years time at Sakhi, what we saw is that towards the end of my tenure, there were not only more people calling, but we also had more folks who identified as men calling on behalf of women in their lives. And they were calling for their sisters, their aunts, their nieces, and sometimes they were also calling for violence they themselves were experiencing.

And so I think, for me, that is a success story because it shows how when you work with communities, you can also create a network of support where the actual abuse is not tolerated. Yes, it's important to have services. Yes, it's important to have protective structures. But ultimately, we live and are part of

communities. And we need to be able to sustain our communities in order to actually have a generation where there is no violence.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much for that. And so we definitely want this to be an interactive conversation. This is Zoe, your host. And so please, if you haven't already, go ahead and put your questions, your comments in the chat.

So Mariel de La Cruz has a question about the recording. So you will be able to get the full recording of this on the Vera website. And Purvi is also putting resources in the chat. And so yeah, you can access all of these webinars then.

So I'm going to turn it over to Lorientne. De nada.

LORIENNE CASTELLE: Here I am.

ZOE FLOWERS: Great. Fantastic. So Lorientne, how does our ancestral wisdom inform the way we think about protective structures today?

LORIENNE CASTELLE: Well, thank you so much for the question, and thank you for including me in this conversation. I'm honored, and I'm really humbled to be a part of it. And I always want to be the last to pipe in when it comes to this. But I have been thinking a lot about protective structures, and protective structures are not so protective.



And so one of the things that I was thinking about, and Purvi, you and I are really simpatico when it comes to thinking about the Indigenous wisdom that has been so graciously offered to folks that are honored to be considered aspiring white allies. And I've been thinking a lot about how we communicate.

Well, Zoe, you and I have talked a lot about how white folks don't always think about their ancestors. We're not always channeling them. We think about history and we think about rituals and we think about tradition, but we don't think about the messages from our ancestors, necessarily, that we're getting. And so it's really easy for white folks to sort of adopt and co-opt, quite frankly, other folks' feelings about ancestors.

But I've been thinking a lot about the domestic violence, the grandmothers of the movement, as we call it, and how folks like me who've been doing this work for two or three decades think about how we were raised up by these badass, fierce sort of feminist leaders-- definitely, not just sort of feminist leaders-- who have really left a legacy that we're still operating in, thinking about this domestic violence and sexual assault mental health health care system that we have considered a protective structure for all of this time that we're now learning, and maybe have known for a long, long time, that they're not quite so protective.

And I feel like my role and my obligation is to talk about and to challenge that if we are survivor-centered, if we are trauma informed, that we need really to be thinking about, in terms of mainstream structures-- domestic violence, sexual assault, crime victims in general-- then we need to lean on these values that we profess every day, values and principles around being survivor-centered and being trauma informed.

We're not really thinking about collective trauma and generational trauma and community level trauma and how that impacts the folks that come to us for help the way we need to be. And so I think about not all interventions working for all survivors, how we're not increasing safety, that we're not addressing trauma, perhaps, in the way that we think that we are, that we're not negating harm unless we're really thinking about the systems and the structures that we are connecting survivors to who have a lived experience where those systems and the culture, these protective structures that we think that we've created, are not trusted by Black Indigenous people of color, including the child welfare system, including police, and including the criminal justice system.

So for me, thinking about-- and I know that this is a little off from thinking about ancestry-- but when I think about the lessons, the expectations of the kind of system that we've put together, I

think about the accountability to the foremothers of this movement.

ZOE FLOWERS: Lorient? This is Zoe. Let me just interrupt you for one minute so that we can switch the interpreters. Don't lose that thought.

LORIENTNE CASTELLE: Clearly I was not looking at the chat box when the alert came through that I needed to pause.

ZOE FLOWERS: It's fine. This is Zoe. Please go ahead.

LORIENTNE CASTELLE: Yes. So thank you very much. And so I'm thinking a lot about what is justice and what is healing, and how to connect people to those kind of spaces for healing that connect to what the speakers that came before me, all these amazing speakers that came before me, have talked about, which Purvi, you invoked the concept of sisterhood and being in community.

We're talking about, all over the crime victims movement, what accountability looks like, particularly in the domestic violence movement. We're talking about what justice looks like when carceral feminism, which is what the whole domestic violence and sexual assault movement is premised on, is undermining safety, undermining justice, and undermining healing for people of color. What are we to do with that? And so I am sitting with that right now in terms of the question, Zoe, that you posed.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you for that. This is Zoe. And when the question is what ancestral wisdom do we lean on? And so for you as a white aspiring ally, to say-- and I don't want to paraphrase your thinking about it-- would that be correct? Are you parsing out what maybe should be held on to and what should be thrown away?

LORIENNE CASTELLE: And thank you for using the term white aspiring ally because it is aspiring, right? And I resonate with that term both personally all of my life, but also professionally in terms of the conversations that need to be had that are sometimes challenging and difficult, and what it means to be doing this work in a way that is truly inclusive and informed and responsive to the current situation in the United States of America.

So we know-- and I want to wrap up because I really want to defer to the other speakers and play just a supporting role here-- but when we only offer connecting survivors to the police, or to coming into shelter when they don't want to leave their community or their family or their friends, their network, when the criminal justice system is the only answer that we have to survivors who have been abused, brutalized, coerced, controlled by their intimate partners-- when we only do that, when we can't think about all of the other things that we might be connecting

folks to, then we can't say that we're survivor-centered and trauma informed.

And so that means being in conversation with all survivors about what would work for them, what would connect them to safety and healing. And I think that's why I'm so honored to have been invited to participate in this conversation because I think it's revolutionary. And it offers us an opportunity at this really, really, really critical time to rethink how it is that we do business, along with the fact that we need to think about nonprofit industrial-- all of that, the industrial complex, and the way funding looks, and the way this protective structure that we've created looks.

It's a system. It's a system that we're connected to and that we all promote, that we promote in order to keep our jobs and in order to keep our organizations open. And so there's a whole other conversation there around how the funding looks and what our goals and our outcomes look like that have to be rethought as well.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you. Thank you. This is Zoe. And so we are going to turn this question over to Maria so we can hear her response about the ancestral wisdom. And then we will circle back around to the anti-Blackness that Annika raised. And Annika, I can join you in that conversation if you'd like because I have the exact same experience. But for now, we are going to turn it over to Maria.

So Maria, how does our ancestral wisdom inform the way we think about protective structures today, especially in the current climate?

MARIA DEL ROSARIO FRANCO-RAHMAN: Hi. This is Maria, and I am in presence with all of you today from Los Angeles, California. And I'd like to take a moment to honor the original people of this land, the Chumash and the Tongva. And if you are called, if you know the names of the original peoples of the land from where you're calling today, I invite you to include those names in the chat box.

And so listening to all those who came before me on this call, and having sat with the question in preparation for today, more questions have emerged, and particularly funding. Lorient was just speaking to that. I've been sitting with and wondering what are our established modalities? What is our standard practice of care in regards to healing, in regards to who gets the dollars, who gets the coin?

And in my experience, it is those modalities, it is those practices of care that have a high volume of empirical evidence behind it. And Annika spoke to, early on, what has it meant for our community to build this empirical evidence. And so if we start to connect all of our conversations, and the experiences of harm, and what is actually being lifted up and held as established modalities right now as we're of service in this work that we're all

engaged in, there's a lot to sort of parse out, and there's a lot to have an opportunity to examine, again, at this critical moment in time in our country, where so many of us are asking, what are the foundations? What are the roots? What is the history?

In terms of history, in terms of ancestral care and wisdom, what comes to mind and what comes forward in regard to protective structures is the concept of oneness in various spiritual traditions from across the world. For my people, for my lineage, the Michika people, I think of some of our original ancestors, the Mayan people. And there's a term called In Lak'ech, mi otro yo-- the other me.

And it's a sacred greeting, and it is a way to recognize, similar to the phrase that Purvi shared from our Indigenous brothers and sisters and siblings here that evokes that notion of we're all connected. We are all relatives. And so you can see from across traditions, again, this concept. Perhaps in Asia, we know it as chi or chi, this animating force, this universal force that lives outside of us and within us and is something that brings life to all of us. And I'll return to that concept later on when we visit an image, an illustration that really, also, we've been our natural world and paying respect to all forms of life.

And so with that concept of oneness, I also want to name-- what's the term? Is a spiritual bypassing? Spiritual bypassing because as someone who has practiced in some spaces of

meditation and yoga, from non-culturally specific spaces sometimes early on, and what really encouraged me to seek out spaces where other Black, Indigenous, and people of color were centered, was that sometimes we're met with this concept of folks embedding their violence on the situation and having it pass as spirituality.

There's this great talk, and I'll share. It comes to us from the Liberation app. It's an app designed specifically for Black Indigenous people of color to meditate. And for those non-Black Indigenous people of color who are interested, they do have a fund to make this app accessible to more folks. And it's a talk called The Dharma of Black Life. And in that talk, the person-- and I'm unable to remember their name, so I'll share that as well later on-- talked about that, talks about the spiritual bypassing and offers that definition to us about us as people who sometimes collect spiritual practices. We want to say, oh, right now we're going to meditate, and we're all one, and therefore your lived experience, your social reality, we're just going to you check that at the door. And so how actually, that's a form of violence.

And so I just want us to be aware of that as well, that when we think about the original concept-- and there's, again, a plentitude of definitions and variations about this concept across tradition-- it is about this energetic spiritual oneness. And then also, we understand that because of our lived experiences, because of the



structures and institutions and systems that are in place, there is not a lived oneness. So I just wanted to name that.

Perhaps we can go to the image, and then I can circle back on some more pieces.

ZOE FLOWERS: OK. So this is Zoe, and I have pulled up the image.

MARIA DEL ROSARIO FRANCO-RAHMAN: And so this illustration comes to us from Molly Costello, and you can find their work on social media. I believe they have an Etsy page. They may have a website. And it's entitled Celebrate the Animacy of all Beings. And the beings that we see here are some beautiful flowers emerging from-- it looks like a bark. And we have some mushrooms, and we have spider webs, and the moon is in the background. We have butterflies, and they serve as symbols of transformation and various forms of being, as they once were caterpillars.

And so I see the plant world, I see this piece of our oneness, as great teachers. Some folks refer to them as plant allies, and how they can teach us about ourselves, how they can teach us about ways that we, as humans, can also learn to work and collaborate with one another.

Adrienne Maree Brown talks a lot about biomimicry and emergent strategy, which I highly recommend. And biomimicry is that

notion where we take note of what is happening in the natural world, and can we learn from mycelium and the way that it grows in terms of our shared practices of leadership, in terms of how we organize, in terms of how we show up in service to others.

So I look at this image, and I call back the image of Annika's share as well, with the plants that were there that are naturally a part of so many of our ancestral healing practices, so many of them that come together for us from community and are available. And it's really an opportunity for us to reconnect to those places that perhaps, nature reminds us, there weren't always established modalities, these sort of prominent ones that are lifted up here in the US. They were these structures that, when we pull back development, when we pull back everything that has happened across the 100 odd years that the US has been here, what was here first? And how can we turn to those ancestors? Our plants, our elements, they were here before us, and so they serve as our ancestors as well.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you. This is Zoe. And let's just go ahead and give the interpreters a chance to pause. I'm going to take the picture down, and then, Purvi, you will be up.

OK. So before, Purvi, I turn this second question over to you, we did get a question from Ana, and it looks like you answered some of it in the chat. I want to read this question. And Purvi, if you

wouldn't mind giving your thoughts on it before we go to that second question.

So the question is, what do you say to people who are worried about losing culture when they are confronted with finding the oneness in different cultures? And Maria, maybe, also, if you want to put a response in the chat, Annika, Lorientne, you all are welcome to do that as well. But Purvi, I would love to hear from you.

PURVI SHAH: Thank you, Zoe. So this is Purvi. And I think culture is ever changing. Culture is tradition, ritual, all of these things that are a part of the fabric of our lives. And we know that rituals change. Again, Annika began with a ritual that was created, but that had deep meaning and connected to ancestral wisdoms.

So I think when I hear people talking about losing culture, I really wonder are they actually worried about losing power, particularly understanding that culture changes and that there is no one thing that is culture. We know that even in our communities-- like I'm an immigrant from India, and India is full of so many different cultures. And you can't just say that there is one of any one thing. So that's what I think about is in terms of is it about losing power?

And I think there's something here, too, to also name, which is, at this moment particularly in the United States, when we have

all of these conversations about southern culture and statues to Confederate soldiers and that kind of thing that we're just trying to keep on to tradition when that is clearly something that's about violence.

So it's really about celebrating violence, and we need to really be able to name that and say that there is a lot more to southern culture. When we think of southern culture, are we thinking New Orleans jazz? Or are we thinking, again, of these monuments? So we can choose what cultures we're thinking about.

Similarly, at this moment in time, we have, again, resurgence of xenophobia, both in feeling and in legal practice. And that particularly affects survivors who are attempting to get gender-based asylum, to immigrant survivors who might be detained at this point in time and not be able to access resources that had been put into place earlier. So folks like the [INAUDIBLE] Justice Center and the Heartland Alliance have been definitely looking at these issues.

And ultimately, again, when we look at the lens of power, it makes me think of who gets to belong and who gets to be protected, which, again, circles back to Annika's comments around anti-Blackness. And I wanted to make sure, also, that she had a chance to speak because I know there was a question deliberately for her as well.

ZOE FLOWERS: Absolutely. Absolutely. So Annika, will you go ahead and respond to that question that was how was anti-Blackness rooted in the conversation about the hysterectomy, from your perspective?

ANNIKA LEONARD: Yeah. So I will just start at 2018, even though the way that I was treated by the medical community is also rooted in some ancestral stuff as well.

So in 2018, I began to have pains, which were familiar to me from a little while back being diagnosed with endometriosis. But before the diagnosis, I suffered a lot of pain. I was always tested for STDs and was not believed when I went to the hospital and said, hey, I'm in pain.

And so in my early 20s, I had a partial hysterectomy. And that only came about because I was very insistent that something was wrong with me and something was going on and I needed help. And so fast forward to 2018. There were similar pains. I'm like, oh, no, it's back, and if anybody is familiar with endometriosis, you know that it is just a beast amongst itself.

And so my doctor did not treat me with kindness. She did not treat me with the dignity that I desired. I happened to have a friend who was treated by the same doctor, and she was treated completely differently for the pain that she experienced in her abdomen. And plus I just had the feeling. I didn't even need my

friends to validate that what this doctor was doing was not OK and was directly because I am a Black woman, and not just another woman of color.

And so she was very dismissive. She was very just not paying attention to my needs and was not giving me an opportunity to take an active role in my health care, in my health recovery. And so from July until October, I was not treated by any medical professional because I could not find a doctor. And by the time of October of 2018, I was diagnosed with not only endometriosis, but also pelvic floor dysfunction, adenomyosis.

What else is it? It's another one. Hold on. Oh, yeah, and painful bladder syndrome. So I had four conditions that were all full of chronic pain, chronic fatigue. I could barely walk. I could barely do anything. And all of that, it got that bad because the doctor that I had could not see my humanity. So that's how it was connected to anti-Blackness.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much, Annika. And I definitely had the same experiences. I mean, not exactly, but very closely female issues. And I went through about four doctors until I found a Black woman that I trusted. But every single doctor before that, their only answer was hysterectomy.

And so one of the reasons we know that this is anti-Blackness is, as Annika talked about in the beginning, to sterilization, there are

loads of studies that talk about the levels of hysterectomies that Black women get, and Latinx women, women identified folks as well. So there's plenty of research on that. But Annika, thank you for sharing that very personal story. And thank you for making space for that, Purvi.

So you've kind of already started talking about these responses that people have. The second question is can you talk about the responses that you've seen directed at survivors or communities that choose to protect themselves when the protective structures don't? So the question is, what are some of the responses that you've seen, Purvi, either towards survivors who choose to protect themselves or communities that choose to assert their lives. What are some of the responses that you've seen in five minutes or less?

PURVI SHAH: Well, as we know, again, as we talk about carceral feminism-- sorry, this is Purvi again-- that one of the common responses is to punish and incarcerate, which is why we have a movement and organization called Survived and Punished.

So if we think about, often, women and girls who are incarcerated, and thinking about the system of mass incarceration, I spoke before of immigrant detention of survivors and children as well. And when we think about incarceration in this country and how it's particularly targeting Black and brown communities, and a legacy, a new enactment of enslavement.

And when we think of in schools, girls who may have faced sexual assault, boys as well, and instead of getting resources, oftentimes they're sent to detention or expelled or other punitive responses. And so I think that in terms of responding to these situations, it's really amazing to see organizations like Susan Burton's organization, A New Way of Life, which is for folks re-entering communities after incarceration. There's also an organization in Oregon started by Trish Jordan called The Red Lodge Transition Services.

And so there are these connections that are made in terms of, again, the actual healing that needs to happen of various traumas, including what it looks like when the system punishes you for fighting back, when the system punishes you for trying to be safe and to protect yourself in the ways that you know how. And that happens, again, fundamentally, because the system has failed.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much, Purvi. So I'm going to open this up to any of the speakers, Maria, Lorientte, Annika. What responses have you all seen other than the ones that Purvi has lifted up? And some resources, some organizations that are working to address those issues. So whoever wants to jump in, again, Purvia, Maria, Lorientte, you have the floor. Or I'll choose you. Maria, why don't you go ahead?

ANNIKA LEONARD: Oh, OK.



ZOE FLOWERS: OK. Go ahead. Go ahead, Annika.

ANNIKA LEONARD: OK. And I actually think this is perfect to just kind of highlight some of the things that Purvi has mentioned. So she mentioned a group class Survived and Punished, and she mentioned what we know as the sexual abuse to prison pipeline, when young women, particularly Black and Indigenous girls, are criminalized for behaviors that are associated with them surviving. You have organizations like Survived and Punished, who jump in and basically advocate for the lives and the freedom of the persons who are being impacted in a negative way.

And so one of the things that I wanted to bring to light in this conversation, we in Milwaukee have a young woman who is now facing life in prison because she chose to protect herself against a person who caused her sexual harm in the past, who facilitated drug-induced sexual assault, who happens to be a white American. She happens to be a Black girl who was 16 at the time that he began grooming her.

Police found evidence. They found hundreds and hundreds of tapes of child pornography. They received a call-- and I believe this call was in February of 2018-- they received a call from a young woman saying that help me, he's trying to kill me. They found a young Black girl walking down the street in just a bra and a shirt, a jacket.

And at that time, they went and arrested this person. And after they arrested him, he posted bail. He posted a \$20,000 bail. He was released, and then he caused harm and attempted to cause harm against Crystal. Crystal defended herself. And now she's being criminalized and facing life in prison for defending herself.

So essentially, she's facing more jail time than the person who has caused all of this harm. She is facing more jail time than a person who has a history of committing harm against Black girls. And it is reminiscent of what has happened to our ancestors on this land because it was legal to rape Black women, girls, men, boys, and every other gender along the spectrum. It was legal because we were considered property.

And so this young lady is facing life in prison because she was not protected by some of the protective structures that were in place. She was adultified, which means that basically, when people look at her as a 16-year-old, they did not see a 16-year-old. They saw an adult. They did not understand the cognitive disadvantage that this young woman held in terms of being in a position where he preyed on her. And he was an adult, and he required her to do what he wanted her to do.

And so I just needed to lift Crystal up. And she's also another that I light a flame for because this is a great example of how the system has failed Black girls in particular. And then even when we think of the criminal justice system, there are so many-- like

Indigenous girls face highest rates of detention, face highest rates of abuse. And so these are my examples, and I'm going to leave space for everyone else to provide theirs as well.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much, Annika, and to all the speakers. So again, the name of this series is Shaping the Future because we're raising these conversations, and we are looking forward at the same time. How can we change these structures, or tear them down and start all over again?

And so I know there was some conversation about restorative justice. Before I switch to Maria, Purvi or Annika, do you have any responses or organizations? We have Survived and Punished. Are there any other responses to counter what continues to go on that folks could either get behind-- I see that you put Crystal's information in there. What are some other sort of marching orders that folks could take from this conversation?

ANNIKA LEONARD: Yeah. This is Annika. And I did put the link in for Crystal Kaiser. And I think in terms of other marching orders, I think to really look at and research-- like for instance, there's Creative Interventions. If you Google that, you will see how some communities have replaced a formal criminalization process or structure with how they, as a community, have solved issues such as a young person being sexually harmed by a family member and things of that nature. So there are alternatives to incarceration that I think that we can look at. And Creative

Interventions, once again-- I'll put the link in here-- is a great example.

Organizations like Insight, organizations like GEMS in New York, the Center for Court Innovations, they have a process in which they provide advocacy for people who have done sex work, and they have a youth court where youth are taught and practice restorative justice.

So there are so many examples of how we are looking towards a different future and reshaping the future of institutions that have caused us harm.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you. This is Zoe. Thank you so much, Annika. So go ahead and put those resources in the chat, if you will. And we are going to switch for the interpreters.

Great. So Maria, please talk about some of the responses that folks have when communities or survivors choose to assert themselves, assert their lives.

MARIA DEL ROSARIO FRANCO-RAHMAN: So one case that has been with many of us these past few days is the one of Vanessa Guillen. And Vanessa Guillen serves our military and experienced sexual harm while in the line of duty and lost her life. And I think of Vanessa and her reaching out to her family to share about the harm that she was experiencing, and what was

the consequence that Vanessa was met with. When we think about the gradations of harm, she was met with the ultimate form of violence, murder.

And I think about, again, this concept of protective structure. And when we think about something like the military, from the outside, it seems this is a institution that is designed to keep us safe at a national level. According to the Department of Defense's website, they describe the military as an all-volunteer force that serves to protect our security and way of life. So emphasis on our and way of life.

And so fitting with our discussion here this afternoon, this morning, what is meant by our. Who are they talking about when they say our? We know that it's not our communities of Black, Indigenous, and people of color. When we talk about way of life, what way of life? Is it patriarchy? Is it white supremacy? And how did that play out in Vanessa's story?

And we think about another protective structure, say a school designed to support our youth and our young people. And I think about growing up and knowing that the military came and specifically wanted to speak to Black and brown youth. And we see this today as well. And having a conversation with my goddaughter about Vanessa, she described the military as a work force, and I thought about how that rings true in our community.

So many of the good kids, quote, unquote, good kids will opt for that military route because it is a form of economic security.

And so, again, how are these things removed from our access? And how are we being positioned or steered into a direction to align ourselves with, perhaps, an institution like the military that inherently is an institution of violence cloaked as one of safety. When we think about war, when we think about what are some of the strategies-- sexual assault being one of them-- how is it that this individual that caused harm to Vanessa was embedding their violence in the situation?

And so that's definitely one high profile-- one case that so many of us are grieving right now and know that so many other women, women of color, Black and Indigenous women have been met with similar forms of institutional violence.

In terms of models, in terms of the way forward, I do want to close with offering models that we can look at in terms of how do we look to really bring forward our voices of our ancestors, the medicine of our ancestors, in terms of healing modalities. And I really want to lift up the work of Dr. Valli Kalei Kanuha, who did the Namelehuapono Project or model.

ZOE FLOWERS: Maria, I'm sorry. It's Zoe. Thank you. I have to interrupt you for a moment because the Spanish line has stopped. So the Spanish interpreter got cut off. So please hold.

Wonderful. Great. OK. So we are back in business. So Maria, you were talking about Kalei's work.

MARIA DEL ROSARIO FRANCO-RAHMAN: Yes. And just wanting to lift up-- I love the description of the model, so I'll just go ahead and read it. It's a native Hawaiian culturally-based group intervention that uses Hawaiian values, beliefs, traditions, and practices to address intimate partner, sexual, and family violence. It was developed under the guidance of Hawaiian cultural practitioners, elders, and domestic violence experts on Oahu. The model provides a holistic pathway to healing from trauma by integrating Hawaiian culture with other healing modalities situated in the unique and sacred milieu of Hawaii.

And so I encourage you, if you're interested in looking at models that have really lifted up their medicine, their ancestors' medicine to allow us to shape a future that brings us to a more liberated place, I recommend checking out that work.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much. This is Zoe. And so Maria, if you wouldn't mind putting that resource in the chat, if you haven't already. We have about five more minutes. There are so many resources in the chat. Those resources will be put on the bureau website. This webinar will be put on the bureau website. The actual chat will not, but the resources will be put there.

So we've got about five more minutes. I want to thank everyone for staying on the call. And let's just take a deep breath together, all 287 of us. Taking a deep breath in through our nose, exhaling through our mouths. We have heard a lot of information today. So let's just take another deep breath in, exhale through our mouths.

Thank you all for showing up. If there are any last questions, please put them in the chat. Please feel free to follow up with our presenters or myself if you have additional questions.

And join us for our next webinar, which is about learning the lessons from missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada and how we can use some of their frameworks to confront violence against women here in the US. And so Annika will be on that conversation as well as Junetta Jamerson. And that webinar is sometime in July. July 21.

ANNIKA LEONARD: Oh. I thought it was the 14th.

ZOE FLOWERS: No. It's July 21. So our run-through is on the 14th. So if you have not registered for that webinar, please go ahead and do so. We want to hear from you. And yeah, put any final questions in the chat. I don't know if any of the speakers maybe want to say one last word, one word for real. We've got three minutes. One last word from each speaker.



Mine is grateful. This is Zoe. I'm grateful. Lorientne, you want to give one last word?

LORIENTNE CASTELLE: I was just going to use grateful, too, but just honored and committed.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you. Thank you. Annika, one last word?

ANNIKA LEONARD: Full. I feel full right now.

ZOE FLOWERS: Yes. Maria, one last word.

MARIA DEL ROSARIO FRANCO-RAHMAN: Possibility.

ZOE FLOWERS: Ashay. Ashay to that. Purvi, you have the last word, sister.

PURVI SHAH: I'm going to say alignment in circle.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you. And so-- this is Zoe. I want to thank the interpreters. Thank you all so much. We are so grateful. Thank you to the bureau team. We have two minutes to spare. I mean, it don't get no better than this. So thank you all. Stay on the journey. Stay with us. Help us organize, and help us reshape what's happening. Zoe Flowers. I'm out.