

Fit for a King Seminar 1-21-21

>>: Hello, everybody. I'm Sarah Omojola. I am associate of justice in New Orleans. Proud board member of LaFHAC. Welcome to the second day of LaFHAC 14 annual Fit for a King summit. We had a great first session last week and it looks like we have more people tuned in today. So hello.

Before we begin our program, we'd like to introduce our interpretation team who will explain how Spanish interpretation will work for today's session.

>>: Speaking Spanish.

Good morning everyone, my pronouns are she, her, I'm joined today by my interpreter. We are members of language justice collective based in New Orleans. Choctaw word which means the land where many languages are spoken.

As language justice workers, we strive to create space for everyone here to understand and be understood in the language in which we feel most powerful.

Speaking Spanish.

Today we'll be providing

interpretation, simultaneous interpretation from English to Spanish and Spanish to English as part of our effort to create multilingual spaces. We are glad to be joined today by Anthony who will provide simultaneous interpretation with American sign language.

To create the space together, a few things. Please speak at a slow and steady pace. If you are talking too fast, you'll see us make this hand signal which means to slow down. Please speak loudly and clearly. We'll make this hand signal if you are speaking too softly. Keep an eye on the chat in case we send a message to slow down or speak up. Keep your mike on mute if you can. And if you have headphones, please use them. And one speaker at a time. Interpreters can only interpret one voice at a time. We don't want to be in the position to privilege one voice over the other.

Speaking Spanish.

You will be able to access the interpretation platform in just a few moments after these instructions.

Speaking Spanish.

If you are using a computer, you see a

globe Iowa con at the bottom of your screen, click on it and select the channel with the language of your choice: English or Spanish.

Speaking Spanish.

For smart phone or tablet, look for 3 dots that read more. Click on that to make your selection.

Speaking Spanish.

And when making your selection, you will see an option to mute original audio to hear only the voice of the interpreter. To hear the original audio, you may leave it un-muted. You can change your selection at any time.

Speaking Spanish.

We appreciate your commitment to creating a multilingual space.

Lastly, please don't suffer in silence. If you have any problems with hearing us or the speakers, please send us a message in the chat.

Thank you.

>>: Thank you for that. And welcome again, everyone. We would like to take a moment to acknowledge that any time we talk about housing, we are also talking about land. While we are virtual this

year, the land that we occupy is indigenous land. I'm coming from where we now, what we call New Orleans now. But once was known as Bulbancha. And home to the -- Houma and Choctaw tribes. Among many others whose names and languages we no longer know. Our program today will examine displacement, without acknowledging the history, the genocidal displacement that indigenous communities have been subjected to for generations on this land. We cannot do so by not acknowledging that black Africans were stolen from their land, enslaved here, we recognize this this displacement is ongoing and indigenous communities, black communities and communities of color today face housing injustice in urban and rural communities across the country as well as land loss due to climate change. We recognize that these communities are disproportionately targeted by the justice system. We have just finished up a challenging year as our communities are devastated by the loss of our loved ones and neighbors due to COVID 19. By the deaths of George Floyd and B Taylor and so many others. But the escalating events of white supremacist violence. We have seen desperation grow as policymakers inability to prioritize health and safety has put 13 million people

at risk of eviction. Despite this, our communities have continued to stand strong, protect each other, provide mutual aid and keep fighting for justice. We are inspired by them and honored to honor their work. Fit for king is happening over 3 days. Last week environmental racism. And today, we begin with a panel targeted policing, gentrification and housing injustice.

You will then hear a performance by award winning poet, Sha'Condria iCon Sibley. We will then present annual fair housing hero award. And then end with a keynote address by activist and organizing Shameka Parrish-Wright.

The last day of our summit, next Thursday, January 28th, speakers will explore the eviction crisis and how you can keep action to keep our neighbors safe and in our homes.

Our keynote speaker will be founding members of moms for housing and council member for district 3.

You can see the full agenda at fitforaking.org. If you missed the program or aren't able to tune in for any other part of the program, the recordings will be available there, too.

Please make sure to fill out your evaluations today. We use the feedback to improve the event every year. We will share a link to the evaluation at the end of the day. If you have to log out before the end of the program, you'll see the evaluation pop up immediately when you log out. If you have any questions for the speakers, please use the Q and A function at the bottom of your screen. If you have any technical question, you can reach us by e-mail at info.fairhousing.org. Or LaFHAC staff in the chat.

I would like to share a little bit about LaFHAC. Our mission is to eradicate housing discrimination throughout the state of Louisiana. We know that discrimination leads to segregation and neighborhoods and communities are not treated fairly. Housing discrimination ever nation has to end to achieve racial and economic justice. We work to end discrimination in several ways. LaFHAC provides fair housing trainings to make sure people throughout our communities know their rights and responsibilities. LaFHAC policy staff work at local, state, national level to push for policies that make housing more fair and accessible to everyone. Our enforcement team investigates complaints about fair housing violations

to find out where and when violations are occurring. Also cysys victims with filing administrative complaints and lawsuits. Our homeowner ship protection program provides counseling services for homeowners facing foreclosure. And lastly, LaFHAC added an eviction defense program this year to provide legal representation for residents facing eviction during the pandemic. Including undocumented community members who may not qualify for other services.

We are a statewide agency that works in tandem with partner organizations and community members. And we could not do any of this work without you. So thank you.

We would love for people to get more involved in our work by working with us to offer fair housing training to your staff members, clients or students. Making referrals. Providing input on policies that impact your communities. Alerting us if you see housing discrimination in any form. Completing action alerts or becoming a mystery shopper or tester. You can read more about our work at Lafairhousing.org.

Finally, this year has really shown us

how important it is to be agile and able to shift our work as needed depending on the immediate needs of our community. Your support makes that possible. We are asking people in our network to consider signing up as a recurring donor in any amount today. It is very easy to do. I've done it before. You can do it, too. Sign up today at LAfairhousing.org/donate.

Now, I would like to introduce my friend Rosa Gomez Herring who is a member of LaFHAC board of directors. A fierce advocate and director of invasion and strategic partnership at Operation Restoration. She will be moderating our first panel.

>>: Hello. Thank you for the introduction. I'm here as a moderator for this session today. I'm also representing Operation Restoration, a local operation that supports women and girls impacted by incarceration to recognize full potential, restore life, and discover new possibilities. Our panelists will introduce themselves. I'll do a quick introduction.

Today we have my dear friend Wendi Cooper. Founder and executive director of Transcending Women. The other panelist is Mr. Bennett Capers, professor of law and director of center on race,

law, and justice at Fordham University. And I our third pan list is Chancela Al Mansour executive director of the Housing Rights Center.

I will ask each pan list to introduce themselves.

Wendi, will you go first.

>>: Thank you. So my name is Wendi Cooper. I am a woman of trans-experience. I am a native of New Orleans, Louisiana. I am the founder and executive director of Transcending Women. The mission of Transcending Women is to provide a safe space to support and empower all women. Transgender, sis women, across the spectrum, with the goals of equipping them with position them to thrive and bring balance to systems that traditional disempower us.

Also Transcending Women is created right to ensure that services and programs for these women are inclusive in theory and practice. Experience by providing resources and opportunities that reach them where they are without judgment, restrictions or discrimination.

Also, I am the founder of the -- campaign. This is a campaign under the discretion of Operation Restoration. This campaign

was created to liberate individuals who were affected by Louisiana crime -- this was a law that was written in 1805. This law was used to or it was found to disproportionately LGBTQ members, low-income women, etc. Over the years, with the campaign, I have done work on symposiums. I have a symposium at Tulane University. So this symposium was broken into two panels. The first panel was for people who advocated, trying to get horrific law repealed. Unfortunately, the statute itself is still on the record. The second part of the panel talked about people who were affected by the crime against nature statute like myself and other trans women who live in the city of New Orleans. The purpose of this campaign is to make sure that this law is eradicated from the books in the state of Louisiana.

>>: Thank you for the introduction.

Bennett Capers.

>>: I'm honored to be part of this program; I'm honored to be here with my co-panelists. My name is Bennett Capers, I am a professor of law at Fordham in New York City. I'm director on the center on race, law, and injustice at the law school. I teach and write in the area of criminal justice. In

addition, I've done things like been a commissioner on the no more questions civilian complaint review board. Housing is not my area of expertise. But I write and research a lot in the area of crime and race. Written about how policing reinforces segregation.

>>: Good morning, everybody. My name is Chancela Al Mansour. And make sure you can hear me.

I'm the executive director of the Housing Rights Center where the nation's fair housing center were located in Los Angeles county. The other LA in California. Although I do have Louisiana roots. My parents on both sides are from Louisiana. My father from New Orleans, my mother's from Monroe, Louisiana. We are part of the great migration of 50,000 black families from Louisiana to the Bay area in California in the 1940s. So if you go, you have the opportunity to go to the Oakland, San Francisco area and find some of the few remaining black people who are still there, you'll be amazed to hear Louisiana accents that have not been changed at all throughout the decades.

So thank you for having me.

>>: We are going to start the panel. I just want to let our participants know that if they

have any questions, please use the Q and A box on the bottom of the screen to introduce your questions. You do not need to wait until the end of the panel to ask questions. You can ask questions throughout the panel. The format today is that I will be asking a few questions of the panelists and then after that, we will go through the questions from the Q and A box.

The first question today is: Racial fears about crime have helped to enforce segregation for generations. Today, white communities often talk about crime when opposing new housing development. What are the consequences of this for communities of color? Bennett, please go first and then Chancela and Wendi.

>>: If you don't mind, I want to add another dimension to the question and bring in a little history about crime itself. If I'm going on too long, make a face or something.

But I want to point out that crime has always been used to justify a racial hierarchy and racial segregation. And equally important, in order to use crime as a justification, we had to create new crimes and define new things as criminal. So I don't want to take crime as a given. So just going back to

history, during slavery, there were the slave codes that regulated what slaves could do but served to maintain racial hierarchy. After slavery was abolished, we got rid of the slave codes but replaced them with black codes which, again, were explicitly designed to keep blacks in a subordinate position which included maintaining segregation.

So post slavery, it became all of a sudden not to have a job. It became a crime to quit a job. The things we think of as vagrancy and loitering became a big thing post slavery because it was a way to recreate this hierarchy and use crime for other means. So before the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments it is possible for the law itself to discriminate against people of color because of race. Afterwards in a blink of an eye, it wasn't, but the majority quickly learned that instead of using race for a reason to discriminate, you could use crime.

You have all seen the birth of a nation. Was used to depict blacks as criminals and create a fear of black crime. The majority realized the more behavior you make criminal, the more you can discriminate on the basis of crime.

So the first point I want to make is

crime has long been used in the service of race discrimination and segregation.

After became unfashionable to engage in explicit or implicit race, you could still engage in explicit discrimination because of criminal activity.

You more you equate crime with people of color, the more easily this racial hierarchy could be maintained. This is part of the argument Michelle Alexander book *The New Jim Crow*. But what people often do to justify their opposition integration like playing loud music. Obstructing pedestrian traffic, riding a bike on the sidewalk.

I'm going to throw in drug crimes. In New York City between 1990 and 1993, there were on average just under 1,000 arrests a year for possession of marijuana. Between 94 and 2001 that shot up to 25,000 a year. That is not because of the use of marijuana went up. It is because society, police decided to focus on different things. All of that, we have to ask, why are we criminalizing certain things, what crimes we enforce and to what end. Keep certain people out and use the argument you keep them out because of crime.

So I want to make the point that when

we talk about crime, we are talking about the creation of crime and using crime as an excuse. Because we associate crime with blackness and blackness with crime. That is how we get things done.

I would like to make a point about white progressives. But I can save that for later if you want.

>>: Thank you, Bennett.

What are the consequences of this racialized crimes being used as opposition to new housing development? What are the consequences of this for communities of color?

>>: Thank you. I can't imagine giving a better response than the one just provided. But it definitely triggered a lot of information and situations that we have seen in California as well. Just to add to the list of reasons that lead to the criminalization in terms of activities, especially of black and brown people, debt, just being poor also has been further criminalized in Los Angeles county. One of our number one issues COVID 19 is LA county's biggest issue with 1 and 3 people testing positive. Is people experiencing homelessness. Especially black people. Black people in LA county. Our population is only

about 7 percent of the county. But we are over 40 percent of the population experiencing homelessness in LA county. And just being in the state of not having housing has been criminalized.

For example, not even jaywalking but crossing when they do not walk sign has started to flash, they found more people of color, especially black men and women in downtown LA get tickets for stepping off the curb on that do not walk sign. Whereas, people who are professionally dressed and city wall, jaywalk all the time, almost never get stopped.

Which leads to accumulation of more debt because then these people have outstanding fines and fees and penalties that are unpaid. That are associated with if you are living in your car, you have that car that accumulates parking tickets. Leads to impounding. And criminalization being fed on the street -- I'm being reminded to slow down.

The criminalization of feeding people in public spaces of sleeping in public spaces. All of those things of just trying to live without housing. Leads to the criminalization and, again, because black and brown people are disproportionately represented in our percentage of people experiencing homelessness

than just not having housing has led to the criminalization and further discrimination of people of color.

I could go into some of the more progressive policies as well. But I am -- a little further, I'm going to talk about other ways in which in general public nuisance laws and crime free housing policies have been used. Especially in newer developments or suburbs of LA county to try to prevented black and brown people from getting housing in those areas. In terms of gentrification in LA. We see both. We see these overly string gent crime free housing policies by over-policing in black and brown communities that lead to evictions of individuals and families. But we also see suburbs as well where black and brown people try to move to find more affordable housing. I'm talking about north LA and east. These cities have imposed, these new housing developments, these crime free housing policies to try to prevent black and brown people from moving there. And to force landlords to evict these persons. I could go further. Thank you.

>>: Wendi.

>>: For me, I -- who gets to decide

what a crime is? Who gets to decide which crimes are worse? And could we punish more? Who decided that you can get 100 times worse of a penalty for possessing -- versus powder cocaine? Who decided that sex workers performing oral or anal sex face more prison time than sex workers performing vaginal sex?

Who decides which laws are going to be enforced against which people? Like David Vitter. Years ago, he was caught red handed engaging in the same kind of sexual behavior that got me and 100 black trans women like myself a crime against nature conviction. But nothing happened to him because he's a powerful white man.

And white university students get to experiment with drugs without consequences while police target black people for drug arrests. That is not to mention the financial crimes that cause more damage to people than any burglar or break in. But the people mainly, white, who commit those crimes are never held accountable. What I mean is white communities are full of crime, yet white people are not calling for more policing of themselves. So we also know the fears about crimes are really fears about black people being close to you.

That means you don't have to deal with the criminality. And so with blackness, I'm not saying there is not a crime in black communities. I'm just saying a lot of behavior that is deemed criminal is people trying to survive conditions of poverty that someone else created.

A lot of times you have to lie just to get the help that you need and it is not a lot. When I think about the situation, especially black trans women, according to the transgender survey, 30 percent of black transgender people live in poverty compared to 24 percent of black people in general. And so unemployment rate is twice as high as that of African Americans overall. The laws that are written in such a way that housing can discriminate.

>>: Thank you for such a powerful conversation.

Our next question is: Breonna Taylor's family has claimed that the raid which killed her was a campaign on the part of the Louisville police departments to evict long term residents that area had targeted for quote unquote redevelopment. How do you think policing and gentrification go hand in hand in your community? Wendi addressed some of this. And

all of you have addressed this issue already. But I want us to spend a few minutes expanding on that.

So we will start with Bennett, then Chancela, then Wendi.

>>: As we all know, probably everybody on the Zoom call knows, crime and the perception of crime and who defines a crime, all of that is also used to enable gentrification without using the word race.

So in no more questions, again, where I am -- in New York City where I normally live, we know that neighborhoods become gentrified as they go through that process. Responding to quality-of-life complaints and other crimes that they previously would have ignored. And I know that in New York, there was statistical analysis done of police trends in neighborhoods between 2009 and 2015 they found that as there is increased real estate investment in particular communities, increased gentrification, order maintenance arrest. Like disorderly conduct, drug possession and driving while intoxicated go up. It is a way for people to keep out who they deem undesirable. But undesirable is often code for black and brown.

>>: Thank you. Chancela.

>>: Yes, so in LA, we had a municipal code that housing advocates, low-income housing advocates for communities of color have been trying to challenge for a while now. It has to do with the city attorney and the police departments using health and safety codes and public nuisance laws to force the eviction of renters in either apartments or single-family homes that the police departments or the city attorney's office has deemed to have some type of criminal activity.

The issue is -- I'm working with advocates with other organizations. For example, in the ACLU and challenging the use of this ordinance as, one, they overwhelmingly disproportionately impact black and brown enters and some homeowners as well in south LA. Two, often times, they are unsubstantiated completely. These aren't criminal convictions so they don't have the high degree of scrutiny and evidence proof needed to convict the family or family member, oftentimes, it is a teenage family member for a supposed activity that they did.

Happening to the old gang related crime ordinances. But because the LA police departments over the last 20 years have instituted such strong

anti-gang injunctions and ordinances that basically criminalize people from getting together from associated with somebody who is on probation, for example. So if you are black and brown, your immediate family member may have a criminal record or be on probation. So it is very easy to get targeted and to further become criminalized and to have to seek criminal penalties or civil penalties just because you had a criminal record and just because the people you associate with or the people that you have to have housing with.

As you can imagine these strong eviction policies used more and more it creates more overcrowded housing because family members and other people have to take in other family members who have lost their housing. Puts those family members at jeopardy of losing their apartment because they are in an apartment with too many people or with people with criminal records.

So, again, it is exacerbating the issue, especially when it comes to evictions.

But so basically, they are saying that overcrowded housing is a health and safety code violation. The potential of somebody maybe having a

drug -- not even a conviction but an allegation as a potential health and safety code violation. So they force these tenants who have allegations of crime. And then filing liens against the properties, injunctions, abatements, civil penalties against the landlords. So we are seeing -- not just landlords who are doing it, but the cities that are forcing landlords to do this as well.

>>: For me, I want to see more better businesses and services in our community. In the sense that gentrification may not be bad. So it is just that if people -- pricing people out of our communities where they grew up in. For example, I'm from the St. Thomas Housing Development. Is housing development that was located in New Orleans, Louisiana. And one of the things when I was living in a development, you know, right before the closing of it, we were promised things. We were promised that we were going to be able to come back. We were promised that we were going to be able to have a better living. And so when they knocked the projects down, and to be clear, that was one of the best times of my life. I learned a lot living in the neighborhood, especially a neighborhood severely marginalized in the community. In the city

of New Orleans.

So when we were promised that, we were able to come back and be able to live a better living according to leaders who were in position to be able to commit that would happen to us. We were lied to. When I look at my community and saw what they have done, it is like, you know, the area that I'm from is filled with people that I don't know.

It was supposed to be a space for us to be -- it was supposed to be affordable for women of my experience. Women who lack some type of education or women who or people who just lack things periods. So, you know, the things that is going on today is I feel like how this city is being built in a way that it is not affordable for people like women like myself.

>>: Thank you, Wendi.

I want to remind our participants to use the Q and A box if you have any questions for the panelists.

Before I ask the next question, I want to preface it with local experience around policing. In the city of New Orleans, it takes 1 hour to 2 hours to get a police response in the New Orleans East area, which is predominantly black neighborhood. So two

hours is average police response in that neighborhood.

Whereas, in other neighborhoods, it takes just a few minutes. Recently, my organization has a transitional home for formerly incarcerated women on the West Bank. Middle class, predominantly white neighborhood. The police were called. It took 4 minutes for them to arrive which was just shocking to our team members, too, because they come from this other neighborhood where it takes a lot more than the 4 minutes.

But it kind of shows you, gives you a clear example of this racial policing we see in our communities and its connection to gentrification.

The next question is: What strategies have fair housing advocates used to fight racist policing and the criminalization of communities of color?

>>: I was told I'd be asked to speak first on this.

So as I said earlier, these crime free housing policies there are over 1,000 cities that have implemented these across the country, to force evictions or not renting to perspective tenants who have criminal records or a suspicion of a legal record

or where they have been associated with somebody with the law.

The city - in river side county filed -- passed such an ordinance that required the -- required mandatory eviction of tenants with criminal arrest records and violated laws. We had drug arrest laws as well.

Several civil rights groups got together. They filed a major lawsuit against the city and settled in 2018 for about \$500,000. Basically, the city of Hesperia had to remove these mandatory perspective screenings and removing the mandatory use of crime free lease addendums and that type of thing as well. So definitely filing lawsuits helped.

Also, and I understand California, we are in a different situation than Louisiana when it comes to recognizing the civil rights of all persons, but it is illegal in the state of California to discriminate against somebody on the basis of -- especially because of being transgender, of being in the LGBTQIA community. Passing laws to make it illegal to discriminate against persons. It helps to have those things as well.

The third thing that has worked is

coming together, having advocates meet, civil rights, legal services advocates, advocates in alleys of all the different organizations of the community that is we serve to share our stories, to strategize about what we're facing, to get media attention as well on those stories of horrific situations where people have lost their housing when they shouldn't have, when there was no proof whatsoever of any criminal activity of anyone in the house hole. But getting together and sharing those and litigating truthfully.

>>: Thank you. Bennett, anything you'd like to add?

>>: Again, I'm going to defer to Chancela. She is the expert on this. But I'm assuming Chancela might join me in saying -- I'm saying this as somebody who teaches at the law school. Sometimes you need to work on getting buy in from the majority community. I see it in so many other areas. You win lawsuits and there is this backlash because everybody is this is absurd. Part of the strategy has to be changing the hearts and minds of people. Unfortunately.

>>: One of the strategies for me is just allow us to buy our own housing. So we don't have

to beg different developers to let us into their new buildings. We can invest in our own communities. Like buying up property. Using it in the way that we want to.

I have two friends; they are showing that over at the house of tulip that they are purchasing properties to provide permanent houses to transgender people. These are two black trans women creating this kind of safe space and stable housing that they wish they had when they were younger.

So you don't have to beg people in power for fair housing or free from police. We can build the power to provide fair housing for ourselves. And instead of enforcing the law they care so much about, the police respect that and let people live in peace.

>>: Thank you. That was very powerful.

We have heard about strategies to change the system and strategies to work outside the system and create spaces for communities without having to deal with the systemic issues. Or dealing with them in different ways by creating and recreating how we see housing.

So the last question for the panel is

when communities of color, communities in general, call for defunding the police, they talk about what we need instead. Like mental health services, social services, addiction treatment. What do communities need to achieve real housing justice in this conversation?

Bennett.

>>: The only thing I'm going to say is obviously, and this might go back to the last point I made about convincing people how important basic things are. It is very easy to say, there is a lot of crime in that neighborhood I think it is because of race. No. If those same people have the housing you have, the educational school system you have, the jobs you have, they would have as little crime as you have. So part of the job is convincing people. You get people better housing, you reduce crime. All of these things are connected. That is part of the abolitionist argument, defunding argument. You defund the police and invest in other things and everybody benefits.

>>: Wendi, will you go next, and then Chancela.

>>: I might just talk about property. I think it is a concrete step along the right path. But

I think achieving real housing justice so it wasn't even a question. So people would have a safe place to live. It questions me, who made up these systems where people have to individually pay rent or mortgage for proof, just to have a roof? Over their heads. When I think about even during biblical times, like, people didn't have to worry about how you were going to pay the rent. Or they had to -- if you don't pay your taxes, your tax gets a lien on it. They were able to build a home.

So I feel like if as the black trans woman and if I'm able to, if I'm able to be omitted -- I don't know if that is the term I should use. But omitted from these systems of discrimination, I feel like as a black trans--- if I'm free, we all would be free from these situations. Especially being a person who is marginalized by so many people.

>>: Thank you.

>>: Defunding the police. LA has a fairly large police -- it is \$1.8 billion year budget for its police budget. So it got a lot of news and press when the LA city council and mayor passed the law to -- not defund the police but reduce the budget by \$150 million. That is less than 10 percent of the total police budget which is increased tremendously in

the last 20 years. Mostly going towards overtime for certain police officers who are pretty high ranking, have high salaries because of other freezes that have happened, hiring freezes that have occurred in the last 10 years. To pay these higher salaries because of the strong union of the police departments it created this really high police budget. So there is not a defunding of the police, just to kind of talk about what defunding the police really means. It is rechanneling some of the financial resource that is have been given to the police departments into other valuable resources to help keep people housed in LA in addition to other things as well.

Housing advocates came together with very direct plan in terms of how the money could be used to affordable housing development, to de-criminalize homelessness issues and so forth. And other ways as well, for mental health services and response teams. Instead of having the police come firsthand just as we saw what happened with the killing of the black father in Ohio by the police officer called to respond to a medical emergency. So having those things in place is what we are talking about, not necessarily 100 percent defunding the police but rechanneling the funding that

is going to police departments and things they should not have been doing to begin with.

As Bennett said, much of our modern-day policing was very reactionary against black people and against black communities to keep them oppressed and to protect as a lot of these laws were done to protect the white woman as well throughout history. That is what we, at least in LA, are hoping to rechannel some of this money into programs to help keep black and brown people housed in terms of defunding the police.

>>: Thank you to all the panelists. We have a few minutes left. We have a few questions from the participants. I'm going to choose two questions to wrap us up in a more positive note. To keep on the reimagining mind set.

One question is: What alternatives do you think can be in place to address issues in our neighborhood that don't involve calling the police?

The next question is Bennett's statement which he mentioned in the beginning. Make the statement about white progressives.

What are your recommendations for alternatives to calling the police in black neighborhoods?

>>: I feel like we need more community leaders, more organizations can be placed in a lot of communities that are marginalized. Sometimes, I notice that a lot of agencies, it is like entrenched into these institutions. So they are in places that are far from communities desperately need help. So I feel like we need to have more organizations that are for communities in communities.

>>: Anybody else?

>>: I'll just say that I have students in New York, I know a couple places in New York, where people just get together and they say, we are not calling the police. And it has worked pretty well. There is a study out about the community that decided not to call police and crime went down. Just police themselves. It is what it is. You don't need police for every single thing. If your neighbor is making too much noise, there is no need to call 911.

Two.

>>: It is more of a channel as communities are being decimated. In cities, Washington, Brooklyn, DC, LA. So those old things where we used to rely upon, the community policing was suggested. And the village and community mothers

getting together isn't quite so much there. But as much as we can, we need to do that. Know our neighbors. Try to do that community building as well. Because as Bennett said, if we see people as people first and not so much as that person I don't know as well and really think of our family, think of us as brother and sister going back to those old school familial relationships that we had. That is what we need the reinforce. Is thinking of ourselves more as family. Even if we don't see each other as immediate family members.

>>: Thank you very much. We have a few seconds left. So Bennett, can you wrap us up with your statement?

>>: It is not an optimistic statement about white progressives. They are fine with everything else except in their own backyards. Not an optimistic statement. So sorry.

>>: Thank you so much. There were a few questions that we were not able to answer. I'm sure the staff at LaFHAC will get back to the participants with those questions.

Thank you.

>>: Hello. This is Cashauna Hill. I want to thank you our panelists for that amazing

conversation. I was here taking a lot of notes. If I was better at social media, I would have been tweeting everything that they were saying. But that is not what I do well. But I learned a lot and I hope you all did, too.

We are going to move into a performance at this time. I do also just about to say how thankful I am to be here with all of you. I missed seeing you all last week. Those of you who joined us last week know I was absent. I was feeling very ill. There was a desperate situation over here. And it had to be a big illness to keep me away from you all. I am so excited to hear continuing to make trouble with all of you.

I have not yet looked at these because I don't want to get nervous, but I know we have so many of our partners and so many people who do wonderful things across the state and the country. So we are grateful for you sharing time with us today.

We will move on with today's agenda. I am excited to introduce to you all Sha'Condria iCon Sibley. She is a long-time poet, performing artist, teaching artist, host, curator, and creator of the viral to all the little black girls with big names

movement. Something that as a little black girl myself with a big name, I appreciate.

Icon is a multiple time national poetry slam champion. She travels the country and has made many television and stage appearances, including on TV1 verses and flow. And the essence music festival. Her work has been on countless outlets. She has been featured on musical projects with national recording artists. And she has written for films. She uses her work and her words largely to speak on black women, identity, family, community, faith, healing. Her first published work, my name is pronounced wholly. With that, I will turn things over to icon.

>>: Thank you so much for that introduction Cashauna. I have to make sure I'm saying people's names correctly. There is something powerful in a name. My game is Sha'Condria. I'm so grateful to be here today to hopefully offer a creative perspective. And also, I believe strongly as we saw yesterday, the poets have the ability to speak life into situations just as we have pastors and other great speakers and orators. I feel previously a lot of my work was strongly political and somewhat -- I won't say aggressive. The work I'm doing now in healing and

transforming has been in reimagining instead of just speaking about what is, also speaking about what could be.

As you stated, I am originally from a little town a few hours away from here. But I've been in New Orleans since 1998. This is my secondary adopted home. One of the things I did learn in being raised in that small, country town, which is where I learned to speak in front of people in my country church, was about the power of your voice and the power of giving honor to the people -- not just the situation. You know, you always hear the pastor say look over the situation. Give honor to the people and the force that pushes us beyond those situations that we happen to be in.

So one of the other big things about being raised in a country church is being baptized. Going under the water and coming out renewed and transformed and even though a lot of my spiritual practice has changed, I hold truth to those things I grew up. They are definitely a part of me and the power that I feel like I carry. So I just want to pay homage to those people, to MLK, Jr. to all of the other great leaders and people we are celebrates at this time who

have given us the blueprint for how to fight for ourselves and not wait for some outside organization or outside system to come and rescue us. If we continue to do that, we will wait forever for people who built the system to save us. We have the power to do that ourselves.

As magical as we are, we are also as human the same as how miracle guide is, how it is still said that God became flesh and blood and still bled and died and released gold into the sky like a dove after the flood to send a message to the world that even after all of this, life still exists. Even on land that has been baptized in water and blood, how we still know wise, no roll back stone, no grave clothes turned to white clothes. How faith has taught us to walk on water across both oceans and swamp. Taught us to make empty shell of both body and grave proving that somehow we are both bigger than both of them, bigger than anything that tries to drown us or shake us off of our foundation because we know that freedom is somewhere on the other side of struggle even if breath is not. So I will not speak of the storm, but I will speak of those whose chains to this world broke when the levees did. Those who laid their burdens down at a river side when the

blood failed to subside. Or those who stepped off ships into the mouth of a hungry sea seeking something that tasted more like home and chose lungs full of salt water over a lifetime full of bitter tears. Who did this even in spite of fear, I will speak of those. Those who lost what seemed like everything but still found something in the residue worth holding onto even if it was just a memory. How they scraped up those memories and made more. Took the scraps and made meals, made tradition, made an entire existence out of everything the devil tried to steal. And still how it was more than enough. I will speak of those who know rough side of the mountain yet continue to climb over rock and hard and still manage to build a church upon this place. Those who still got a prayer and a praise flowing from the flood line of their lips. Even when they have tonight through scarce and surge to be heard to be here. I will speak of those who know hell and high water, who know below sea level, but also know heaven, who also know holy, know hollow and hollowed be thy name. No gutted-out frame and filled up spirit. Know fall down and get back up again. And rise and rise and rise and rinse and repeat. No left out to dry. But still know how to come up for air. No held breath and

bellowed hymn like the ones the mothers used to sing on Sunday morning after a baptism. You know, when old becomes new. And the body realized that it is indeed bridge instead of burial. And that a grave, not even one made of water could hold it down. Not for too long, so I will speak of those who may not recall the words but whose souls still remember their speak victory song like MaDear used to sing. Toll the bells done got over. Toll the bell, done got over, done got over at last.

And I think about those women, my ma dear and the women who taught me when the world don't recognize you, when the world doesn't build a home for you, how you have the power, the tools, the strength to build that home for yourself and by first honoring the first home we have which is this body and us. And I watched how they took nothing and made a whole lot of something about of everything that was taken from them or as I said before, what was attempted to be stolen and made meals and made homes and made community out of it.

I watched my ma dear take a few cups of corn male, couple of eggs, half gallon of milk and feed her entire family. I watched both my grandmothers take the bitterness of divorce and turn it into some of the

sweetest homemade cakes you have ever tasted. I watched my own mother take teenage pregnancy and ridicule and turn it into 30 years of marriage, award education and award-winning poet of daughter. Women who take life's most bitter ingredients and turn them into something worth licking your plates for. Wrinkles and star dust who weave miracles from misfortune. You can call them women, others, alchemies, but whatever you call them, you better call them maim or Mrs. They are the type of women who demand respect. My mama and my ma dear are the type of women whose eyes say everything their mouths never need to. The women in my family inhale life's pollution and exhale gospel. They are walking, talking hymnals. Perfect verses of chestnut skin and big bones set over organs and strong heartbeats all testimonial and healing all holy and how I got over. The women in my family have always been bridges over troubled waters. Beautiful examples of how to take life ocean storms and turn them into baptisms. Some days I don't feel worthy of this kind of salvation. I know the many times I have been saved by their blood, sweat, and tiers. Some days no matter how much I accomplished, I wonder if I am doing such a legacy any justice. Oh, what a cross to bear.

This world will try to make you forget the strength in your own spine even when it is your DNA to bend and never break. Even after you give and give and never take anything for yourself. How we are often seen as save yours, but never as angels. That is why we've had to learn the take the scars on our shoulders and carve out our own wings which is to say we don't need the world to tell us we fly. Although it would be a nice gesture. Well-deserved recognition. But thankfully, our mamas and ma dears, they taught us how to be our own tambourines which is to say they taught us how to shake the devil off our backs and holy ghost dance all over his neck. Their ancestors taught them that. These were the things that cannot approximate drowned in the ocean. For them we say hall lieu -- for I am from a long line of people who know how to turn classrooms and kitchens into pulpits. The type of people who taught me that when your life becomes a sermon that no one else wants to hear. Sometimes you got to be your own amen.

Amen.

>>: Thank you so much for those words. I'm having a little trouble getting my video on. I'm going to ask someone on staff to please do that for me if you wouldn't mind.

Thank you.

Thank you so much for being with us today and for sharing those words. I was over here getting emotional as I tend to do. But I'm going to keep it together. So thank you. It was deeply felt. And I know it was deeply felt by the people joining us today. We appreciate you and your work. Thank you for joining us.

Moving on with our agenda. We are going to turn now to an award presentation. So I'm thankful that icon has set the stage for us as we think about the impact that our community members that the world seeks to marginalize have. We certainly know that systemic racism and classism and all of these oppressive systems can really make things hard for black community members. We certainly know the oppression that exists and that people who are not part of the majority often face.

The group we are honoring today takes those systems on directly in service to the community members that the world tries often to leave behind.

I want to recognize today with our four housing hero award the housing law unit of South Louisiana legal services. This is an award that we

give to recognize people and organizations in our communities who through their courageous and steadfast action have made contributions to the local fair housing unit. Local fair housing movement. The housing law unit is tiny but very mighty. Those of you who have worked at South Louisiana legal services, know about the day in and day out grind that their attorneys face in order to provide legal representation to low-income members of our community. SLLS is one of LaFHAC's most valued and closest organizational partners in this work.

During COVID, we all know that SLLS's housing unit's case load has tripled. The workload has gone up exponentially. However, SLLS has risen to meet the challenges as members of our community face being forced from their homes. They have dealt with the pandemic by shifting their resources and priorities to ensure they continue to provide topnotch legal representation, low-income community members.

I have been amazed and awed by the dedication and commitment that the housing attorneys at SLLS have shown throughout this pandemic. They have not only responded to the needs of the community, but they have continued to put their own health and safety

on the line but appearing in court with people who are facing evictions when our systems have not been set up to allow people to attend these hearings virtual.

We know that eviction is a racial justice and fair housing issue. And we are so thankful for the work that the southeast Louisiana Legal Services Housing Law Unit has done many the face of the COVID 19 pandemic. With that I would like to ask Amanda Golob to accept the award on behalf of the housing law unit and share a few words.

>>: Thank you so much, Cashauna. I'm so thankful to the LaFHAC for putting on this conference. I'm looking forward to when we can be in person again, and for -- you are always at the forefront of tenant's rights and housings advocacy issues. It means so much to receive an award from such a prestigious organization.

I'm not going to lie; housing work is hard work. Evictions move so quickly in Louisiana and the laws here are for the most part over 150 years old and very landlord friendly. So we as tenant advocates are constantly fighting uphill battles. Often times the only line of defense between clients and homelessness. Now we are facing more challenges and

unique issues that we never anticipated facing. And our team, Hannah, Alexis, Kevin, Chris, Jessica, Elizabeth, Andy, Zack, Gene, Pam, we've risen to the challenge. Being evicted from your home has different consequences. Puts you at a higher risk of contracting COVID. Displaces your family. There is all kinds of studies on the effects. But add the COVID layer to it. It is very serious.

We are going to court in person since the courts reopened at the end of June. And our team didn't think twice about that. It is required for our jobs. We are going to do it. We are going to be there for the tenants. We knew it needed to be done. We worked hard to advocate for courtroom safety. We helped the courts make changes to the way people access them and make sure they are as safe as possible. We have a lot of advocacy success. Taken several writs and appeals -- and to better define the new law that have been enacted because of COVID to make sure with the CDC moratoriums on evictions which Joe Biden just extended through the end of march and maybe further to make sure that is implemented in all the courts and that landlords are following that.

While the eviction moratorium has been

extended, this doesn't mean there isn't work to be done. That rent money is still owed. We expect a consumer debt crisis to be looming. Landlords are taking steps to evict tenants. By filing in court totally unrelated to the nonpayment of rent issue. They take illegal action such as changing locks on doors, removing belongings, cutting utilities off.

While the future is uncertain, one thing is certain, SLLS housing unit will be there. We will fight for tenant's rights.

Thank you for fair housing. We work together with you all the time. We have done so much for the community and we will continue to do so.

So thank you.

>>: Thank you. Congratulations. We appreciate your work and look forward to continuing to fight with you all. Thank you.

So now we will be moving into our keynote address. I am so honored to have the opportunity to introduce someone who I only met once virtually. I know she is one of these mighty women that icon spoke about in her piece. I have been inspired by her and amazed by her in many ways. I know that you all will be, too. And so now I am going to introduce

our keynote speaker for today, Shameka Parrish-Wright.

She is a dedicated community organizer, educator, and activist. She currently serves as operations manager for The Bail Project, a nonprofit organization designed to disrupt mass incarceration. She is passionate about fighting daily to end the cash bail system. She has been appointed by the mayor of Louisville as a Louisville human relations commissioner. She served in that role from 2,008 to 2012. Currently, she serves as a board member with organizations including The Homeless Coalition Continuum of Care. And the Carl Braden Memorial Center. And Kentucky Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression.

She has worked with Kentucky for the commonwealth, Kentucky Jobs for Justice. The Kentucky Alliances is one of the oldest civil rights organizations in Louisville and Kentucky and has paid a pivotal role for the justice for Breonna Taylor movement.

Justice square part a key site of organizes for the justice for Breonna Taylor movement. She lives in Louisville, Kentucky with her husband James, her 6 children, and her 6 grandchildren. We are

so thankful and excited today to hear from you.

>>: Thank you. What an introduction. I'm excited to be here. Thank you Cashauna. Thank to everyone that is in attendance. I feel blessed to talk about something that is near and dear to my heart. I have 2 and a half grandchildren. So 6 children, 2 and a half grandchildren. They might be watching and I have to be correct on that.

>>: Thank you for that correction. I'm still in awe of your ability to have raised 6 children. I'm going to be stuck at one. And I think that awe led to my mistake. So I apologize.

>>: No worries at all.

I was thinking about how to approach you all and where to start. It is so much going on. I appreciate the amazing panel with Bennett, with Wendi, and Chancela. You all have covered so much ground. So I wanted to make sure I wouldn't be repeating too much of what was said. But as we know in this work, we have the data. We use the data to change hearts and minds. We have to hear the different stories that impact us and how this work connects us, not just in Louisiana, not just in Kentucky, but all over our nation. And I always have a world perspective. That is one of my

favorite quotes from Dr. Martin Luther king. We must develop a world perspective. What we do now impacts everyone. People are watching us. We must make the best strides into getting there together.

That is what I use for injustice square. We get there together. It was a time for us to use our resources to come together and those of us who were able to, to support our young people as they do something they have never done before, put their bodies on the line for justice. Justice for Breonna Taylor and too many more. You may see one of my grandchildren running in the background.

That is how we started. It was a group of us that needed to come and we said our young people are going to die. They came to us and said to me, I will die for this movement. I will die because Breonna Taylor didn't do anything wrong. But we know even Breonna Taylor's case ties to discrimination when it comes to housing.

We knew something wasn't right to where she lived. I want to consider all the impacts of discrimination how it is connecting issue across cities and across the nation.

Discrimination is deadly,

discrimination is real. Discrimination is happening somewhere right now.

I want to that I think the Louisiana fair action center for doing what their name entails. Taking action. Because affordable and non-discriminatory housing is a human right that is fit for all kings and queens and definitely everyone in between.

Those closest to the problems, yes, those directly impacted have to be leaders in the solution.

How did I get here? Let me first say, I am honored to be chosen to speak on this dear issue, but who you are looking at is someone who had to work hard to navigate the systems. You are looking at a 44 year-old mother of 6, sometimes 7 if you include my husband. And grandmother of 2 and a half. My generation, my parents' generation and their parents' generation struggled with homelessness. Statistics would rank me as unstable, chronically homeless, teenage mother, high school dropout, drugs, alcohol, mental and physical abuse.

And on top of all of that, I am black.

But who am I? I am a cycle breaker. I

work every day to attack poverty at every level because it unites us. It kills and it can be dealt with in our lifetime.

What are you looking at? What you are looking at a navigator of the many systems that perpetuate poverty. It wasn't being a mother at 15. It wasn't my father being incarcerated 40 of his 56 years on this earth. It wasn't my single mother of 3 with barely a high school education. It wasn't drugs. It wasn't alcohol. It wasn't physical or mental abuse I suffered that hindered me from being greater years ago. No. It was affordable and stable housing.

Yes, four states, 17 schools, a host of jobs, and 4 colleges later. My husband and I were able to buy a home just 2 years ago.

Now with my bail project work, I am better positioned to deal with the many injustices in our judicial system. This national work, we see what many of us know all along. Housing is one of our biggest issues.

When you see the pictures of homelessness, they are missing key components because they show you people on the streets. They show you people going into buildings. There is no way to

properly attack poverty, racism, all of our other irks without addressing housing rights and injustices that stems from over-policing, gentrification, yes, ongoing discrimination, that happens every day. For example, just this week, I paid for my brother who just served 10 years in prison. I had to pay for him to move into a hotel in Lexington, Kentucky. My brother's offense was related to sexual charges. And he was renting a room from a woman who was directly impacted by incarceration. And her sole mission is to provide housing to men that are justice involved.

Well, there were police officers who didn't feel that people like my brother and other folks deserve to live in the house they were living in. No issues with reoffending. Their strict programming. They all work. They all have jobs. They all are in so much programming. And they all take care of one another. But these police officers harassed them. They do a bunch of random visits. They also made flyers and contacted the neighbors and pressured this black man that owned the home to evict them.

They weren't evicted for any upcoming offense. Not for paying rent late, for tearing up the property. They were evicted from she put the house

under her name and her organization's name and she did not list them all on the lease.

She was fearful this would happen. Because she has two other homes where she had to change them because of similar situations.

This isn't every police officer, but there are a few who continue to harass the people she tries to serve.

So this black male homeowner was forced to give in and they were evicted. They want to hold onto their jobs. So we were able to move them to a hotel that was properly distanced until they can find another place to live.

That is an example of discrimination. We understand that when someone is sentenced and they return to our society, we tell them all the things while they are incarcerated. You can come out, rejoin. But we do not tell them about the discrimination that my brother and so many others will continue to suffer for the rest of their lives.

Policing and gentrification go hand in hand. We know that. We see that every day. As soon as we learned about Breonna Taylor, we knew. She went to school with my older daughter. Her sister went to

school with my third daughter. She was a part of our community. But she was doing everything right. She went home. She worked. So social distanced. Her whole life was dedicated to saving lives. Her life was taken by those who she worked for and were sworn to protect and serve.

But we know in different communities protect and serve looks different. Protect and serve meant they kicked in her door on bogus warrants, five warrants signed in 12 minutes by a judge who didn't think about Breonna's life when she signed her life away.

She was focused on that relationship with the police.

Ever since that door was kicked in in that neighborhood which is considered in our west end of town of Louisville, we know that -- I remember Bennett saying or someone saying that it takes 2 hours -- I made a note of that. For police to come. That doesn't necessarily happen in our neighborhood. They are so over-policed they are just around the corner.

But as for information about Breonna's case grew, we learned it is directly connected to

redevelopment and gentrification designed for that community. So those tactics are used all over. Not just in Louisville. Those tactics where -- if the amount of police calls, the amount of drug related activity. If you have somebody that is deemed an ex-offender living at your address. All of those factors are taken in as they consider property values, they consider the next leg of redevelopment. But we know that it is just disguised gentrification.

Fair housing advocates just like you have in Louisiana, in Louisville and all over, have always known that there's discrimination, that we must take action, and have worked tirelessly to try to deal with it. We set up programming. We fought for housing trust fund. We've worked together to make sure that benefits are extended, that we can ban the box and not have criminal records stop them from getting houses.

It is hard to get ahead because we are fighting so much money. We are fighting money. Money that should be used for sustaining communities and sustainable solutions.

What would you do or how could we clean up the streets? I say, affordable housing. Affordable livable housing. When your home is secure,

you can focus on thriving and not just surviving. Poor people and poor people in need of adequate housing don't have time to plan for the future beyond 3 to 5 years.

As we dive deeper in the impacts of red lining, hope six, and low-income housing, we have to be bold and innovating. We have to do what it takes to meet the need.

Our real estate does not match our wages. I'm sure that is the same in many locals. We pay, our wages are so low that people are struggling. People are working two minimum wage jobs just to pay rent. Our ability to keep the same position beyond five years has diminished and continues to diminish as jobs have changed.

A great deal of our youth are couch surfing. They are living from home to home. Many of them put out their home too soon to be able to survive.

Our numbers for unemployment continue to grow. I just read that there was over 900,000 people who just applied for unemployment benefits. We all know those numbers will continue to rise.

What we have to focus on is more community partners. That includes business. We cannot tolerate any form of housing discrimination.

This includes those with medical issues, those who are section 8 participants, many of which are forced to use what we use slum lords. I remember growing up and we moved around so much and really our electric would be off when we would get out of school. We sometimes had to go down to a one bedroom and it was 3 of us. But my mom never talked to us about it. We just moved and went to a new school.

When I was on section 8, I realized the struggles in housing and dealing with slum lords. There was a mushroom that grew through the ceiling of my apartment. There was a mushroom. I remember calling about the leakage and calling sometimes when it rains, water comes through. And when it was time to renew my lease, they offered me new carpet. I said, what are you going to do about the windows and this mushroom. I know that means there is mold. They never came in to do that.

We think about those who are institutionalized who barely are able to get housing. So when they get it, they deal with the worst conditions. We think about the women who offer up their bodies to be able to live in the places that they live because many of the landlords participate in

predatory lending and tell them they will help them but it comes at a huge cost.

These are realities that people are dealing with every day.

I remember before my dad died in 2015. I went to visit him and went to use his restroom. All of his plumbing was exposed. The building management was extremely slow on fixing those things. And it was every time I came up to visit because he was in Cincinnati. I would say, you have one month before you have to move. I cannot allow you with our heart condition -- I'm on my third pacemaker, with our heart condition, you cannot continue to live in this. It is going to cause problems. In fact, he ended up dying from an as ma attack that turned into a heart attack.

I remember him -- he was proud of himself. He spent 40 of his 56 years in and out of jail. He had been able to maintain this apartment. She got dis-I ability. It was close to \$800. When I went over his bills with him. I wanted to make sure everything was okay. When I went over his bills, he had spent \$600 just to live in that apartment. So beyond rent and utilities and keeping a phone. I said, you are spending a great deal of your income -- not role an

income -- I said, you are spending that on rent. That is more than 30 percent. That is more than 50 percent of what you bring in. But he was happy he was able to stay there.

I had to celebrate that with him. Out of five years, I only had to pay his rent one time when his money didn't come in on time. But he was so proud that he didn't want to leave.

So when I see that kind of decision happening today as we deal with the protestors. As we see people who are house poor in all of our ZIP codes. It is not just the poor ZIP codes. It is all of our super-codes, somebody is struggling with do I pay my rent, utilities, or something else. Going to people's homes, delivering food and supplies and learning their electricity and water are off because they only had enough to pay the mortgage or rent. These are the realities that many people are dealing with. These are people who are struggling. But because they live in certain ZIP codes, they are given scrutiny. Many of them don't go and employ those things because they are worried about being discriminated against because they are worried about where their ZIP code is.

I was on section 8. I had to move in

with my mom for a week because my utilities got so high that they had to be cut off. They were cut off. And I didn't have utilities for a week. So I moved in with my mom. I didn't take the other route where I saw my neighbors taking the electric meters and replacing them or taking them off and turning their power back off, risks fees and fines.

I know people now are struggling to pay their bills and we know it is going to get worse as we still deal with the impact of COVID 19. So housing is so important. It is going to continue to be important that we all must take action. We all must do everything that is necessary to make sure that people aren't house poor, people aren't almost homeless, people aren't put out on the streets.

Housing cannot continue to be based on 30 percent of income. It is not realistic for many Americans, not realistic for many Louisiana folks. Everyone is struggling with having that based on 30 percent because with that percentage, folks right-hand turn able to save. And they say that most people are one to two paychecks from losing it all. I've seen it. I've lost it. I've been homeless. Not because of anything else than not having enough money.

We see our clients, many of our clients struggling with pretrial incarceration we are able to get out, the next big issue is housing. And sometimes when you have certain charges, you can't go places.

It used to be that those charges didn't show up on your record. But now we are protestors who are charged with protest related charges being denied employment, fired from jobs and not able to get housing. So this is bigger than it is.

It means we have to use initiatives that reduce that. We have to fund things that work.

More families are forced to sublease and set up community houses and set up situations where they can live together. But now when landlords learn of that, they charge them more money based on the people that are there.

I'm saying I'm not a believer in business or understanding real estate. Our income doesn't match what rents are, doesn't match what we are trying to strive for.

I can understand. I am a business owner as well. We all lost money. I definitely lost money. And I didn't even qualify for a loan. So I can understand there is a business component that matters.

But a strong community means that people need to be housed. When people are housed and are able to thrive, then the surrounding businesses around them, they thrive, too.

So businesses definitely have a buy in into making our communities affordable, to eliminating discrimination when it comes to housing. To making sure everyone is able to get housing and that it is accessible.

More mixed communities. They work. We've seen mixed communities work. But they cannot come at the cost of poor person. You cannot put a poor person out just because you might have a tenant that makes more money. That does not make a better community. It has to have the people directly impacted at the table.

To think about the next steps or moving forward and thinking about more solutions, I want to tell you some things that we've seen work in Louisville and things we are pushing for nationally. I'm trying not to cover anything that was covered.

Just in December and partially due to protesting now 240 days of being out in the streets protesting for justice of Breonna, we saw in December,

our councilwoman, Jessica green worked hard to get this passed. We have source of income protection passed in December. This means that landlords can no longer say no section 8. How many jurisdictions deal with this? Where you have a tenant that has section 8 but it is hard for them to find a place. A lot of times they are forced to go into the same communities because a lot of the other communities won't even rent to a section 8 participant. So having this new ordinance passed by our council means that landlords cannot discriminate.

Anything that passes, you have to have the effort to make sure everyone is adhering to it. But this is huge. And moratorium being extended to March 31, that is a big deal, too. We have a housing trust fund but it does not get the funding. I worked on the housing trust fund. I worked to help get that established. We get it established and then it is not properly funded. So we're doing the best. The people who run the housing trust fund are using those funds to do the best that they can. But because it is not properly funded, we are not seeing the real benefit of it.

One in 5 families qualify to get affordable housing, but we need to make that an

entitlement. We know we are serving a large deal of our communities. We need that in writing.

I sit on a board that I am very proud to be on. But I am trying to help them with housing. Do you know that those of them seeking to become U.S. citizens as well as have affordable housing, sometimes signing up for affordable housing through HUD or housing authority can hinder them later in their application process for citizenship. So they can't show that they needed the system to survive. They have to show they pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps or this can come up as an issue when they try to become is citizen.

Our country was built for all of these folks to be able to come in and do what they need to do and to have that held against them is a shame. So we are working to make sure. We have to work at the Congressional level, state right level, local level to make sure housing is an entitlement.

Land banks. Land banks were set up to everyday folks can go in and buy these abandoned properties, properties that are just sitting that just owe taxes. The problem is you have to be able to show you have the money to fix them. So you can buy a

property for \$5,000, but you have to show that you have \$25,000 in the bank to fix up the property.

We had a push against transitional housing which is similar to what my brother was living in. Transitional housing push was they wanted to are programming. They don't just people who are justice involved moving into their communities. We see the same pushback against affordable housing in the more affluent communities. They have the land, but they fight it tooth and nail because they don't want those kinds of people living with them.

So we are dealing with housing on so many levels.

Our housing authority is one of the good things, they operate based on what HUD requires. So having additional ordinances makes it easier for those justice involved be able to get housing.

Like I said, we have lots of data on our red lining around consumer debt prices. What we have to do is change hearts and minds to understand that you can be pro-landlord and pro-homeowner ship and pro-business development. You have to understand that the two go hand in hand. Affordable housing is a component of that. It is not just this thing we do for

those people. Those people use the businesses we serve. We see that in justice square. A lot of people were homeless. A lot of people became homeless because they were protesting. We took direct aid and mutual aid and used that and put that back into the surrounding hotels in downtown Louisville, as well as the outside hotels and make sure every dollar we spent to get ice, to supplies, went to those small mom and pop businesses, as well as the other businesses in surrounding downtown.

So you see it looked like we were at arms with the business community. We weren't. COVID 19 is the culprit that shut down businesses. There were few instances of people deciding to take things to another level. That was not the majority of protestors that were there.

Because of that, some of them were seen on TV. Some of them lost their homes. Some of them lost their jobs. And we ended up helping them connect to other jobs and homes. A majority of them were our young people already displaced, already couch surfing. They need transitional housing. Some of them need to understand what it is like. Some of them have left home too soon and they are not ready. Just like somebody

impacted by foster care system. As they matriculate and exit, there is a transition program for them. That program needs to be extended to young people in their 20s because they are struggling with housing and securing affordable housing.

We have so much work to do, but we have to be focused on the solutions. We've tried a lot of things. We have to be willing to be bold, innovative to do everything discussed on the panels and more.

We know that tenant's rights matters. We know that when we have people properly housed; you take pride in your community. You take pride in going to work and doing all the things that you need to do. We cannot do anything without our community partners. They are faith community, business community, schools. We know our schools have nearly 8,000 students considered homeless. Living in cars, staying in transitional housing. My children had to do that.

I had to have two children graduate while we were in transitional housing. What that was like to navigate and constantly asking questions. It was important that no matter what I was going through housing wise that their education had to be a priority. I was able to work with our county school board to work

with the homeless department and be able to make sure those children were able to get their education while we were homeless and stay many the same schools.

I will say those funds used for that to make sure they have busing, too make sure they could get to school, made a difference. They all graduated. They are all making a change in our family and in our generation. My parents didn't graduate from high school. Their parents worked and didn't graduate. We are starting to see a trend in our own families. When we invest in education, we have to understand for someone to properly learn, they have to have all the other things met so they can come to school focused on education.

You are looking at someone who had to be a cycle breaker because I had nowhere else to go. I know that there's more people like me out there on our streets with doctorates degrees, with double master's degrees struggling with homelessness. They might need a peer support. So when we talk about defunding the police, we talk about defund and reallocate the funds to programs that work.

I was able to get help with St. Vincent's DePaul. And when I joined the homeless

coalition, I was the poorest person on the board. I was the only person who had experienced homelessness. If you are in these situations and you don't have people directly impacted, you are not serving the whole of the community. You need to get the voices there. We have answers, too. I know society tells us only white businessmen have those answers. We are showing you that we do. We are holding up our communities. Any black woman is already being a mayor in our community. Where we need to go, where we go next, who we bring to the table, continue to go to work.

I want to leave some time for questions.

>>: Thank so much for that engaging talk. Again, we are so honored and so blessed to have you here.

I have several questions. And then you answered every last one of them. You went through the list and answered them all. So I'm guessing that everyone educational is like me and they couldn't keep up. You were ahead of all of us. Nobody has any questions for you which I think may be the first time that has ever happened.

So I want to thank you again for being here. I want to note that I appreciated that shout out

to council member Jessica green who was my classmate at spell man college. I am sure she does not remember me. I remember her and knew she was going to be a change agent. I appreciate that the two of you are working together. And I'm scared for the power struggle.

>>: She was my councilwoman before we bought this house. I worked with her mom working for -- she said, you know I am for this to be a sanctuary city. So she is amazing.

>>: Is there any way you can share with folks how they can reach you. Is there a web site so that folks can plug in. I know most of us are in Louisiana, but there are folks from across the country who may be watching this on social media. If you could let people know how they can be in touch with you, up to date on your work, how they can support.

>>: I have a dear friend who moved from Louisville to New Orleans and I turned 40 in Louisiana. I had a ball. I needed a detox after that. You can find out about our work with BAILPROJECT.ORG. Kentucky alliance is [Kentucky alliance.ORG](http://Kentuckyalliance.ORG). SEASONFORYOU.

I was trying to be slower for the amazing translator.

All social media as Shameka
Parrish-Wright.

I believe in policy. I believe in data. I believe in change; local politics are everything. I door knocked in Georgia. I believe we have to use the tools that we are given. That is one tool. Your advocacy for homelessness is the best on every level. I love the work you are doing with sending shoppers out. That kind of stuff is so important. A lot of times it is overlooked. I have a name Shameka. I always worry that when somebody sees my name and say they, we know she's black. I did receive discrimination because of what my name is. That shouldn't happen. We have to remember that at this moment somebody is fighting discrimination in their housing and we have to be there. We have to speak more to those sex workers who are forced to be in those situations in the worse way.

And the slum lords. Imagine a mushroom growing through my ceiling while on section 8. But that work has helped me be able to work with the local housing authority. Making sure we get out there in front of this. The policy has to happen after the protest.

>>: Thank you so much for all of that seasoning that you sprinkled on us. I hope you have some left. I know you do. Thank you again for joining us today. We are out of time.

I want to thank our keynote speaker, Shameka Parrish-Wright. Hope you continue to be in touch and be up to date on the work she is doing. Not only applicable in Louisville, but we know these lessons can be brought and should be brought to the communities across the country.

Also I want to thank icon and congratulate the housing law unit at southeast Louisiana legal services. Thanks to our morning panelists, again. For blessing us with that wisdom and encouraging us to think about things differently.

Thank you, attendees. Please fill out your evaluation and survey via the link that is being placed in the chat. Or once you leave the webinar that link will pop up. If you haven't done so, please do consider becoming a recurring donor to LaFHAC in any amount to sustain our work and allow us to respond quickly in this unpredictable climate.

The link to donate will be placed in the chat as well.

Lastly, I want to remind you to please not miss the final Fit for a King session. That will be next Thursday at the same time from 11:00 to 1:00 central time. You can log in then using the very same link that you used today.

We will talk about how communities are taking action against the eviction crisis and how we can all get involved. We will hear from a keynote speaker on Thursday, January 28th. That is Carol Fife of the Mom's for Housing group in Oakland, California. We will also have a powerful panel and performance next Thursday, the 28th. You can read the full program at fitforaking.org. That link will be in the chat.

Approximate you missed any of today's summit, we will share the recordings at fitforaking.org.