



## Rebirthing a Nation: Letters from the Future Pt. 1

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[00:00:36] This podcast is being presented in two parts. You are listening to Part 1.

[00:00:42] Hey there.

[00:00:43] My name is Davida Ingram and I'm hanging out with Nikki Etienne, who is one of our emcees for tonight, and I want to kind of condense my remarks because I want to keep us going with the program, I want to start by saying tonight's program is made possible by the Seattle Public Library Foundation. And as we acknowledged, it's taking place on Indigenous lands. And for the last 25 years, we have hosted special civic engagement programs just like this one. And they were designed to create a space for community togetherness that celebrates inclusivity and racial justice during challenging political times in our country. We also do this because libraries are the backbone of democracy. In them, we find knowledge and power along with intellectual freedom. So please join me tonight and thanking all of the people who helped to bring this community dialogue together. Let's begin with our presenters Aneesa Roidad, Erica Ijeoma, Aretha Basu, Esmey Jimenez, Hannah Bahram

[00:01:49] Pour, Miriam McBride, Ray Corona and Ricky Reyes. Can we give them a round of applause?

[00:01:56] And in a little bit, I'm going to bring up my partner in crime Ana Pinto da Silva. But before I do that, I want to say big ups to our youth, elders and families and adults for holding it down for community and lighting the way. And I also want to give a shout out to our

hardworking library staff. There's one person tonight that I want to give a special thank you to, and that is my colleague, Orlando Lugo.

[00:02:20] This is Orlando's last public program with us.

[00:02:25] And I really cannot tell you how dearly Orlando will be missed. So before I get too teary eyed, I'm going to pass the mike to the one and only co-founder of PechaKucha for Seattle, the inimitable Ana Pinto da Silva. Please take it away, Ana.


[00:02:45] Just going to surreptitiously sneak a bit of tech into our program. Just give me a minute. Don't mind me. OK.

[00:02:57] First and foremost, I want to thank Davida for that extremely kind welcome and I want to say also, Orlando, you are a dream to work with. You're absolutely amazing. So let's just do that one thing again for Orlando, right over here. I'm going to be super brief because we have an incredible program today, but what I want to underscore is that PechaKucha is about togetherness.

[00:03:23] PechaKucha is about building community. PechaKucha is about building community through courageous conversation. Today, we've been brought together to rebirth a nation to hear letters from the future. And what I love about this program is that it rests with us with our stories and how we inspire each other to not only imagine a better world, but help each other actually create it. PechaKucha Seattle, PechaKucha just a raise of hands how many people have. This is a first time PechaKucha event.

[00:03:59] Well, welcome, welcome, everybody. Let's give everybody a big P.K. welcome.

[00:04:06] So for those of you who are new I'll just briefly say that PechaKucha is actually a global phenomenon, it was founded about in 2004 in Tokyo, Japan, by two architects who had a practice in Tokyo. Since their founding in 2004 there are now over 1000 and 60 cities around the world that host PechaKucha Nights. What does this mean? It means that on any given night from like for example, today we have PechaKucha events in Medina in Bermuda. We have them in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary. Right. In Madison, Wisconsin, all happening at the same time. That means that there are usually about 10,000 PechaKucha events per year. Seattle was the world's 32nd PechaKucha and it was ignited through a flame of friendship. And



since our founding, we have become one of the most premier, longstanding and prolific PechaKucha chapters in the world.

[00:05:09] Let's give that up. So what does that mean for our region and what does that mean for Seattle?

[00:05:15] I did the math the other day at that on a Post-it note, and I shocked myself and I realized that there have been over 900 speakers that have crossed the PechaKucha stage since 2006.

[00:05:27] That is a lot of leadership. That is a lot of brilliance taking the stage. And I'm proud to say we've had seven-year-olds take the stage, 77 year-olds take the stage. We've been honored to collaborate with so many different partners around the world. And we are so delighted to be here with you in Seattle at the Seattle Central Library.

[00:05:47] So we start with gratitude. And so tonight, it is my honor to thank our community partners and artists. So starting from the top, the NAACP Youth Coalition, Hilltop Urban Gardens, RingSide, Seattle Center Festival, Earshot Jazz, Wa Na Wari, [UNKOWN], Tula Kurashige, Emily Lawson.

[00:06:14] Yeah. Give it up, guys. It's all so good. It's so good. We inspire each other.

[00:06:20] We are each other's teachers. This is the best Scott Kurashige,

[00:06:26] Steve Sneed, John Gilbreath, Gansango Dance. Let's do that again for Gansango Dance because that just made my month, Ben Hunter, Nikki Etienne, Nikita Oliver – I know, she's here - and Wesley Roach. RingSide are going to be our emcees for the night.

[00:06:48] And I want to invite them onto the stage to introduce themselves and welcome our first speakers. Thank you.

[00:06:55] What's up, y'all?



[00:06:56] Tonight I am K.O.

[00:06:58] Nikkita yep. One of the co-hosts of RingSide.

[00:07:03] What's up? I'm Mama Nikki.

[00:07:06] I usually have the mike a lot, but our other part of us, is our deejay (we're a bit of a trio) DJ Rise is a dealing with a family matter.

[00:07:16] And so I feel a little naked without him.

[00:07:21] I could say that on TV. Right. Right. You can say naked. Okay. Good. There's other things I shouldn't. Got it. Noted. I have to be. I have to censor myself today because we're in the library and it's we have a live podcast. The library is not about censorship. It will be if it's. It's not, it's not about censorship.

[00:07:45] Welcome to the duo that K.O. Nikkita and Momma Nikki.

[00:07:49] Yep. I know y'all are excited for it. You don't sound excited. See, the one thing that happens at RingSide is that if you don't participate, I come into the crowd.

[00:08:01] Since I don't have my travel mike, it's over there - I will get it. Right now, I just feel like I'm a teacher, but I'm not. Each one teach one. We're all teachers. There is my music.

[00:08:12] We are teachers tonight! The youth right now are the truth right now. Yes. The youth right now are the truth right now.

[00:08:24] The youth right now are the truth right now. All right. A couple of you all caught on. We're working on it. We're going to working on it. I want to give some shout outs. So, dudette. We have an incredible artist. We have many incredible artists and cultural workers that have been with us starting out in the front. I'm going to call it the pavilion, but I don't think that's what they call it. It's the plaza. If you could all show some love for all those cultural workers that got

us set up with the prefunk. I also want to give some love to Tula Kurashige. We got a crowd pleaser up there!

[00:09:08] All right. So we're creating some incredible art. Hold on. Let me grab a piece of it so you all can see it. We got a visual aide folks. Got a visual aide. Hold on.

[00:09:17] Wait for signed copies of this one of a kind pieces of art. Our cultural work is so important. In addition to the things that you'll hear tonight, art that is created really sticks with us. And it has the power of transforming our communities. Facts. Support your cultural workers, support young people making art. Yeah. All that is really important.

[00:09:40] If you're a young person under the age of like twenty-four can I get a hand? Shout out for yourself. Go ahead and clap for yourself.

[00:09:49] Love it. We need you. So we have an incredible opener for you all tonight. Fact. And you know, it would not be rebirthing a nation. It would not be a PechaKucha if we didn't start out with young people taking the lead. Young people are not the leaders of tomorrow. They are the leaders of today. Every important movement that has changed the world has literally been led by young people on the front lines. So in that fashion, we are going to have leaders, representatives from the NAACP, National Association of Colored People.

[00:10:26] Ok. You know what? Sometimes you'd be looking at the acronym because, you know what the acronym is. Yeah, the NAACP and then you like. Do I really know the words? Yeah. So we have some young people. Some representatives, we have Erica Ijeoma who uses she/her pronouns. Who is a rising senior West Seattle High School, as a student leader for the NAACP Youth Coalition. She advocates for social reform in our Seattle Public School District. We know we need that. But she's not in school. Erica spends time with kids and petting dogs. Love it. Aneesa Roidad also uses she/her pronouns as a rising senior at Ballard High School. While she says she's not looking forward to all those adult responsibilities ahead, I'm not either. Wait. I already have them. She can't wait to shape the future in our democracy by voting. Aside from social activism, she loves reading, learning, hiking and eating.

[00:11:21] If you would all warm your hands up, make it rain, make it rain, rub them together and then clap together for these incredible young leaders, Erica and Aneesa.

[00:11:40] Hello. Hello.

[00:11:42] Hi, I'm Aneesa. My name's Erica. I guess we'll just get started.

[00:11:49] Do we need to click on anything? OK. Thank you. Thank you.

[00:11:53] I'm not just thinking about school because it starts in a week. Coming from a family who used education to overcome circumstance. I can't remember a time I wasn't told or didn't know that education was the most important aspect of my life. My love and appreciation for learning fostered early on grows the more and more I learn.

[00:12:14] My father moved here to give opportunities to his children that he didn't have access to growing up. His journey to America consisted of harassment, poverty and odd jobs. My job as a student was to make this journey worth it.

[00:12:25] From a young age, I fell in love with education.

[00:12:29] Education is where it all starts. Not only does education prepare us for lives and careers, but it is how we learn about, better understand and appreciate ourselves, others and the world. But in schools where racism is affirmed, true history is ignored and students aren't uplifted those idyllic views of education are far from reality.

[00:12:51] Students know the system through and through because they've lived it, but they're constantly excluded from decision making as well as negatively impacted by school and district wide decisions. Who better to vocalize students' needs than the students themselves? Self, especially the ones furthest from justice.

[00:13:06] That's what the founders of the NAACP Youth Council asked and answered.

[00:13:10] The NAACP Youth Council is a group of students dedicated to racial equity and justice in the Seattle Public School District and beyond. We're fighting for a future where our list of our list of demands to the school board for mandating ethnic studies to staff training are realized. Erica and I want to see our demands not only reflected in Seattle, but across the country.

[00:13:31] Imagine you're walking through the hallways of one of these schools.

[00:13:34] The walls are full of vibrant posters affirming the diverse student body promoting clubs like Muslim Student Association, traditional Chinese New Year Lanterns are

[00:13:45] Showcased, along with other community and student art filling the halls with beauty and positivity. As you pass by a classroom, you glance over and see a teacher greeting their students at the door.

[00:13:57] They are part of a well-paid staff as diverse, supportive and eager to be there as the student body. They are a role model and inspiration to the students they teach who see themselves and their successes in their teacher.

[00:14:10] Today's lesson parabolas, ellipses and how Katherine Johnson used them to make incalculable contributions to spaceflight. Every subject K through 12, including math has ethnic studies incorporated in. Because of this, the students understand one another from a point of compassion with accurate knowledge on their backgrounds and are able to better learn together.

[00:14:28] Instead of taking yet another test which can't measure all their value or intelligence, the students are working on an engaging project informed by districtwide trainings on anti-racism and on cultural responsiveness. The teacher honors each student by being flexible about how they complete the project.

[00:14:49] The next room you pass by is empty, but it's usually used for restorative justice circles instead of having suspension or expulsion be the primary response. Students work through conflict by sitting down and talking it out with the support of their community. They know that they are loved and cared about and not just another statistic or problem.

[00:15:07] When things get too stressful, either in school or out of school, you know that there are mental health specialists, teachers and other students who can support you. Although your school challenges you to the best of your abilities. They still make sure you can balance your academics, athletics, social life, mental and emotional health.

[00:15:27] Finally, you arrive at your destination, the main office, the paper holder next to the door has a school newsletter in multiple languages, advertises cultural community events and holds a flyer on upcoming school board meetings which are staggered at different times and days.

[00:15:41] So they're accessible to everyone in the community.

[00:15:44] You're at the main office to thank your principal for all that they've done for you and your school. It's been an amazing four years. And because of the equitable resources your school provided, you feel well prepared for life after high school. Whether that be community college, a four year university, trade school, working or traveling.

[00:16:06] In a few days, you'll be graduating along with everyone in your grade, unafraid of failure, full of compassion, overflowing with knowledge and eager to learn even more. You are not just capable of changing the world. You're excited to do it. And it's all because of your educational experience. Or more likely to say, your learning experience.

[00:16:24] We've been using the term education pretty loosely throughout this presentation. But what we really want to do is fundamentally change the education system into a learning system. The root word of education is civilization, and the unfortunate implication is socialization and oppression. Learning, however, is a liberating journey. It means following the soul of one's foot.

[00:16:48] If you have a passion for learning similar to ours, please join us in the fight to advance our demands. One, support the Black Lives Matter at school actions such as end zero tolerance policies. Two, mandate ethnic studies as well as improve the existing curriculum.

[00:17:01] Three, increase Youth Voice by increasing student involvement opportunities. Four renovate Rainier Beach High School, a Seattle Public School that hasn't had a major renovation since it was built in 1959.

[00:17:14] Five, increase access to post-secondary opportunities and mental health services. Six, overhaul discipline practices implementing restorative justice district wide. Seven,



mandate staff training on issues of race and equity. And lastly, eight, hiring and retaining more staff of color.

[00:17:33] It won't be easy. But ask yourself, what kind of ancestor do you want to be?

[00:17:38] Do you want your kids and grandkids to stand up here in a few decades and wish for the same things we are? Or do you want your courage, hope, love and strength to have made racial equity a reality for them?

[00:17:51] Thank you for the opportunity to speak here tonight. And thank you for our peers to our peers in the NAACP Youth Council and our advisors, Jon Greenberg, Rita Green, Sebrena Burr and Virginia Pattaya. Thank you all for being here tonight. For not only re-imagining a nation with us, but changing it.

[00:18:09] Follow us on social media and visit our website to find up about upcoming events, as well as stay updated on the progress being made. Sign up to testify at school board meetings by emailing or calling the district the Monday before the meeting at 8:00 am sharp. Vote in the upcoming City Council and school board elections and please keep coming to amazing events like this one. Thank you. And have a good night.

[00:18:39] Can you all show us love for these youth now?

[00:18:45] I think renovations at Rainier Beach should be happening now.

[00:18:50] Like today. I am going to get my theme music back on because I can do that, because that's what I do. I want to bring up our next presenter because I know we're running a little bit behind schedule. So I am going to tell you a little bit about Hannah Bahram Pour.

[00:19:06] She's a member of the Seattle Center Festál Community, an Iranian-American who has organized her March of Our Lives as a gun reform advocate. There is a trigger warning for this particular presentation. So it looks at the impact of gun violence and if this material is triggering for you. It's totally understandable. And the Seattle Public Library staff are here to support you if you need to take care of yourself. So we'll give you all a minute if you do need to step out.

[00:19:31] Can I also get control of my sound again for the music? Be great. Thank you so much. Y'all give it up for the sound guy.

[00:19:42] Because otherwise we can't do what we do it. Is Hannah here? There she is.

[00:19:47] I didn't even ask what your pronouns were. Is it she? They? She. Okay, great. Okay. Hi.

[00:19:54] My name is Hannah Bahram Pour. And today I'm going to be giving a presentation about something that I believe is incredibly relevant to what is happening in our political environment today and what we are going to face, whether we like it or not in our future. Today, as you probably already know, I'm going to be talking about gun violence and the stereotypes that surround it. So when most people think of gun violence, they think of school shootings. But in reality, gun violence can present itself in a variety of different ways. You'll see on the chart on the next slide, gun violence can look like suicides, homicides, law enforcement shootings, accidental shootings. Thank you. And more. No matter the type of gun violence. All these need to be addressed by both the government. That includes, you know, Congress, House of Representatives and us, the people, without us acknowledging these incidents. nothing is going to happen and nothing will change. And so there are many different groups of people who are working to battle the obstacles that this country faces from gun violence. One of the most well-known, especially in the Seattle area, is March for Our Lives.

[00:21:08] I actually worked for a March for Our Lives for around two ish years. And so that's why this topic is so important to me. What I believe is really special about March for Our Lives is that it works through helping the younger generation kind of gain their voice. Something that I learned with March for Our Lives is about the upward trend in gun violence. When we think of the word upward trend, we think of, you know, growth and improvement. Yeah. You have an upward trend in your grades. But this isn't really the case in this situation. The United States has seen an increase on the lack of gun control and how easy has become for people to be able to find loopholes in our government system. When we look at gun violence in the U.S. specifically, unfortunately, we see that the United States is the leading country in the world when it comes to gun ownership. You know, at first we don't think of this as a bad thing. But some of these people haven't necessarily gone through the right background checks.

[00:22:05] I know this picture is really blurry, but I feel like it was a really good example of a scapegoat, which is defined as a person who is blamed for the wrongdoings and mistakes or

faults of others. I think now more than ever, we see scapegoats in our society. And whether or not I mean, most scapegoats we see, especially for gun violence, is immigrants, Muslims and those with mental health disabilities. Despite the real research and the proven facts, we still continue to make these associations out of fear. But blaming a scapegoat won't get rid of our problems. So this cover of *Time* magazine is probably my favorite ever. I mean, besides, the topic and the colors. I think the title is ridiculously meaningful. I mean, "Do words kill?" And I honestly think the answer is yes. One of the most common stereotypes we see in gun violence and terrorism as a whole is people from the Middle East. Now, my parents were originally born in Kerman, Iran. They were raised. I mean, they went to elementary school there, middle school there, college there. And, you know, with the politics we see on TV today, Iran is associated with a negative connotation. But to them, it's their home. After my parents were married, they decided they wanted to leave Iran because it wasn't a place that they felt comfortable to raise their children. And as you can imagine, it's very difficult to leave Iran. I mean, even to enter Canada, which is what my family first had to do. Its borderline impossible. And it's because of these original Middle Eastern stereotypes that they would bring danger to this country. So why do we associate some races and cultures with gun violence and not others? Why is it so difficult for my family to enter the country, but not for people migrating from Europe, for example? Well, to this day, many would classify gun violence as a social problem, going all the way back to the unfortunate attacks of 9/11 and media cover on only certain incidents.

[00:24:09] Gun violence has slowly approach to increase as a social problem. So despite the stereotypes placed on Middle Easterns for gun violence, I am proud of my culture and the way it has shaped the person I am today. The slide behind me is one of Iran's most beautiful mosques in the capital. And so, despite what many may think, Iranian culture gives root to grow respect through beautiful dance forms, art forms and surprisingly, rug making. And I wouldn't be the person I am today without this culture in my life. So I'm going to start talking a little bit. This is more of a sensitive part about the statistics of who the shooters are and who the victims are. Now, none of this is to place any blame or to point any fingers, but it's important to actually look at these facts, to push these stereotypes out of our mind, whether or not we realize we have these stereotypes in the first place. When we look at the races of the shooters of these crimes, we see that they are predominantly white males, not the minority stereotypes that people originally think of. And when we look at the victims of these crimes, we see that they are predominantly minorities, which isn't what we would usually think of. The slide that you can see behind me kind of emphasizes what I was just saying about who the victims and the shooters are of gun violence.

[00:25:32] And so I guess the question is what can I do to stop gun violence? I mean, I'm just a high school kid, you know? Haven't even graduated yet. We can stay educated on the stereotypes of these crimes. We can support peaceful protests and rallies and we can contact our Congress representative and demand that they advocate for gun violence prevention. So

we have seen an increase in the amount of gun shootings over the years, but this doesn't mean it has to continue this way. In the past five years, what I believe to be one of the most powerful pieces of action is the banning of assault rifles and high capacity ammunition in 2016. Unfortunately, this does mean the biggest piece of legislation we've had passed to address this was three years ago. What happens from here on out is up to us. We have no idea how long it will take or how much effort to stop the effects of gun violence. And it's not only these people who are running for the presidential election in 2020. It's up to us and what we can do to look past these stereotypes and recognize that there is an issue in this country. What can our country do in the future? I believe we are getting better. I believe there is a future without gun violence. In fact, this month we've seen a large push in Congress for stronger gun control measures. Every peaceful protest, every mention in Congress, we are getting one step closer to a safer and better future. Thank you.

[00:27:08] Thank you. Pretty sure Davida is going to be coming up here to do this next introduction. Leave it to Nikki to stick to the script.

[00:27:17] You know. How are you feeling? She told me, too.

[00:27:20] What do you think about our first our first two presenters?

[00:27:28] The reason why I wanted to introduce our next speaker is because Miriam McBride was part of our Seattle Emergent Strategy Cohort. That was the project that helped to inspire this program. We have been trying to imagine in the library and through other city teams like the Seattle Office of Arts and Culture and the Seattle Office for Civil Rights. What can we do together to make it possible for Indigenous, black and brown communities to have the city that they deserve. And, to also think about the ways that we're connected to surrounding areas. So big ups to our cousins and Tacoma. I love that Miriam represents for Tacoma and for anyone in the south end and unincorporated King County. We know we're connected because of displacement and gentrification, but also because of culture. All right. Miriam McBride lives in Tacoma and enjoys bathing in the sun and talking to the trees. They love to dance and talk to folks about their birth charts. Please give a warm round of applause for Miriam McBride.

[00:28:46] Hey, everybody. Hello. Hello. Okay. Get comfortable.

[00:28:53] Yeah. I'm excited to be here. I'm gonna be talking. I'm really literal. And so I'm gonna literally be talking from the future. So we're gonna be doing some time travelling. It is

exciting. And yeah. I'm going to be talking about liberation and how we can create that now and how we can continue to dream towards the future.

[00:29:16] Let's do it.

[00:29:18] Welcome back to the future. I say back because this is what we dreamed and imagined together. I'm Mariam. I'm a young elder in 2049 and I am standing on reclaim a Duwamish Land and what used to be the old United States. And so I welcome you to this journey with me. Thank you for unplugging from the present and being here to imagine with me. It takes courage to dream past our current demise. It is a radical act to dream and believe. It was your ability to dream and believe that God is here in the first place. So again, thank you and welcome. When I was young, I remember believing that the only way that that 21st century system was going to serve us was if it was burned down and rebuilt. And honestly, it wasn't that far from happening. And so before I get into that, I want to welcome you to our lands where folks are taken care of and cared for, where we believe our biggest strength is our relationships and our relationships of people being one of them. But specifically, our relationship to youth, our youth are our greatest achievement. They are the ones who carry our steps forward. So we focused very heavily on skilling them up, but also allowing them the freedom to be, to play, to explore, to teach and to be themselves. And we also honor elders and ancestors. They encourage, inspire and move us to be where we are now, to be where you are now. Their presence and knowledge is honored and valued. So youth get to learn from them and create with them and they get to be taken care of in our space.

[00:31:01] We also honor our relationships to land our Indigenous siblings and ancestors. Let us to unearth our own indigeneity in our practices, to be in relationship with the world around us, to grow food and to viciously protect the land because we learn from our past. What happens when we don't. And now getting to the past of what is right now for you. It is almost 2020 and climate crisis has almost reached a point of no return. And we all knew it. Some folks felt like people weren't doing enough. But others knew that folks who have been directly impacted have been fighting for years and generations. And as our environment was on a downfall, so was the rest of society. From children to black, brown and trans women missing to families being displaced for the wealthy. There were so many wounds of oppression. Sometimes it was too much. But everyone kept fighting and building towards their liberation. And that's when the visionaries, the young people of that time decided to rise up. It was their turn right at that time. It was a time of extreme creativity and openness. And they knew that the world that we lived in couldn't suffice. We needed more healing, more land connection, more safety, more community protection, more action. And we needed to create change and build towards that. They realize that even though we are all fighting towards liberation, there is no liberation. If we have no safe place to exist, no water, no food or land to claim. We needed to

honor and protect this land to get to it. And we needed to come together, but also needed to pave a way for healing.

[00:32:47] First thing they did was decided that they had the power to fight back. There were many movements already happening at that time led by those most impacted. So they rallied and organized to get others involved because stagnation is no longer an option. They fought against big corporations, complacent governments, and they knew the future still needed to be created. So what they did was meet their community needs. But at the same time, they were bold enough to dream of the world they wanted. And that would create that they would create and practice each step as they got there. They knew that at that time they weren't yet ready for liberation because they need a stronger, trusting, healing and accountable community with everyone playing their part. A lot of visionaries knew that there was a lot of internal harm happening and we needed to eradicate it in order to get to harmonious future transphobia, anti-black, settler colonialism, all those needed to be gone. And so they created avenues for healing and accountability. So one thing they created was the box. The box goal was decolonize the mine, identify colonialism impact and to relearn and allow folks to travel throughout their ancestral timelines and to find the roots of their beliefs around gender, sexuality, bodies and power. And it opened up so many opportunities for folks to be accountable for themselves as both learners and teachers to rebuild their own views in a space that was not only safe for themselves, but safe for the people who were coming into this new community. Where did you learn this? Does it serve you? Does it harm others? Those were some of the questions at the box asked.

[00:34:31] The box became extremely popular as it changed the lives of those in it, because we know when we create a world where the most invalidated can thrive. That's a world that's great for everyone. And the box is still used today as we welcome in newcomers. Of course, the box alone didn't get us here. It was honoring our relationships, the people and to land, imagination and bold dreaming, action and repairing harm. We vision so hard that we were pushed to create the reality change and we believed in our power as people. Now, in this new world that we are in today, capitalism and colonialism impact is long gone. We focus on people and our relations. Every person has a role. We honor passion and natural instincts, free expression and being our truest selves. We learn in Indigenous ways and we trust ourselves and our own knowledge because we, the people have power. So sharing those pieces of history with you was an important part of our way because our biggest principle is to honor and teach our history. We made it through, but just barely. So having knowing our history is also a source of power and resilience and allows us to dream and imagine even bigger than what is here today. So before I get back to the future and leave your to dream, create and act, I want to leave you with this song to honor your histories ancestors to propel you all into the future.

[00:36:01] I do not come here alone. Oh. I carry my people in my bones.

[00:36:13] I do not come here alone. If you listen, you can hear them in my soul. Thank you.

[00:36:29] Keep showing love for Mariam. That was incredible. I just want to remind us that we are in the land or I call it the land of Octavia Butler.

[00:36:40] There should be a statue.

[00:36:42] So that human beings somewhere in this city and just, you know, the power and the value of our afro sci-fi traditions of being able to call out what is and could be if we stay where we're at, but also imagining what could be if we changed. So that was really powerful. Thank you so much for that reminder. Yeah, show some love one more time. Love is good. Well, I feel incredibly excited and honored to introduce this next speaker.

[00:37:14] Quick story, I met them when they were 18 and they had a protest uniform. Just describe it to you. It involved wearing black boots and cut blue jeans and a leather black jacket everywhere. I mean, she was starting the revolution.

[00:37:31] And I remember meeting her at a protest and just being inspired and encouraged by her energy and reminded again what I said earlier, that young people have been on the frontlines of every movement that has changed the world.

[00:37:44] So Aretha Basu serves as Legislative Assistant and Community Outreach Manager in Seattle, City Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda's Office. Aretha is an active anti-racist community organizer working accountably in community with many grassroots coalitions on issues related to police accountability, no new youth jail, addressing anti blackness through Asians for Black Lives and South Asians for Black Lives and working very deeply in community serving with the city on the criminal justice equity team. She really is a powerhouse. I'm so excited to see her continue to bloom and share this this knowledge with you. So rub your hands together, make it rain. And, show some love for Aretha Basu.

[00:38:42] That's my favorite song. That's why that happened. I also took this very literally. I've been told that's because I'm like hella, I'm hella Capricorn is what I've been told. So, yeah, we're also going to go to the future with me as well. And this slide is going to change and the magic is going to happen right now. So I wanted to start by saying thank you. I want to start by

saying thank you to the women of color, especially the black women in my life who have poured their brilliance, their love and their labor into me so that I have the analysis that I have today. Because of them, I can stand in front of a room like this and talk about prison abolition like I know some shit. So I also want to thank you all. So fast forward to 2060.

[00:39:28] Dear Aretha, it's future Aretha. How have you been girl? I'm writing to you to tell you that Rihanna is president. Cardi B is vice president and you married the love of your life Aquaman. You're also a mermaid now. Congrats. Clearly 2060 is poppin.

[00:39:46] More importantly, I'm writing to tell you that we won in the year 2060. The vision of No new youth jail has finally come to fruition. That movement that started back in 2012 with that disingenuous ballot initiative has changed our world. The youth jail was repurposed. In fact, all jails were repurposed. We learned from my friend Zack Norris and Deanna Van Buren in Oakland and turned all of our jails into restorative centers. The centers have job training and small business incubation for formerly incarcerated people. There are restaurants run by the people in the job training program. Entire floor is dedicated to community organizing, restorative justice spaces intentionally built to incorporate nature and comfort which amplify the circle process. Along with repurposing all of our jails, we repurpose all of the courts too. Working with the Deanna, we replicated the Peacemaking Centers of New York using process facilitators bring together people in conflict, family members, friends and other members of the community to talk about how an event affected each person. Through these conversations people have been moved towards reconciliation and wellness, and since we have moved away from the archaic criminal legal system of your time, we are freed up some serious money. I can't believe the county used to spend \$1.4 billion on courts, jails, cops, lawyers and staff. You'll be happy to know what we spend that money on now. We finally invested in the programs we knew worked. We implemented the curriculum, Freedom Schools Creative Justice - The Ella Baker Academy community passes into schools. We got rid of school resource officers, expulsion and suspension. We serve real food in schools.

[00:41:23] Rectangle pizza is gone.

[00:41:24] Kids of color have curriculum that centers them, history books that honor them, and food that nourishes their minds. We expanded the Corner Greeter program and has been a resounding success. Streets I used to be filled with cops are now filled with community volunteers. This is because of increased social engagement, community members being accountable, small business being connected to youth and people being trained in de-escalation and response to emergencies.



[00:41:51] Girl, there is affordable housing in Seattle.

[00:41:54] Those few community projects by El Centro, Africatown and Youngstown became the norm. Developers finally began working with historic communities to design spaces that reflected and honored the neighborhood. These buildings have art spaces, gathering spaces, small businesses and affordable child care.

[00:42:12] And we saved the planet after divesting from fossil fuels, switching to a green economy and making meaningful investments that were outlined in the Green New Deal locally and nationally.

[00:42:23] We were able to slow down and eventually reverse the destruction of the planet. That 1.4 billion went pretty far, huh?

[00:42:31] This is where that deejay does that little scratch noise. Dear Aretha.

[00:42:35] Its future Aretha. I hope you are well. I'm writing to you from the year 2060. And let me tell you, we need your help. Donald Trump never left office. In fact, him and Jeff Bezos got married and deployed white supremacist robot babies everywhere to make things worse. Rihanna canceled Fenty Beauty and there's no more highlighter. The world is in chaos because of the climate crisis. It feels like a dystopia. South Park is underwater. In fact, most of Seattle is underwater. Most of the air in the world is too polluted to breathe. The entire Amazon burned down, along with most of the rainforest. Entire populations of animals are extinct, and now more than half of the world's population are climate refugees. Because of where Seattle is located we were one of the few places where the air is still somewhat breathable. This has drawn a massive migration of climate refugees to the area. But because we never fully changed zoning laws, we have no capacity to hold all of the refugees arriving. Rents have tripled and quadrupled. Communities of color and local folks have to be shuttled in on boats. Encampments and tent cities have exploded around the city. The wealthy have stockpiled resources and good land. Meanwhile, everyday people are left scouring for dry land and fighting for scraps of resources, effectively making slums. Due to the flooding of so many neighborhoods there are massive amounts of people living in very small and desolate areas. It is devastating to watch. As if that wasn't bad enough the executive has doubled down on sweeping people from place to place in order to pay for all of her new police officers.

[00:44:02] They have taken money away from social workers, housing and food banks. This has led to more and more people being funneled into courts and jails, which have also

expanded to match the population growth. Because of the huge influx of people and the encampment to jail pipeline, jails have become overcrowded. Instead of investing in housing, health or social services, they have built more jails and prisons, which has decimated the tree canopy. There are now more jails and prisons than there are houses, community centers or parks combined. The climate crisis has raged on. Because of this people have been dying at alarming rates in the jails. More people have died in jails now than ever in history. Heat waves, floods and the lack of food are killing people off faster than any of the diseases which have also, unfortunately, blossomed. And there are now prison strikes every week for basic human needs. Even with the increase in courts, the system is overwhelmed with a deadlock to due to the number of people being incarcerated. You thought people were waiting for a long time in 2019 for their trials? People now wait years and years before even having their first hearing. And it's honestly common for people to die before their first hearing because of the flooding, heatwaves and lack of food. The world keeps burning. People keep running. They keep getting locked up and they keep dying in the jails.

[00:45:25] It's become a deadly cycle. Please, for our future, do something. Sincerely, Future Aretha. Both of these realities are on our horizon. It is the decisions that we make today that decide which of those worlds we get to live in. I hope that after today, after hearing our stories, we choose liberation because we have nothing to lose but our chains. Thank you.


[00:45:55] Wow. Bad.

[00:45:59] I went from like, yeah, we won today to dang. Right? Thank you. Thank you, Aretha.

[00:46:06] For you letting us know we still have a choice right now. Isn't that a beautiful hope? To know that we still have a choice right now. That we can change our future by living better in our present. And Mama Earth will definitely take care of us if we take care of her. So is Gansango in the room?

[00:46:27] Are y'all ready to get back in your bodies a little bit? Let some rhythm wash over you? Can you rub your hands together?

[00:46:34] Make it rain and then clap together, make it thunder. As Gansango comes up and gets ready to share some music and culture with us. How are you all feeling? Yeah, I feel you. I feel you. I'm like man, I need to get an electric car. Messing up. Who got money for me? You share my car. All right. One more round of applause for Gansango.



[00:47:10] Thank you very much.

[00:47:13] I'm moved by all that I've heard. To share a few words with you. Have you ever heard of the word Sankofa? Do you know where it comes from? Well, let me educate you. Sankofa, it's one of the Adinkra symbols. Adinkra symbols is one of the symbols from the Asante people of Ghana. And it simply means: to go back and pick up from the past. But the message behind it is quite simple that any culture that does not go back to the past to pick from the knowledge and the wisdom from the past, to replenish the present, and cast a shadow into the future, dies. Don't forget to vote. 2020. Then one of the most interesting aspects of culture is the diversity that we share. The unique aspect is what is sacred. Do not forget about the sacred things that this land has given all of us. The respect and a reverence for your fellow human being. It's what we present as African drummers and dancers. We are not here just to drum, but also to give you that knowledge and wisdom from the motherland.

[00:49:03] Thank you.

[00:49:36] [MUSIC]

[00:51:43] [FOREIGN]


[00:51:47] [MUSIC]


[00:52:28] [MUSIC]

[00:52:47] [MUSIC]

[00:57:06] Thank you very much. Thank you. We got one more for you. It's been a pleasure being a part of this.

[00:57:13] Thank you very much. [MUSIC]





[00:58:54] Thank you. Thank you.

[00:58:58] Oh, we forgot to introduce the members of the group. On my left all the way from Togo Kokou Gbakénou.

[00:59:12] All the way from Seattle, Togo, Ghana, Miss Nailah.

[00:59:19] On my right. My Uncle Greg/g all the way from Ghana.

[00:59:26] He's from Ghana. He can't play like this if he wasn't from Ghana. And my name is Yaw Amponsah from Ghana. Thank you.

[00:59:38] This is Gansango Music and Dance. Thank you so much. Can you give me another round of applause? We got any percussionists in here?

[00:59:50] Wow, it got quiet real quick as soon as you saw all that, huh? Yeah, I used a hand drum once. No, it's okay.

[00:59:57] It's alright, you don't have to admit it. We can talk about it later. This concludes part one. Listen to part two for the conclusion of this podcast.

[01:00:08] 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.

