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COVID-19, Uprisings, & Mobility Justice

UNTOKENING PUEBLO

About

COVID-19, Uprisings, & Mobility Justice

2020 Transformative Talks Series

Co-Produced by: The Untokening and Pueblo Planning

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The Untokening core organizing committee uses “mobility injustice” to name the intersectional unsafeties and attacks people from marginalized groups experience in public spaces such as streets, transit systems, and the governance processes that regulate those spaces. When we say “marginalized groups,” we mean Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities, people with disabilities, immigrants, trans people, queer people, women, and youth. We believe “mobility justice” will be achieved through targeted investment in these communities and the implementation of innovative ideas created by these individuals. When mobility justice is achieved, it will free us to move easily, fairly, and unafraid. Mobility injustices include policing against Black bodies; persecution and incarceration of undocumented families; gender-based violence and harrassment; and racism, ableism, and tokenism in transportation planning, policy, and advocacy. Mobility injustices also occur when people are forced to move because they cannot safely remain at home. Getting priced out of your neighborhood; having no choice but to go to work during a global pandemic; traveling two hours each way on public transit between where you can afford to live and where you can secure work. These experiences foster isolation and fear rather than the freedom and independence touted as the future of sustainable mobility.

Pueblo Planning, a values-driven social enterprise, is a participatory planning and design firm that intentionally focuses on populations that are often left out of the planning process and those most vulnerable to the impacts of planning decisions (i.e., QTBIPOC- Queer, Trans, Indigenous, Black and People of Color; unhoused; disabled; low-income; etc.). Their work is rooted in a simple principle: The voices of residents should be respected as experts, and they should dictate the design of their community. Pueblo Planning is deeply committed to social justice and incorporates an intersectional approach to planning by acknowledging the relationship between structural racism, housing, transportation, public health and safety, and the environment.

From Stories to Strategies

The Untokening, in collaboration with Pueblo Planning, started convening a virtual conversation in April to share our concerns and visions for mobility justice in a COVID-19 world. We facilitated this virtual space where people could come together to share ideas and highlight community-based narratives and strategies; the goal was to create a healing space for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) community leaders, advocates, and practitioners engaged in mobility justice. Using Zoom and Facebook Live, we hosted engaging participatory panel discussions with facilitators and participants from across the country.

Participatory Panel Format

The team aimed to create a dialogue among participants rather than provide one-way knowledge sharing from speakers. To that end, we created a model where "facilitators" planned discussion questions and remarks and then invited attendees to join the panel as speakers. All the facilitators were BIPOC practitioners. For each session we had at least one facilitator who was at the frontline of the impacts of mobility injustices, ranging from an Amazon employee to a racial justice activist on the ground in Minneapolis.

For the first 30 minutes, facilitators shared their analysis on the issue and helped lay the foundation for the conversation. For the next hour, they posed thoughtful questions to the webinar attendees; participants were then able to become panelists themselves sharing their responses, reflections, and strategies to questions being posed in the discussion.Key insights and strategies from each participatory panel discussion was documented and shared as a resource to the broader planning, policy, and advocacy community.

During these interactive webinars, we typically reached an average of 150 people (attendance ranged from 50-250 people, between Zoom and Facebook Live). As with all Untokening events, we prioritized participation by BIPOC individuals and actively encouraged other people who have felt tokenized to attend, including women, members of the LGBTQX communities, and people with disabilities.

Centering Equity and BIPOC Communities

This project aimed to provide a mobility justice platform for planners, policymakers, and advocates to use as a guide that centers equity and BIPOC communities when making decisions, particularly in the era of COVID-19. Specifically, regional transportation issues we focused on included how to ensure BIPOC and other marginalized communities are centered in planning and policy decisions regarding public transportation and active transportation so these decisions do not negatively impact them.

From the participatory panel discussions and stories shared, we were able to co-develop mobility justice strategies. The topics covered during the participatory panel discussions and in this resource guide include: open streets and public spaces; transit riders and drivers; policing and community safety; delivery workers; and exploring planning practice.

COVID-19 is disproportionately and severely impacting BIPOC communities throughout the country. The ability to move safely has always been challenging in these communities, but there is an added layer of "risk" during this time due to the virus and systemic racism in policy, planning, and policing. The intention of these participatory panel discussions was to elevate these issues and collectively co-create strategies and statements of accountability for practitioners.

Open for Whom?: *A Mobility Justice-Centered Approach to Open Streets*

1

Transformative Talk: May 1, 2020

During the May 2020 Untokening Transformative Talk, our community engaged in a justice-focused conversation about Open Streets and emphasized the importance of centering people, not infrastructure. Our co-facilitators were Lynda Lopez (Chicago) and Marcela Guerrero Casas (Cape Town, South Africa). The following highlights that can be applied in the COVID-19 era and beyond were provided by our co-facilitators and community panelists.

Contributing Co-facilitators and Community Panelists: Lynda Lopez; Marcela Guerrero Casas; Annie Koh; Anna Zivarts; Midori Valdivia; Alejandro Manga; Do Lee; Caitlin Guerra; Tracy Corley; Alejandro Manga; Denise Ramirez; Vivian Satterfield; Paola Castañeda; Belen Herrera; Erwin Figueroa; Adonia Lugo; Martin Varona

In the COVID-19 era, the primary conversation around Open Streets has been centered around space for people to engage in recreational activities or framed around seizing the "opportunity" to remove cars from public spaces. However, conversations and actions that do not take a justice-centered approach will inevitably inflict harm on those who are already marginalized and those most impacted by COVID-19: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), people with disabilities, and the unhoused. Often, another missing component to the Open Streets conversation is the reality that just being out in public spaces can be a risk for BIPOC individuals whose bodies are often targets of violence perpetrated by law enforcement or white supremacists. We are reminded of this again during this time as we demand justice for Ahmaud Arbery. May he rest in peace and power.

Plan with Community

When there is a crisis there is often the reaction to move quickly with "off the shelf" ideas. However, that does not always lead to equitable or good outcomes for those that are most impacted by the crisis at hand. If moving forward is going to leave out people who have always been left out, moving forward will often do more harm than good. Communities, particularly BIPOC, need to be included in the planning process to determine if open streets models are a good fit for them at this time, and if so, what specific considerations need to be incorporated into the program to ensure cultural relevance of street closures. Planning processes must also ensure that open streets changes do not negatively impact the mobility and safety of essential workers and those most vulnerable to COVID-19.

Prioritize Essential Workers and Trips

Colonial and racist zoning and planning practices have spatially organized cities such that BIPOC communities have to travel further from where they reside to access jobs and resources, such as healthcare and food. Hence, many rely on transit or personal vehicles to travel long distances. In the COVID-19 era, many

"There is a lot more room for nuance and the conversation around open streets is being presented as a false dichotomy--those staunchly in favor and those who oppose. We should be asking, "what is the role of open streets right now?" There is a desire for more critical conversations because some are rushing in to move these initiatives forward without thinking about its role in this moment and its impact on BIPOC." - Lynda Lopez

essential workers come from BIPOC communities. In addition, these communities must make essential trips such as going to the grocery store or seeking social services. Community members should be consulted about whether open streets will make it easier or more difficult to travel to essential jobs and make essential trips. Additionally, delivery workers are making the stay at home efforts possible for many people in the U.S.; they deliver products, food, and other necessities to individuals who work from home and are able to do online purchasing. They should also be consulted about how open streets may negatively impact or help their ability to do their work safely.

Do Not Exclude or Remove
Conversations regarding open streets should not be centered around infrastructure, but instead revolve around the question, "Open for whom?" Open streets must also include and adapt to individuals with physical disabilities and unhoused individuals. The disability community should be asked about how the open streets program can include those who are not able-bodied and address the potential barriers they may face as a result of open streets. Additionally, we need to stop the removal of the unhoused from public spaces; this policy change must be integrated and implemented as a part of open street programs.

Acknowledge and Address Environmental Injustices
Many BIPOC communities are located in or near areas with limited green spaces and polluting industries. Without acknowledging and addressing air quality and other environmental impacts in these communities, the streets being "open" does not mean these communities are out of harm's way. In order for open streets to benefit these communities, toxic industries and practices need to be held accountable and air quality needs to improve.

Remove Police Presence

Police presence is problematic in BIPOC communities, as there have been numerous examples of police brutality in these communities before and during COVID-19. The community should explore and implement options for open streets without police presence.

Tailor Open Streets to the Community If a community determines that open streets will be beneficial, we should have a more tailored approach to each neighborhood and street, even within a city. People use streets differently depending on culture, need, and values so incorporating nuance and paying attention to a city's micro-cultures is important.

Protect Workers
Open streets efforts often involve the placement of temporary infrastructures, such as cones or barricades. These efforts do not happen on their own - it is public agency workers and community volunteers that make them happen. Therefore, we need to ensure their needs are being met and that they are provided with appropriate resources, such as Personal Protective Equipment. We must also support policies that ensure protection.

Essential or Sacrificial?: *Protecting Transit Workers and Riders*

2

Transformative Talk: May 15, 2020

Transit workers are essential workers, as are many of the current riders of public transit. However, policies and practices have not treated these individuals as essential members of our community, instead signaling that their health can be "sacrificed" in order to keep society functioning.

Co-facilitators: Lynda Lopez; Midori Valdivia; Mariana Huerta Jones

Contributing Community Panelists: Dealnd Chan; Jeffrey Nolish; Ambar Johnson; Do Lee; Maria Sipin; Erica Mattison; Tarik Kiley; Kristen Jeffers

"The conditions created by the pandemic drive home the fact that we essential workers — workers in general — are the ones who keep the social order from sinking into chaos. Yet we are treated with the utmost disrespect, as though we're expendable. Since March 27, at least 98 New York transit workers have died of Covid-19. My co-workers say bitterly:

We are not essential. We are sacrificial."

Sujatha Gidla, M.T.A. Conductor
NYTimes Op-Ed: May 5, 2020

Since March 2020, transit workers have experienced confusing and conflicting policies and as a result, many workers distrust the management and institutions that are supposed to protect workers. For example, in New York City, some workers have had to rely upon mutual aid networks to get personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies. Transit workers are also having to fill the role of first responders and social workers to meet the needs of riders. Many transit workers who have recovered from COVID-19 are returning to work, which can be a source of trauma as they may not have been given the time or space to grieve the loss of co-workers, friends, and family.

Transit has experienced a large decline in ridership and transit agencies are cutting frequency and routes. However, some of these routes serve essential workers and are now operating at high capacity due to service being cut. For example, in Los Angeles, 70% of transit riders rely on buses but LA Metro cut back bus service hours by 29% and cut rail service by 14%. These cuts are impacting essential workers and communities of color the most. In addition to crowding, people are being violently assaulted on buses by law enforcement as we saw in Philadelphia when one individual was pulled off a bus for not wearing a mask. Furthermore, low-income riders are disproportionately harmed by exclusionary policies like the "one bag policy" which dictated early on in the pandemic that transit riders in Los Angeles could only bring one bag or personal item on board. This created

How do we demonstrate to people that they are essential?

immense difficulty for people who do not have a location to shelter-in-place and those who use transit to transport their essential goods.

A Call for Solidarity

Many transit workers and riders are Black and Brown and are a part of the very same communities that are being hit hardest by COVID-19. The examples above show the need for a public health response that protects both transit drivers and riders, rather than punitive policies and practices that endanger the bodies of Black and Brown people. Some policies and protocols may also be pitting drivers against riders, such as directives to forcibly remove unhoused or people not wearing masks from platforms and buses.

"Who wins and who loses" can not be the framework to guide policy decisions to support transit workers and transit riders. If there is a policy to support transit workers that hurts other parts of the community, then we are selecting who lives and who doesn't live. We don't have to make those choices. We must continually ask, "How are we advocating for policies that keep both workers and riders safe?" There needs to be greater solidarity between transit workers and riders and broad cross-movement organizing to ensure a just recovery that includes both workers and riders.

We encourage transit agencies to, first and foremost, listen to transit workers' and riders' stories, experiences, needs, and recommendations for their own communities to help shape protocols, policies, and operations, and provide the type of support they need.

- Include transit workers and core transit riders in transportation planning and pandemic planning processes
- Allow for public meetings and special accommodations so that people can safely participate and provide public comments to inform decisions.
- Advocacy groups should employ creative approaches to continue to connect with transit riders and workers (via surveys, flyers, etc.) and include community members in direct advocacy opportunities and co-develop advocacy agendas.
- Provide transit workers with Personal Protective Equipment (gloves, masks, sanitizer).
- Ensure hazard pay for transit workers.
- Provide additional paid sick leave for transit workers experiencing COVID-19 to ensure they make a full recovery before returning to work
- Increase sanitation on buses, trains, stops, and platforms.
- Hold space for healing and provide grief counseling and mental health services for transit workers.
- Remove exclusionary policies, like the "one bag" policy, that disproportionately and negatively impacts unhoused and core transit riders who use transit for essential trips.
- Implement rear door boarding on buses to protect drivers and passengers.
- Provide clear guidance, supported by CDC guidelines, on when transit workers who have had COVID-19 can return to work safely.
- Stagger crew schedules to prevent crowding in transit workers' crew rooms.
- Identify routes essential workers rely upon most and increase transit frequency to allow for physical distancing.
- Operate with care and empathy and provide shelters and resources to the unhoused, rather than forcibly removing people from public spaces through sweeps.
- Distribute masks to transit riders who do not have one and ensure hand sanitizer and masks dispensers are in locations accessible to those with disabilities..
- Invest transit funding into the transit system and not into increased law enforcement.
- Remove law enforcement from trains; replace them with unarmed, community-based "transit ambassadors" trained in de-escalation practices who can create a welcoming and safe space and can assist passengers and transit drivers.
- Develop public service announcements and communications campaigns that provide clear public health guidance centered around care for one another, not criminalization or policing the sick.
- Suspend fares.

We need to move beyond nightly cheers as the only way to demonstrate to individuals that their contributions are essential to our society.

Moving from Harm to Healing: *Accountability, Resilience, and Restorative Justice*

3

Transformative Talk: May 29, 2020

Harm to Healing

The source of harm in our communities stem from broken relationships. Alternative systems of accountability in our communities have to be anti-racist, feminist, anti-heteronormative, earth-based, and based on the core of humanity.
- Dominique Diaddigo-Cash

As calls for defunding the police increase, we want to acknowledge or highlight the fact that mobility justice advocates led by BIPOC voices have been saying police should not be a part of transportation spending and programs for many years. This includes calling for an end to law enforcement in Vision Zero, safe routes to school, and police on transit. This is intricately tied to standing in solidarity with the movement for Black lives, the need to defund the police, and invest in Black communities.

In the context of Black liberation and anti-racism, what do restorative justice, accountability, and resilience look like in our communities? In the wake of protests for George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, among so many others that are on our minds; this question becomes even more pertinent to unravel as we do our work. Each of us is processing the current events differently, whether in solitude or in public forums like our online conversations.

Non-Black people of color and white allies have a responsibility to stand in solidarity with the Black community in fights for justice.

As we speak of alternatives to policing, how do we have conversations on a dimension that doesn't even mention policing? How do we decenter policing as we move to find alternatives?

Our exploration is attempting to find new ways of accountability for our communities that does not harm but heals. This work means holding elected officials accountable and examining how issues like the displacement of Black residents from major cities like Los Angeles are tied to the systems that keep some community members safe while marginalizing others.

Rio Oxas, co-facilitator based in Los Angeles, shared with us that in order to develop visions for healthy communities, part of it goes back to learning to reconnect with nature and rejecting the belief of separatism, that we are not part of nature. This separatism is at the core of policing and capitalism. Community well-being is part of reimagining alternatives and developing systems of mutual aid.

Policing is embedded in communities across the country and is unfortunately integrated and over-utilized in public health and social services.

Dominique Diaddigo-Cash, one of our co-facilitators, has been on the ground in Minneapolis amid the uprisings. They see restorative justice as a way forward. Dominique shared restorative justice is founded on the belief that humans innately want to connect with one another and that the true self within us all is true, wise, and powerful. We need to build systems that enable everyone to live within those true selves. Those who make peaceful change impossible makes violent ends inevitable. The source of harm in our communities stem from broken relationships. Alternative systems of accountability in our communities have to be anti-racist, feminist, anti-heteronormative, earth-based, and based on the core of humanity.

What is the price of convenience?: *Supporting Delivery and Warehouse Workers*

4

Transformative Talk: June 12, 2020

We live in the age of convenience facilitated by ecommerce and apps. One perspective to acknowledge is that being a consumer of convenience comes at a cost. There is one or several workers behind the package that comes to your door within 24 hours or the food that comes to your door in an hour. How do these workers suffer? What are alternatives to Amazon and other food delivery channels? There is a lot of the exploitation of these third party apps that try to keep rates down and minimize risk for themselves and increase profits for themselves.

Rina Cummings, Amazon warehouse worker and community organizer with Make the Road NY, Juan Goris with Make the Road NY, and Helen Ho and Wong with The Biking Public Project co-facilitated a conversation that made us reflect upon the price of convenience.

The Lived Experience of Warehouse Workers

Juan, shared that warehouse workers are being injured on the job at an alarming rate--even before COVID-19. Warehouse workers are the unseen workers, but incredibly important, in the delivery logistics industry. In a time where Amazon is making record profits, the $2 pay increase for hazard pay was short-lived. Workers have been demanding greater protections in their work environment to improve safety and prevent the spread of COVID-19. At that time of this conversation, Rina Cummings, amazon warehouse worker and community organizer and advocate with Make the Road NY, on Staten Island was on unpaid leave from her job because she has a pre-existing condition. The reason she made the decision to go on unpaid leave is because Amazon was not implementing safety protocols to protect workers from COVID-19. The company was not providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), they did not create accommodations for adequate physical distancing, they did not stagger lunch breaks to prevent overcrowding, and have not been forthright when there is a COVID-19 outbreak in the workplace. In addition, if a worker has been in close proximity to a person with COVID-19, Amazon made it difficult for the employee to be able to quarantine for two weeks.

The hazards warehouse workers face is not just confined to their workplace. Getting to work at the Staten Island Amazon warehouse can also be a treacherous journey. Thousands of workers, primarily Black and Brown people, use the bus as their primary transportation. At the time of this conversation, MTA, the local transit agency, failed to provide enough buses so people could get to work safely without overcrowding; the overcrowding on buses prevented people from having enough space for physical distance on a ride that can be an hour to an hour and a half ride.

The reality of what the public is being shown on Amazon commercials regarding their conduct towards workers, particularly in light of during COVID-19, does not match the reality in the warehouse. Juan emphasizes this point and states, "Amazon has taken a stance publicly saying that they care about black lives and our workers, but that is not true. They have taken this opportunity around COVID-19 to discipline workers who are speaking out about these conditions." They have smeared Chris Smalls and other workers who were calling attention to hazardous working conditions.

The Lived Experience of Delivery Workers

Delivery workers are contract workers. Therefore, the bikes they ride or the cars they drive belong to the worker, not the restaurant or grocery store. This illuminates some of the challenges delivery workers face. Due to COVID-19, many delivery workers were left in a vulnerable position in terms of finances and health.. For those that wanted to work, many restaurants were closed. There was a lack of personal protective equipment and policies to ensure their safety. For example, delivery workers would wait

Early on during the stay at home orders, at 7 PM people would go outside and clap for essential workers throughout the country. Helen reflected upon the erasure of important labor being done and stated, "but a lot of people were clapping for the doctors instead of the delivery workers. I would rather people write a letter or tweet at their elected officials advocating for livable wages, appropriate health and safety standards, and healthcare than to just come outside and clap."

in front of restaurants with no space to physically distance or the ability to use the restroom to wash their hands. Additionally, during the uprisings in New York City earlier this summer, an 8 PM curfew was put into effect. Many essential workers were targeted by the police after 8 PM.

10 Actions to Support and Advocate for Delivery and Warehouse Workers

Donate

Give to a whistleblower fund. This helps support warehouse workers who are speaking out against Amazon and provide some financial protection if they lose their job.

Call Out

Juan shared that thinking of a boycott would be difficult with Amazon because they are a part of other web based systems. So, we really need to speak out about the risks the workers are taking and support the demands of the workers. When customers speak out against Amazon (online), Amazon has been responsive. So, we collectively need to continue to press Amazon publicly to do what is right and just for the workers. Use social media to publicly shame Amazon and third party app providers. Participatory panelist, Rebecca Reilly stated, "these platforms have perfected exploitation and they need to be called out. Embarrassment goes a long way."

Support Workers' Demands

Paola Castañeda, participatory panelist, shared there is an immediate impulse to not use the delivery apps or Amazon, but she is conflicted in terms of how that will impact the workers. There is this dichotomy as a consumer we face. She stated that she has had conversations with delivery workers in Mexico City and asked if she should boycott using the app delivery service and they said no, but to support their demands instead.

Call the Restaurant

As a consumer you should try to not use the third party apps. Try calling the restaurant directly and have them use your credit card over the phone and provide your delivery worker with a cash tip. Oftentimes, on the app based programs, there is a delivery charge but not the entire fee goes to the delivery worker and then most people do not add more tips. The only guaranteed way to ensure delivery workers get the money is to literally put it in their hands.

Vote your Values

Helen emphasized the importance of knowing who your elected officials are and to connect with them. "If your elected officials don't work for you, get new ones!"

Shop Locally

Rina mentions the importance of doing the best you can and advocates for a boycott of Amazon if this is something you are able to do. She shared different strategies to make this possible for many folks. "There are plenty of mom and pop businesses that can deliver your medication, food, goods. Research and seek those businesses out and purchase directly from them. Also, go directly to the manufacturer's website and buy directly."

Neighborhood Scale Delivery

Participatory panelist, Kristen Wilkens, shared that in Capetown they are exploring new hyperlocal models of connecting businesses in a bikeable radius and to bike couriers that can make their deliveries. Connecting businesses to local cycling communities could serve as a model to decentralize and democratize the delivery economy. Additionally, exploring and implementing worker cooperatives could allow the people who do the work to own the work.

Update Policies

Rina has been protesting how Amazon treats their workers prior to COVID-19 and states the poor treatment of workers is just getting more eyes on it due to COVID-19. She states what is needed is more government oversight to protect workers; many of the factory laws that protected people in the 1920s are no longer adequate to protect warehouse workers today because Amazon is not technically a factory since they do not manufacture anything. The law has not caught up to technology, working conditions, and the logistic operations. Nick stated a similar thought in calling for the reformation of the gig economy and for laws to reflect the current situation of new technologies and third party exploitation of workers.

Defund the Police

Helen shared that the discrimination delivery works face is primarily from police officers. She stated, "we need to get police to stop harassing people of color on the street" and went on to sayone way to do that is to "defund the police."

Move away from tips and increase pay instead

Workers depend mostly on their tips. Right now we should be tipping in person and not using the apps to tip. However, we should be working to increase wages rather than utilizing tips as a way to pay these workers.

"Essential"

Rina powerfully closed out the session by sharing, “If you are calling people essential, get the essential people what they need. The support that they need.... We don’t need a crisis or pandemic to call us essential. We are human beings and everyone is essential to their family and loved ones. We don’t need a company to describe us as essential. We are essential because we are human beings.” May we all remember these words the next time you receive your package or have your food delivered and be compelled to take action today.

Co-facilitators: Helen Ho, JuanGoris, Rina Cummings, Nick Wong

Contributing Community Panelists: Rebecca Reilly, Paola Castaneda, Kirsten, and Natalie Hernandez

Moving Planning from Colonialism to Liberation

5

Transformative Talk: June 26, 2020

City Planning as a profession has contributed to violence and trauma of BIPOC. This conversation provided a space to collectively imagine new methodologies, relationships, strategies, and collective-care as we navigate planning practice during COVID-19 and in support of the uprising for Black liberation and beyond.

This conversation was co-facilitated by Annie Mendoza; Yanisa Techagumthorn, Brytanee Brown, and Brooke Staton; all of whom arepractitioners who engage with planning processes and projects.

Violence in planning takes many forms and the resulting trauma is experienced in a myriad of ways by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Annie, who is Tongva and lives in Tongvagar, shared that violence perpetrated by the planning practice for her and her community is the erasure that occurs in the planning process. "People look at Los Angeles as many things, but it is seldom looked at as an ancestral homeland to indigenous people which makes planning particularly difficult. The particular way that the indigenous people are erased is very consistent with the extractive growth of the City. Planning is the ground zero for this process of erasure." She further emphasized that native nations are not just another marginalized group in the United States. They are sovereign nations that should be recognized as such.

Others shared that violence in BIPOC communities looks like conducting a community meeting to receive feedback for one singular project instead of thinking about how planning should be interconnected. Brytanee expanded upon this point and highlighted a California Senate Bill which would streamline bike and pedestrian projects. She provided a critical analysis of this "well intentioned" Bill and states, "what that signals to me is this idea in our field that environmentally sustainable is synonymous with anti-racism. And I don't necessarily see that being the case. Policies and programs like this that bypass community processes are reminiscent of erasure.... It doesn't feel like it honors our experiences to get these quick build projects."

Richard Aviles, participatory panelist, shared that urban planning from its conception is rooted in settler colonialism and community engagement is the first thing to be cut from the process if timelines or budgets are strained. He goes on to share that planners are not trained in community engagement or they get stuck utilizing outdated public forums. "My job shouldn't be in the office. I think planners forget that there are people living in cities. How do we leverage the lived experience to be as worthy as the technical expertise?" For Yanisa, violence in planning decisions is something that becomes normalized and little thought is given to the implications that these decisions will have on people. One example of this normalization is cutting Sunday transit service due to budgetary constraints but keeping the 9-5 commuter lines fully operating,

Violence in planning spaces is also inflicted upon planners of color. Amar, a participatory panelist, shared that BIPOC planning staff at public agencies come into the profession with lived experiences of harm, but their voices are silenced and their intellect is questioned. She shared this frustration by stating that many BIPOC staff know best how to engage communities meaningfully, but they are often ignored and othered. It is clear that the main reason for their involvement is to check boxes that engagement has been completed. As a result, BIPOC staff are leaving these

"My job shouldn't be in the office. I think planners forget that there are people living in cities. How do we leverage the lived experience to be as worthy as the technical expertise?"

- Richard Aviles

positions. In addition, Jan Victor shared how planning often ignores what is actually happening on the ground in communities and the experiences of the people who are walking the streets. He stated that when they contribute to a planning process feeling that there may be improvement, it often results in pre-made plans that are not a reflection of the effort put in by the community. Community members often spend time at community meetings listening to planners propose ideas and solutions and then share their own ideas and feedback, but none of these ideas are ever actualized. When there are no meaningful results and solutions from the time spent by community members on the project, community members are left feeling demoralized and undervalued.

Another detrimental planning practice is that oftentimes community members are brought into the planning late in the process. Brooke illustrates this point in the following statement: "we are asked to bring folks to the table, but are we allowing people to determine where the table is, what it looks like? The way the planning process is set up is when money arrives to focus on priorities that may not be important to community members." This sets up a scenario in which the planner is being asked to facilitate a planning process that does not reflect what the community wants.

Value Lived Experience as Expertise

An important step on teh path to liberation is shifting the planning paradigm away from a preference for technical expertise and instead uplifting lived experience as valued knowledge. As planners we must hold BIPOC communities in the same high regard as you would someone who has more power over you. Planners respond differently todirectors of agencies, for example. They ask questions like, how do we get a meeting with this person, how do we respect their time and expertise? The community never receives that type of approach nor is the question asked "how is the community benefiting from the interaction as much as the planner or public agency". Amy Fong confirmed through her own experience with planning institutions that there is a top down approach in transportation funding. "Funding is distributed by priorities that they set, not the community."

Rethink Resources as Relatives

Annie, shared that oftentimes land or the liberation of land is erased from this conversation. "Human beings wouldn't be able to exist with mother earth and our reliance on her cannot be denied. When colonization hit this continent it did not impact the people from this land and the people brought here to work the land, but it impacted the land itself. It was exploited and extracted for capital gain. If we want to decolonize our thinking we need to stop looking at the land and water as resources and start referring to it as a relative." Moving from "land as resource" to "land as relative" would dramatically change the framework that planners use. Ofurhe Igbinedion, shared a valid perspective particularly in light of the demands of the uprisings. She stated, "I feel like I'm experiencing a lack of imagination right now. It is really hard for me to imagine planners thinking about land as a living being, when they can't even think about black, indigenous, and people of color as living beings who have autonomy and control and things to say. I really want to get there. Where I can see that. But it is really hard for me to see that happen."

We know the harm planning has done and continues to do. What is our responsibility as practitioners, particularly those that are BIPOC practitioners and what can we do to move from colonialism to liberation?

Center Local Indigenous Knowledge

Planning must incorporate the local indigenous views of the land that is being planned on. People need to connect with the land that they are working on and making decisions about. We need to be accountable, not only just to us, but to the seven generations. This means we don't just think about what is going on now, but about seven generations from now. Indigenous people are often tokenized in the planning process and their ways of thinking and being are not incorporated into plans. Essentially, we can not talk about decolonization in planning without talking about native land return.

Be Accountable to BIPOC Communities

A lot of the methodologies we learn and practice as planners actually perpetuate oppression. Even well-

meaning planners often continue to perpetuate the same oppressive systems. Yanisa has observed that "The 'white man planner trope' of the 1950s is still around today. It is just slightly in a different form. How do we challenge who is the expert?" Accountability for white allies and BIPOC planners is important. Planning is a toxic field and white allies and BIPOC planners can actually take on some of the language and these oppressive practices. To build in accountability, we need to be in the community and have critical relationships with people in the community so that they can be challenging us as we do our work.

Abolish the "Planning Profession"

There are contradictions inherent in trying to implement more equitable planning practices in the field as we know it today. What is equitable planning when the profession is based on settler colonialism? Are you even valuing people's bodies, let alone the land? But the timeline and budgets for these processes are created by priorities that are not related to communities and the spaces to do that work outside of the planning field doesn't exist. There is often this coercive dynamic that exists when planners suddenly have a project to work on. Those with good intentions will say that they should engage the community in the project, but usually are not asking what communities are doing already, what they care about, or what their priorities are. The unstated expectation is that community members should jump when planners say jump, or else they will get paved over. Brooke shared, "As planners we must think about those contradictions and what it means to reform those oppressive practices and resist tokenization for those of us that are able to access these spaces to a certain degree. What does it look like to do more good than harm because they will use us to rubberstamp things." Carmen Kuan, and many others in the space agreed that our goal should be to abolish the idea of planning as a profession and instead do real equitable engagement that will build deep meaningful relationships with the community and redistribute decision making power to the community by centering them as experts.

Co-Facilitated by Annie Mendoza; Yanisa Techagumthorn, Brytanee Brown, Brooke Staton

Contributing Community Panelists:Amy; Ofurhe; Caitlin; Richard Aviles; Cordelia Storm; Kasi; Carmen; Jason; Jan Victor Andasan; Anna; Amar; Alyssa Chung; Michelle Rolon

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- Brooke Staton

Reflection

This virtual convening series facilitated by Untokening and Pueblo Planning centered the voices of community members and co-created a vision for mobility justice in a COVID-19 world. The space was created for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) community leaders, advocates, and practitioners and engaged dozens to hundreds of individuals through Zoom and Facebook Live. The insights and strategies shared during the participatory panel discussions were documented and shared as a resource to the broader planning community. This convening serves as a model for equity work in this arena; BIPOC and other marginalized communities should be centered in planning and policy decisions so they best serve the entire community.

Collectively, participants articulated clear strategies and paths to accountability for mobility justice issues: Open Streets planning must include and reflect the needs of BIPOC communities who are simply in danger by accessing public spaces, integrate the needs of those who are not able-bodied and the unhoused, and continuously answer the question, "Open for Whom?" when making planning decisions.

Planning processes must acknowledge and address how various systemic injustices are piling up against our BIPOC communities: racist, police brutality, environmental injustices and air pollution in our neighborhoods, transportation cuts affecting the safety of essential workers going to work, transit policies that pit transit workers against riders, disproportionate impacts of COVID-19, and investments in policing on transit rather than in transit itself. Transit workers and riders are often from the Black and Brown communities who have been hit the hardest by COVID-19. Essential workers such as delivery workers allow large populations of the U.S. to remain safe and work and shop from home.

What are the ways elected officials and leaders can meaningfully communicate the imperative role essential workers play in our society? How can we ensure we are not sacrificing essential workers' lives but protecting and uplifting them? In the realm of transportation, transit workers must be protected with proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and policies must be implemented that value their life (such as paid sick leave when contracting COVID-19, staggering shifts to avoid overcrowding, etc.). Like all planning processes, their voices must be centered in decision-making and they must have safe opportunities to participate.

COVID-19 is a new public health crisis that translates into specific institutional and racist challenges for the BIPOC community such as working and traveling safely as an essential worker. The issue of police brutality and the need

to defund the police is not new---BIPOC communities have been demanding change for decades. As we move forward to address the plethora of systemic issues BIPOC and other marginalized communities face, we must begin to decenter mainstream narratives (such as the focus on policing) in order to make room for creative, alternative solutions and methods of accountability. In doing this work, we must counteract colonial thinking, and remember our connection to the earth and our collective humanity.

For many Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), who work in the transportation sector, we have no choice but to continue to tie together the personal, political, and professional aspect of our lives. There is such a huge impact from COVID-19 on people of color and many of us are inundated with illness and death and do not have the time or space to grieve. As a result, other priorities take precedence and our perspectives are more nuanced and our work is centered around how that impacts people who are marginalized. Holding this truth, the community wove the personal, political, and professional when reflecting upon each of these mobility issues.