



Library podcast

Advancing Racial Equity & Engaging the Community's Voice: Reverend Starsky Wilson

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[00:00:43] I wanted to thank tonight the collective impact forum for bringing this event as part of their conference as well as FSG. It is our pleasure to have Reverend Starsky Wilson here tonight to speak about his experiences with the Ferguson Commission and the Deaconess foundation and to be in a conversation that is so important to us on advancing racial equity and engaging community voices. And we also want to thank Karen touring from social justice NW for joining him in this important discussion. Thank you so much I also want to say a special thank you to the Seattle Public Library Foundation that makes so many of our free library programs possible. Now I want to pass this over to Sherry Brady from collective impact forum to introduce our special guests. Thank you.

[00:01:40] Good evening and thank you for joining us this aft this evening. I guess it is right. It's still sunny out. That doesn't happen in D.C. where I'm from I'm like what's going on at the time. So I'm a little confused.

[00:01:49] I'm Sherry Brady from the Aspen Institute from the Forum for Community Solutions and I am delighted to introduce our guests tonight.

[00:01:56] This event is brought to you as was said by the Seattle Public Library and the collective impact forum. I represent the collective impact forum which is a project of that of the Aspen Institute and FSG to really think about how you provide resources and a community platform for those using the collective impact approach to work on complex social issues ranging from homelessness to ending homelessness to supporting veterans to building sustainable career pathways for opportunity youth the world today is really filled with deeply complex problems that seem insurmountable when you work with them. When you look at them on your own but by working together we can really work to overcome them. This includes having discussions like the important one we're having tonight and really thinking about why

it's important to talk about racial equity and why it's important to authentically engage communities and working toward equitable change for their lives. I am honored to welcome and introduce our guest Reverend Starsky Wilson and Karen Terry. We'll be discussing what we can learn from what happened in Missouri in Ferguson Missouri following the tragic death of Michael Brown Junior in 2014.

[00:02:58] Thank you both for joining us so Reverend Olson and can you come up and then I'll just give you a little bit of background on the both of them.

[00:03:10] Reverend Wilson is a pastor philanthropist and activist who serves as president and CEO of the Deaconess Foundation. Pastor of St. John's Church the beloved community and co-chair of the Ferguson Commission the Deaconess Foundation is a faith based grant making organization devoted to making child well-being a civic priority in the St. Louis East region through St. John's Church. Reverend Wilson has led congregational activism on a myriad of issues including youth violence prevention Medicaid prevent Medicaid expansion public school accreditation voter mobilization capping payday lending and raising the minimum wage in 2014 Missouri Governor Jay Nixon appointed Reverend Wilson to co-chair the Ferguson Commission which was charged to study the underlying conditions and make public policy recommendations to help the region through issues exposed by the death of Michael Brown Junior in September of 2015. The commission released the groundbreaking report forward through Ferguson a path toward racial equity calling for sweeping changes in policy in policing the courts Chartwell being an economic mobility. Along with us is Karen touring we'll be moderating tonight's discussion. Karen is senior project manager for social justice for Northwest here in Seattle. Social Justice Fund Northwest is a foundation that supports social justice organizing in five states in the northwest region. Her background as an organizer cultural worker and consultant for nonprofit arts and social justice organizations is born out of her passion for connecting people to ideas and action. Her work includes base building and collaboration on media justice and media policy initiatives. Through her work on the ground and on the boards of national media advocacy organizations including the media and democracy the excuse me including the media and democracy coalition and the Alliance for Community Media in Washington D.C. along with reclaim the media here in Seattle. She also serves as consulting producer for Seattle's Langston Hughes African-American Film Festival and is the founder of the Gary international Black Film Festival in her hometown of Gary Indiana. Before I turn this over to Karen to kick off the discussion please join me in giving them a warm welcome.

[00:05:24] It is so nice. First of all there are a lot of friendly faces in this audience. Reverend Wilson a lot of organizers a lot of people that have been doing really really amazing work on the ground. And I just want to acknowledge you know your presence here that you're in this building and I acknowledge also the ground on which we stand which is do homage land. And we stand on the shoulders of many many great people who was strong enough to live and strong enough to survive and we're really really grateful to be in this space having this

conversation tonight. So thank you all for being here. And let's thank our ancestors for making it possible for us to be here tonight.

[00:06:08] I'm sure this is some pretty powerful images.

[00:06:19] And I think it's a good place for us to start with our history because that is how we patterned ourselves for the future. So why don't you. Bring us to this moment.

[00:06:31] Thank you and thank you for the opportunity to share to give my appreciation to the collective impact formed to the Seattle Public Library and to each and every one of you for being here. I got it they can't because you don't know me so you got to be here because of her. So. So thank you very much. We come to this moment and to this conversation from St. Lewis.

[00:06:54] And as we said history I don't know how I would go all the way here but I'll go all the way here.

[00:06:59] 1917 East St. Lewis race riots a large 1917 1970. All right here we go. Saint Lewis race riots. Lead to a mass exodus of African-Americans from East St. Louis Illinois into St. Lewis. That also begins the trend that we see. Generation after generation of white flight from the city of St. Lewis into areas that are north and ultimately west of St. Louis City. That kind of action if you will from the mass responses to African-Americans in St. Lewis led also to massacres of many African-Americans in their flight into St. Lewis. I say this because around the same time those folks who are coming into St. Lewis and those who need to find themselves need to find a space in the place that leads to the establishment of the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Lewis to help them to adjust to the community. But it also leads to a unique policy happening.

[00:08:02] We begin to have restrictive covenants made in neighborhoods by people who decide I will not damage this neighborhood by selling my house to one of those African-Americans.

[00:08:14] So I will enter into a relationship with my neighbors and say we will venture to embed within our deeds that these homes cannot be sold to those folks.

[00:08:25] That sounds familiar. Yeah. We know about restrictive covenants.

[00:08:29] Yet that's critically important because once we get to Ferguson and begin to talk about the issues that we see in this small hamlet of twenty one thousand people within a metropolitan area of 2.8 million people those same covenants were used to set up neighborhoods outside of the city of St. Lewis but the boundaries began to be used to establish municipalities charter communities that could then also restrict people from being in these places. The St. Louis metropolitan area has 91 municipalities and 2.8 million people in

those 91 municipalities. There are 80 municipal courts. There are 57 police departments and 43 different fire districts fire departments. That is what Professor Terry Jones called fragmentation by design and that fragmentation causes for us quite frankly a culture of divisions and racialized segregation as well see in the St. Louis metropolitan community is one the only community that leads the nation in two unique categories that are indicators for racial segregation. The number of municipalities per 100000 people and the number of school districts per 100000 people in the St. Louis metro area is number three in both categories. Thus one of the most hyper segregated places in the nation. And so we come up to August 9th 2014 and we find an incident between a young African-American and a police officer that falls in a line of American history. We know I know we won't talk about the event and the particulars thereof. It is helpful for us to recall that for the one last 100 years of American history every nine to 10 years there has been an incident where an African-American has been shot by police. And it leads to a community uprising. Lindsay Lupo in a book that I went to. I'm a kind of a political science nerd. And so this is a political science thing and I found myself in it and I needed to ground myself and get some context for what the governor was asking me to do.

[00:10:35] Sleep studies movements studies movements but also very specifically studies right commission. So her book which is the most recent more definitive work on right commissions in America is entitled flak catchers. So when I saw that title I feel highly comforted. Right.

[00:10:52] And what she notes is that these commissions which come after these kinds of conflagrations are used in unique but very consistent ways. And so part of what you see in these images is our attempt to trouble and to create tension what we learned about right. Commissions. Number one they're used to make it look like executives are doing something when they're not. Number two they have a tendency to focus on economic and community development and forget about the responses to the actual people and their issues. Number three they used to process people's emotions and to help them to have a place to talk about to vent things over a certain period of time until it goes away to run out the clock and give people of peace a place to talk about their emotions without real impact and change. And finally there historically underfunded so that they don't have enough time or money to get the work done that they're actually asked to do. And so one of the things that we had to do is to be thoughtful about that and maybe even take some blows for what kind of funding was required to put into this work. So what you see on the screen is a collection of images from the course and time immediately following the shooting of Michael Brown early images from the uprising which began on August 10th 2014 and then a movement all the way through to the day of the announcement of the no true bill and the Darren Wilson case.

[00:12:32] So the images that you see with flames or burnt out areas are things that happened on the day of the announcement of the no true bill. You see images from our commission meetings that I hope illustrate both the diversity of the meetings but also the challenges that came up in those sessions. And you see the work we needed to do and had to do outside of the meetings to be consistent with our own sense of call and vocation that this is our work that

the commission should be an organizing tool and that we had to be wholly accountable to people on the ground.

[00:13:06] The one thing last thing I'll say and I think I can say this with confidence I've figured out.

[00:13:11] But anything that's in the dark or a night like this image right here was taken on my cell phone and I say that because the nighttime images are the action images the nighttime images are the agitation images and you just need to know that like that when a reporter somewhere some of us were actually there and so there's a requirement of proximity to engage this work with authenticity. And so I'm just very clear to say that because it's easy from the outside to suggest that this is a nice clean way to do this work on the side of the governor. And I know when I get into that later. But I think that's the history that's how we come to this moment and ultimately it seems to me I'm glad that the collective impact form is creating space for this conversation because what I believe it has led to and part of the work I said this earlier today that we owe to young people like Brittany Ferrell and Tara Thompson and Tori Russell and Ted Poe and battle rappers like teed up oh who are doing organizing in our neighborhoods today and doing book and breakfast programs with people across the country is that they kept our community and enough tension that everybody realized they had to respond. And so we're having a conversation in Seattle today about a commission that wouldn't have happened if they wouldn't have put their bodies on the line. And so I owe them that thanks and I owe them that love.

[00:14:35] Yeah. So tonight what we want to do is basically talk about the commission. Its work and how you came to a collective resolution to do the work and recommendations. That's what we're hoping to actually take a look at and study is the work of the commission. How do we come to a point where we recognize and the report says that this this term a lot and an unflinching way the root causes of why this happened and we put together not only just recommendations but a path forward. To let the better world that we all want to have. So that's that's the subject. And substance of the conversation that we hope to have today. And earlier. You mentioned young people you know the youth are really that youth. I think let's just make you do things that you may or may not necessarily be prepared to do. And I want you to speak to how you know that the different ways that young people actually held this tension as you said earlier and literally made not only you know that the greater metropolitan St. Lewis take notice but the whole world took notice. And that was the work of young people right.

[00:16:12] Absolutely. It was absolutely their work. And we also remember this is a work of ordinary folk in a neighborhood in Ferguson and careful green in the north one's apartments whose lives were disrupted here. But one of the things I say about this narrative that what happened on August 10th ultimately was this was a reaction to I think a visceral reality that people experience on August 9th which I talk about three groups of young people. We have had sustained advocacy and organizing for the last couple of years around the fight for 15 with a show me 15 campaign fast food workers who were working for a higher wage in them. And

not only this in this metropolitan area but throughout the state of Missouri and some of those folks like machine Aldridge were some of the first people there to see Mike on the ground. So they look up and they look across and they see people like to hear Russell terrier Russell head start a school away. He grew up in Ferguson start a school away came back was doing coaching a little kids in the neighborhood.

[00:17:17] And Terry was one who knew the realities of the neighborhood and knew certain police officers in those apartment complexes. You really didn't want to see comment. Right. So that was just the cats from the neighborhood. They were the organizers from the fast food workers campaign. And then there were people like Brittany Ferrell and Alexis Templeton. BRITTANY FERRELL just graduated with her art and just got board certified. She's one of the folks a little one with a megaphone in her hand who is who's agitating and leading chants and a lot of these images. Brittany was a fourth year student at the University of Missouri St. Lewis which is just not very far from Ferguson. What. What happened. I see her as one of those who's done all the stuff we told them to do.

[00:18:01] Went to school got an education with a single mom taking care of her baby Mackenzie. But what happened around Mike's body was that the Katherine the neighborhood and the folks organizing for a higher wage and the kids who were in school all looked at each other and said it really didn't matter. This could be any of us even all of us who checked all the boxes and they recognized that they're the first the first generation of Americans who won't do as well as their parents even the ones who checked all the boxes. This ain't gonna work for us. And so what they did was they decided at the call of Tory Russell. So Tory is one of the founders of hands up united. Tory told people that day.

[00:18:42] Meet me tonight at the Ferguson Police Department. We're all black. At 8:00. We're gonna get some answers. All right. Tory makes the call and they go there he goes and goes into the police department he's trying to talk to people.

[00:19:02] People are gathering out there some clergy end up coming you know. You know how good respectable clergy do. People trying to get people to sign petitions and stuff right. It's just there for some answers.

[00:19:11] He goes in and spend some time and then he comes back out disappointed and dejected and he says if people come back tomorrow.

[00:19:20] People are upset and they just want it. He said look we've been dealing with this for 400 years. I can't get all the answers in two hours. And so it was that kind of commitment and energy that sustained them and creativity quite frankly they created a joke of the appropriate sophisticated term is indigenously led activist groups. They were really just protest clicks and they and they operated like clicks You know. So after what there was ten of them one day then it was three groups of three and they had this name and then they had another hashtag

because they were dealing with the reality of trauma because people were there out all night. Some of them were out on night because they didn't have no other place to be.

[00:20:02] At one point we ran into a group that we love another living in a one bedroom apartment. But they found each other on the movement. Alexis and Brittany found each other behind tear gas. And now they're married. Revolutionary love popping up. And so. And so I mean this reality where they created bonds with one another wrestled in tension with one another and did all of this behind enemy lines paying for Maalox and one another's eyes and the whole time while they're doing this the St. Louis Post-Dispatch is calling on the president. To start a commission around Ferguson with no reply and then calling on the governor to start a commission around Ferguson with no reply and then calling on the mayor and the county executive to start a commission to study these issues with no reply. So for 90 days with no governmental appropriate governmentally appropriate response they're holding the line they're going to jail. They're taking rubber and wooden bullets. They're taking tear gas. They point. Point well blocks in each other's eyes and milk and trying to figure out how they're going to live and love each other until somebody be accountable to each other being because nobody is being obviously nobody is being accountable to them.

[00:21:21] Yeah and it's important to say this some of these folks showed up in the commission work as well. So let's not let's not discount them as protesters alone. Mm hmm.

[00:21:30] And so some of these same activist turned organizers over time became people who facilitated sessions in the Ferguson commission public meetings. They became folks who organized and turned out young people to inform the process they were reporting in this state bureaucratic entity to the public on things that young people were saying. So we need not discount them as one category or the other or see them as people who are just yelling and not contributing to creative conversation. So they played all of these roles. They've sat an informed national funders about the work that they're doing and the work that they needed to support. They've said no to funding because they didn't trust it or said no because somebody else was better positioned to take it and sought to orient this work with a great deal of integrity. So so they had they led when no one was leading. And some of us who were smart decided to follow.

[00:22:26] Right. Right. And so the other thing that I didn't mention is that this is not just a conversation between myself and Reverend Wilson. This is a conversation in this room which is why that microphone is over there. So as folks have questions I do want to let you know just come up and cue up to the microphone. It's easy to do. And there is no shame in asking questions. There is no such thing as a stupid question. And we also know that Seattle with the with the Q and A there's a lot of a and very little Q which

[00:23:04] We're not saying. LEWIS Well

[00:23:07] We are prepared for that but we really do want it to be a community conversation. I am just here to kick off this conversation.

[00:23:15] But I I truly invite each and every one of you if you have a question come on up here and let's get this conversation started. So

[00:23:23] I want to I want to spend a minute actually. Uh oh and I have. Uh the Ferguson

[00:23:34] Commission report uh forward through Ferguson. It's about two hundred and one hundred and ninety six hundred.

[00:23:43] Yeah.

[00:23:43] Hundred and ninety six page ninety six pages one hundred eighty nine policy calls to action to into four different categories racial equity justice for all youth at the center and opportunities to thrive with racial equity is the overriding framework.

[00:23:58] So let's talk about who finally made it to the table. Now here we have a history of commissions that were designed to do what

[00:24:08] Run out the clock. I do believe and I have read these hundred and ninety seven pages. That this is we are looking at something different. We are really looking at a model that could work. And I got my fingers crossed. I'm going to ask you at the end of the conversation how it's working but talk to me about who is at the table why they at the table and how they got to the table because you know that you know what the saying is right.

[00:24:39] If you're not at the table you're white on the menu you on the menu. Yeah. So it's really important to talk about who is at the table so first almost make it to the table. I don't know who put my name in but we should give a little bit of credit. So the governor opened up he announced in October that he would he would call this commission. He opened it to the community to apply to be a part of the commission. And there were applications from all over the country and there were somewhere about 350 applications online process people could apply and then some folks got called into you know how that goes. Right. And and so myself and my co-chair Rich McClure were asked to co chair this work. Rich is a businessman. He at the time was the was the president CEO of you know group unit the United Van Lines. And and he had been the president of the local chamber with the chair of the board of the local chamber the chair of a group called Civic progress which is a collective of our thirty three largest employers in the St. Louis metropolitan region. So highly esteemed businessman driven by his faith Evangelical Presbyterian driven highly by his faith and very conservative Christian culture to this work to help people. And then there was me I knew Rich because we worked together around some educational equity issues and collaborative. So we weren't new to one another. And I think that's been that was a key to the work ultimately on the commission

there were 16 people chosen including us. So the two of us plus 14 who were from throughout the community.

[00:26:19] So people like machine Aldrich who was one of the who was one of the young organizers and activists who was there and show me 15 campaign who showed up at the official commissioning in a demilitarised the police T-shirt that made the governor very comfortable. He had me a rich yeah. My friend Traci Blackman another pastor with the United Church of Christ tradition the leader of Big Brothers Big Sisters local Big Brothers Big Sisters affiliate schools superintendent of police all two police officers actually on the commission and a former police chief who was serving at the department the head of the Department of Public Safety for the state so very diverse group of folks who were chosen some residents of Ferguson some not most of us not because we took a regional approach. We knew that we were not convening to resolve issues for twenty one thousand people in a municipality. We're really convening to address issues that were pervasive in this metropolitan area three point eight million people and that this work had to be regionally had to have regional impact before it could have national implications right. But we also knew we had to set the table in a certain way. And so I tell people who else was at I got in trouble for this. So I'm just coming clean because we're a state agency we have all of the things that state agencies have to have. So we had to build stuff and we had that. And that one nowhere where it wasn't certain stuff just went on where it militate it against the process of actually doing work that could be trusted and work that could get done well. So I tell people all the time I'm full throated about this. There's nothing significant I've ever done in my life without black women ever

[00:28:04] And so there is a firm called vector communications that's led by group assistance to do community engagement strategic planning. And the first thing I did was call Victor like I like you rich but I ain't doing this without vector. And so they helped us to set up the community planning process. So our meetings were always organizing meetings. They were always to get community engagement and input. And ultimately that process that they helped to set in place for us led to three thousand people engaging in over 70 public meetings and providing more than 30000 thousand volunteer hours to produce this document sharing their own testimony. So every meeting after the first meeting the first meeting we tried to be all official and stuff you know we have one of those tables that well the black skirts and then the pop up mikes and and then we get we began with a briefing from the attorney general's office about the sunshine law. And we got about and we thought we should introduce ourselves to people tell them my credentials because they needed to get to know us. Now there's about two and a half hours into that meeting. Oh it went down

[00:29:07] Sister came up to the mike. Just you know we don't watch out yet enough we all talk. It's time for us to talk.

[00:29:16] She was right. She was absolutely right and it went down and so we changed everything from that moment. So no more table. The tables were around but our chairs came out in front of the tables. We began to sit with the community particularly in their presentations

so that we were getting a pulse of what was going on. There was a lot of kneeling and negotiating is not in this deck but the pictures in the paper at me like I'm pleading with people and I'm just talking about I do Lebanese but that kind of direct engagement became our posture and we reordered our meetings they always started with public comment real public comment that we actually responded to now like when you go to a school board meeting and you know you come up to the line they tell you they say it's time you move on. So I know they're organizers and I know this right. So we actually begin to engage people and we hear people's stories. And that began to transform how we began to do the work. So we heard people's stories were heard from experts. So yeah they're folks who had lots of knowledge in this area. We we we gave that but we're very intentional to center the stories of people who are directly impacted to place that first in the work and then move from there. And so there was great diversity.

[00:30:27] The other thing we had to do was we had to move our meetings around and so of all of our public meetings and of those 70 there were 21 that were full commission meetings. So there were also work group meetings.

[00:30:42] We made sure that they went from St. Louis City to St. Charles from North St. Louis South St. Louis east to west St. Luke's to all over the region to make sure we were getting perspective and in some cases were agitating people in different areas. So you know in the community in St. Charles where they thought they didn't have any problems we made sure to take a meeting there and they came out and they showed all their wares and talked about how well they were doing. And the county executive was happy to say that if St. Louis County just did stuff like we do it in St. Charles then everything would be OK. And I was very pleased to say except for the fact that I have three police chiefs and none of them are here so you were glad to roll out the boys and girls club.

[00:31:22] Where's your police chief.

[00:31:24] Because you all have some of these same challenges and issues you just haven't been under a DOJ investigation yet and quite frankly I think you all found out here and we found out in other communities across the country. All it takes is a reason for the investigation that we can find some of these same issues in any community. It was Tory who I first heard use the words Ferguson is everywhere it is. And so these same issues we find in other places.

[00:31:51] Absolutely. Sara what do you have a question or a comment.

[00:31:55] I'm a therapist and I teach stress reduction at the V.A. hospital in Hawaii Japan et. I wanted to go to Ferguson because I know that there is an inner healing that needs to be done. In all these cities where there is violence there is stress this stress causes disruption in the body and it stays there for years until it's gotten rid of. What's been done in the community for this kind of healing to take place if anything.

[00:32:28] Great question. I think I appreciate that and I would actually push further this suggests that you know we also have data now that suggests that it's transmitted from generation to generation. And so one of the things we very intentional to do at the wisdom of one of our funding sources and so one of the things we did kind of close the loop on this. We told the governor if you don't come up with a million dollars we won't do it. That's what rich and I said. So you come up with it from wherever you can come up with it but we need a million dollars just to do this work. We also knew that there were certain things that the state money couldn't pay for. So catalyze about three hundred thousand dollars in foundation funding to put with it and know a good bit of that those dollars came from health foundations and so with an intention to apply Health Equity lands to the work. We took data throughout all of our meetings on trauma because well we recognize this from a narrative sense and I tell people this way. On August 9th a whole lot of people saw something that nobody should ever see. But I saw early in my life which is a human body lying in a pool of blood opened in the streets the first time I saw that that was my brother who was killed in street violence in the neighborhood. But because of social media a lot of us unfortunately saw Lesley McSpadden son Mike Brown Senior's son lying in that way. And so our community's ties and that made it to people who were there and people who were not like my son. And so the time at a 10 year old son.

[00:33:56] He's now 11 and because he rides in the car with dad and dad runs errands. One day I was coming back pick them up from school taking him and his brothers with me to pick up some cleaning and I was listening to NPR and they were talking about the incident. And he said daddy every time I hear about Michael Brown my stomach starts to hurt right. And so we've all been traumatized by the realities of violence in our communities in our neighborhoods. And so part of what we saw to do was to name and to document that trauma by the people who came through our meetings to represent that to community and to invite different kinds of responses we're pleased to say a couple of things happened first early on the school districts that are in the area receive some support to work together and a resilience initiative to train educators and administrators on how to respond to that trauma in their classes. That has led to a wider initiative by the Regional Health Commission and the Integrated Health Network whose CEO we were able to negotiate her leaving her post for a year at the Integrated Health Network to be the managing director of the commission. So she came with this public health framework already and what they've done is led to an initiative called Alive and well in SDL that's all about trauma trauma informed communities. How we respond to this work and school districts on jobs and in different settings and community and so this has been one of the more robust responses quite frankly and significant funding for that for the ongoing work and that initiative came from Missouri Foundation for Health.

[00:35:33] So it's transformed how we think about our reactions to these realities with this focus on trauma and stress so now you've got you've got 16 people who are going around the greater the St. Louis County St. seamless metropolitan St. Louis metropolitan area. How were you able to create some kind of shared language so that everybody understood what everyone else was talking about when they were talking together. How did you manage to do that. Because you know we all have different ideas about what individual words mean individual you

know. Statements or turns of phrase or what we mean when we say collective liberation what we mean when we say racism what we mean when we say privilege all of these things. So how did you manage within that group of 16 who come from all these disparate places to create some kind of shared language.

[00:36:38] You know first is very difficult. We actually couldn't do it in the group of 16 and the way we wanted to. So we had to do it with 2.8 million people because of sunshine law. And I say this because I think it militates against us getting good governance. And so because the sunshine law we couldn't do what I would have done on my board which is take everybody away for two or three days bring in the best consultants who actually do diversity equity and inclusion where levels say how people deal with this stuff. There are some stuff with each other at least hold them in a container long enough that they get vulnerable to each other. We didn't get to do that. And some people met the morning of the end of the afternoon of the announcement of the commission. So I don't know you and I won't sit here and share all my stuff talk about. And so so that kind of thing. And so we actually had to do it more intentionally. And what I said. I say that because we have school districts we have city councils who are making difficult decisions like this wrestling with the community's issues and they have not taken the time to do this because of the constraints of how we structure some of our laws. I think it's really important how they do their work. The other is we just had to do it publicly and we had to do it plainly.

[00:37:50] So we were able to bring in some resources as some folks to come in from the Kellogg Foundation and censor their work on America's healing which again takes this kind of trauma approach. This public health approach to say this is what this word means right. When we say racism this is what we mean. From here on out this well we mean it would've been great to try to get consensus but we just had to define it and say when you say it here this what it means right. When you say equity here this is what it means an interest in to be able to center and that required quite frankly me rich as my co-chair and Bethany our managing director to be a consistent communication because we were making that decision. All right. We just had to we couldn't argue about everything and we were trying to bring people along from different ideological perspectives and everything else. So we had to set the table with some some foundation and so we just made those decisions wrestled about that. All right. So we met every week. I told people we met every week for over a year seven thirty in the morning sometimes before coffee. So it wasn't cute but that was our commitment to continuous communication so that we could guide and lead this group together even though all three of us had different stuff different perspectives different defaults and different reasons why we came to this work.

[00:39:14] And so part of what we had to do was in the public space and for the public make these definitions plain that is work that's still ongoing. So we left we created forward through Ferguson incorporate. Leave behind small nonprofit Catalyst group to do some of this education in community forums and throughout this thing Lewis region. It's led by a pod of former staff from the commission guided and governed by a group of five former

commissioners so that this continuity and working with local leadership group call focusing Lewis to help those who have influence and access in our community to get to some of those same definitions.

[00:39:54] Tell us a little bit about focus St. Louis. Who are they.

[00:39:57] It depends on who you ask.

[00:40:00] I was so focused on Lewis is a group that over the years came from two different sources one kind of our leadership St. Lewis many communities have these leadership training programs they expose you to different people throughout the community different programs different aspects and perspectives and different assets. And then there was a group called confluence Saint Lewis that was about community problem solving. And over the years the two groups merged and so focused is mission is really about quote unquote leadership for a thriving region. It's about regional collaboration. It's about preparing leaders for the work as they find themselves. I was formerly on the board and served as board secretary of focusing Lewis actually while this work was going on I say it depends on who you ask because there's some folks who say you know Mayor James Knowles the mayor of Ferguson and the city manager of Ferguson was actually they've been through leadership Saint Lewis and so and so some people look and say we're focusing on Lewis are the ones who trained all these people

[00:41:03] But they also trained me so I don't know if that's good bad or ill you know good bad and ugly. So it's a leadership training organization for the sake of community problem solving and it becomes kind of a partner in community learning on a regional basis. And so I think we have similarly situated organizations in different communities and I imagine here in Seattle as well.

[00:41:26] How many people here have actually gone to some kind of leadership training right so you can you can imagine the diversity of folks who might go through a similar leadership training.

[00:41:44] Absolutely. And corporate folks civic leaders elected officials philanthropic people but folks who are community oriented toward some type of civic engagement if not community changing. And in a line across the ideological spectrum I'll just say one more thing about the previous question about about how to get to common definitions. It's very important for us to make data accessible to people. And so all of our meetings were transcribed and posted immediately at our previous Web site SDL positive change dot org which is still up. So all of our public meetings full commission meetings are fully transcribed. If ever have a time and you're having difficulty getting to sleep the 300 page transcripts. But also there were all of the reports that we got from any expert who presented all their power points. All the footnotes all their reports. So all that data is up on that site as well because we felt the community needed to learn with us. So all of those definitions were center there as well. So we were we took we

were arrogant enough to take the position we're defining for the whole region based upon this data all in English. All in all in English we have a question in the audience if you're ready

[00:43:00] Um well I have a question for you. I'm going to poke the bear. Um are you familiar with the term the Ferguson effect and do you want to address that.

[00:43:11] I am familiar it has a couple of different definitions though.

[00:43:15] So tell me which one you're talking about.

[00:43:17] Well the only thing I know about it is here and what I read from a Hillsdale College speech. Basically it. The person who's doing the stats says there is an increase in black on black crime because basically police don't want to be seen as racist and are not doing what they used to do which apparently to give it the best uh way you could look at it was to break up the uh kind of areas where crime typically happens which basically meant hassling black people.

[00:44:01] Yeah.

[00:44:02] So I'm glad I asked you to define because this has come to mean different things for different political reasons.

[00:44:07] So the first way I heard the Ferguson effect was that there was increased militancy against police and police hatred in communities and so people spoke to that as a reasoning as people did in the city of St. Lewis to make a request for four million dollars more for the police department to give more money and more police because of things like Ferguson. So they talked about spikes in crime in the interests of padding budgets.

[00:44:36] I had to raise a little bit attention to that. I have to say with anyone who uses the term and I know you were reading from somewhere so the process wasn't our term. Black on black crime. Just because it's just it's just not a thing. It's kind of like whiteness is a social construct for political reasons. It's just not a thing. So there's no statistically significant difference between black on black crime white don't write crime because crime happens within communities where people are together. And so that's kind of what it happens. But if I had to use this terminology that definition would be most appropriate is to talk about as the Cincinnati effect. And I say that kind of tying back to the police killing of Timothy Thomas in 2001 and the uprising that followed because there we do have a 10 year study that suggests that once police were given accountability constraints which they got with the investment of resources by the community in Cincinnati they decided they didn't want to stop people because they had to document how they were stopping people. And so what you saw was that actual increase in crime in pockets in neighborhoods in Cincinnati. And it was explained by the 10 year report some of the Rand data or Rand Corporation did some assessment and then there was a 10

year report from the community foundation in Cincinnati that suggested that the attitudes toward accountability led police to stop doing their job.

[00:46:02] Now that just tells me we got the wrong police because you know yeah.

[00:46:10] So I think that's that's part of the challenge. This sense of community accountability for people that we give unique license to to work to kill with impunity and then quite frankly afford the same kind of privileges to the prosecutors who are called to bring these cases we can't even you know we can't bring them on malpractice if they don't bring a case because we've allowed that same kind of privilege to that office.

[00:46:40] And so. So I hear the term Ferguson effect Ferguson fatigue that also people who talk about the Ferguson effect as an establishment in a building of community organizations. A re radicalization of people and a renewed commitment to community organizing policy and advocacy work across the country and deeper investment in it. So I think to your point about definitions. This is critically important as well.

[00:47:04] You have to define. You have to have a shared language. I mean because it certainly sounds like two sides of the same coin. Yeah. If not three. If not three. Question.

[00:47:18] Yeah. I'm running with the theme of definitions. Would you be able to define racial equity and your dream for racial equity.

[00:47:26] Oh I was saving that for later. No just kidding I'm just kidding I'm just kidding.

[00:47:32] No that's great. I think for us it really is a commitment to get the root causes of injustice in the community particularly along the lines of race. Very specifically it speaks to the identification of disparities and with a commitment toward getting to equitable outcomes. I shouldn't use word to define a word in with a commitment to get to outcomes that are similar across ethnic lines. There is a commitment to provide additional supports where you see those disparities. Right. And so one of the things that we found when we did our assessment of the report is that these demographic shifts just cause all kinds of issues. So we saw what people see all over so we saw a 53 percent increase in poverty in St. Louis County between 2000 and 2013. But that was mirroring the suburbanization of poverty that the Brookings Institute found across the country. All right. But we also found that in 63106 which is a neighborhood around my church I saw a pastor church in North St. Lewis. People literally lived 20 years 18 years shorter lives than if they lived in 63105 which is the county seat in Clayton right.

[00:48:42] So this generational difference we can make that wider if you live in predominantly white Wildwood in West County and St. Lewis versus living in kin like predominately black kin lock which is one of the more vibrant black communities robust merchandising centers. If you go back two generations ago if you live in Kent Locke you live two generations shorter life right. And it's all related to these social determinants of health. And so what is racial equity look

like racial equity to me looks like people having a fair shot a fair chance to live a life that approximates people who happen not to be twice kissed by God godson right who happen to be of a different. Who happen to be of a different ethnic group. And so my hope is not and I'm very intentional I have to use them had I had to resist this word so my buddy Rich and I that we had the most challenges over our common Christian theology.

[00:49:42] Really. Because he kept wanting to use this term reconciliation. Mm hmm. And my suggestion to him was Well this is the deal right Rich. We we can get the reconciliation but before we get there we got to walk this path. The path that we began in the 1950s 60s talking about equality of access and equality of access.

[00:50:08] You know we're not going to restrict anybody from coming in here.

[00:50:12] Right. And then we got to the wonderfully progressive conversation for the 1980s about diversity the things you can see in a room or you can see on paper that suggests there were differences of perspective. Right. And then in nineteen nineties we began to have conversation about inclusion. Right. Who's at the table and who actually gets some input on the menu. Right. But equities suggest going beyond access. Going to be on diversity. Going beyond inclusion of voice to actually being talked for about outcomes. And my argument was Rich was you we can't have reconciliation until we have equity because reconciliation happens between equals and so rather than calming people down with images of us hugging or seeking to have conversations where people enlighten themselves. How about we push toward getting to the same outcomes among people groups. And once we get to those places then maybe we can shake hands hug and be I and have reconciliation.

[00:51:22] Yeah absolutely. Great question. Thank you Reverend Wells and I haven't read the report. Thank you.

[00:51:32] I saw Ferguson. A report from occupied territory on it's on YouTube and I was stunned. About these municipalities and the way that they ticket people from minor things and give them huge fines. And I was just so outraged that it seemed like they're balancing their books on the backs of black people. Are there recommendations in the report. Is anything getting done about parks. I was just stunned yes and no.

[00:52:08] So yes there are recommendations in the report and yes there are some things getting done about that but not happening at the scale that we asked for them to get done. So a couple of things we call for. We have we have to credit for the focus on municipal courts and this issue of fragmentation. The Arch City Defenders a legal advocacy group working with homeless populations who had a well timed white paper. About the impact of the court's fragmentation on their clients. And that paper was released in the context of all of this work. And I think that by the New York Times. And it began to kind of shudder a reaction by I us our Missouri Supreme Court because they were embarrassed at their colleagues because they have responsibility for supervising the court. So this is part of the challenge we have is

structural in our area. There are 81 courts on the supervision of one presiding judge. The closest we come throughout the state to that same kind of supervision is in Kansas City where there's 22 courts. So you think 22. Do you think. Eighty one. That's supervision. That's not really supervision right.

[00:53:14] That's the challenge of course is that the courts are uniquely influenced by the local municipalities. And if you look at the Department of Justice report these saw that there's documentation of actual calls from the city manager who's the chief executive of the city to the police department's chief asking him to make sure they write more tickets because there's a shortage in the budget.

[00:53:34] Right. And so we know that this is happening the courts are being used as an A.T.M. for a system of fragmentation that has turned police into armed collection agents and they're doing it in communities with this fragmentation of course you can drive through. There's a segment where you can drive three miles or go through ten different municipalities you get ticketed for the same thing ten times. And so what's being done about it first. Thankfully they're being at their actions that are being brought by people like large city defenders the Advancement Project supporting some of this work to go in into small municipalities like Jennings to sue over these issues and then take the ones I in these cases to transform courts. But then you got to take it from court to court and try to implement these same things or file again. So they actually planning another round of suits to do that.

[00:54:21] The Missouri Supreme Court convened a working group to tell them what to do about this after we had already told them what to do about this.

[00:54:29] I got a call with the chief judge next week and the working group came back and told them that they didn't have the authority to make these changes because one of things we call for the consolidation of the courts. They need to be made larger so that they can actually provide full access. Some of these courts most of these courts are not full time courts. I talked about the city attorney in Ferguson is very important to note that if you bet map all of these part time courts with part time judges and part time attorneys you get to 11 law firms who are contracted to provide services for these different municipalities. And so you had start mapping where do you get some of these judges from. And so we see some issues with the state Supreme Court not acting in their authority to consolidate courts.

[00:55:13] And so we're seeking to bring to bear additional influence that we had a unique. We we presented myself and Tom Harvey from the arch City Defenders presented to the US Commission on Civil Rights and we were presented on the same panel with members of the attorney general's the U.S. attorney general's office with their kind of Dear Colleague letter providing guidance on how municipal courts should be working. So we continue to see ongoing conversation about that and now we're kind of agitating directly with the American and the National Bar Associations national prosecutors associations all of these groups somehow are coming to St. Louis to meet in the next couple of years. And so some of this is direct advocacy

with those organizations as well to get them to change the practice within the legal field to bring it to bear in the court. So we're trying to working inside outside on this. Well we have another question I want to know sort of way to the other angle of the whole issue how how the commission and also the intense response to Michael Brown sort of if it changed people's idea about what they wanted how they wanted to basically police system and police use of force to change or if it just reinforced notions that we're already there

[00:56:34] And what sort of Commission's particular stance on it.

[00:56:39] Yes. So thank you. Great question. It's important to note a couple of things as we kind of get the timing. In April of 2014. So before any of these incidents the ACLU produced a report on the militarization and rationalization of American Policing.

[00:56:53] And it documented a lot of these issues of disproportionate contact by communities of color that these were pre Ferguson issues this kind of shined a light. Right. It's also the case that the November before the Department of Justice began to study open an inquiry into the St. Louis family courts which are our juvenile courts that noted and documented the noted racial discrimination against young people of color coming through the courts. And so this view of how the courts are working how policing should work and communities have all worked together. Last thing I'll note is that a group called the coalition against police crimes or repression had been working with the organization for black struggle for 30 years to get civilian oversight of police in the city of St. Lewis.

[00:57:34] And they won in 2015 in the middle of all this. All right. Do believe that there has always been a community consensus around increased accountability. We made recommendations in the report for civilian oversight boards with with subpoena power and authority for the consolidation of police departments and for the certification of police departments. What we found is that a gross number of police departments are unaccredited or uncertified by Coolio or any other national accrediting agency. And so one of the reasons why we did that was just to raise the standards what kind of interest do you have to carry.

[00:58:08] What kind of training do you have to carry. Because if you do that you may actually force someone some consolidations of some of these police departments and we have seen people gonna be more creative about that. We're able to get passed in one session.

[00:58:21] It was almost remarkable Bill. Senate Bill 5 which called for increased call for the certification of police departments. It increased the insurance requirements.

[00:58:32] It also reduced it placed a cap on the amount of revenue that I mean it's a powder we can get from minor traffic violations. And so we were able to kind of push that down. There was a cap of 30 percent for certain areas. It was clearly being it was clearly being outstripped. We found some I mean this battle is ahead as many as much as 60 percent of their budget

coming from minor traffic violations. So we had to push enforcement with the attorney general's office and the state auditor.

[00:58:59] We pushed that cap down. We passed the certification standards and then the Department of Safety and our state holds the accountability for police training requirements which is different than the requirements for the departments.

[00:59:14] So this was under executive authority. So this is something we took right back to the governor and say hey you asked us to do this. This is something you can do like tomorrow.

[00:59:22] So by executive order we doubled. We call for tripling. But we doubled he agreed to doubling the police training requirements for all police throughout the state in the areas of use of force culturally competent policing and an officer wellness. We had to use officer wellness as a way of getting at the trauma of the officers themselves primarily because collective bargaining agreements can't require mental health screenings for police except at certain points. So so these are things that we have seen actually happening some of the calls that we've made about policing specifically and some of the changes that we've seen in the area.

[00:59:58] Good evening. My name is Ashley and I'm from Cincinnati Ohio. My question is what can we do as individuals and as individuals and as a collective community to be proactive and try to build better systems in our community so when things like this happen we're armed and ready to move or we can prevent them. You know one thing that is really you really need to read this report because not only does it have one hundred and eighty nine recommendations one hundred eighty nine it also points out

[01:00:32] The actors and the intersecting you know who is responsible for this. If this group and this agency this institution this particular system all have to work together in order to make this happen. Right. And I thought that was really somewhat revolutionary because you know you see a lot of commission reports that just lists a list of recommendations but they don't necessarily point the finger at who needs to do this work. And I thought that the report. Was it was definitely incredible. And the fact that you did that kind of work.

[01:01:13] Well thank you. I mean this is this gets to again using this public platform. I mean as far as I was concerned we had a million dollars to organize people which you don't get a lot.

[01:01:23] And so part of what we sought to do is to invite people into the public space. So part of what I'm saying is what we needed to get this done was we actually needed people working within neighborhoods within community groups within churches.

[01:01:37] We're having this conversation with the collective impact form earlier today about a person in the role and a system. Right. And so we need people to identify and understand in the context of community right that they have certain values that they want to be expressed in their neighborhood and their community.

[01:01:55] And they show up in different spaces and places right. They show up as a father or mother they show up as an executive from this company or they show up as a pastor. And so we need those persons and roles to show up in settings to impact the systems whether that's a school board meeting or whether that is a city council meeting. So I think part of it is we have to find ourselves in a community that can move together in order to impact systems. And so I tell people you know your church your synagogue your mosque ought to be affiliated with some faith based organizing engagement. And one of the specific calls we make on a racial equity is you know I was very clear I wanted to do this.

[01:02:33] I called all clergy to engage in school board meetings city council meetings so that you can't be where we the space that helps us to nurture our values and outsource responsibility for getting those values embedded in legislation and policy because legislation and policy is how we live out our values together. So I think whatever community you find yourself and organize it and then engage these systems directly for the sake of holding them accountable.

[01:03:03] And so what we tried to create through the report was a map for accountability that people could use in their communities and they could take and we've seen remarkable work.

[01:03:13] Our local Gmail Yale affiliate which has a great diverse set of churches their community we're going a faith based community organizer. They've got a diverse set of churches. They had little white women in West County protesting outside of a police department and taking the list of Ferguson commission recommendations about policing to their chief right.

[01:03:33] And so because they say this not just over there with the black people. This is we want you to be held accountable to us too. And we didn't even know we hadn't had this kind of incident but we didn't know. That we didn't really have power over you. Mm hmm. Mm hmm. But we pay for you so we want it. Right. So that direct engagement is part of what I think we're called. I mean I think it's the essence of citizenship.

[01:03:55] Exactly. We have a local organizer here. Her name is Mary Flowers and I

[01:04:08] She and Mary is is you know as we are having our conversations and you know doing our organizing work. Mary talks about two things three things alive. Number one she talks about our humanity. She always ask us to look for our humanity in our organizing because then we can find and help other people find the humanity in what they do. She also talks about gatekeeping you know the fact that we have a duty you know that gatekeeping isn't that necessarily thing that keeps the gate close.

[01:04:40] It's also the thing that holds the gate open right.

[01:04:45] And then she said she tells us if you have a job. That's the people's job.

[01:04:52] And find a way within the work that you do wherever you are. To do that work if it's it's it's racial equity in your nonprofit organization or your government office whatever you can do. Leverage it to make the kind of change that we want to see and it's minute. And you know when we ask each other what can I do individually. You can start right with yourself and the job that you have.

[01:05:23] Absolutely absolute 0 minutes.

[01:05:30] It seems like you communicate a lot with political leadership and you're pushing them and making recommendations. What do communities need from local political leadership to make to ensure a path to equality. They need them to learn.

[01:05:46] No I mean really. So racial equity is more than. A dream or a pipe dream even if you know it requires skill sets competencies and capacities in leaders. And so they need to be trained to apply these lenses to their work. I'm really excited tomorrow will be the second open committee meeting where we ask for all settings of governance in the St. Louis region to apply racial equity lines to their work. There's a resolution before the St. Lewis Board of Aldermen it's coming up tomorrow where they're dealing with what they need to do in order to apply this. And so people have to learn about this work. The other quite frankly is basic is built into this concept of representative democracy and that's accountability to the people. A couple of the scenes you'll see up here you may be seeing them already. We knew we said this. We said if the community is surprised by our recommendations then we didn't do our work the right way. So in August all the recommendations were public. They weren't cleaned up but people knew what they were they were out there. We just hadn't brought them together. We had desegregated all of the data we had. So so we hadn't put the report together the report was released on September 14th. But at the beginning of August when we knew that it was we knew when we had a sense what the recommendations were.

[01:07:02] We started weekly convening at Deaconess Foundation an organizing table so that the organizing table prioritized the recommendations as aligned with their agenda already. So they had a subset of 30 things that were in the one hundred eighty nine that they wanted to get done. And when we handed the governor the report on September 14th I announced because they allow me to I announced a public accountability meeting on November 1st where we called on elected officials to come and tell those organizers who had already prioritized the report for themselves what they were going to do in order to get this report done right. And so this is the deal about accountability. There is an attorney general who were much more friendly now than we were in the moment who's running for. He's the chief law enforcement officer of the state. All right let's talk about him that way. Who committed to this group of people to come to this meeting this people this group turned out. Eleven hundred people for the first meeting on Friday. The meeting was on Sunday. We had a weekend convening organizing peace at

our church brought in other speakers from other communities because we're trying to assure accountable organizing.

[01:08:11] What we talk about organizing accountability and on Friday he had an aide to call me and say he won't come in now when you said you weren't coming. I was talking to you why do you have a calm until you're not. So we Twitter stormed him and any still income and then we found out we began to scratch. There was the mayor who scared him off. Told him he should come these me. He thought he was coming and he was really giving himself cover because he had said he wouldn't come. So neither came to the meeting. So on one of these you see a roomful of people and four empty chairs and we use that to agitate people and the next day we showed up in the mayor's office unannounced twelve of us they shut down the office because they didn't know why we were there and we let him know you had a scheduling conflict but we're concerned that you created a conflict for somebody else. So that's what we're gonna do. We're gonna convene this meeting again it's gonna happen before Thanksgiving. We're gonna stay here until we have the date and time from you and then we're gonna take it to the attorney general.

[01:09:13] So let us know how long it's going to take you to get that date because an hour from now the people who were with us yesterday are gonna be outside of the City Hall steps. We're going to give them a date. We're gonna tell them how long we're gonna hang out at city hall and so we've got a date at the time for them. And later in the slides you see the mayor standing up taking off his accountabilities and the things that he had done. And the thing that he was committing to do. He came with a pamphlet it was all nicely made of all of the stuff that he was doing. You also see the attorney general standing behind him committing to the things that he needed to do especially if he thought he was gonna come ask some people to make him the governor. Right. And so part of what we need is the kind of responsiveness and accountability and we shouldn't have to organize. Fifteen hundred people for that. We had to have a whole nother meeting. We turned out 400 people the next time. But. We had to do that and we had to sit them in these rooms and put them on the spot.

[01:10:08] And quite frankly that's their job anyway. You asked us for this job. And so part of what we need is education. The thing we need is accountability. I'm sorry. Well the governor set up the commission the attorney general the mayor really didn't. The mayor was going to the mayor was going to but they didn't set it up to do what we did. They said it has to do with Lindsay Lupo what a commission is to do. And we did something different. Right. So that's that's part of the reality. And so what are we going to do was you talked about who's at the table. We took a table out to the front of City Hall. And we said you invited us to come in out of the streets to the table and we came to the table. Three thousand of us came to the table we gave thirty thousand volunteer hours at the table. We created this report at the table and then when we brought the table for your accountability you decided not to show up. So it is what we gonna do until you start lining up and accountable. We don't carry this table right here around

[01:11:09] And we don't take this table to City Hall. When I take this table to Jefferson City when I take this we did. I mean this was I gave this speech. I remembered his name right. And so we took this table to all these places until they decided to show up in physical taking a physical table. We have we have one last question from the audience.

[01:11:26] That's the table.

[01:11:32] Perfect timing. My name's Shirley Seacrest and with the Seattle King County double ACP. My question deals with how do you awaken a sleeping giant here in Seattle. In fact many of the people in this room are the ones who brought in the Department of Justice against the Seattle Police Department where we have a consent decree. My question now for Ferguson is kind of in a situation where we are is what happens when there is the separation from realities. The chief will go to the White House and take a photo with the president saying that police brutality excessive force is a thing of the past in Seattle then the young people in this room who are still toeing that line that you had said they are the ones who not for just 90 days but year after year are keeping it present. What are some of the tactics that Ferguson has done to make sure that whatever is in your report that those solutions you can circle back to those young people who are out there that you can get a realistic answer on whether or not it's working because when we had to do it here in Seattle before we were able to celebrate those young people said no no no there's still work to be done. So what are some of the things you guys are doing to make sure the solutions are okayed by the young people.

[01:12:57] Well first of all we didn't come up with them without them. Right. So. So they were part of the solution engine if you will. Great. So. So we had one full commission meeting. We didn't let anybody one persons and we let anybody over the age of 24.

[01:13:13] Talk. All right.

[01:13:16] So is this their space is just their meeting right. And actually we had to like that one that was oriented all around the arts. And so they use the arts to tell their story performing arts creative arts and we brought in people just to help them to frame their vision for community and craft it and so the first is they should be fully involved and engaged in the process itself. The youngest commissioner we have was 19 when he started. So Rasheed now that's kind of you know the governor did that. Whose representative more than anything else. He didn't know what he was getting what we're seeing though right. Like we're she's running for committeeman now. Right. Trying to oust a long sitting African-American family dynasty in a district. Right. So so he did he know what he was getting. So so part of that is staying in relationship and staying in contact within those parts. One of the things that I didn't I didn't say I started saying this. One of the accountability the young people started.

[01:14:12] So some of this with the collective impact forum I convened a meeting before I say yes to the governor and I have representatives of hands up united organization for black struggle Millennial Activists United all at the parsonage or my church and told them what I want

to say publicly yet was that the governor asked me to do this. I had my friend Traci Blackman to come in and she was another commissioner my friend Brittany pack now to come in she was another commissioner and they asked and we asked their permission to go do this work right.


[01:14:43] Because we stood with him on the line. Right. They allowed us in that space. We asked them permission. They said you can do it if you're willing to walk away. If it looks like they're taking advantage of us. And so the commitment we made to them before we made a commitment to the governor was that if this looked like a riot commission of the past and if we were being used to trade on our communities then not only would we walk away we would walk away together and we would take two additional commissioners regime and the Director of Public Safety to Chief Isom with us. And so we later told the chief about this agreement. We didn't know where he was at first. He was he was working for the governor at the time. So we brought him in later once he was working for the governor.

[01:15:29] So that was the deal. At any given time it all breaks because of our commitment to those young people. Right.

[01:15:36] And so that accountability is how we set the table in the first place. The feedback loops with him is that what we part what part of what we've done my own commitment is to work to embed them. How I talk. Early I use this term by moving from activist to organizers. And so we invested one hundred thousand dollars in youth organizing locally. We set up the Ferguson youth organizing fund because there were funders across the country who wanted to help support the work. And so we've been able to leverage in about another half million dollars to invest in youth organizing and to point people to people so that people could go through organizing training with the Organization for Black Struggle so that they could be on this work and embedded within organizations. This is the difficulty is transition. That's why I said before if we really want to do this we've got to do within some kind of group club neighborhood church something for the sake of our own accountability. So we put those young people on a path we began to support their work in organizing and then got them engaged in groups like OBSS and others so that they would continue to do the work around accountability and recall we had already prioritized the report with them. So their agenda within the agenda was set they are set with an institution that are organizing and advocating around these things on an ongoing basis. And now we provide funding and support for their work on an ongoing basis as well. So I think that's how we've got to keep doing it. And that's outside of just being present and hanging right. I mean this is we got to spend time and space with them so that we held that relational accountability as well.

[01:17:10] Thank you. I see this motion. I know what this means. Reverend Wilson thank you so much. I just wanted to say

[01:17:40] I just wanted to let you know that we see you. We love you. We're holding you in our hearts and we appreciate this is for the people of Ferguson and St.. Lewis that we see you. We



appreciate you. And we're holding you in our hearts and we thank you for coming and sharing your story with us today. Thank you.

[01:18:02] Thank you. Applause All right everyone.

[01:18:15] My name is DeVita. I'm a public engagement programs manager and I wanted to give just you all have been so generous but just one final round of applause for Reverend Wilson and for caring just for being a proud of

[01:18:36] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.

