CDN Creative Placemaking Convocation

Plenary

October 13, 2020 at 2pm EDT

English Transcript

[ MUSIC PLAYING ]

>> Speaker: Good afternoon everyone. Good to see you all. Once again. I am Eric Giles, I am NASAA's learning services director and I will be your Convocation master of ceremony. I am your emcee. We had a lot of great sessions last week and this week we will continue that trend. To get us started, I want to call attention to the lands we call home in their complex and layered history. NASAA does this at the outset of every convening to pay respect and appreciation for the original people, places and cultures of this country. Please join me in a moment of reflection to honor the lands we occupy and the histories of their indigenous people, as we acknowledge the taking of lands and lives, let us commit to responsible stewardship of the land and respect for the first nation to remain part of the past, present and future of this country. Today we must acknowledge the people who were forcefully taken from their ancestorial lands in Africa, uprooted from their cultures and enslaved ‑‑

We have posted a link in the chat so you can find the name of the indigenous peoples of the land on which you reside. Please find and post the name of the original people in the chat area.

Thank you. We have been using Zoom a lot lately but I will go over tips anyway. Bear with me for a bit.

We are encouraging you to interact with each other and us throughout the week via chat, that is also where we will field questions, you will notice we have a couple people working as text today. Stephanie and Thomas. Feel free send them technical questions you have. All questions and comments can be entered into the chat. Click on the chat icon at the bottom of the screen to open the chat window and type at the bottom of the chat window. To see participants, click on the icon at the bottom of the screen to open up the participant's window. We have a crowd from across the country. Our sketch artist is back. Thank you so much for joining us again this weekend.

You can watch Alson work through the gallery view as it is set now or make his work your primary view. Hover over the sketch and click pen. To unpen, upper left corner of the video. We are spotlighting a few people today. Thank you, Thomas. You have a choice, otherwise to view on your screen, click view in the top right and click speaker or gallery. We will spotlight speakers from time to time and that will force you into speaker view. If you want to see the crowd again, press gallery view.

We are encouraging everyone to keep their video feeds on during the session. It will reinforce our sense of shared community and allow our speakers to see who they are talking to. We are offering closed captioning today, English and Spanish. To access English, right click on the CC icon at the bottom of the window. From there, choose to view the captioning as a full transcript or on the screen in realtime. To access the Spanish captioning, click on the link in the chat window. It will open another window where you can follow along.

Finally, and I promise this is the last tech note, we are recording this session for future view.

We have an exciting week set up. Tuesdays and Thursdays are for everyone. For plenary workshops, we are delving into creative place making, looking at equity issues this week. All that has an eye toward the reality we live in. On Wednesday the community development coordinators will discuss their projects with their peers. Look for an e‑mail with a URL later today for tomorrow. Today's agenda is a great kickoff for this week.

As you see, we are at the opening session now but first we begin with a poem from Hannah Drake. And then we will get back to work with the plenary, exploring equity, and the recognizing and naming of inequity practices. We will take a break and come back for a discussion on the themes that arose during the plenary. Hannah Drake is a blogger, activist and author of eleven books and she is about to knock your socks off.

>> HANNAH: Thank you so much for having me and allowing you to join me today. Before I recite my poem spaces, I would like to say I am in Louisville, Kentucky, where Brianna Taylor, a 26‑year‑old black woman was murdered by the Police Department in her home. So over 100 days we have been protesting. The third day of protesting I recall going downtown, and I was tear gassed and pepper balls were shot at us and I never imagined in a city where I had given so much that I would find myself being tear gassed in the street. I felt as if a city that I had dedicated my work to, it turned its back on me.

A few weeks after we were tear gassed, our city decided to remove a confederate statue located in the Cherokee triangle, an affluent part. There have been debates for years about removing the statue and in the wake of Breonna Taylor's death and the uprising in the city, they decided to remove the statue.

I recall when they were having debates about should they remove it or should they not remove it, they asked us to go online and complete a form if you wanted them to remove it or not remove it. I remember filling out the form asking them to remove it and I felt how would someone that I had not ever met on the other side of this computer see my humanity and understand why I was asking them to remove this and I was very emotional about it because I couldn't believe that in this day and age I still had to plead this case of why of the statue should be removed from our city. They did end up removing the statue after the death of Breanna Taylor and I felt compelled to go stand in the space where the statue used to be. The statue was on a base, and so they removed the statue and the base was there still and my daughter and I went to the Cherokee statue and started reciting my poem, as I recited it people started coming out of their homes and people started gathering around to hear me recite this poem. I didn't accept that. I was just trying to record it because I felt it was very significant to stand in this space where the confederate statue used to be.

After I finished the poem people were crying and they were clapping and I challenged them, I am a believer, an artist that works in communities, communities know what they need and know what needs to be put in their community. I don't reside in this community but the Cherokee triangle is an open space where many people venture too. I challenged them, how you felt today when you heard me recite that poem is how you can create and put art in this space. That will call people in and not push people out. And you can put art in this space where everybody in the city and beyond feels like they believe and they are welcome to stand in this space. And so right now there is just flowers all around the base of this ‑‑ where the statue used to be as people are deciding what will be in that space and I challenged our city and many cities as we deal with removing confederate statues to create with equity at the forefront and create in a way that people feel I belong here.

I am going to recite my poem spaces now and then turn it back to Eric. Thank you for allowing me to do here.

This poem is called spaces.

It is difficult to stand in spaces, spaces that weren't designed for me, spaces that were not created for people that look like me, spaces that scream you do not belong here. Spaces that feel like sandpaper against my blackness, course and rough, and painful and uneasy. Spaces that are void of signs but still I can see them hanging in a not so doesn't memory, signs that separated water fountains in restaurants, blatantly reminding people that these spaces were not made for them. And although the signs no longer remain, the architecture and atmosphere is constructed in such a way that I know and we know that these are not our spaces. We are simply standing on borrowed time to entertain the masters masses, it is difficult to stand in these spaces and be me, fully me, cold switching my vernacular to make you feel comfortable, why must my life dress itself up in discomfort for you to feel at ease, why must my hair look a certain way in these spaces, why is my gender an issue in these spaces, why does my skin feel so heavy in these spaces? You see, these are spaces I no longer want to reside in. I do not enjoy being in these spaces, I no longer want to subject myself to these spaces but then I am reminded, as I stand in these spaces and I see the faces of these two little black girls watching me perform in awe because I am a woman with kinky hair like them and skin that looks like theirs and lips that look like theirs, standing in these spaces, spaces that have been designed in ways that have spoken to them at an early age, reminding them, baby, some spaces just ain't for your kind, you see, that is why I am in these spaces, being a shout in these spaces, it is for every black person that has ever entered a room and wondered would anyone look like them in these spaces, it is for every woman that has stood at the head of a board room table would she be considered equal in these spaces, it is for every LGBTQ person that has wondered could they safely be themselves in these spaces, it is for every Muslim woman that has wondered could she wear her hijab in these spaces, you see, I remember those. That stood in spaces not made for them. That marched on roads not paveed for them. That sat down on seats and buses not earmarked for them. That sat down at counters and endured the humiliation of sitting in spaces so that one day I too could stand in these spaces, you see, that is why I am in these spaces. It is for everyone that came before me that sipped water at the colored only fountain, that marched into integrated schools and knew they would be just one of nine. It is for every black performer that stood on stages so that one day little black kids could know that they too could stand on these stages. It is for my mother, my mother that stood in the space of a cotton field picking cotton for 80 cents a day, it is for everyone that will come after me for them to know that they have a right to be in these spaces, to have a seat at the table, in these spaces, to have a voice in these spaces, to have influence in these spaces, you see, that is why standing in these spaces, even when it makes me uncomfortable, and now some of you sit looking at me and now you feel uncomfortable. But today you have heard me, you cannot unsee me, in this space I belong. In this space we are here and we belong here, in this space. We are here and we belong here, in this space.

Thank you.

>> ERIC: Thank you. That was incredibly powerful way to start this session. Thank you so much for sharing that with us.

Moving into gallery view now, I am going to turn things over to Kiley Arroyo.

>> KILEY: Thank you so much. Thank you so much for sharing this space with all of us and sharing your gift and your spirit. I can't imagine a better way to ground this conversation and set the tone so thank you.

Thank you, Eric, and to all of the organizers to provide us this opportunity to pause and reflect and share out some of our learnings. Thank you to the participants today. And an even more thank you to my fellow panelists.

I am going to provide a little bit of context for this conversation that builds upon the brilliant ideas that have emerged over the last couple of weeks. These were expansive conversations. I will do my best to boil them down but I want to make sure we intentionally connect some dots today.

Over the first and second plenary, the speakers channeled this revolutionary energy that characterizes this moment and the long overdue need for social healing and holistic systems transformation. They demonstrated how restorative practices can interpret inequity by shifting power and expanding opportunities for those affected by oppression to lead the work. They showed us how arts and cultural and community led design can support this transition by enabling new relationships and exchanges and ideas and behaviors to emerge.

Today we are going to build on those ideas and explore more deeply how inequity is embedded in visual and invisible structures and what is involved with transforming this.

All systems tell stories. Right? They describe who belongs, who will be protected and who will be empowered to thrive.

A system that privileges a white, western patriarchal world story creates disparities in power, wealth and wellbeing. This is infused into dominant languages, practices, policies and places as Hannah so beautifully articulated. The holistic systems transformation we are talking about requires we decenter this underlying world story. And remediate the soil so that just systems can grow. If we don't work from this invisible level of deep culture, our work will be incomplete, it will be fragile and the changes that emerge will be temporary at best.

We are going to hear from three really incredible humans and their stories about how we can become liberated from these dynamics and again, remediate the soil so more just systems can emerge.

Asali will kick us off. Asali?

>> ASALI: Hi. My name is Asali DeVan Ecclesiastes. I am the CEO of the cultural arts center in New Orleans. Thank you so much. Thank you so much Hannah. Now I am going to try to push through to some stuff that makes sense for you guys.

I come to this conversation and to this work from a long way. What Hannah's poem reminds me of is that way does not begin with my existence. Right? I am the descendant of folks from Madagascar who were enslaved and brought to New Orleans, who toiled there for many years before my great, great, great, great, great grandfather and his brothers escaped enslavement. My direct ancestor went to Iowa. And two of his brothers went to Illinois and one to Colorado.

I came back to New Orleans by way of my mother, who visited one day and just decided it was the place for her and never left.

So growing up in New Orleans, I never knew that about my ancestry until I was in my 20s. But what I did know is that for a place ‑‑ when I was growing up, I didn't know ‑‑ I thought white people were only on TV until I was six‑year‑olds. They weren't my teachers, my neighbors, they weren't around me until I got out into the world a little more.

For a place that is so inculcated with black folks, it is overwhelming unsupportive of us. it is overwhelming negates our values. Right? I didn't have the words for that growing up. I didn't have the words for that, you know, when I started a black history program in my high school. I just knew there needed to be one because why isn't there one. I didn't have the words for that when I went to Vanderbilt University to study education and started a black history program there as well. When I returned to New Orleans to begin my work, I ‑‑ I just knew I had to do something to change the way things were and tried many different things. When I came across this creative place making. I taught from kindergarten to college, in prisons, all of that, and then I went into the arts and culture world by way of festival production. I started doing Afrocentric production. And then started doing my own festivals and it wasn't until I got into government, a place I never, ever imagined I would be that I came across this whole creative place making notion and that is when I DNA is to develop the vocabulary and learn the scholarship that I feel like grounds me now in this work. The reason why creative place making is creative is because it has to work around systems that are designed to stop exactly what it is doing. It has to work around, you know, systems that inculcate inequity, that oppress with great sincerity and vigor and resource. What I learned in trying to come up with my creative place making program, my first work in the field was in a group of neighborhoods called the Cleburne Corridor. This is the neighborhood where all the arts and culture traditions of New Orleans, everything you know New Orleans for, the food, the music, the architecture, the dancing, the Mardi Gras, any of those things, this is where those traditions originated, where they get innovated and where the people who create them live.

While they fuel a $10 billion tourism industry, they take $17,500 a year, right? the Cleburne Corridor project, it aims to address the interstate. In new Orleans like many black and poor communities across the country, the most urban renewal, we lost 326 black owned businesses and over 500 family homes in ‑‑ which were ‑‑ even though the city received relocation and compensation for the businesses, it never got to the people. We had a segregationist mayor who said those "N" words don't need indoor plumbing, they don't need this, they don't need that, we will use this money for higher purpose.

I learned three key lessons about equity and what it really takes to achieve it without dismantling the system.

First, I think it should be dismantled. In New Orleans we live under colonial laws and until each and every one of the laws are reviewed and replaced, it will always have the outcomes it was designed to have. I know this is a group of designers. You know what design is and what it does.

As long as we have to be in this place of working in and around the system, I found that first of all, equity is responsive. It actually responds to what it is, the folks that you are saying you want to create or ‑‑ you respond to them.

Actually, listening to and providing a feedback where you can always take in people's recommendations, take in people's input and contributions and reflect it back to them. To make sure you are getting it right.

The second thing, equity is expansive, it takes different kinds of interactions, a lot of different kinds of studies and ‑‑ it is a lot of work. It goes into a lot of places. You have to be willing to open yourself up to all of that. You can't cut it off. You can't say okay, this is what we are going to do. Because otherwise, it is not equity. Right?

It might be something, but it is not equity.

And then lastly, I am sure there are many more but these are just my takeaways, equity is expensive. Right? As I raise money for my project to make them happen, we always needed more and we still need more because what gets you somewhere in an inequitable project only gets you a quarter or less in an equitable project. We did not get to this place over night. It is compounded by centuries of oppression. Centuries of inequities, laws and designs to come up with the outcomes we have. In order to change the outcomes, you have to put the same ‑‑ my kids say, come at me with the same energy. If we are going to reverse inequity we have to come at it with the same energy, passion, there is a lot of passion, we see the people who want ‑‑ who are invested in keeping inequity and they are very vigorous about it and we have to be just as vigorous and come at it with the same level of resources that came into creating the outcomes we don't want. I am going to pause there to get the input from my fellow panelists. Thank you.

>> KILEY: Thank you so much. We will pick up on a lawed of those threads during the conversation. We will turn now to Theresa who is coming from the west coast of the U.S.

>> THERESA: Hello everybody. My name is Theresa Hwang. I am based in Los Angeles. Thank you, Hannah and Asali. Having a space of tenderness and connection is something that I long for. Especially right now. Sort of all the isolation related to the pandemic so thank you for being together.

I am a community engaged architect, which means a lot of my work is around facilitating a design process so people who live in and are most impacted by whatever issue or project, they are guiding the vision. And the design solution for projects.

I am also an educator. I work with a national consortium of communities and we design an anti‑racism curriculum. And I am a mother. I think really that has been one of the most reinforming identities that has changed who I am but the practice and the work I do. The larger goal that I have in this lifetime is to really develop sort of to kind of come back to where Hannah started us is create spaces where we belong. My goal is for communities of color to be able to see themselves in the permanent infrastructure in their communities. I feel like if you see yourself in your community, it creates a sense of belonging. If you feel you belong, there is a sense of safety, if there is a sense of safety, there is the ability to imagine and thrive and live out loud the life you deserve and you long for as well.

I think the prompt that we had for our introductions was around how we got to the work of equitable, cultural community development, creative place keeping, creative place making, whatever we want to call it. I think for me ‑‑ I talk to a lot of young people, especially women of color who are interested in design, who want to get into the essential impact side of the design industry and I say the most important experience that I went through was organizing within my own community. While I was a grad student in the Boston, Cambridge area, I was in a space where I wasn't used to where it was mostly white male wealthy people talking about these very abstract ideas of beauty based in a western cannon. I was like, isn't architecture buildings that are supposed to support people and none of my ideas were valid.

I had a trauma response where I fled. I ran the opposite direction. It was not a place of safety. I wasn't seen but I was told my ideas were not valuable. The place I was able to land was finding other Asian‑American artists, poets ‑‑ when you are in your 20s it is like this ideal kind of, you know, crew to be with and thankfully a friend's parents, you know, sort of opened ‑‑ had a first generation bookstore that was meant to be a Chinese bookstore and so here I am with east meets west, that is exactly it. Over 15 years ago, I am in my 20s. I have a group of radical artists, it is the dream, even now I am, like, this is what I want to do when I grow up. But really the peace of starting an open mic and realizing we needed a space to tell our own stories, to validate our own identities, to create a space of safety so that ‑‑ for me it was, like, having the courage to hold a mic and say this is who I am and this is my story was one of the most important skills that I learned around leadership, about taking control of my own narrative and recognizing that what is projected from the media as a Asian‑American woman is actually not close to my own reality.

I say founding, hosting and being a part of an open mic series was the most important professional development activity I could have possibly done.

It is also about, you know, how do you hold a space of safety for others to be able to find their voice. How do you practice this deep listening. Right? A space of tenderness so people can, you know, come together, fall apart, do whatever you need to do in order to nurture yourself and recognize that that is also nurturing your community.

And so for me being able to organize within a space of I need, I think was a really important first step in social justice work because that is when I understood what self‑determination meant. When I graduated and entered the professional field, I ran the other way. I was, like, I don't want to be surrounded by these designers and that is when I started to engage more deeply in community organizing work but also neighborhood based, you know, nonprofit efforts and campaigns so starting to understand what does it mean to organize in collaboration with communities.

It may ‑‑ I may not have a firsthand experience of being an evicted resident of Chinatown but are shared identities that I can bring resources and capacities to.

When I started to shift and move to Los Angeles a little bit over ten years ago and started with skid row, it was overwhelming to be this is so far from my own lived experienced but taking a breath and recognizing, you know, I have a very similar lived traumas that are around substance abuse, around violence in my community, my home and recognizing I may not have experienced homelessness myself, realizing that impacted communities long for the same thing. A space to share your story, a space to dream out loud. That is when I started to recognize design was a tool to hold a space of reimagination but the space of pause, coming together connection that allows for a sense of healing. We begin to share an understanding of the harm that we have experienced collectively and lot of it is as a result of systemic oppression and thinking about how do we ‑‑ as a designer share tools, resources so that again, the people who are most impacted are the ones not only redefining but determining the outcomes of their own neighborhood. The way I see a lot of this equity work, it is about going through the steps of finding your own personal power. What does it mean for me to be in this body. Right? What have I experienced, how am I perpetuating harm? It is important to recognize the culture of whiteness, regardless of your identity is something that is a part of my everyday experience. So many times, I have false sense of urgency or other things driving me that I need to say stop. What is this coming from and recognizing how I allow a lot of this colonial hangover to move through my body.

I may be continuing this harmful activity in my own family, my own practice and thinking about the next public of in my own community. What are the tools and resources I can supplement as I become more privileged and ‑‑ especially with professional capacities. And beginning to think about where I am now and talking to practitioners thinking about what is the fusional changes we have access to. I am starting to recognize what does it mean to be an institutional organizer and what are the ways we can begin shifting practices but also for me, I am changing the design industry and thinking about the ways we can include all identities but also, you know, tenderness, motherhood. The loving connection that we need in order to live the future that we want.

>> KILEY: Wonderful. Thank you so much. So many wonderful threads to pull on. Before we do that, I would like to invite Dee to join us and share his thoughts with us.

>> DEE: Hello, I live in eastern Kentucky. I was touched by that poem, it resonated as a true moment of living in the state and trying to embrace the complexities.

My place of work is center for world strategies, we are a communications and policy shop, we have online newspaper.

We say building the inclusive nation of people and spaces.

I would like to say that where I live from a distance, probably wouldn't be that attractive, we are the poorest congressional district in the United States. We have the worst health results, we have the shortest life span but it is actually a wonderful place to live because people tell stories and even though there are challenges, we ‑‑ if you got your car stuck in a ditch in front of somebody's house, they would pull you out and bring you in and want to hear your story. In some ways you don't pick a friend because they are perfect, you have a place and you live at that place and you try to build something out of what you see every day. The great thing about this little community is it embraced cultural diversity in ways that is usual, you have exchanges with theater companies from the Bronx and from south Texas, traveling Jewish theater, Piedmont Blues and the town came out to hear a singer and these moments give us a chance to reassess who we are and to connect with each other even when our daily transactions move us apart.

I am trying to think of stories where I got a glimpse of something that resonated or helped me. I was thinking back to after Katrina and Rita, we were asked to come in and document what was happening in the rural coast. Everybody knew what happened in the devastation of New Orleans but a lot of people who had been killed and made homeless and been injured in Louisiana, Mississippi, outside of the city and that story wasn't getting out.

I was thinking about in Mississippi, you would see this incredible series of injustices of people taking federal money and laundering and hiring, putting in condemned hotels and still bringing bodies out of the mud and African‑American communities where they wouldn't give them money to rebuild but push them back or not let them move to build somewhere else. We covered I.C.E. raids where women were shipped back to Mexico without their kids. You see this stuff up close and you are moved by it and I remember there ‑‑ you had people telling you about the Red Cross refusing to give blankets to people because the color of their skin. All of a sudden, you know what, Kentucky is the south, it is a different kind of south and I wasn't used to what we were seeing and we were shooting this guy one whose house had been wrecked and I remember 6'4", he was telling a story, all of a sudden, across the street, this little girl looked out, this African‑American child and he said, there is the boss. And she runs across the street and he embraces her and all of a sudden, maybe seeing the story through the eyes of a patriarch I begun to understand complexity that was hard for me to see before and it made me think about these moments to reassess what we see, reunderstand what we see, to lean into complexities and find the parts of our lives and our communities and ourselves that are healing and can take care of what's wrong.

After the George Floyd killing, there was an organized protest in my town, 1534 friendly people. Not a big town. Mostly all white. I was worried just that there would be an embarrassment, that people wouldn't come out, that it would be disruptive, I didn't know what. I went down there to the courthouse, there were 200 people. I am an old arts administrator, I counted every head. 200 people. And these masks and there were white representatives and African‑American representatives and people together and they were giving testimonials and afterwards the full of people who were saying say his name, George Floyd, I can't breathe. You know, I knew enough ‑‑ more of them probably been to Iraq than to Minneapolis, maybe even Louisville, but still, they marched across town together from the courthouse, to the city hall and back. And there was this moment of learning where you could see that we had these chances to redeem ourselves and to lean into the complexities that are harming us all but we have to ‑‑ those are moments ‑‑ I will just stop there.

>> KILEY: Thank you so much. We have a lot of beautiful threads. Some very similar and distinct in a wonderful way. I am going to pose a couple questions if that is all right. I welcome the panelist to speak with each other and pose questions as they arise and then we will open it up to the all the participants. I am really struck, I mean, each of you spoke to the need, the inherent need we have to be seen in the richness of our humanity and to see ourselves reflected back in the world that we live in. And how that is very much not the case as of yet for many folks.

We have talked as well about how the arts, how culture, how community engaged design, how holding space is so crucial. We need places to process. Our values are evolving, our identities are being challenged in all kinds of ways, where can we go to explore who we are individually, and collectively and how we want to be in the world. Right? And how we can start to practice embodying the work we want to do. So many of us work in environments that move like this, you know? Where is the pause? Where is the tenderness, the nourishing, where do we sit and process? I particularly appreciated that each of you spoke to the sort of ways inequity is nested and the ways equity can also be nested. Starting with us, right? How we move through the world, how we move with others and how that shows up in our organizations and communities.

I would love to hear, you are speaking with an amazing group of audience members who sit inside of government for the most part, what can they do? How are they uniquely positioned given the resources they have at their disposal to create space for this kind of pause, to encounter difference and explore who we are and how we want to be in the world? If they were their boss for a day, what would you ask them to think about doing? I welcome any of you to respond.

>> ASALI: I will start on that one since I always have a bone to pick with government. When I went in for government, the thing that that just floored me is how long it took for anything to happen. I could not understand it. I had to walk things through and sit ‑‑ I had to be ‑‑ I just ‑‑ I didn't care at a certain point who was mad at me. I am sitting at your desk until you do whatever you have to do. I don't know if it is just New Orleans, but it is incredible that things will sit on people's desks for three to six months. It is crazy. Just ridiculous. I don't know what can be done about that. I can't believe it is just that. There is a culture of whenever I get to it. What I like to remind people, my colleagues and co‑workers, you are a neighbor. You don't stop being a resident of one of these communities. Act in accordance with that. Advocate for your mom and them. Stop ‑‑ whatever happens to you when you get in this building, just stop it. I encourage everybody to be that zealous nut so when they see you coming, they know they don't want to see you again so they hurry up and sign it. I got to a point, we needed a joint youth agreement from the state and I drive up to Baton Rouge, every few days to bother these people, took me two years to get the joint use agreement. We got a 20‑year agreement because they don't want to see me back in Baton Rouge. Right? That kind of stuff.

The other thing is just, you know, look at the equity of the laws and the policies, encourage your colleagues to do the same and just change as much as you can. Accountability measures. Government just make something, we meant something different to happen. Right? Encouraging that kind of accountability and transparency wherever you can.

>> KILEY: Thank you, Asali. Especially for bringing up accountability. One thing to raise what we want to see more of but what is the mechanism.

>> THERESA: I think that we always rush to the ‑‑ what are we changing versus let's stop and identify what is wrong first. I think people are always trying to diagnose but we don't talk about what the illness and the symptoms actually are. We keep pulling up these chairs at this table but when we are swimming in a toxic room that you can barely breathe in, maybe we need to have our meeting outside. I think really being able to identify the practices that perpetuate white dominant color becomes really important, we can't always rely on the BIPOC employees to do that work. There is a certain amount of risk you have to take in order to identify some of that and so I think some of it is ‑‑ I try practice self‑accountability, how am I actually upholding a lot of this ‑‑ I say whiteness. It is not just the work of white people. Right? It is the culture that ‑‑ it is the air that we breathe. I think some of this moving from self‑accountability to collective accountability, well, maybe this deadline doesn't make sense because Theresa doesn't have childcare for the next month. I don't know. I think being able to ‑‑ I feel like the pandemic collapsed a lot of the personal and private spaces which I think is wonderful because a lot of the domestic labor is being acknowledged for the amount of labor and work that it is. For me, I think being able to identify the way ‑‑ the practices really, and policies and protocols, all the HR stuff, that we need to shift before hiring a diversity officer and all of these external things, trying to throw more people into drowning waters becomes important.

>> KILEY: Yeah. Absolutely. Thank you. I think white culture broadly speaking has a real habit, a reflex of leaping over the vulnerability, sitting with the discomfort that has to accompany transformative change. It is part of our culture. Got to have the answer, the solution. That is not healing. That is not going to stick.

>> DEE: I work in a lot of states and try hold off bad things from happening. Worked a lot on federal policy from everything from broadband to health care, excuse me, but, you know, I am old enough to remember when you can actually get something done. We could create programs for funding, diverse video and film production around the country, where we could push up just for cultural institutions. Really wasn't that long ago but the country has been very good at ‑‑ particularly on the federal level ‑‑ you know, just being able to find a way to create objection, make sure nothing happens. There is no chance to get decency through this environment of ‑‑ it is not the guys ‑‑ you know, when you go to government, knock on their door, pretty much been determined somewhere else.

We have seen a kind of expertise develop in stopping things from happening, that is why we get a deep frustration because not the narrative, the ideas or the needs of the communities. It is much more about the cleverness, the legislative and executive branch.

>> KILEY: Absolutely. The days of government working well sound idyllic. The toxicity and divisiveness nowadays is hard to describe. I want to make sure we open this up and invite each of you to ask each other questions if any are emerging from the conversation.

Asali, I see your mouth moving.

>> ASALI: I am sorry, I had to unmute.

It occurred to me in thinking about my own bone to pick, what if city hall were made differently, how could we make spaces that were government spaces but that encouraged collaboration, encouraged thinking outside the box and like all the things we want government to actually do? City hall is a horribly depressing, depressive place.

>> THERESA: I think this is when we have to look to what are the spaces that actually function, that are places of joy, information, resources that actually work and I think it is never a singular condensed hyper efficient building like city hall. That process of trying to put everything into one place, it is like the physical manifestation of a hierarchy that fully embodies white supremacy in that sense. When you look at community organizing models, it is a complete network, a decentralized blanket where you know the names of everyone that is a member of that base.

This is again ‑‑ this is the abolition piece where we have to tear it down and reimagine the new. We have to look at ‑‑ remember the family in the village, what is that scale of self‑sustainability and connectivity that allows us to get things done. Still sufficiency with high impact but that everyone feels scene and a part of that decision‑making process.

>> KILEY: Yeah. I would love to jump in and answer the question too. I love this question too. When I think about liberation, I also think of liberation from this fixed notion of what government is. We have imagination. This radically sophisticated resource, we have the capacity to remake these things if they no longer serve us. I would invite all of you and all of you listening to really sit with that because much of what I am hearing in these conversations across the country and even other parts of the word, fall across the spectrum of folks who are interested in advancing equity within the structures that be. Moving the furniture around. And those who actually want to reimagine and design and give tries the structures we need to do the work we want to do. They are related but they are two fundamentally different things. Thinking about which expression of equity are you sitting with. And which one do we need and which ones do your communities need. Dee?

>> DEE: Asali, her point about showing up and explaining the change in ways they want to get rid of has always been the best remedy. I sometimes counsel other groups doing organizing or trying to improve policy, particularly when they want to come to work in rural communities, my advice has always been show up. Grab somebody, put your hand on their shoulder, buy them a bowl of soup, sit down. I mean, those were ‑‑ it is not good counseling during the COVID period, you would be up on charges if you put your hand on somebody's shoulder.

I think in some ways we have to find opportunities to be present, to not give up and to keep trying to give those people the solutions to the problem.

We fail a lot but we have to keep going.

>> KILEY: Thank you, Dee. I want to make sure we open this up. I am opening the chat box here. We believe we have Eric yielding questions from the group. Is that correct?

>> ERIC: We had a few questions so far. Throw them in chat now and we will continue collecting them. I think that there has been a lot of chatter on the chat about how municipal spaces to reflect the communities. I know you talked about that already, there is always ways of, you know, people ‑‑ the outcome, where the policies are in the way, that is coming through here. I don't know if you had further thoughts on both those issues. The spaces not reflecting the community and not reflecting what is happening there and making it accessible for everybody or how the idea of policy and procedure actually restricts and I think it was ‑‑ Dee said it keeps ‑‑ the purpose is to keep things status quo as much as it is anything else. If there are any interesting ways that you can kind of think of or creative ways you have seen working toward undermining that or shifting that, because I know ‑‑ I don't mean to keep going on here, everyone on the phone, they are restricted within that and constantly having to work out creative ways to get things done that don't break policies and procedures but maybe bend them a little bit. Have any of you see examples of that in the field?

>> KILEY: Thank you so much. I want to put a twist on the question. Many have spoken about the need to transform the structures that allocate resources and opportunities to advance equity and scale, those Structures are policy which invites the question, how can arts and culture, design, strategies facilitate the co‑creation of new policy, not only the creative interpretation of existing policy, right, a lot of folks involved in this call are doing but the co‑creation of new policy, that is what democracy is. We still live in one. I know it is hard to remember sometimes but we actually do.

Thinking about where are those places for cultural democracy, where can we come together? Any thoughts?

>> ASALI: I will share some of the successes that we have had, you know, with getting policy change and it is exactly what you said. It is about democracy, involving the folks. Right? You can bang your head against the wall all day in city hall but when you go into the chambers with 100 people, that is when things kind of begin to shift and ‑‑ well ‑‑ this is on a local level, I don't have a lot of experience in how to do this ‑‑ yet ‑‑ on the state and federal level.

If you have the people behind you, part of the success of what ‑‑ you know, I was working in my community, I knew the people, right, and so I could Sunday text out, I need you at city hall ‑‑ you know, like Theresa, I ran the poetry venues, I hooked people up with free tickets, if you want V.I.P. tickets, holler at Asali. I had relationships, I had long and deep relationships, friendships and professional relationships and called on all those things when it was time to make the policy changes and talking to people in the plain language of I need you here because they are trying to pass this law to do this and it will do this to us. Always remember it is us. I know the difference it makes. Like you said, we have the colonial hangover. When we walk into the buildings, it becomes us versus them. I say we and our. I am part of the we that I am speaking of. Being able to get folks in the room when the policy decisions are being made and getting them to call and raise heck with their council people. Our mayor got this our fair share thing for the cultural community, she took back money from the state that was supposed to be for art and culture but when it got the city, they tried to bring it into bureaucracy with none of the money for arts and cultural. You have this 5.7 million, I don't see this coming to us, you have to be in city hall. Those things is where I have seen change be able to happen.

>> KILEY: Absolutely. I appreciate, Asali, and this has come up in the comments, centrality of relationships are essential. They are fundamental to these changes. Trusting, meaningful, lasting relationships.

You're muted.

>> ASALI: Sorry. I wanted to add something else based on something Theresa said, talking about security. When she said it was that click in my head, yes, all these structures make us feel insecure and what does it make you do, how does it make you act or behave? Thinking about how we can provide that security, not just in design, of course, in design but also ‑‑ in how we interact with people and making them feel safe enough to come out and say what they really mean and think.

>> KILEY: Absolutely.

>> DEE: I would like to say that I think that ‑‑ I spent the last few years on a commission looking at the practice of American democracy and making recommendations, the participants were parties from different geographies, very diverse sampling, I don't know of any group who thinks democracy is working or feels that they are being represented. We kind of become sophisticated in devaluing voting and restrictive participation. If you think about it in the context of this election and discourse about whose vote counts, what you have to do to actually send in a ballot in this time, I think we are at a cross roads where we are going to fix, or we are going to be living in all kinds of peril for a long time. Got about 30% of Americans under 40 who don't see it is important. This is an erosion that has come from a system where we spend billions, I don't use this term loosely, billions in political organizing and advertising to discourage people from going to the polls, make them feel crummy about their own choice and then, you know, should we clutch our pearls when it starts to work? Should we say oh, no, this isn't right? We let this happen and now is a time that we ‑‑

>> KILEY: Indeed. Goes back to what Asali was saying earlier. Come at me with the same energy. A lot of energy has been put toward putting the barriers up. Reparative justice will require the same amount of energy. Here in California things like civics class and public education has been eroded over decades. Right? Even the basic capacities of understanding of what one can do beyond voting, how one can engage could use massive bolstering, which is an opportunity for creative organizations to think about their role in that space.

>> THERESA: When I think about the co‑creation of policy for, me that is what community control is. When you have power over how the resources are invested or divested. What development is actually happening.

When I really think about really leveraging the power of culture, it has to move beyond the aesthetics. Often it is here is a mural, here is a new monument that tells a different story and I think that is where people want to stop. Let's tell a story. Then what needs to come with that is how are you getting the root cause of the suppression, how are you breaking that pattern of trauma. If we are talking about a new monument, are we redesigning the education curriculum that reinforces colonialist education with one that is rooted in indigeneity. Education system is being fundamentally changed or if you are doing a mural project, how is this sustaining the next generation of visual artists or culture bearer for long‑term cultural practice or does this building that has the mural, stay a black owned small business. For me it always has to come back down to what is the pattern of harm that you are breaking or, you know, what is a new system that is based out of liberation that you are creating. If not, if it remains at this level of ‑‑ I hate the word decoration, but if it is, it is only sustaining not only the oppression that is happening, it is detracting and making it look like things are changing when there is no shift in power or genuine community control.

>> KILEY: That's right. Beauty put. This is why we are having this panel that is looking at the visual expression of inequity wet and also this invisible stuff that lies at the base of it which is the level of deep culture which is always shifting, changes, where are the spaces to negotiate that, how are we using creative practices to bring people together, to sit there and recreate that culture, as well as the physical stuff for the programs you can see on top of it. Exactly.

I think we have time ‑‑ we have a provocative question that links to this from Kelly that I would love to share. Do you want to share it allowed?

>> Speaker: Of course. No problem. Just thank you to all the panelists, you are awesome. You are touching my head, my heart. Just a lot of applause. Having a lot of conversations with State Arts Agencies right now who are in dialogue with communities, in some cases in person, many cases virtually, in conversation about how can we advance equity, how can we make communities more inclusive and/or what do you need to cope with the fallout of COVID‑19. This is one of the fundamental functions of State Arts Agencies is to plan and inform their own programs through those kinds of conversations. My question for you all as panelists and thinking, what are good questions State Arts Agencies should be asking in those conversations? They have an opportunity to inquire, how would you shape that inquiry or advise that inquiry?

>> KILEY: Thank you for that. Great question. At a critical time to intervene, infiltrate. I would love to hear from you three panelists, what would you like government to be asking or thinking about?

>> DEE: I will take ‑‑

>> ASALI: I feel like ‑‑ go ahead, Dee.

>> DEE: I think that spending a lot of time with arts institutions and haranguing State Arts Agencies and the legislators, I think that so much of the conversations are always about survival, how can we make our budget this year, how can we reach our audience this year and I don't think enough of the conversation is why we survive, what is the critical transaction that we are bringing to our community, where does this meaningfulness begin to affect change. I think all change is cultural and sometimes we restrict this conversation to just the kind of perfunctory budgetary practice of what the immediate impact on the community and there is an opportunity create a discourse about why this cultural activity makes a difference, why it really is what the country needs right now in this time of sickness.

>> KILEY: Thank you, Dee.

>> ASALI: I wanted to add and yes, thank you Dee for the all change is cultural. I love that. Along with colonial hangover. But I also think that these agencies before they pose questions to community is they must ask questions of themselves first and acknowledge where they have fallen short. Or maybe not. Acknowledge successive and needs to grow, and if you have come ask your question from that perspective when you go to community, if you are open to hearing from them about where your particular agency has not met their needs, even though you are required to by your policy, I think that sets the stage for a much more honest and productive conversation and one that probably invites many more people to be a part of it because they know it is honest. And see people. In New Orleans, we always see people before the hard times.

>> KILEY: I was going to say, it has to be nourishing on all levels and I love you bring up acting with humility, the burden of change is it starts over there, outside of me, outside of my organization and it doesn't ripple. I would bring up the question that Theresa raised, how is what you are doing disrupting patterns of harm? Do you want to embellish that in any way?

>> THERESA: I wanted to address what is the role of the art municipalities, it is really important to not stay in your sector lane. I think when arts stays self‑reflective and feels like the place of intervention is only in cultural institutions or artists or existing cultural programming, we are doing a disservice because culture is not only, you know, change but it is the glue. When we are talking about increased public health awareness, you know, this is a question of creativity and culture. Talk about the revitalization, this is a question of culture. The reinforcing of the silos of sect 49ers is the work of white supremacy to piece apart because it is harder to actually systemically solve. Culture is one of the few things ‑‑ it is already systemic and that is why it is such a potent antic dote, making sure you are not only just thinking about how to create cultural bearers but creating entrepreneurs and doctors and social justice teachers, that could be the work and how it breaks the harm because you are looking outside of just that is not my job, that is not the work of this agency.

>> KILEY: Thank you so much for bringing that up. I know we are just about at time, I want to thank all of you, the panelists for sharing your brilliance with us, thanks to the participants for good questions and deep listening.

>> ERIC: Thank you. You have opened up a bunch of different topic areas and pathways to follow, which is what we will be doing a little bit later this afternoon. But first, we will take a 30‑minute break before reconvening at 4:00 p.m. eastern. For the interactive whole group and small group discussions that will dig into the topic areas. Last week was absolutely incredible on our Tuesday breakout reflection. I want to encourage all of you to show back up. That is where you get to get into conversations with your peers and talk a little bit further and deeper in that with breakout rooms. Come this afternoon with for a highly interactive time at 4:00 p.m. we will use a different Zoom room so go back to visit the website, Stephanie popped that into the chat and you get back in with that password and that that location. This room is like last Tuesday going to self‑destruct at 3:30 p.m. take a half hour. Come back in 30 minutes after taking time to get a fresh breath, tea, feed one of your pets before they get too hungry and we will see you back here shortly. Thank you.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*DISCLAIMER\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

THE FOLLOWING IS AN UNEDITED DRAFT TRANSLATION. THIS TRANSCRIPT MAY NOT BE VERBATIM, HAS NOT BEEN PROOFREAD AND MAY CONTAIN ERRORS. PLEASE CHECK WITH THE SPEAKER(S) FOR ANY CLARIFICATION.

THIS TRANSCRIPT MAY NOT BE COPIED OR DISSEMINATED UNLESS YOU OBTAIN WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM THE OFFICE OR SERVICE DEPARTMENT THAT IS PROVIDING CART CAPTIONING TO YOU.

THIS TRANSCRIPT MAY NOT BE USED IN A COURT OF LAW. ‑PF.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*DISCLAIMER\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*