

Transcript:

The Way Forward: Emerging Strategies for Crime Victims of Color, Shaping the Future of Organizing: Applying the Lessons Learned from Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Organizers

JACKIE CHERNICOFF: Good afternoon, everyone-- or, good morning, depending on where you're joining us from today. Thank you for joining our virtual session-- Shaping the Future of Organizing Applying the Lessons Learned from Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Organizers." This is the third in a four-part series, "The Way Forward, Emerging Strategies for Crime Victims of Color."

For those of you who've 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 with us today. My name is Jackie 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 wonderful panelists we have for today's session.

ZOE FLOWERS: Hi, everyone, this is Zoe Flowers. So glad that all of you all are in the room. So glad to see you all-- just the various states represented. And I'm really, really excited to go ahead and get this started.

I am Zoe Flowers. I am a senior consultant with the Women of Color Network. And this conversation is part of the longstanding work that WOCN has been doing with the Vera institute of Justice and the National Resource Center. So welcome to you all. Hi, Don. I'm going to stay out of the chat and stay focused on the conversation.

So I want to go ahead and introduce my fantastic panelists. You all are in for a great conversation today. So I would love for Junetta Jamerson to come on the screen, Annika Leonard, and Rachelle. And Rachelle, is it Venne, or Veene?

RACHELLE VENNE: It's Venne.

ZOE FLOWERS: Perfect. Thank you. So again, you all are in for lots of great information. You will be able to access this webinar on the National Resource Center website. The Vera team will be putting that information in the chat throughout the call, so you will be able to do that. It is being recorded. And you might want to take notes, too, because it's going to be good.

So let me go ahead and introduce my colleagues. So Junetta Jamerson is an emancipationist, anti-racism expert, community builder, and award-winning Black youth educator in Edmonton, Alberta. She has worked extensively on issues ranging from discrimination and inequity to women's uplift and empowerment.

She is one of the founding members of Black Women United YEG, an advocacy collective committed to the advancement and protection of Black women and girls. And Junetta, please put what YEG means in the chat, because I can't remember. Thank you.

While her projects have taken her to numerous international countries, it is her work with women and youth in Edmonton's African Canadian community which she is most proud of.

And on to Annika. Wherever Annika Leonard feels called to create spaces, she goes where she feels called to create spaces-- where deep healing can occur, particularly in the lives of Black women, femmes, girls, and youth.

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 Incite 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 of Business Administration from Cardinal Stritch University.

Her continued studies and 15-plus years of experience honoring and holding space for people most impacted by violence allow her to present offerings, in the forms of workshops, keynotes, and guiding us to be in alignment with our truth-- through her organization Priceless Incite.

Annika has developed a unique, culturally-specific curriculum for Black youth, that cultivate their self-awareness, leadership, and wellness to bring about deep, radical, and cultural solutions to ending violence.

And now on to Rachelle. Rachelle Veene is the Chief Executive Officer of the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women - IAAW. She has over 20 years of experience with building collaborative partnerships in non-profit, corporate, and government sectors. Rachelle has held a variety of positions to prepare her for her current role, including contract analyst for children's services, project officer for the Urban Aboriginal Strategy in Edmonton, and small-business owner.

In 2012, Rachelle received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, for her community service with REACH Edmonton. In March 2017, Rachelle was selected as one of six Canadian NGO delegates to attend the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York.

Her accomplishments include being appointed to the government of Alberta's Metis Women's Economic Security Council, Alberta Order of Excellence Council, Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Alberta Recycling Management Board-- and recently, the board of the Edmonton Community Legal Center.

Using innovation and several community partners, Rachelle is guided by her own experience as a 22-year-old Metis single mom going back to school after fleeing violence. Her three children are now 36, 34, and 32 and a great source of pride. Rachelle enjoys spending time with her five grandchildren and traveling with her partner, Glenn, when she isn't working or volunteering.

So I am so excited to bring this conversation to you all. And I am going to stop talking and turn it over to Rachelle and Junetta and Annika. And I just want to remind the panelists that, as you're talking, please just introduce yourself by saying, this is Junetta, this is Annika, this is Rachelle.

So I'm going to pose the first question. Why are we even having this conversation? And what are the parallels between our communities? Because I know that folks have that question. So why are we having it?

JUNETTA JAMERSON: This is Junetta. Annika, were you going to jump in? So I'm also an oral historian, focusing on my people here, who were the first Black people to settle in Western Canada-- starting 130 years ago. We are originally from the southern United States.

But at this point in time, I am fifth generation Canadian-- although ethnically African American. And the histories between Africans in America and also Africans in North America and Indigenous folk are running on parallel tracks. Both groups-- and I use the word group broadly-- are survivors of genocide. There is the genocide on North American soil, and then there is also the Maafa, which is Kiswahili for the great disaster-- referring to the genocide that had its catalyst on African shores.

The death toll number of these pogroms ranges anywhere from-- I've seen figures up to 100 million for the Indigenous genocide. I've seen estimates at 40 million for the Maafa, or the genocide surrounding the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

And when you look at what the fallout of genocide is, of who must remain down in order for others to remain up, that's when you

see parallels pertaining to the systems that maintain that-- that maintain that power differential-- and even more parallels begin to emerge. These are enduring disparities. These are enduring attitudes and highly-enforced practices and beliefs.

How that pertains to specifically black women, Indigenous women-- well, we find even more parallels there-- as who receives, in many cases-- and I can make a case for this-- the brunt of those disparities within the greater society. And I can also make a case within our cultural communities.

There are in fact lessons to be learned-- and this is what we want to share-- from how those disparities have been challenged. And that's why I'm really happy to have Annika and Rachelle here. So that's what I would like to--

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you, Junetta. This is Zoe. And so we are going to take a quick pause, so that the interpreters can switch.

OK, so it says that they're all set. I do not see the interpreter on my end, just to let you all know. Thank you so much. OK, so let's have-- Annika, I believe you were going to say something, and then Rachelle. Why are we having this conversation? Why now?

ANNIKA LEONARD: Hi, everyone, this is Annika. And I wanted to first ground myself. I am the daughter of Eric and Anne Leonard. I am the granddaughter of Norvel Curry and Gracie B. Leonard,

who we just buried her on Saturday. And I am the mother of two amazing young adults-- Anita and Eric Leonard. And I am the keeper of countless stories that have been shared with me by members of the community affairs.

And so Zoe mentioned in the introduction about my organization Priceless Incite. And I started Priceless Incite because of the parallels that we see between Black Americans and missing and murdered Indigenous women. And so there are so many things that we have in common that Junetta has already mentioned.

And so I wanted to piggyback on some of that, while also saying that a lot of what I'm sharing is not my own original information. Like, I have studied. I've read. I've followed people who have been sharing their views and research on the different things that I'll be bringing-up today.

So I wanted to make sure that I said that, because none of this is my own work. Well, not a lot of it isn't, I should say. So I saw a person named Dr. Joy DeGruy maybe almost 10-years ago. And she was at this YWCA function. It was a training series.

And I was blown away. I was absolutely blown away by the way she organized the group of information based in North America, and discussed the fact that African Americans here had what's called post-traumatic slave syndrome. And she showed a series of flags during her presentation where she named some of the ways

that Africans had been enslaved in America, , and connected it to some of the things that we see here today.

And so I wanted to talk about how both First Nations, Indigenous people, and African Americans, or enslaved Africans, have definitely been stereotyped to justify the use of violence against our communities.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you, Annika. Rachelle, I'm so--

ANNIKA LEONARD: Oh, I wasn't done. Just kind of soft pause. [LAUGHS] Oh, we got some work here. So I wanted to talk about things like the Casual Killing Act, that Dr. Joy DeGruy introduced to me. And it says that you can actually kill a slave, if you were killing them in an effort to correct their behavior. And that behavior was rebelling-- doing something that was outside of the plantation laws, or rules. You could actually kill a slave, or enslaved person, and not be punished for it.

So there's a direct connection between the Casual Killing Act and to Say Her Name to Black Lives Matter and to the number of police disparities and murders that we have here today. So I'll leave it at that, and then I'll pick up the rest a little later.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you, Annika. Rachelle, I'm so excited to hear from you, because this is our first pairing. So welcome.

RACHELLE VENNE: Thank you very much. And I first want to say that I am coming to you from Treaty Six territory, and home of the Metis, of which I am a part of.

And just to kind explain a little bit about the Metis people, we are of mixed ancestry. And we associate with ourselves as Metis, being as though we come from the Red River area. So Rupert's Land in Manitoba.

And so I have both French in my background, as well as Cree. And so that is just a little bit of a unique thing for Western Canada, mainly. But in the province of Alberta, , for example we do have Metis settlements who have land. And that is unique to Canada.

So just wanted to start off first by saying I am not First Nations. I do have lineage to the First Nations. But I come to you as a Metis woman. The idea of why we're having this conversation, I can say simply, because I think there is a need to become allies of one each other.

And our experience is different but similar, in that we have just recently, with the National Inquiry results, I guess had it written. And I mean, there was a big to-do about being recognized as genocide. And so previous to that, it was cultural genocide. And regardless, in our perspective-- and sorry for talking so quickly-- it's the idea of there are blockages put in front of you.

And so if by becoming allies with other community groups, we can reduce those barriers together, I think we can move forward in a positive way, collectively. I just wanted to make one other statement. I'm a daughter of a national advocate.

So my life really was following Mom around to all the marches, the events. And so I can associate with Annika, just with the fact that what I'm bringing to you is the stories that I've heard and that I've been a part of. And they're not mine. So I'd like to pay homage to the people who came before me. And as Oprah said, put on that crown, because it's been laid-out there for you to bring forward-- and bring forward in a good way.

So I'd just like to say that my mother was is an advocate that received the Order of Canada, the Alberta Order of Excellence, and has been nationally recognized. Our work started way back 40-years ago, with her work. But there's also been very significant Indigenous women who made that trek to Ottawa, to try and change policies and things like that-- that in my lifetime I was fortunate enough to see and be witness to. So I always remember where I came from. Thank you.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much. This is Zoe. So Junetta, this conversation also was born out of conversations that you and I had. So for those of you all that do not know, last summer-- gosh, I think coming up on this same time of year-- I traveled to

Edmonton to meet with the First Nations elders there, to hear about the missing and murdered Indigenous women in Edmonton.

And Junetta was kind enough to take me on a reserve. And we had just such a great conversation. And we felt that this cross-country, cross-cultural conversation between Indigenous women and African American women here was critical. And so I would love for Junetta and Rachelle to talk about some of the first steps that communities can take to address violence against Black and Brown girls-- the work that the missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada did, that we can look to as a framework. So if you all would talk about that, it would be fantastic.

JUNETTA JAMERSON: Sure. So let's tag-team this, Rachelle. The framework that we came up with begins with the first step around statistics-- stats. And originally, there was no reliable estimate. Indigenous families, Metis families knew this was going on. Communities knew. But there was real resistance to quantifying that. Rachelle, can you tell us a bit about that resistance?

RACHELLE VENNE: Yeah, it was interesting. In my search of kind of the 20 years of history that I've personally been involved, I found a document that was presented to the United Nations, in 2013. And it talked about 40 years of governments to the human-rights commissions knowing about the murders of Indigenous women and doing nothing.

And we've had movies. The Conspiracy of Silence is a good movie. It talks about the Helen Betty Osborne case, where four men who murdered her were known in the community.

Everybody knew who did it, but nobody wanted to pursue those charges. So that took many years of fighting, to get those four men charged in her murder.

But those are some of the instances of they did know. But it's indifference. We call it indifference. But the fact that they knew and did nothing. And so those were very widespread. I know I've been in rooms where the government would say-- they like to keep you hungry. And just very derogatory remarks about-- they knew we were fighting. They knew we weren't being heard. And we just couldn't get people to see what was going on, and our women were being murdered.

So I know from our perspective, in that first presentation to the United Nations, we noted that in 1999 there were 114 women in the Edmonton area where there were no charges. We knew that they were missing or murdered, and no charges. So in that respect, we had already made that initial kind of scan of the immediate community, and yet nothing happened till very recently. So it's been a long, long history of just trying to get those statistics out.

And I really have to pay respects to Amnesty International, because them working with the Native Women's Association in

2004, to kind of take our case, if you would put it that way. But they really shed an international light on what was happening in Canada. And we were very grateful for that happening, because we couldn't do it on our own. Nobody would listen.

JUNETTA JAMERSON: I think in terms of the blueprint, it's important to find out that that first statistical gathering was the initiative of Indigenous women. And in your opinion, Rachelle, why are stats so important? Why did those numbers matter? Why was that statistical gathering a crucial first step?

RACHELLE VENNE: Well, I think the comparison to the percentage of Indigenous people that are in Canada versus how many are being murdered. I think those stats really tell a picture of their own. But also in my speeches, what I share is that you can look at every socio-economic indicator, and Indigenous women are always at the bottom. In regards to just being able to have the resources and the support that they need to move forward, it's not there. And so it's still a continuous fight for us.

So I love to use numbers. Our current provincial government we have here, they have an austerity kind of look at things. So I love to do comparisons of if you support Indigenous women, how much money would you save? Oh my gosh. The idea of we can show that if you do things right, it will cost you less. And so I like to cut of use stats for that benefit.

JUNETTA JAMERSON: Thank you, Rachelle. And the next sort of step in the framework that we looked at was narrative, and how Indigenous women, they seize hold of the narrative. So stats are one thing, but then what people think of the stats and how they make sense of the stats is quite another.

And we had heard from one of the panelists about the stereotypes-- these deeply-ingrained stereotypes. And seizing hold of the narrative refuted these very degrading colonial stereotypes, and instead begin to infuse the conversation around the traditional status of Indigenous women as life givers, as leaders. Can you talk about that narrative a little bit more, Rachelle, and how that affected people's attitudes?

RACHELLE VENNE: I think most significant for me in that area is around our work with the Esquao Awards. So esquao is a stylized word for the Cree word for woman. And Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women started the awards 25-years ago. And the whole intention was to change stereotypes of Indigenous women in the community.

And so over 25 years, we've made our own rules. We've kind of recognized women that are unsung heroes in over almost 100 communities across Alberta, to try and change that stereotype. So what we were seeing is that regular recognition events, that you would never see an Indigenous woman there. She wouldn't make the cut, so to speak.

So we created our own, and we have funded it ourselves, through corporate sponsorships, for a long time. First probably 12 years, we had no government funding. And so we just said, we're going to do this ourselves. If our women won't be recognized, we will recognize their work. And so that has served us very well.

And it came at a time where we were really struggling, which is usually summer-- because we're a project-based organization and we never have money in the summer. So we would use the funds that we get for tickets purchased for an event to keep our doors open over the summer.

So that's how it started. But it's 25 years. And I think we've been really successful in not only reducing divisions with the public and the Indigenous women, but also between women. So coming together to support Metis community, Inuit community, Indigenous communities in a whole, right? First Nations.

So the idea of you know supporting our own women is what we did. And we just blasted it everywhere in the media and throughout the communities, to just say, we will recognize our own women.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you Rachelle. This is Zoe. So we are going to take a pause for the interpreters. And Junetta, I'm not sure, were you going to say something else? If not, I'm going to turn it over to Annika.

JUNETTA JAMERSON: Yes, we did have a few other steps to share. But if Annika would like to jump in because it's related, we could do that.

ZOE FLOWERS: Perfect. Annika, please feel free to join in.

ANNIKA LEONARD: Hi, this is Annika. So I wanted to add a number of things. And the question was around, how can we address violence?

ZOE FLOWERS: The question is, what are some of the first steps that communities can take to address violence against Black and Brown girls. So just some first steps, in either your opinion or your resources, that we can take.

ANNIKA LEONARD: Yeah, I wanted to make sure. Because I have so many notes that I've been jotting down, just because things are just coming to me. And I'm very thankful to relay the information. I've been one of the things that we can do is hold community-based organizations, domestic and sexual-assault service providers, accountable for the services that they do and do not provide-- in particular when it comes to Black women and girls-- and even more so when it comes to transgender, nonconforming, and LGBTQ folks.

So one of the things that I think would be really helpful is to create funding streams specifically for our community, and to

have that funding stream be a way to guide the work that's being done-- that is led by members of the community who are most impacted by violence.

Yeah. And I wanted to just kind of piggyback off of Rachelle, when she mentioned the stereotype, saying, I'm still there. Because we have so many stereotypes about the Black community, in general, but particularly some of those stereotypes that were used to enslave and, like, actually trafficked enslaved Africans here are some of the same stereotypes that we see today. And we see those stereotypes being played-out in the criminal-justice system, in the non-profits that operate and receive funding to solve problems in our community, that we did not create.

And so I want to also just name that these-- I know a lot of nonprofits do this trauma-informed kind of approach. And that's been a buzz word for some time now. And I think that we need to switch that language. Because when you say that your services are trauma informed, you are putting the trauma before the person.

And the trauma that we as Indigenous and Black communities did not create. They were created as a result of colonization, as a result of enslavement, as a result of attempted genocide. We did not create these problems. And I would like for all of us to look for other ways to describe the things that are happening in our

communities, that don't blame us for what we've experienced-- because we have been oppressed. Now I'm done.

ZOE FLOWERS: This is Zoe. And so in the chat, I actually put a link from the Action Network. It is a petition. There is a young girl speaking about what Annika was talking about. They're using her name as Grace, who was put in a detention center in May-- a 15-year-old special-needs Black girl, who was put into a detention center for not doing her homework.

And so those of you that are in Michigan, the judge, Mary Ellen Brennan, today or yesterday said she felt like the detention center was the best place for her to be-- that it would be best for her mental health. And so all of you Michigan folks, just going back to what Annika was saying about mainstream organizations, I've actually not heard a peep from the Michigan coalitions, or any Michigan program.

So for those who are on the call from Michigan and surrounding areas, I would encourage you to read-up on this case and to get in on this advocacy. So that's my thing on that.

I want to turn it back to Rachelle and Junetta. Junetta, I think you said you had more steps that were enacted in Canada that we could benefit from here in the US. So I will turn it back over to you, Junetta. And I'm just going to remind the panelists to please introduce yourself when you come on to speak. Thank you.

JUNETTA JAMERSON: This is Junetta. The next thing that Rachelle and I broadly identified was the step of amplification. So once they had seized hold and reclaimed their own narrative-- so those stereotypes-- prostitutes and no good. No, no, no, no-- life givers, leaders, sacred.

And I even as an outsider noticed this. Did you catch how Rachelle said that they blasted it? When they were doing their event and everything, they just blasted it. So the tools that they started to use in terms of media pressure to cover these things that were always just swept under the rug, and social media, had a very different language in it when the amplification now took place after the seizing hold of the narrative. That's where the hashtag MMIW emerged-- missing, murdered, Indigenous women-- MMIW.

Again, from an Indigenous woman-- a former grand chief of Manitoba, Sheila North Wilson, we heard about the Esquao Awards. If you live here, unless you're under a rock, you know about the Esquao Awards-- you really have to be not paying attention-- and the positive messaging that went out with that.

And Rachelle had also talked about reaching out. Really, I look at it as going over the Canadian government's head, when you reached out to the United Nations-- when you reached up to Amnesty International, to then exert more of a top-down pressure. That was a huge amplification-- huge.

And Rachelle, if you could even just talk about-- we have these massive campaigns, like the Red Hand campaign. We see the Red Dress campaign, to amplify. What else can you tell us about this amplification stage?

RACHELLE VENNE: Yeah, I can remember in 2009 when we were at the United Nations to hear what the government of Canada was saying about how they're dealing with the violence against Indigenous women. My mother and I walked up to the minister. And my mom was ready to hug her by the neck, I guess you would say.

But she was so upset. She said, I'm not sure what world you live in, but what you said is not applicable to our communities that we live in and that we're raising our kids in. Because at that point the only suggestions, or what they were proud of is that they were opening two more shelters across Canada. And it was really you know disgusting to be there to hear that-- what they were telling the world.

So yeah, for Amnesty to come on and take a stand on-- and they had over the course of several years-- United Nations rapporteurs coming to Canada to kind of look at what's happening and reporting back to the world. It really did show how terrible of a situation it was.

And then we also had the plight of the children and that movement, to kind of say, if you're on a reserve, you should be getting the same good treatment for kids as if you're in an urban community. So that work that's being done nationally on emphasizing the disparities between the two has been phenomenal in reaching the world.

And so I know that was a big event for us-- the idea of being able to show the cases that have gone. Especially in Alberta, we have some really significant cases that really identify how terrible of a situation, and unjust our justice system is for the women. Really, I think pulled at the heartstrings for all Canadians. And I know the Cindy Gladue, which was a case that went to the Supreme Court and is still in process, there were national walks and marches around that case. Because it had implications for all women, not just Indigenous women. So those are a couple that I can identify.

JUNETTA JAMERSON: Yes, thank you. And that actually gets into the next step around investigation and inquiry. Now, there was intense lobbying to even get an inquiry into the missing and murdered Indigenous women. And again, just somebody here who was seeing it taken place, like, ugh.

I don't know. I'm even searching for words to describe the effort that went in to getting that inquiry to happen. And it was it was

women-- Indigenous women all across Canada, not just even in our own province. It was really a combined effort.

There was a lot of resistance from multiple governments, but eventually they did come out with those recommendations. There was a final report. And it was ignored by the media. What can you tell us about that?

RACHELLE VENNE: I know, it was. And this is why I'm not too fond of the media. It was an embargoed final report, and the media released it a day before. And we really fought that the families would see the final report first. And CBC Canada released it prior, because I think everybody got excited about the genocide word. But for that purpose, I really resent-- and kind of try to ensure that the messages that we are giving are the ones that are from us, not how the media spins it.

And so the idea of those cases very much kind of got to the entrenched policies that need to change for us. And we have the Angela Cardinal case. That's not her real name, but it was a name given to her. And she was transported in the van.

She was the victim, but actually she was thrown in jail, because they thought she wouldn't appear in court. She was brutally raped by a serial rapist, and incarcerated for a week, because they weren't sure if she was going to come to court or not.

What happened in that case-- it was atrocity-- but the Alberta government at the time ordered an independent investigation from our neighboring province. A lawyer there did a independent inquiry. And just to kind of quote what they said-- there was enough blame to go around for everybody. Because it kind of showed the number of errors that were made within that case was unbelievable.

And despite that-- despite having a very thorough report, we still can't move forward. Nobody's coming to our doorstep and saying, I'd like to implement the changes that were noted in the this independent inquiry. So we still continue to have to battle to try and get that recognized. Hey, did you do anything on this report?

And so although I try and be optimistic about-- you know, we have some good things written, and we have kind of a plan to go forward. We have lots of strategies and could probably paper Edmonton with all of the work that's been done. But the idea of kind of getting the government to do anything is kind of the next step that we haven't been able to secure a lot of the time.

But I just wanted to make one note, because I think it's really important. And it was very emotional for me and those in attendance on the final report for the National Inquiry. And the National Inquiry it's an imperative-- a legal imperative-- so that the prime minister now has a duty to implement the changes. And that's what they agreed to going in.

And so at the final ceremony, you'll see the Indigenous community-- the commissioners of the report, they pass over in a ceremony the information, the messages of the families to the prime minister. And the prime minister in turn receives it and says, I'm going to do something on it.

So that for us, I think, was very significant, in that in ceremony he agreed to do that. And with the National Inquiry, we now have all the provinces and territories signed on to take the recommendation and look at them and do something about them. So that's kind of the step we're at now.

So like I say, I always try and stay positive and hope that that will be enough to kind of make the changes that we need. On the working group that I'm on, we have some fabulous MLAs-- members of our government that with four Indigenous women. And we're trying to make recommendations on how to implement the National Inquiry in Alberta.

So I'm hopeful. I'm hopeful that now we have enough on paper, we have enough in the media, we have the public support now. And now it's time to get down to some significant actions. And so I hope that transcends for people who are working towards this issue in your community.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much, Rachelle. This is Zoe. So we are going to take a pause for the interpreter. And then Annika, I

will be coming back to you. Great, thank you. This is Zoe. And so Annika, I'm moving onto this third point that we wanted to highlight.

When it comes to outside communities being put in charge of administering justice or healing, I would love for you to talk more about that-- what you have seen, and what are some additional remedies?

ANNIKA LEONARD: OK. So I'm going to share some of my personal experience. And I would like to create some boundaries around sharing this information. I'm not ready to engage with it in the chat, or anything of that nature. It's still very raw. And I also feel that I am honoring my own experiences and journey, and the experiences of my grandmother, who was recently deceased.

So I would like to share that, during the quarantine, my family had experienced violence at the hand of another family member. And this violence was so severe that we needed to ask for help within the police system. When the police arose on the scene, they did not take the person into custody. And the person actually said that they were going to kill myself and another member of our family, and pulled out the gun. And when the police arrived, they did nothing.

I attempted to file several restraining orders, with the respondent being unserved. And when we were finally able to get the respondent served and arrive at court, the judge denied and completely dismissed my restraining order-- because he said that it didn't happen the way that it happened.

So twice this family member came and caused the violence towards myself and my daughter. I know that I have her permission to say that. And the judge could not believe that the police did not do anything. This was a White male, older judge. And I feel that that's why I'm here, because the police didn't do anything.

This man insisted that I should have had witnesses with me. And this was just last week, everyone. We're in an epidemic right now. And he insisted that I have witnesses come to the courtroom. And because no one came, my story was not believable. My experiences were not believable.

And so I wanted to just highlight that as a prime example. I'm a person who's been in the movement to end violence-- in particular, gender-based violence-- for over 10 years. I'm close to, like, 17 years at this point. I am very familiar with the legal system. I know that cases are just not dismissed when you don't have a respondent. They usually grant you a restraining order.

So we are in the process of getting the transcripts from the restraining order and filing an appeal. And even though that can help with the trauma that I experienced within the courtroom that day, it by no means heals the harm that's been done.

And so one of the things that I would recommend is that there be an examination of how we view communities of color-- and particularly, how Black and anti-Blackness shows up within our community organization. Within people who are offering services to individuals who have been harmed, there is a lack of awareness. And also some of the things that I experienced was just a lack of humanity, just in general.

We're in an epidemic. I have experienced extreme violence at the hands of a family member, including being harassed and tortured about my sexual identity-- because I'm not straight. All of these things were going on at once. And the advocate that I had, I had to literally asked her, like, are you my advocate?

So her actions did not reflect that of an advocate. Her actions reflected the reason why I began my organization Priceless Incite. And so one of the things that I would recommend is that you all support community, grassroots-led people and organizations, and move further away from this system where we are ready to support 501(c)(3)'s.

And the 501(c)(3) status, in my opinion, just uplifts and upholds a lot of the stereotypes. It puts the money in hands of people who are not looking and reflecting as the community that they serve.

Everyone has biases. All of us have biases. And if you have been raised and trained in socialized to believe that, oh, when you see a black person that you have all of these negative stereotypes against this person, then you're less likely to want to assist them. You're less likely to call them and say, hey, how are you doing? Because you, in fact, have this underlying belief that this person does feel pain, or this is a everyday occurrence, so it doesn't matter if I call and check on them or not-- it's just a matter of everyday life for them.

And so trauma is really normalized. And I mentioned it earlier, where folks who've experienced the trauma are being targeted repeatedly by systems who are re-harming us. And so I wanted to name that. And I also wanted to name-- because that's my example--- and I also have been working--

ZOE FLOWERS: Annika? This is Zoe. Please slow down. [LAUGHS] Let's take a breath, and thank you for sharing. And let's just slow down.

ANNIKA LEONARD: OK. Thank you for the reminder. I apologize, everyone.

ZOE FLOWERS: Don't apologize, but thank you

ANNIKA LEONARD: Yeah. OK, I take it back. So there is a high-profile case in Wisconsin right now. Of young lady-- her name is Chrystul Kizer. And she has been the subject of a lot of conversation. And I wanted to share some of the backstory. And anytime I get a chance, I'm going to uplift her and her story.

So in February of 2018 the police received a phone call from a 15-year-old girl, who said that she had been drugged and the person who drugged her was threatening to kill her. When the police arose on the scene, they found a young black woman walking down the street with a jacket and one undergarment on. So it's literally a scene out of Criminal Minds.

When the police moved to arrest this person who caused the harm-- his name is Randy Volar. They found that he had hundreds of tapes of Black girls who he drugged, sexually assaulted, and trafficked. Chrystul Kizer was one of the young ladies. And they arrested this man. He spent \$20,000 on a lawyer and was released the same day.

This is the system that is supposed to institute justice for us, which is why it's important for us to uplift the experiences of Black women and girls and make sure that those of us who have power to create change to support women like Chrystul, because she is a woman at this point-- and both support and secure her

freedom. We have to do what's necessary to make that happen.
Thank you.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much. This is Zoe. Thank you so much for all that you shared. Rachelle, I saw you nodding your head throughout so much of what a Annika was sharing. Please share with us some of what you were thinking, or even parallels that I know the Indigenous women in Canada experience as well.

RACHELLE VENNE: Yeah, it's so unfortunate. I don't know if anybody's seen the National Inquiry, but there there's over 1,300 stories in there. I mean, families have submitted their stories regarding that. But I was kind of shocked to know that every one of those stories that were shared, I had a similar type story that was shared with me in Alberta. And it really brought home the fact that it's happening all across Canada.

And so the idea of how we communicate with each other, to share kind of what's going on in our neck of the woods, so that we as allies can support and kind of bring to light what's happening-- because sometimes, like you say, the media or others aren't picking-up this story-- is just something that we should always do.

In regards to the cases that are in Alberta that we've kind of intervened on, the Cindy Gladue case, as I spoke of early on, was very significant-- in that every actor, we call them, in the

courtroom had responsibility for what went on in that courtroom. And that includes the defense. That includes everybody within that courtroom.

So if you can imagine, her vagina was brought into the courtroom. Mom didn't know. And so there was no laws against it. But for Indigenous people, there are lots of traditional connection to the body and how we lay people to rest. So she is not still laid to rest-- this woman who died in 2010.

So the idea of what goes on and the responsibility that we have as community members to kind of shed light and create awareness on these injustices that happen is just so important to continue. And so I commend you, Annika, and all those that are sharing the woman's story. Because that's how we kind of come together and in our movements together.

So the idea of we're all moms, and we do kind of have that connection the same. And so thank you, Annika for sharing that. And yeah, I could relate.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much. This is Zoe. And so just to let the panelists know that we will be switching interpreters at 3:15. Annika, there was a there was a question to you about explaining the trauma-informed piece and what you meant by that. I have started to use, personally, healing-informed instead of censoring the trauma.

That's is Zoe. That's just my frame of reference. Because I do feel like we like to center trauma and not the healing.

And I would also want to say that I would argue, and say frequently, that if you're only talking about the trauma that brought the person to the shelter, you are not trauma-informed. In order to be trauma-informed, in my opinion, you need to also be talking about historical oppression and all of those things that impact how survivors see the things that happen to them. And it also informs how the perpetrators inflict harm on them. So with that, I'm going to turn it over to you, Annika.

ANNIKA LEONARD: Thank you, Zoe, for adding that. So in the chat, I mentioned this author. His name is Sean Ginwright, and his article is called "Healing Centered Engagement." And he speaks a lot about what you just mentioned, actually, Zoe, around centering trauma-- and that being the first thing that folks respond to.

And then also how, when you're centering it, you are not talking about the conditions that made it more likely to happen. You are speaking to the behaviors that the person who's been impacted is displaying as a result of being traumatized. So it's really oppressive to start with trauma first, when we have so many other layers in our lives. And our lives are also impacted by institutions that have policies and procedures that do not benefit us taking a healing-centered approach.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you Annika. This is Zoe. I was just looking for Sean Ginwright's Facebook page, which I was able to find. And so I'm going to put that in the chat.

And so in these last 15 minutes, I want to encourage participants to-- there's about still 200 folks on the call. I would encourage you all to put any questions for our panelists in the chat I do want to see if Junetta wants to come in and talk more about remedies.

I know that Rachelle talked about the media campaign-- all the very specific steps that Rachelle and the folks that she was working with did. Junetta, I would invite you to put that back in the chat-- those steps again. And please just let me know Junetta if there's other things that you want to add before we begin to wrap-up.

JUNETTA JAMERSON: This is Junetta. Do you want to switch?

ZOE FLOWERS: Oh, yes, yes. Let's pause for the interpreter. Thank you. This is Zoe. Thank you, OK, so are we all set with the interpreters? Great, thank you. Junetta, it's to you.

JUNETTA JAMERSON: This is Junetta. In terms of numbers right now, the last that I saw, missing and murdered Black women in the United States was around 80,000-- 80,000. Is anyone else familiar with that number?

A year ago it was 73,000. 2020 we're closing in on 80,000. Yes. That's a crisis. That's an absolute crisis that is screaming out for our own attention-- a carefully, impactfully constructed narrative around that, from Black women, of course. Amplification-- I can see the United Nations needing to get in on this. I can see Amnesty International needing to get on this. And we absolutely need legislative and policy change.

Now, Rachelle let us know that in Canada here-- First Nations, Metis, Inuit-- Indigenous women have been at this work for 40 years, and there still is work to do. Trying to remain optimistic, but she was very blunt with us about the opposition, even now, to get the recommendations from the Inquiry taken seriously and implemented. So they're going to have to keep the pressure on. I think that's a given for any of the steps.

But it's time for a national effort. And as a Black American woman, I want to put that out there. I want to sound the alarm-- that clarion call to everybody who's gathered here today. It is time for that national effort. I see there Rosalind shared that the number of murdered is 538 as of today. That's oh-- missing and murdered. Is that of 2020, Rosalind? 2020, 538 so far? Yes. OK, wow.

And just to, again, in the spirit of amplification, what Rosalind is doing is literally using Facebook to curate and document the deaths as they occur in a very real time. If you tune into her

Facebook page, it is not a happy place, but it's a necessary place. Because we need to know what's going on. No more head in the sand. So yes, thank you, Rosalind, for that.

And this is where it starts. Rosalind, I'm so thankful that you came today, Rosalind. This is where it starts. Do you remember how Rachelle was saying that the people knew, the community knew, the families knew. And that's where that statistical gathering all started. It starts with something like what Rosalind is doing. So we're literally seeing step-one stats in real time, in a representation courtesy of Rosalind. So thank you.

And I'll just type in just this last bit of recap. So yeah, that's what I wanted to highlight.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much. This is Zoe. So now I would like for all of the presenters to give one last word that you would want to leave folks with, and how people can get in touch with you. And Rosalind, I'm inviting you to put your Facebook page in the chat, if you wish.

So anyone can jump in. One last thing-- who you are and how people can get a hold of you.

RACHELLE VENNE: I can go. It's Rachelle. So the one last thing I wanted to leave you with something I didn't touch on. And that is infiltrating the systems. So mentoring and also supporting women

to be in decision-making roles-- also to be involved in. So my daughter, for example-- my oldest daughter is an RCMP. And we need to get more women-- Indigenous women specifically into positions where they are the decision makers for moving forward.

I believe my information has been shared. The Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women does have a website. And so yeah, I'd be glad to connect with anybody after.

ZOE FLOWERS: This is Zoe. Thank you, Rachelle. And if you could just put out what RCMP means-- if you can put that in the chat, it would be great. Annika or Junetta, last thing that you want to leave people with, and how they can get in touch with you.

ANNIKA LEONARD: I just want to leave people with the hope-- hope, that is my word. That although I have shared some very painful experiences over the last couple of weeks, I have had some incredible people who have been there every step of the way-- who are of all ethnicities, who have been able to hold me the way that I hold others in the community-- and who have offered to help shape change for some of the mainstream organizations that I have alluded to-- or mentioned and not mentioned, I should say.

So I have hope. And I know there is promise in our ability to change this, so that we don't have so many missing and

murdered Indigenous women and missing Black women and youth. And so I have hope that we can figure this out.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much, Annika, for that. Junetta, how about you?

JUNETTA JAMERSON: Well, I'm very happy at what we were able to bring forward today. Something that occurs between communities that are experiencing oppression is a phenomenon called the race from the bottom-- where everybody who's oppressed is trying to get up out of that bottom rung. And if I have to step on your head to do it, that's what I'm going to do. It's that race from the bottom.

And is just so wonderful to see Black women, Indigenous women, Metis representing Metis Nation coming together and just saying, you know what, race from the bottom, kiss my butt. We are not doing that today.

We are sharing strategy. We are going to move this forward. So thank you everyone for the spirit in which you came. Thank you.

ZOE FLOWERS: Thank you so much. And again, this particular conversation came out of experiences-- this is Zoe-- that Junetta and I have been sort of putting together. And so I want to just thank Annika.

Thank you, Rachelle. Thank you to everyone who joined us on the chat. Also, for folks that want to support Indigenous women here in the United States, the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center is doing amazing work.

And so I did put their information in the chat, as well. So there are lots of women right here in the United States who are doing this work, who've been doing this work. So I want to make sure that we shout them out as well.

And I want to encourage you all to fill-out the evaluations for this conversation. We-- the resource center, myself-- will be back next month for our last conversation of this series. And it will be focusing on healing justice. There will be some embodied-healing movement.

So I invite you all to register for that. Please follow-up with Junetta, Annika, Rachelle. Thank you so much to the interpreters. It's just so great to continue to work with you all. Thank you for the Vera team.

And Nicole says, "thank you." Just lots of thank you, thank you's. "Thank you for your vulnerability." "Thank each and every one of you."

Again, you can get the recording for this on chat. And I just want to again say thank you so much to the panelists for sharing what you shared today. And onward, you know? The work continues.