

Fit for a King 1-28-21

>>: Good morning, everybody abdomen welcome to the third day of the LaFHAC 14th annual Fit for a King Summit which is an annual tribute to the work and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. My name is Cashauna Hill and I serve as executive director of LaFHAC. This is our third and final day of the summit and we are so excited about the conversation that is we have planned.

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

>>: Speaking Spanish. My name is Chloe. I'm here with my interpreter. We are members of the language collective.

Speaking Spanish.

Today we will be providing simultaneous English Spanish interpretation and you'll be able to access after this instructions. If you are using a computer, click on the globe icon on the bottom of your screen with the word interpretation. Select the language of your choice, English or Spanish.

The smart phone or tablet, click on the 3 tablets labeled more to make your selection.

>>: Speaking Spanish.

Don't forget click on your language of choice. If you have any problems hearing us or with the technology, please send a message in the chat. Thank you so much for your commitment to creating a multilingual space.

>>: Good morning again to everyone who may just be joining us. I would like to take a moment to introduce myself. My name is Cashauna Hill. Executive director of LaFHAC. I would also like as we've done throughout this summit, acknowledge that any time we talk about housing, we are also talking about land. New Orleans was once known as Bulbancha, a place of many tongues and was home to Houma and Choctaw tribes among many others whose names and languages we no longer know. Our summit this year has discussed how discrimination and displacement can threaten people's lives. We cannot have these conversations without acknowledging the genocidal displacement that indigenous communities have been subjected to for generations on this land. We also cannot have these conversations without acknowledging that black

Africans were stolen from their homeland, enslaved and forced to work this land of which they were later dispossessed.

Moreover, we recognize that displacement is ongoing and that 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. The past year has been incredibly challenging and painful in so many ways. Despite all of this, our communities have continue to strand strong to protect each other, provide mutual aid and keep fighting for justice. We are inspired by them and we have been honored to high their work. Fit for a King 2021 has been a 3-day conversation. During our first week, our speakers discussed environmental racism.

Our second session explored the connections between gentrification and policing. Recordings of both days and the full agenda and program are available at fitforaking.org. If you missed any of the conversations, please check out the recordings.

Today, for the final day of our summit, speakers will discuss the eviction crisis and how you

can take action to keep our neighbors safe and in their homes. We will begin the day with a conversation with our morning keynote speaker. Car roll fife, a founding member of moms for housing and. We will then present our Mondale-Brooke awards for fair housing leadership and civic participation. After that, we are so honored to have Congresswoman Maxine Waters join us. We will then screen an original performance piece by the incredible Dance for Social Change company.

Finally, we will close the event with a panel discussion where you hear how organizers and communities are responding to the current eviction crisis and how we cannot only use this moment to respond, but also to push for fundamental changes in our housing system.

Again, you can see the full agenda and recordings of all sessions at fitforaking.org. That link will be shared in the chat for everyone to access.

I would like to go over some housekeeping items. I want to ask that you please make sure to fill out your evaluations today. We carefully review feedback and use your comments to improve this event' 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 will see the evaluation pop up immediately when you log out. If you have any questions for our speakers throughout the day, please use the Q and A function at the bottom of your screen. If you have any technical questions about Zoom or LaFHAC's work you can reach us by e-mail at info at LAFairhousing.org. Or chat in the chat box.

Now, as we get started and transition to our day, I would like to share a little bit about the LaFHAC for those who are new to our work. Our mission is to eradicate housing discrimination throughout the state of Louisiana. We know that housing discrimination leads to segregation and that neighborhoods and communities are not treated fairly. Housing discrimination has to end if this nation is ever going to achieve racial and economic justice.

We work to end housing discrimination in several way. You can read more about our work at LAFairhousing.org. The link will be shared in the chat.

LaFHAC is a statewide agency that works in tandem with partner organizations and community members. We could not do this work without you.

Finally, want to say that this year has shown us how important it is to be agile and to be able to shift our work as needed depending on the immediate needs in our community. Your support makes that ability possible. We are asking people in our network to consider signing up as a recurring donor. Sign up at LAfairhousing.org/donate.

Now, we are excited for our conversation with our morning keynote speaker Carroll Fife.

>>: Good morning everyone. We will now move into a conversation with Carroll Fife. I am excited to have her joining the LaFHAC for today's last installment of Fit for a King 2021.

By way of introduction, she is an executive director, a community leader, a mother, and a fearless freedom fighter. As director of ace Oakland, she helped found moms for housing and pass legislation at the state and local level to build collective power for tenants. She has fought back against police terrorism and helped to build a necessary work of black organizations and individuals working together for community self-determination. She has been involved in Oakland electoral politics for

over a decade. She is an elected member of NAACP. Since 2016 she has managed several campaigns including Oakland's first slate of all black member candidates.

She was a 2016 and 2020 platform committee delegate for Bernie Sanders and drafted an amendment for the 2020 democratic national convention platform to make housing a human right.

Car roll's legislative and electoral accomplishments. Grass roots behind Oakland's department of race and equity. Protecting the coliseum area from gentrification. Passing Oakland's emergency eviction moratoria and eviction ban. And pressuring the city council to reopen the city budget in order to divest from Oakland's police departments to invest in community services.

Carroll facilitates many grassroots -- running for elected office and is a trusted advocate and servant of marginalized people everywhere. In November 2020, she was elected to Oakland city council representing district 3.

Thank you so much for joining us today. We are honored to have you.

So we'll jump right into the questions. We just have so much that I know our community is really

excited to hear from you about. And I wanted to start off by asking you to share with us the roots of the moms for housing campaign. How that work came to be. And if you could share with us more about moms for housing. I would very much appreciate that.

>>: Sure.

I have been the director of ace Oakland since June of 2017. And it was very interesting on my very first day I broke up a very intense fight by between a sex worker and someone who hadn't paid her. I was just walking in the door and getting a walk through when two people slammed up against my glass door. I went outside against all of the staff's suggestions because this woman had -- it wasn't a knife but a screwdriver holding it on a man saying you didn't pay me. So I was, like, you can't do this here. It was a black woman. She had to be maybe in her late 40s. And I said, how much does he owe you? And she said \$15. So I gave her \$40. And she broke down. She said, this is the only way that I can make money. I'm living in my car with my daughter. And I don't have any other options.

And that was my very first day at work. And in that course of work, there is another black woman who had come to my office on a regular basis. She was

much older. Frail, maybe 4-foot 11. And she had been living on the streets for some time and she would come in to microwave food or get bus fare from me and different thing. She was like if you find a permanent place to stay, let me know. I'm trying to get a tough shed that the city offers. So I was constantly searching. There was always a wait list.

Then two of my staff, my receptionist and one of the others fell into a situation where one was living in hotels constantly being propositioned by people around the hotel that were living or -- engaged in the underground economy hanging around the hotel. Trying to put her on the street. So she is walking into her hotel room with a 1 year-old and a 5 year-old and it was beginning to be too much for her. She asked me for support.

It just became over and over again where I'm seeing -- and they are all black women -- coming and saying I need something. I am losing my mental stability or I don't know how much longer I can hang on.

But it was when the elder sister I found out she attempted suicide. That I was like, this is too much. And so I called different women who I had

contact information for and I said, I don't have any money. I'm low income. I don't have any property. I don't have networks of people with property for you. But if you organize, then we can get something for you.

We are going to make a lot of noise about the fact that there's no place for these women to stay. For all of you. And so we decided to organize. So I pulled my networks. I said, I'm going to do everything in my power as an organizer. What I've been taught and trained in and figure something out. And we decided that it was important to make a will the of noise about the conditions.

>>: Thank you, I appreciate that.

And I know that so many folks in our community and the people who are joining us are very familiar with the moms for housing am campaign and are thankful for your work and your example. I'm wondering if we can back up a little bit and talk about how we got to this place. Where folks are being unhoused and don't have access to the safe spaces that they need.

So to that end, I'm wondering if you can share with us a little bit more about the historic root of the current housing crisis gentrification and displacement and its disproportionate impact on black

communities.

We know folks not having access to housing doesn't just happen accidentally. It does not happen in a vacuum. I'm wondering if you request share with us more about the historic roots and path that got us to this place that we're in now.

>>: In broad strokes, this is not a new phenomenon in reality. We were brought to this country from across oceans to be chattel and property. And post emancipation, there's been a long journey of disenfranchise black families. I think the most relevant point is there were successes after emancipation. But then you start to have criminalization of blackness. And so criminalization means that you might have been freed, but if you are loitering and you are unemployed or if you are -- if you have debt -- there's always different ways where families were broken up and it is primarily men that were targeted to work in chain gangs and to be incarcerated to put them back into a system of chattel slavery where their labor is free.

So it ended up with black women often being the heads of households in many of your family structures and institutions where now it is just a woman

that is providing for the family which is a host of economic problems.

So then during the great migration where you see a huge shift in black families from the south to industrialized areas in the north and east coast and west coast. There were no places where black people could live because segregation. And not just housing segregation, but also employment segregation where black people didn't have access to living wage job that would afford rents or mortgages. If they did, then you had institutionalized racism through red lining and only allowing black people to live or get mortgages in certain places.

So that relegated us to certain areas, low-income areas, that really created communities of poverty. And so we have combination of economic disenfranchisement and housings disenfranchisement which creates the conditions we see today. It was this historic very planned way of keeping black folks away from income earning and living in places with decent schools and housing accommodations.

And then fast forward to the financial crisis. In spite of that, black people have been able to thrive. And build. But the 2008 financial crisis

where we were targeted with subprime mortgages wiped out almost all of the gains that were made over 50 years of struggling against all odds in this country.

So we have a series of -- I don't want to say unfortunate events. Really, it has been planned to be exactly what it is. If something continues to happen in the same way across the country -- across the world, really -- then it is not an accident. We can point to the same patterns happening in Louisiana that we can point to in California. In Chicago that we can point to in Philadelphia. And especially, it has been harsh in places where you see energy in terms of black power and black resistance. So places like Oakland, Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia. Because I was just talking with someone yesterday about the -- the mass extermination in Philadelphia for the -- family. So this militarized approach and attack that happened with moms is also not new.

So I go through this whole history from the time we were property to the time that we are taking back property because I think it is important to highlight and bookmark very key points in our history because there's never been a time when we've had an opportunity to just fully thrive equally. When after

the new deal that Franklin Roosevelt gave these subsidies to individuals experiencing the trauma of the Great Depression, once again, black folks were left out of that equation. And loans were given to white families. And we just had to figure out how to make it. And there's never been a time in this country where we've had the opportunity and equity to just pull ourselves up.

We heard a lot. Just work harder or move if you can't afford Oakland. But the reality is there is no place in the United States of America where you can earn minimum wage and pay the average rents. There is no city in America. So there is nowhere you can go. And when you have been deprived of education and access to employment., it is a perfect storm.

So I hope that answers your questions in broad strokes. But it has been an uphill battle for us since day with. Unfortunately, with the end of certain eviction moratoria around the country, I'm concerned. And we are going to need a mass movement to address what is in front of us.

>>: That is an excellent segue. I wanted to talk with you about how we see COVID 19 building upon this legacy of oppression and

marginalization that in particular black folks across the country has experienced. You took us through that very terrible history, very quickly. And you mentioned sort of the system of enslavement and Jim Crow and legal discrimination. Red lining, 2008 foreclosure crisis. Militarized policing of our communities. The occupation of our neighborhoods by these militarized police forces.

So now on top of all that history and on top of all those layers -- as we hear a police siren going past my house right now -- I wanted to ask you about how the COVID 19 pandemic is affecting this system and the housing crisis that black folks have been experiencing for many years. And I also not only wanted to ask you about how the COVID 19 pandemic impacts the way we live but also what can communities do to respond to the time that we are in now?

>>: I think that is an amazing question. And I've been up at night thinking about how do we get through this. These are very challenging times where people are losing their employment if they had it in the first place. They don't have access to health care. I've been hearing for over a year now -- has it been a year -- I don't even know what time

we are in right now. But I've been hearing that COVID has laid bare the reality that our safety net is broken.

And I would argue that our safety net never existed for so many people in this country. We have been as African Americans, the begin knee pigs of the health care industry or just completely disregarded. Where our pain doesn't matter. I think we know the story of Henrietta Lacks where her cells were tested and how we've been lab rats like in the Tuskegee Institute for the medical industry when they want to test things. Or they feel that we are stronger. And black women have been the crash test dummies for the medical industry since the inception of the medical industry in this country through testing of not using painkillers for childbirth. So many things.

So COVID 19, because we are at the bottom of every negative indicator that exists from shorter lifespans and more health challenges, living in environment that is are heavily polluted. This was just another attack on our health systems, our personal lives. Because we -- the spikes in death and just people acquiring COVID was through the roof. Very early on. Which is why so friends in Oakland pushed for a black new deal because there was no relief for

us. We had to physically go to our governments and say what are you going to do about the huge numbers of COVID acquisition and death in the black community. And once again, it was not just Oakland. It was happening all over the country where we were seeing black people hit the hardest from this disease.

And I've been one of the things I said that has been keeping me up at night is how do we deal with it. I think capitalism and the way we practice it in this country that makes us competitive, it makes us individuals that primarily care about our own existence is what drives everything that we do, even unintentionally. We have become products that are -- we control our own lives as a proprietary thing. And I think the only thing we can do to combat that is work together as collectivism.

We need to figure out how are we feeding each other. How do we make sure the senior down the street has access to healthy food and do we even know if she is eating? Who is checking in on her?

If we with are going to have activity ins our communities, how do we do it collectively, look out for our collective wellbeing. What kind of collective housing can we create? We have got to

figure out how to create our own systems. Collectivism is the only way to combat individualism. And I think that is what we need to do to figure out how we pool our money. How do we pool our resources? And in every way, we have to bend collectively.

I think that is true in housing and every other way as well.

>>: So I'd love to ask you about that paradigm shift. I think you are right. We know that one of the central tenets of what we think of as an American identity is this idea of rugged individualism. And so there are all these things that sort of make up what we think of as an American identity. But this idea that one person can self-determine their future and be in charge of their future and they have to work harder than other folks. That is a very, very central idea to what we think of when we think about being American.

And I think, many folks would argue that that kind of hyper-singular focus on individualism has actually been detrimental to the people who don't benefit from our power structure.

So if we think about this idea of caring for the general welfare, I wanted to talk to you then about defunding the police. So we know that as we start

to think about new ways to exist in the United States, many communities have been calling for divesting from policing in order to shift resources to the social safety net which as you pointed out has never really existed for certain groups of people.

So I'm wondering how can we also start shifting resources away from evictions? And into supporting people being able to remain in their homes?

>>: I firmly believe that if you take something away that you have got to make sure there is a system to address the void. Because something will come in and fill the void. And I also believe that under racialized capitalism, black folks and people of color and poor white people will always be made the target of a system because you have to -- and this system of capitalism, you have to have something that is -- there is an exchange. There -- there is a financial exchange in capitalism. So there's no real incentive to end crime because if you -- so many industries. We know the prison industrial complex are full of millions of people. There are more black people incarcerated than in slavery. That is because there is a desire in this insatiable system to fund and fuel things with free labor.

In the prison system it is not necessarily free labor. It is incarcerated people might make a dollar an hour or 50-cents an hour. So it is still a system that is using our bodies to feed itself.

So the reality is there is -- why would our system, why would your governments, corporations, want to invest in completely getting rid of crime -- blue collar crime like crimes of poverty, because we haven't even scratched the surface on the crimes that are stealing entire neighborhoods through gentrification and speculation. Those are the crimes that I care about. I also care about the crimes of poverty where people are stealing in order to eat or even to create a lifestyle that is on par with this capitalist identity of having things. Of being able to floss and flex.

But the reality is die vestment in order to invest in communities which I think is essential especially in Oakland where our police budget is more than our parks and libraries, human services, department of race and equity. More than at least 6 departments combined. And the departments that actually are serving people, serving our residents.

So in situations like that, you have to look at how is it keeping us safer? If crime is up and there are fluctuations in crime, that are ticking up, then we have to look at what value are we getting for our money. I don't understand it right now they say there is a gang war in the district that I live in. And is there are no officers because people are upset that there's been this call to defund the police.

So there's an unofficial strike that appears to be happening by the police to punish people for saying their budgets need to be reallocated. There is no other department in my city that goes over budget at least \$30 million and still gets a raise the next year. I don't know what job that you all know about that you cannot achieve your requirements and still get a raise and still have a job.

So there's something, many things, that are flawed about our system of policing. But I also understand because this system creates people that are not whole. There is also going to be a need to keep people safe in their own neighborhoods. But once, again, that is why we say all violence is state violence because the state is what creates the disinvestment in our communities that has people in a constant state of

disease. There is mental trauma. There is economic trauma. There is educational trauma. That all comes from a disinvestment in our communities.

So if we have that proper investment, the disease would start to wane. But if we don't have that investment, the conditions continued to exist.

So we have to create a safety for our people living in these conditions and for years and so we need crime to not be happening. We need to have these crimes of poverty not happening. But in order to have them cease, then we need to invest so we end poverty. So it is this thing that needs to happen.

>>: Thank you. I appreciate that.

That really sort of builds on a conversation that we had at last week's Fit for a King discussion where several of our panelists really were able to discuss the links between gentrification and policing. And we did have a pretty in-depth conversation about this idea around crime in the first place.

Who were the folks that decided which actions would be criminalized? And how did those decisions start at a place that was looking to marginalize oppress people of color? So I think you

are right that that is a very important conversation to have and it is important to bring those knew answers to the discussion for sure.

I want to end by maybe combining two questions. At the very end, I want to bring things back to where we started which was talking about moms for housing work. So what I'd like to do is ask this. I would love you to share your thoughts on how policymakers, advocates, organizers can support the leadership of those who are most impacted by housing injustice, especially those living at multiple intersections such as black housed mothers. And then to wrap it up, I'd love to ask if you could share lessons you think other tenant movements should take away from the moms for housing's work in Oakland.

>>: Those are great questions.

I think when you are living at the space of multiple intersections then supports really matter. What I saw through this process is that moms need childcare. Moms need health care. And moms need meals. It is difficult when you are in all of these spaces and try to lead work that is so transformative. There are several days that I forgot to eat. If people hasn't brought me food -- I didn't think I was going

to eat today.

So these basic support systems I think are necessary. And that is why we are trying to create co-ops to support mothers in that way. So when we finish the construction and rehabilitation of mom's house, it will be a transitional home for unsheltered women and a resource center where we can offer these services to the moms. So we are working on building out co-ops to provide childcare for people. As we know, black women and Latino women have been hit hardest by COVID in terms of employment. We are trying to look at ways to create co-ops where people are creating new ways of generating income for themselves and their communities. And looking through those service employment positions that we may have lost.

Everybody still needs childcare. Everybody still needs fresh and healthy feed. If we work directly with farmers in our areas, work directly with other women and center their leadership and experiences, then what we need we'll create right near in our own city.

Ask them what they need. There is still rental assistance needed by some of the mothers living in substandard situations where we were fighting

their landlords.

We were trying to keep them from being evicted while other mothers were in situations where they were living in their cars. So there were a bunch of situations that some of our original members were fighting with. So ask the women in your communities what they need so they can be on the front lines demanding that we transform the system. And that not even demanding. There are things we can do ourselves.

And your second question was around just the specifics around moms and other places and organizing. How do we support organizing?

>>: Lessons that we can take away in other communities from the organizing and from the work that moms for housing has done and is doing in Oakland.

>>: Research. Research, research, research. Do your homework. Find out what the conditions are in your particular geography. There are different tools that you should use as an organizer. A way to communicate with the masses. To do mass turnout if necessary. Ways to contact the media. Have -- you have to constantly be checking in with each other and meeting regularly to be able to frame your story. Because the reality is that the real estate

industry is a powerful industry. They can influence media channels. So you have to have a way to get your message out there without relying on the traditional ways of information dissemination.

And we were constantly at work with people that were had ins with different networks because they were going to run with the dominant narrative that these black women were welfare queens and thieves. The press was picking up his talking point. They tried it. They were not ready for us. Oh, my goodness. They were like that one, get her out of her. They were trying to discredit me because I was, like, did you get those talking points from the same public relations firm that fought for the oil companies to dismantle community organizations in the Amazon. The ones who poisoned the rain forest.

So it is important to have your own media machine and ways to impact the existing ones. Research your neighborhoods. Research who owns what. It is difficult with LLCs. They have a lot of different owners. But don't let that stop you. If you need specific tools, you can check in with us in ace Oakland. We have been organizing for a long time. Understand, that we are against a behemoth and we have got to work

together and there are people who have done it before.

Use us as a resource. The community ready core get your security and safety team together. And taking care of yourself is really important for organizers to do. It is a lesson that I'm still learning. But self-care is critical. If you can, try to rest, drink a lot of water. Find a spiritual routine whatever it is. Find time to introspect and rest your mind. Because this is not a sprint. Organizing is a marathon. We have been fighting systems for a long time. But we have also been winning. We have to take our wins and lift those up and celebrate them because you are going to have a win and then you have to get right back to the fight.

>>: Thank you so much. We'll let you get back to the fight. But I did just want to thank you one more time for sharing your wisdom, your expertise. And your time with us. We very much appreciate you being here today. Thank you so much.

>>: It was my honor, thank you.

>>: Thank you again to Carroll Fife for joining us for that amazing conversation.

At this time, we will continue with our program. And I want to introduce myself again for

folks who may have joined us recently. I'm Cashauna Hill, executive director for LaFHAC.

I would now like to introduce the director of policy and communications Maxwell Ciardullo who will present our Mondale-Brooke awards.

>>: Thank you. So I'm sheer to present the Mondale-Brooke awards. This is named after senators Walter Mondale and Edward Brooke who worked diligently to make the fair housing act a reality and finally succeeded in 1968, a week after Dr. King's assassination. We present this award each year because though we know change the made by movements, we know it is greatly assisted by smart policymakers.

This is for policymakers who have distinguished themselves as champions of civil and housing rights.

Our first awardee this year is state Representative Mandie Landry whose district includes a number of uptown neighborhoods in New Orleans. First person in her family to graduate from college. Spent full-time in Washington DC where she worked for a U.S. congressman and a senator and for amnesty international.

As an attorney in Louisiana, she's

represented one of the last remaining abortion clinics in the state.

The particular efforts we want to lift up and honor her for today is her willingness to take up tough issues with the state legislature.

I usually have to track down representatives. But representative Landry sought me out after her election to figure out how she could address some of the housing issues she saw in her own district.

She was constantly reading articles, ask questions, and prodding me about ideas about legislation.

We were regular text buddies in short order.

And about a year ago in the before times, she agreed to carry a bill to bring our eviction laws to the same standards as our neighbors in Texas and Mississippi. And even Texas and Mississippi have better landlord and tenant laws than we did. COVID pushes pause on that bill. But many May she was willing to amend the bill to try to ensure renters had more time the pay the back rent.

Though the bill failed, she was a

skillful champion who has significantly elevated this issue and made it more likely we will have future wins.

So representative Landry thank you from all of us and please accept this award which I was able to give to you yesterday.

>>: Hi, everyone. Here is my award from yesterday. Nice to see you all. I was touched by this and this is a true story of how I got to housing issues about 2 years before I thought about running for office, one of my neighbors had problems with a home that was sold quickly. The rent went up \$700 a month. She had 5 children. I started researching Louisiana's laws. Of course, this must be wrong or illegal. I was floored that something like that could happen. I was excited when I won to see that there are advocates out there working on these issues.

It is going to be such a tough road as we saw this year getting even basic protections. But there is one thing I want to do before I leave the legislature is to at least have minimal protections, legal protections, for tenants in Louisiana. We are at the floor and we need to -- lower than the floor. We need to at last get to the floor. If there is one thing I want to do, it is that. You are a great

community. You have so many resources and so many people who want to help the people in our state. I hope we can do more in this year and use that federal money and put it to good use and smart use. I'm always here for the fight. I'm always here for educating. I think it is important that we keep doing this work that we know what we are doing is educating people and alerting to them to what is going on like yesterday.

So I'm glad to know you. I will continue to text you and pester you with questions. You and the rest of the community are such a good resource for us.

>>: Thank you. And please do continue pestering us. We look forward to working together some more.

>>: My mom said thank you, too.

>>: Our second awardee is State Representative Ted James of Baton Rouge. Representative James was also recently chosen by colleagues to serve as the next chair of the legislative black caucus. And he is a Baton Rouge native who began his political work fighting for affordable housing. As the governor's housing advisor. Secure \$25 million of investment into the Louisiana housing trust fund.

Since 2011, he has been recognized as a champion for criminal justice reform. And serves as chair of criminal justice committee. You might know him from a video that went viral this summer. Defending his resolution calling for a review of law enforcement procedures.

Like Mandie, Ted sought me out this year with a number of ideas. They will be saddled with a mark on credit history for years. He navigated two bills. And though neither passed, he kept this issue alive through a resolution that resulted in a very successful hearing yesterday. That will set us up to propose some new protections this spring.

So we thank you for your commitment to housing justice and please accept our award.

>>: I have my award as well. I've been riding around with it. I am parked outside Louisiana housing corporation following up on some discussions we had yesterday. So thank you all. Maxwell, Cashauna who has been my good friend for a long time. Legislators get a lot of credit because our names appear on bills. But you guys on the ground doing this work every single day are the real champions. Thank you for allowing us to work with you. These

issues are so critically important. Maxwell, even yesterday, it made me shift some focus and move one of my bills. I was to the limit. But I know that this issue is one that I don't want to abandon. And so for me, I'm freeing up space to continue on this fight. I think the hearing we had yesterday from the testimony and the research and information was so vitally important. I look forward to working with you all to continue to make sure that we are protecting renters and making sure these folks are protected from securing housing way past this pandemic.

You mentioned the folks that didn't have masks. That is a whole other discussion. But thank you guys. I am going to put this up on the wall. I look forward to working with you guys and hopefully, I can frame a bill right next to it once we get things passed in the legislature.

>>: Thank you. We appreciate that and look forward to working with you as well in the next session.

So thanks to all of our colleagues at the legislature who support housing rights. As we said, we build movements. That is how we get things done. But we also very much value and rely on the

partnership we have with some of our lawmakers who understand how important this is.

>>: Thank you, Maxwell. Also, just want to add my thanks and congratulations to the recipients of this year's Mondale-Brooke awards. The work that you do is so very important. We are so thankful to you, for your commitment to housing justice. It can certainly be an uphill fight and the Louisiana legislature as we know. But the two of you continue to do the right thing even when many of your colleagues are opposed. So we thank you for your courage and for your commitment and we look forward to continuing to fight with you.

I know that many of you are excited for who is coming up next. And that is representative Maxine Waters. Maxine Waters. While we wait for her to joins, I ask that folks go ahead and think about questions that you'd like to ask representative waters as she discusses the eviction crisis and the state of housing today.

You can also make sure to follow us on social media platforms Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. Keep an eye out for our action alert. If you have not already visited our web site at LFairhousing.org

please do that and get signed up for our e-mail list so you can receive those action alerts.

You can sign up to donate on a recurring basis. We'd love to have your ongoing support.

I did want to note that we have lots of messages of congratulations and thanks in the chat for both representative Landry and representative James. The community is very appreciative of the work you have done and that you continue to do.

So what we are going to do is just take a very, very short break. We are running just a lit minutes ahead of schedule. Which we are very excited about. But did not necessarily anticipate. So feel free to just take a moment and do whatever you need. But we will be coming right back to you with representative Maxine Waters. Maxine Waters.

Hello, again, everyone. This is Cashauna Hill. Executive director for LaFHAC. I think that may have been a shorter break than some of you were anticipating. But it looks like we do have the congresswoman joining us. So definitely would like to go ahead and move into that introduction because we know how very, very busy congresswoman waters is.

>>: If you can give us 2 minutes.

>>: We can do that. And so in the meantime, I will just, again, encourage everyone to please visit our web site LAfairhousing.org. Sign up for our action alerts. Sign up to be a recurring donor if you haven't done that. Also, again, want to encourage you to follow us across social media platforms. You can find us on Facebook, Twitter, as well as on Instagram.

And you can find lots of information about the works that we are doing about our policy priorities on our web site as well as all of those social media channels.

I do also want to note that we are always looking for testers to work with us. Many of you are familiar with our testing program where we train community members and send them out into the housing management to help us determine whether and how housing discrimination is occurring in our communities across the state. If that is something you are interesting in, you can sign up to be a tester at our web site [LA fair housing.ORG](http://LAfairhousing.ORG). We can never have too many folks who are interested in joining the fight for housing justice in this way. We would love to have you work with us if that is something that you are interested in.

Again, you can find more information about the organization and about testing opportunities at LA fair housing.ORG. Or if you are interested in becoming a tester you can give us a call at (504)717-4257.

If you know anyone who has experienced housings discrimination and would like to speak with someone about that. (504)596-2100.

And with that, I will go ahead and begin the introduction of our esteemed afternoon keynote speaker.

Thank you for joining us. I am executive director for the LaFHAC. I am honored to introduce to you today representative Maxine Waters. Congressman waters is considered to be one of the most powerful women in American politics today. She has gained a representation as a fearless and outspoken advocate for women, children, people of color, and the poor.

Congresswoman Waters was elected in November 2018 to her 15th term in the U.S. house of representatives with more than 70 percent of the vote in the 43rd Congressional district of California. Congresswoman waters made history as the first woman

and first African American chair of the influential house financial services committee. Oversees all component of nation's housing. Banking, insurance, research, real estate. And this role representative waters stayed true to form and worked tirelessly to hold the previous administration accountable for the way it is policies and inaction perpetuated harm.

Member of Congressional progressive caucus and member and past chair of the Congressional black caucus. Throughout her more than 40 years of public service, she has been on the cutting edge tackling difficult and controvert issues. She has combined strong legislative and public policy records and high visibility with deep commitment to grass root organizing. Those of us in New Orleans appreciate that -- that she worked diligently after Hurricane Katrina to insure a right to return and one for one placing of public housing units.

Congresswoman.

>>: There. That should do it.

Thank you. Well, first of all, let me thank you for that very generous introduction. I'm so pleased to be with you this morning. I'm very pleased to join the LaFHAC for this year's virtual Fit for a

King event. And thanks to you Cashauna Hill for both that introduction and your great leadership to ensure fair housing throughout the state of Louisiana.

The work of the Louisiana Fair Housing Action Center and fair housing organizations across the country is now more important than ever. As we work to address housing disparities during the COVID pandemic. And as we begin to rebuild from the damage that was caused by the last administration.

At the onset of the pandemic, we saw reports of housing-related sexual harassment increase by 300 percent. In some communities in Asian American and immigrant communities have faced increased incidents of housing related hate crimes.

So as chairwoman of the financial services committee, I fought to secure 12.4 billion in critical housing funds in the cares act for the department of housing and urban development including funding for fair housing programs.

I also fought to secure eviction and foreclosure protections and forbearance relief for homeowners with federally backed mortgages.

Time and time again, we have seen in the aftermath of disasters and economic downturns like

those of Hurricane Katrina and the 2008 great recession, federal relief funding is often spent in way that is discriminate against people of color and other protected classes of people. I have been working around the clock to ensure there is an equitable response to COVID 19 pandemic crisis. Along with my democratic colleagues on the committee recognize the importance of fair housing infrastructure.

COVID 19 has continued to spread across the country, many individuals and families, especially in lower income communities and communities of color are experiencing the most damaging effects to both their health and financial stability. The national death toll is expected to reach 500,000 in the next month with many still grappling with unemployment and wage loss.

Nationally, nearly 20 percent of renters are unable to pay their rent while more than 8 million homeowners have reported they are behind on mortgages. In Louisiana, these numbers are even more troubling with over 1/3 of all households estimate today be struggling to make housing payments in August.

We know that these hardships are not evenly across racial lines as a result of the ongoing

legacy of housing discrimination and segregation in the United States. We have seen formerly red lined areas across the country experience disproportionate raid of COVID 19 infections. Debt accumulation as well as increased eviction pressures.

As of June 5, black residents in New Orleans parish accounted if 77 percent of 492, COVID 19 deaths. Despite representing 60 percent of the population. This is compared to a less than 20 percent death rate for white residents who make up 35 percent of the population.

In September of 2020, women of color experienced the greatest job losses due to ongoing economic shock of COVID 19. We know that prior to the current pandemic, black and Latin households, especially women headed households were more than likely than anybody else to be subject to evictions. In the wake of these current crises, these are the same households that stand to face the most acute housing instability.

Since the onset of the crisis, I've fought for the creation of 100 billion emergency rental assistance funds. To support families and individuals who are facing months of back rent.

They are unable to pay through no fault of their own. So I am very pleased that in the bipartisan legislative package, we did at least pass into law \$25 billion in emergency rental assistance and we extended the eviction moratorium through the end of January. I applaud organizations like yours for your advocacy in helping us secure these critical funds. But that bill must only be the first step.

I'm pleased that President Biden took executive action during his first week in office to extend the eviction moratorium through the end of march and called on federal agencies to extend the eviction moratorium -- congress provides more emergency rental assistance funds along with additional assistance to lower- and middle-income homeowners.

In addition, executive actions COVID 19 related items, I am very pleased to see President Biden sign an executive moratorium on Thursday calling on the secretary of housing and urban development to redress our nation's history of discriminatory housing policies and practices.

This is a major step in the work we have ahead of us to strengthen our fair housing laws and re-instate the regulations, implementing the fair

housing act that were dismantled by the Trump administration such as the affirmatively furthering fair housing and disparate impact rules.

As chairwoman of the financial services committee, I have fought hard to defend fair housing and restore these protections over the last 4 years, I along with members of the committee have introduced legislation to make housing opportunities fair, more equitable, such as the restoring fair housing protections eliminated by HUD act of 2018. And the housing fairness act of 202, the latter of which passed the financial services committee in early 2020. So I look forward to continuing to push this important work forward in the 117th congress. And I'd like to that I think the Louisiana Fair Housing Action Center staff and leadership for your tireless work and keeping my staff up to speed on the challenges you and your communities face during these difficult times.

So I know that you are going to be pleased to know that Mar Shah Fudge was appointed by the president of the United States of America to be the HUD secretary to oversee all of this housing policy. And to carry out and support the kind of legislation that we have all been working on for far too long.

So I believe that her confirmation hearing is today. I feel very confident that she is going to be confirmed by the senate and that she will be the HUD secretary.

And so many of the issues again that we have been working on, we will have a chance to get them passed out of my committee onto the senate and where you know if there is a tie in the senate, Kamala Harris will break the tie because she will be the vice president of the senate as the vice president of the United States of America.

And so I'm up, I'm feeling very good despite all of the difficulties we have been doing through. The invasion on our capitol and the right wingers, the white supremacists, the keepers, the proud boys, all of these terrorist groups that were in town and still lingering around our country are focused on destroying our democracy and so called taking back their government.

But we are going to move forward with this president and with this vice president and not only correct some of the damage that has been done by Trump. But we are going to move forward with a futuristic agenda taking a look at all of those areas that have

been lacking in support. And I tell you fair housing is at the top of the agenda. And in the president's initiative, he charged HUD with getting about the business of getting rid of racial disparities and creating equity for all of those that have been left out and particularly people of color.

So I thank you and I look forward to working with you. And we'll talk some time about what happened I think in the St. Bernard parish some time ago where they had the relatives who were hooked into the kind of policy that would protect them in getting the housing that was certainly excluded to people of color from having.

So here we are. We are on our way. And thank you so very much for having me.

>>: Thank you very much for joining us. We know that you are busy beyond belief. I don't know how much time you have. We've had several questions come through. Are you able to answer one or two questions?

>>: That is all right. Thank you.

>>: We'll pose just a couple to you. And then let you go.

We've got two here in the chat box.

The first question is how can everyday people advocate for fair housing and what actions can we take to address discriminatory housing policies?

>>: First of all, let me thank you again for the advocacy that you have made so helpful to me and my committee getting public policy that makes good sense for all of the people.

But let me say this, to your elected officials, make it a priority. Keep it on their radar screen. Talk about it on radio talk shows. Write editorials about it. Keep it as an issue that has to be dealt with. And let's not back down from it. You know what happens when we talk about fair housing and talk about getting rid of discrimination. They say, they are playing the race card. Don't let that get in the way of your advocacy.

If they say that, turn a blind eye to it. Don't pay attention to it. Have a strong voice on advocacy. Make it at the top of your priorities. And that will help an awful lot. The average person can do that. Talk abet. Keep it on the radar screen.

>>: Thank you very much.

And just a last quick question. From one of our board members who is mentioning that she is

so very excited that you are here and in yaw of everything that you have done.

But the question is what are your thoughts about how jurisdictions can fight through legislation and advocacy the displacement of gentrification where property values rise rapidly and price out renters who historically lived in the community.

>>: This is a good question because gentrification is happening all over the country in various ways. And in my own district, the City of Inglewood has brought in all of these big-time sports teams. The rams and chargers. And of course there is some jobs that are available, particularly at the beginning of construction. But often times, these jobs are limited and they are not jobs that will last for a long period of time.

So economic argument is always made for those who are doing the development who are coming into the communities. And we have to get in front of the development and the construction. Whenever the city councils are giving permission to the developers to come into the community and deal with market rate housing and they are not at all thinking about

low-income housing and what is going to happen to the displacement, you have to get involved right then. Don't let the development start.

And you get involved the minute it emerges in the city councils. And you say to your city council members, what you have to do if you are going to advance any kind of housing, first of all, you've got to make sure that affordable housing is included in the plan. That is number one.

And number two, not only is it included in the plan, but that has to start even before your development of your whatever your development project is. Or at the same time. We are not going to have you say, well, yes, we'll include it and so after we get the development up, a year from now, we -- no. We want it in the plan from the beginning. And if it is not in the plan from the beginning, if you are intent on running over our communities, we are going to run a campaign against you. Because you are our representatives. You are the ones that are supposed to look out for us.

Our senior citizens don't have increased income to find market rate apartments. They have nowhere to go. And so we have to look out not only

for the seniors, but for low-income folks who have been in these communities for years often times. And they only can afford what they can afford. And what happens is if they don't own the place, the owners see all of this development and they know that the communities are becoming more likable and people want to move in, they are going to raise the rents. And our seniors and low-income families won't have any more rent to be able to go out and find a place someplace else.

So you have to get tough. It lies with the local elected officials. City council members who give permission to the developers to develop many the communities. Fight them.

>>: Thank you, congresswoman waters. That is a wonderful response. Brings home the importance of the work that we do on this community on the local level as well. I appreciate you making sure that folks understand it is not just about the federal government. We have to work at all levels.

I want to thank you one more time on behalf of the staff and board of LaFHAC. We are so honored that you chose to share your expertise and insight with us today.

On a personal note and I know I'm not

the only one who feels this way. I grew up admiring your courage and your fierce commitment to justice. I have come to know that sometimes using our voice comes with a cost. I want to thank you for continuing to use your voice even though it may have been lonely or difficult or terrifying. Despite the fear, the loneliness or the difficulty, you have shown a commitment to showing truth to power that has never wavered.

I thank you for that and all the people fight alongside you. And all of us coming behind you, you have never let us down. We will not let you down. We will continue to learn from your example.

>>: You are too generous. You are just too supportive. And the way that you have just articulated that, that does my heart well. Thank you so much for the confidence that you are showing in me. And I, too, will never let you down.

>>: We know you won't. You never have. Thank you, thank you. Take care.

I know that you all are just as full and as encouraged as I am by the wisdom and the incite that congresswoman waters has shared with us and has continued to share with us for so many years.

I hope that we can carry that energy into the next part of our day. Because I know that it will be just as uplifting.

I'd like to now take a moment to introduce Dance for Social Change. Dancing grounds is a multigenerational arts organization that brings inclusive and accessible dance programs to New Orleans residents of all ages. With youth dance companies, summer camps, dancing grounds creates safe and celebratory spaces in which the lived experiences of youth are truly valued and unique creative talents are recognized, developed and celebrated.

Also hosts the most comprehensive adult dance program in the city. Since 2012, dancing grounds has become a driving force for arts and education in New Orleans and a hub for the local dance community serving over 3,000 youth, 5,000 adults, and countless audience members.

Dancing grounds work is guided by a set of core values. Equity, racial justice, integrity, relationships, learning, collaboration, abundance, and joy.

With that, we hope that you will be enjoy this performance by Dance for Social Change.

Thank you.

>>: Hi everyone. I am the teen program manager for dancing grounds. I am excited to introduce to you soul nostalgia, a film created by the Dance for Social Change youth. This film you are going to see is about gentrification, about the effects of displacement and how it is so related to what we are still seeing happen today.

In the midst of pandemic, you'll hear stories. I hope you enjoy. And be on the lookout for their film coming 2021. You can check out dancing grounds.ORG to keep updated.

>>: Welcome, we are here to mourn the death of a city that lingers in its essence. Two sweet smells of our grandmother's cooking has begun to produce a stench. The gumbo has blackened and spoiled. Walk into funeral programs. Tiers drip like beads hanging on St. Charles trees. You thought this was a celebration. Well you will feast on the sorrows of the displaced. Lick your fingers clean of their resilience and wash it down with the waters that flooded their homes.

As you move in, they see their city lowered into the ground. For them, the does not fade.

It is ever lasting.

Of all the people who have died of COVID 19 in Louisiana, 7 out of 10 are African American. Discriminatory powers -- let me be crystal clear, we do not think people of color are genetically predisposed to gets COVID 19. But they are seriously predisposed of getting COVID 19.

What started out as a natural disaster became a manmade disaster because we came to understand that for too long been plagued by structural inequalities that left too many people, especially poor people, especially people of color, without good jobs or affordable health care or decent housing.

For residents of African American neighborhoods such as the lower 9th ward it was a symbol of something else. Discrimination.

Federal tax dollars sent in the name of recovery that have created one of the largest racial disparities that we've had in the history of not just New Orleans but the gulf region. So it is not a situation of figuring out what is the best way to go forward, the problem that we have is that there's tension and conflict in the recovery planning.

Predominantly African American

communities. We are living on the front lines of both the cause -- and because we love the place we call home and New Orleans and the surrounding area. We are fighting for changes ...

Welcome to my home. This place that I call my home. This place, this is my place. More like our place. We were born here. We cherished it here. We love here. This is the city that we want to hold close. This is the city that we love. So hear the jazz, feel the sun, make the music want to do what you want to do. This is the city that we love. This is the city that we cherish. This is our place. This is my place. We want to hold this city until it is blown away. This is the city I love and will continue to love until I am in the dirt with it and come back as part of it. This is my place. This is our place. We want to hold onto this city and cherish it. But how can you hold onto something when it is blowing away?

>>: My home is what I know. Such a -- I am faced with today. Am I will not be displaced by invaders who say they want to change? But they don't know my soul. They say I am inferior. But really, I'm superior. Profiting from our -- but they can never feel the same. Where has it gone. Show me where has

it gone. Where is my home? Where is my peace? Where is my soul inside of me? Where has it gone? Tell me where has I gone.

>>: This place, this place, displace, this place. This place is mine. This place is mine. This place is mine. This place is mine. This place. This place is mine. Mine. Mine. Mine. Mine. This place.

>>: This place.
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>>: Mine.

>>: What a wonderful performance. I want to thank Dance for Social Change for sharing that excerpt with us. Want to make sure that you all know that what you saw was an excerpt from a piece by Dance for Social Change. You can see the full piece on their web site. It was an excerpt from a piece called Solastalgia. We will share a link for the web site if the chat.

With that, I would like to bring back LaFHAC's director of policy and communications Maxwell Ciardullo to introduce our closing panel. Before we do that, I want to say that this is a group that we knew could follow Carroll Fife and Congresswoman Maxine Waters and all the amazing things that you have seen and heard today.

We are excited to bring this group of legendary organizers to you all.

>>: Thank you.

I'm the director of policy and communications here. And I am very excited today to

bring 3 panelists to come share their big brains with you. And our panel today is do we need evictions transformative housing justice organizing in a pandemic.

Your panelists today are Sarah Carthen Watson who is associate counsel in Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Before this project her work was focused on challenging the discriminatory effects of nuisance and crime free ordinances against people of color, victims of domestic violence and low-income communities.

Our second panelist is Tara Raghuvver who is founding director of KC tenants in Kansas City.

Australian born Indian American immigrant who came to the U.S. with her family in 1995. Leader in the movement to cancel rent and mortgaging during COVID and knows all the coolest members of congress.

And our last panelist is Frank Southall. He is the lead organizer and community engagement coordinator at JPNSI. Organizing outreach strategies to empower to hold slum lords accountable.

He is also a member and architect of the New Orleans renters rights assembly. He has been

involved in racial and housing justice organizing for nearly 20 years and still manages to be one of the most up beat and positive people I know.

So I'm just going to give a brief overview and then get right into this.

We are also going to be doing polls throughout. So be sure to look for those and answer those as they pop up.

So the emphasis for this panel was relatively obvious to us and likely you joining us. The pandemic has taken a devastating toll on millions of families that were already housing insecure before March of 2020. Evictions have always been a housing and public health crisis. Now they spiraled out of control with 18 million households saying they have little to no confidence they will be able to make rent.

Throughout the pandemic we haven't seen any local, state, federal government treat this like the crisis it is. Do we need evictions is an intentionally provocative question. For many of us COVID has created an opportunity to reframe and think about how we think about -- how we got here, the solutions we need to keep us all in our homes and how everyone can take action for justice.

So as we talk, if questions come up, please put those in the Q and A box, rather than the chat. And feel free to put them in as they come up throughout.

So we are going to start with a quick audience poll. Related to our topic here. Do we need evictions during a pandemic?

So I'm going to start here. Sarah, I'm going to have you kick us off.

You came to eviction work through the affirmatively furthering fair housing process. And I'll let you explain that a little bit. But can you explain how those things are connected and how landlord tenant laws are a fair housing issue?

>>: Absolutely. So for those who don't know, the affirmatively -- fair housing requirement tells HUD and all people, all people who receive funds from HUD that they have to do more than just prohibit discrimination. They have to take steps to actively eradicate. As part of that process jurisdictions that receive certain types of HUD funds have to complete a fair housing audit. Examining barriers to housing. Race, sex, disability, etc. And figure out ways they can take active steps to address

those barriers. A lot of jurisdictions contract to organizations that have more fair housing expertise. As we have been doing from states to regions to cities, one thing we saw was that landlord tenant laws were significant barrier to people of color who will renting who are tenants.

In many places homeowner ship is a tool almost exclusively for white families. So comprised of communities of color, households of color. These are direct contributors for people of color being pushed out of housing.

Allowing source of income discrimination, permanently so they were unable to get housing somewhere else because of that eviction on their records. Nuisance ordinances that are enforced against communities of color.

In addition to telling jurisdictions you need to build affordable housing; we saw that a lot of what was expecting their housing issues for protecting -- were landlord tenant laws. We make recommendations.

>>: Tara, I'm going to come to you next. And then Frank.

So you are in Kansas City. Frank in New

Orleans. How have you seen race as a factor in this eviction crisis where you are at?

>>: Thank you so much for having me. It is wonderful and an honor to be a part of this panel. I've had the opportunity to work with Sarah and Frank before and can confirm they are some of the most brilliant organizers, thinkers, lawyers in the country. It is my pleasure to be part of this movement with them. Thank you for having me here. This program is beautiful and I can't believe you have us following Maxine Waters.

So the first thing I want to say in grounding is it is Thursday and Thursday in Jackson County, Missouri is eviction day. I'm wearing my action outfit now. We have a court disruption that is going to start when afternoon courts reopen. So I want to bring that energy into this space. I'm coming here with an emphatic no eviction should not be permitted during the pandemic or otherwise. I'll tell you more about that.

In terms of racial impact, I've been studying evictions in Kansas City. I know all at the address level is that for a black family in Kansas City, you are 18 times more likely to be evicted than a white

family who earns the same amount of money on the west side of town.

So Kansas City looks very similar to a lot of other mid size Midwestern cities. Has a similar history of racial segregation and red lining. Kansas City was one of the birthplaces of tactics like red lining and racially restricted covenants.

JC Nicholls invented some of these practices and spread them across the country. He is one of the many factors that contributes to this reality today where on the east side of town where most of the black residents of Kansas City live, there is the remarkably higher eviction rate and of course many of us on this know that it is not just black communities and people, it is specifically black women. That plays out here in Kansas City as well.

>>: I think we might have poll results here. So I'll let you jump in Frank. It does seem like the majority of us do not believe we need evictions during a pandemic.

>>: It definitely, there should be no evictions during this pandemic. I want to say thank you for having me. It is a pleasure and honor to be on this panel. I echo what Tara said about following

up with representative Waters and Carroll.

So the intersection of race and housing is as old as this country's existence. The dispossession of land of indigenous people. So we can't have a conversation about evictions without talking about race. We know New Orleans we see red lining. We know that the highest rates of evictions are occurring in neighborhoods who were red lined become back in the day. Often times, I think people tend to go, well, where people are being evicted are in middle class and upwardly mobile neighborhoods. That is not true. The legacy intersection of gender balance of white supremacy, and of keeping working class people downplays itself out when it comes to housing.

So we see that locally in displacement of renters during the pandemic who are forced to double up. Where you see public transportation being forced into suburbs. That impacts how people are getting vaccines. If you live in suburban area, your access to a pharmacy or hospital is slim. We know how that impacts people catching COVID. If you have multigenerational households where you have younger people working, elders who are retired or can't work,

then you know what the story is.

We have seen increased rates of COVID in black and latin X households in particular in other working-class households in part due to.

As our service economies come back, we see increase in rates popping up. Bourbon St., the people working inside who are in kitchens tend to be black folks. And it is a major impact. We know before pandemic our own research via eviction -- will be going to eviction court and monitoring evictions. We know 82 percent of all tenants are black folks in general. Despite whole black folks make up about 50 percent of the population in New Orleans.

That is one of the reasons we need to stop all evictions. We need rental assistance. We need to stop all evictions until the pandemic ends.

>>: Thanks Frank.

I am going to move to our second question. Thinking about solutions. And the solutions that we actually need at the local, state, federal level which I think are likely to be different from the ones we have been given so far. I am interested in strategies and tactics. What have you seen make progress toward these goals?

We are going to do a second poll question and ask the audience what they want to see as solutions to our current housing crisis. So we can get that up and you can pick one or two different here.

Take a minute and do that real quick.

Tara, why don't you start.

>>: I appreciate the question. I think one of the ultimate curses of racial capitalism and the ways it has influenced housing and land policies it is limits our ability to dream of a different world. It is a crisis of imagination fundamentally facing at local level and federal level when it comes to policy.

So at the local level we are having these conversations right now in Kansas City as our unhoused population is growing, it was already high. We had about 10,000 people living on the streets before the pandemic. And of course, several thousand more in hotels, motels, doubling up, living in cars, other forms of homelessness. Those numbers have skyrocketed in the last several months. Local elected officials have taking seriously the question of what we do. What are the solutions?

Unfortunately, their imagination is limited. That sort of crisis of imagination is playing

out at the local level. What they are proposing is things like warming shelters. Places where people with go warm up if they are living on the street. What they propose is hotels. Temporary shelters. I don't have an issue with hotels as a general thought. It does allow people to quarantine safely at the time like this. Here is my issue. They propose hotels. Buying floors. And removing the beds and putting cots in instead.

So imagination is limited. And the design of the policies that exist today are extremely cruel. When you ask me and us what the solution looks like at the local level is putting people in homes. There are vacant properties across the city. There are city owned buildings that can be converted to permanent shelters. Start there and wrap around services, leveraging some of the service infrastructure we have here.

Ultimately, what we are doing with these moratorium policies, I should finish -- it doesn't matter how long we have an eviction moratorium if we don't cancel rents, mortgages, and rental debt. As long as we are extending the moratoriums and national, state, local level, we are kicking a can down

the road. I am seeing eviction judgments for \$2,000, \$10,000, \$12,000. That is many that people will not ever be able to pay back. In Missouri, your wages can be garnished. People who are already in the worst financial period of their life, maybe are out of work and have been for months, if they get more stably employed again, their wages will be garnished until they pay down this debt that they got a judgment for.

It is spelling financial ruin for that family. And that is intergenerational poverty in the making.

This requires us to take seriously the fact that workers, tenants across the country did not create the conditions of this pandemic or the economic crisis. We should alleviate the burden they have to pay rent or a mortgage. We should erase all of the rental debt that has accrued until this point.

The way we get there is organizing.

I'll let someone else jump in.

>>: Thank you. I want to turn to you to maybe touch a little bit on tactics. I know -- had some not quite coordinated by similar actions.

>>: I think the tactics is interesting piece. We did an action without even

communicating with each other on the same day back in July. Which we both shut down eviction court. Kansas still carrying the torch boldly keeping it short down. It is really inspiring. I know talking about what does action like that look like.

But ultimately one of the things we are starting to of in addition to what Tara mentioned around canceling rent, creating a comprehensive eviction moratorium to at least December 2021 at the very minimum. We also need to get thinking about legal representation. What does it look like for tenants that we don't get an eviction moratorium? We need right to counsel as a piece. Most of our tenants have, they don't have access to have a lawyer come to court.

We have amazing legal aid, southeast Louisiana legal services. And there is just too many people. So we need to equip our city were more tenant lawyers. One of the tactics we are examining right now. But ultimately, it has to be about canceling rent for small and medium sized landlords. That is what it's got to be.

>>: Thank you.

And Sarah, you are in a unique position in that you are working locally, but also part of this

national organization. So I'm interested to hear your perspective as well about what you see we need on those multiple different levels.

>>: I apologize, my internet is going in and out. So I turned my video off.

We have some wild wind in DC that is shaking my building right now. Absolutely need to cancel rent. There is no way people are going to be able to pay down what they owe. It is impossible. I also echo that right to council eviction proceedings. The eviction moratorium requires tenants to submit these declarations that most average people could not fill out without the assistance of a lawyer.

So one of the things we have done is we distribute some of the funds we receive to do eviction work as a national organization and recognize that local lawyers are doing it better. So we redistributed those funds to train pro bono lawyers on the ground to assist tenants to provide training on how to evaluate -- so we are going to get into this later, but it has required us to shift our approach.

We also know that federal legislation is incredibly important. Now that we have a friendly administration, I think we will be taking a lot of steps

to ensure comprehensive eviction moratorium is extended. Also working with Tara and other organizers to push for canceling rent.

>>: I'm just going to take a point of privilege.

Tara, would you jump on for a quick second and do a short explanation of what the canceling rent and mortgages look like. I think people here cancel rent first and we don't talk about the full picture of how it protects a lot of people.

>>: I feel like I need to write a tweet on this and pin it to my profile. Inevitably in comments, what about the landlords? What about property owners? What about the small owners trying to make it work?

We introduced this bill in April. We are going to reintroduce it in a couple weeks. It cancels rent and mortgage payments. That part is pretty self-explanatory. It cancels the obligation to pay rent or mortgage. The second part is that there is a relief fund that is available to small property owners to apply and get relief because of lost rental income.

But here is the critical difference

between that relief fund and what exists now through rental. That relief fund comes with a condition. We would secure critical tenant protections that are not available at the federal level. To us, that distinction is huge. The rental system that representative waters has fought for is a critical harm reduction measure. But it needs to be amended to include this conditions so that landlords don't just accept this money from tenants and turn around next month and evict them or turn around and increase the rent.

If we are going to give a bailout to an industry, let's tie some strings to it so we can do multiple things at once and enshrine into federal law some of the protections we've needed for so long like good cause evictions and rent controls.

The last part of the bill that I am excited about, especially living in a place like Kansas City, Missouri that was decimated by the 2008 crash and then the real estate speculation. The last part of the rent and mortgage cancelation act is a component about an affordable housing acquisition fund. That would give the federal government the first right to intervene and buy out properties falling into

foreclosure. So the corporate speculators swooping can't swoop in and scoop them up before the rest of us. And the federal government could turn those properties back over the communities. And that would be the seedlings of a much larger social housing program where housing is controlled off of the private market and it is not available for speculation. I am optimistic for every piece of that.

And the piece we are adding in is a complete rental debt forgiveness piece.

>>: Thank you for laying that out. And I'll say that I think -- the fair housing action center is signed on and support of that. But what it means when we don't take those big steps is, we spend so much time going back and trying to correct everything piece by piece. So we are running around right now trying to work with every local jurisdiction and state receiving rental assistance funds trying to get the minimal protections in there. So when they bail landlords out, they include some protections for renters in addition.

We shouldn't have to do that jurisdiction by jurisdiction.

Similarly, the award we gave to state

representative Ted James for his work if trying to ensure that people's rent debt and evictions don't follow them around for 7 years after this pandemic and keep them out of homes, out of jobs, that wouldn't be relevant if we canceled the debt. And if we just made sure people could stay in their homes.

There are easier ways to go about this.