

# WHOSE STREETS? BUILDING SAFE COMMUNITIES FOR ALL

## Voices from the *Criminal Justice Law Review's* 2020 Symposium

Over several days in October and November 2020, the *UCLA Criminal Justice Law Review*, in partnership with the UCLA Law Criminal Justice Program and the UCLA Center for the Study of Women, presented the virtual symposium series *Whose Streets? Building Safe Communities for All*. The focus of the series was innovative community-centered approaches to public safety that are emerging amidst calls to rethink policing. In each session, a panel of scholars, policy-makers, lawyers, and activists looked through the lens of an iconic neighborhood space—the street, the home, and the school—to explore the possibilities and legal obstacles to creating new forms of response to public safety incidents that are safe and effective for all. Collected here are excerpts of the voices and viewpoints presented in these sessions. They have been minimally edited for clarity, with every effort made to maintain the informal tone of the discussions.

–Kevin Shang, Chief Symposium Editor  
–Eric Marshall, Editor-in-Chief

### **I. The Street**

#### ***Michael Saavedra, Youth Justice Coalition***

I spent nineteen and a half years in California prisons. Fifteen of that in solitary confinement. Based on false labeling of gang affiliation, etc. But during that time, I also began to become autodidactic and I taught myself the law.

I never went to high school; I was kicked out and sent to juvenile hall during junior high. So, while I was in solitary I began to educate myself and also study and learn the law. And I ended up suing the Department of Corrections several times and winning a substantial settlement for due process violations for keeping me in there so long. But at the same time, other individuals were also advocating and pushing against the use of longterm solitary confinement, which is based on very racist procedures and evidence, such as having a tattoo of a dragon or an Aztec warrior, or having a book by George Jackson. These types of things can cause you to be kept in solitary confinement indefinitely, meaning if you have life, you will be in there for life—unless you either parole, turn informant or die.

Solitary confinement has its own history of placing people who were activists and organizers and leaders in the community in isolation in order to suppress their ability to communicate with the world, and with other people. So in 2010, all of us in solitary confinement came together and we're thinking about ideas of how do we fight back and resist. Similar things have happened in prisons uprisings. Like in Attica and other prisons, which ended very badly with a lot of people being killed. You know, a lot of harm and not much change.

So we began to formulate ideas of how we can do this in a peaceful way but also get attention from outside and bring attention to what's going on in here. The idea formed around doing a hunger strike, and so around 2010 we went on one of the largest prison hunger strikes in this nation. At the end, around 20,000 prisoners had joined. Both in solitary, outside, as well as activists out here in the in the free world. In order for us to do something on such a grand scale and have such an effect within the prison system, we had to first end all of the hostilities, tension, and violence that occurred amongst prisoners racially.

Some people may know, unlike New York and many other states, California segregates its prisoners by race, so it's divide and conquer. They also use that against us when people begin to become nationalist and, you know, learn about their history, their roots, and also segregation. People start organizing, becoming politically aware of things. This is always used against us. And then there's a long history of racial tension and violence amongst black and brown prisoners. In order to create this change and begin this hunger strike we needed to all come together. So folks, all of us inside, began to form these dialogues and these conversations with Black, brown, northern, southern, white, everybody, every race and faction, to come together in solidarity and say, "You know what, we need to do something." It's kind of like what Emiliano Zapata once said: "As individual fingers, we could be easily broken. But together, we form a mighty fist."

With that idea, we began to have negotiations or peace treaties around ending all the hostilities amongst us and just completely becoming solidified. And that led to the largest hunger strike ever. And then folks like myself and other people began to learn the law and litigate. A group of lawyers and activists took on our case as a class action. In 2016, Almost 90 percent of us were all released from solitary confinement, and longterm solitary confinement also stopped. They can no longer keep people in solitary, in California, for more than two years—which is still a long time. But compared to fifteen, twenty, and some men, even thirty years, it is progress.

Coming home in 2017, I started going to school. One of the things that we were asking for in solitary, during the hunger strikes, was higher education inside because then, there was literally no type of education programs in solitary. I began to take some credits inside and then when I came home, I immediately enrolled in community college. I just recently

graduated and was accepted to UCLA where I'm beginning my undergrad studies.

... Using a model of transformative justice and restorative justice where you still hold people accountable is not necessarily having the law back you up—more of it is community. The folks that are in that circle are all accountable to each other. And I think it's a much better practice than law enforcement and locking people up and punishment. The people that are harmed actually come away with healing, and the person who does the harm is being held accountable. There's different models. It doesn't have to be the one that you know is popular, but whatever is decided by the community. And there's different ideologies on it, but my experience has been with social justice. It's based on a lot of indigenous practices where people form this circle and you have the person that was harmed there and they get to bring in people for support as well as the person that harmed that person. The community is holding that person accountable. You also have a community-respected person who does the moderating. And they get to ask each other questions, which you don't get to do in the criminal justice system. When they're punishing, the person who was harmed doesn't get to ask the questions and the person [who did the harm] doesn't feel free enough to answer honestly, and sometimes that's what people want for closure for healing.

***Farhang Heydari, The Policing Project at New York University School of Law***

When I think about the parts of policing that I want to work on, I want to distinguish between proactive and reactive policing. I think proactive policing has gotten a lot of attention in the last few years. It's the idea that cops will go out and try to figure out and deter crime before it happens. That's the logic that kind of undergirds stop-and-frisk in New York, and the huge amounts of traffic stops that we see around the country. Police want to go out there, have their presence felt, deter crime before it ever happens. And we all know the problems with that: huge racial disparities often result when police proactively make stops.

There's very little evidence that those stops do anything. The rates of finding weapons or deterring meaningful crime in New York during the stop and frisk period were almost none. We did a study in Nashville about the use of proactive traffic stops and found that it had almost no impact on crime. Tens of thousands of people still die on the road, every year.

So there's plenty of problems with proactive policing, but reactive policing doesn't get nearly as much attention and it's one piece that we've been starting to work on lately. Millions, tens of millions of Americans call police services every year, usually through 911 or 311. They often bring police to their location because they are in some sort of crisis or they see a problem. They need help; they don't know who

else to call. When police come to the location, all sorts of problems can result. And the underlying problem is that police are only well suited to do a certain number of things. We train them on how to use force, how to use law, but yet we call them in all kinds of situations: homelessness, substance abuse, and calls from mental illness. Those calls often go to police because we don't really have first responders that are willing and able to respond at any hour of the night to any kind of problem that people might have. And so when you bring people who are really only trained in enforcement law to dangerous situations, they're going to apply enforcement law to those situations. That's going to lead to unnecessary uses of force and it's going to lead to a complete failure to address the underlying problems.

So we are starting to think through a project we call "Reimagining Dispatch and Response." What does a dispatch system look like when people pick up the phone and need someone's help, but there are people other than police at the other end of that phone? What do we need to train the dispatchers to understand? What sort of resources do we need government or community groups to have to actually be able to respond?"

I think Michael [Saavedra]'s peace treaties are kind of an amazing example. And we've seen other examples and other places in the country where you can actually call with a violence-related problem and have someone other than a police officer show up. That's not common, people are just started are starting to work on those sorts of resources, but when we think about creating alternatives to 911 and reimagining dispatch, that's what we're thinking about. How can we work with communities and redistribute societal resources so that police are not the only responders?

. . . I think one of the challenges with scaling up community-based response models is the challenge of keeping them community-based, if that makes any sense. You know, the model that works in one community may not work in another one. You need neighborhood organizations . . . [A] lot of the models that we've seen crop up are big city models with municipal funding behind them. There are a lot of cities in this country where they're resource strapped—maybe they'll be less resource-strapped if they divest from certain institutions. But funding is going to be a problem in places. There's going to be rural communities where this is going to be a problem. There are rural communities where you call the police for animal control problems because they they're just kind of the only responder out there. You know, rural small community incarceration rates are sky-high. I mean, they're the only ones that are still going up. They're a third of our justice system. So we can't just think about solutions that only work for the New Yorks, LAs, and Philadelphias of the world.

***Ronda Goldfein, AIDS Law Project & Safehouse Philadelphia***

The officials in Philadelphia announced in 2018 that they wanted to consider a supervised injection site—that they looked at all the evidence and they thought it was a good idea. And we thought we would move forward with that. And the “we” in this instance is the AIDS Law Project and Prevention Point. And again, perhaps we were a bit naïve, we thought: “This is an evidence-based approach. There are more than 100 of them open. They’ve been open for thirty years. There’s been no fatalities. Drug use is down, treatment is up. Neighborhood improvement is up. Public consumption is down. Who wouldn’t like this? Who wouldn’t want this?” But in fact, the U.S. Attorney didn’t like it. And there was a piece in the New York Times from [then-Deputy Attorney General] Rod Rosenstein saying: “If you’re going to do this, we’re going to come and get you.” But we persevered because we thought this is the thing we have to do.

So in February of 2019 the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania sued us. And while nobody likes to be sued, particularly by the government, we thought, “Okay, this is good. It calls the question.” They sued us—a civil action for declaratory judgment—simply asking the court: “Is this activity lawful or not?” We’ve consistently maintained that it was lawful and that it didn’t violate the Controlled Substances Act.

As some of you may know it as there’s a section, a “crack house statute,” which makes it illegal to maintain a premises where drugs will be used—for the purpose of using, selling, storing, distributing drugs. And we said: “That’s okay, we’re not doing any of that, we’re maintaining a place that we can save people’s lives. We can give them immediate healthcare. We can be a trusted source.”

We went into the argument with that idea and by the fall of last year, a federal district court ruled that supervised consumption did not violate the federal law—that our purpose was not to facilitate drug use and that it was lawful in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. So we’re thinking, “Okay, you know, a third of the state. It’s lawful there.” We prepared to open a site.

We were met with some community opposition which we are prepared to weather, but COVID became more than we could weather. And the judge, in fact the very judge who ruled that our activities were legal, granted the U.S. Attorney’s motion for a stay, saying that he still agreed that the activities were legal. He thought the public health data supported it. But he thought that Philadelphians were a bit afraid from COVID and demonstrations in the street, and he put us on hold.

. . . When we talk about supervised injection and communities, there’s kind of a split within the community. Some neighborhoods in Philadelphia are struggling with open air drug use. There’s the community of those folks who are housed and don’t want that in the neighborhood. And the community of those who are unhoused and they’re desperately looking for alternatives. And what we see is that law enforcement has

come in, heavily on the side of those housed. And it's not that we are not sympathetic to people who have those kinds of struggles and conflicts in their neighborhood. But I think that we need to recognize, like all these people are living in the neighborhood, whether you're outside or you're inside, you're still living in that neighborhood.

. . . The research around supervised injection is clear. It decreases public consumption, it decreases drug paraphernalia in the streets. It improves community lives. It decreases overdoses in the vicinity . . . [W]e don't have any reason why there isn't a supervised injection site in the U.S. right? It works, and it's simply because there's a federal law, part of a failed crackdown on drugs.

## II. Home

### *Assemblymember Sydney Kamlager, California State Assembly*

Over the decades we've seen that law enforcement has played a greater and greater role in defining what family structures look like because they have been so prolific and successful in tearing many of them apart—or certainly in recalibrating them. And we know that from just looking at our foster care systems and our jails and our prisons across the state. We see many parents, uncles, guardians, family members who are living most of their adult lives incarcerated, leaving the communities who are not incarcerated to figure out how to reshape the unit or nucleus that makes the most sense for them to survive. And I don't believe that should be the intent of law enforcement, or even what folks are thinking about when they call law enforcement.

It is debatable at best that the expansion of our police systems—and we know that they've expanded just by looking at the budgets—has actually resulted in communities feeling safer. Maybe certain communities, but certainly not all communities. We also know that the over-reliance on law enforcement has meant that more civilians have become ensnared in a criminal court system that tethers them to this system for the rest of their life and has socioeconomic impacts on generations of family members. What we have seen, and one of the reasons why I authored AB 2054—the C.R.I.S.E.S. Act—was that a lot of people are afraid. They are hesitant to call on law enforcement because of past experiences that they have had or that other folks that they know have had as it has related to interactions with the police. And in doing so it's actually created scenarios where they feel more unsafe.

For the San Francisco Police Department, around 1,100 of about 2,300 officers have had about forty hours of mental health crisis intervention training. Just forty hours. I think you get trained more if you're going to cut someone's hair or do someone's nails. And we know that many more of those officers have actually had fewer hours. So, you have to ask yourself: "Do I want someone who's had less time being trained than someone who's doing nails to be responding to a call that I'm going to make about some intimate partner violence that I'm experiencing?"

We also know that of the almost 850,000 reported calls on intimate partner violence, less than 45 percent of them were actually reported to the police. That means that so many more folks were not reporting something and probably endangering themselves and anyone else that happened to be in that space because of their fear of law enforcement. So, we have to recognize that when we talk about accountability, oftentimes we're talking about personal accountability. But very rarely are we talking about system accountability, and we have to move into that space where we are requiring that our systems be accountable to all of the people that they serve.

You cannot say the system is really just designed for this particular color of person, this particular gender of person, this particular class a person, or this person who has this particular background, or this person who lives in this particular region. That is not why we each pay as taxpayers into a system designed to help and serve and protect all of us. It's also really important to know that we collectively have to have some honest discussions with ourselves about how we even define punishment, and how we define safety, and how we define intervention. Most people, when they are involved in a crisis, their goal isn't to have someone arrested, charged, sentenced, over monitored—essentially to have someone's life changed forever. They want that crisis to stop. But when you begin to analyze the systems that you have in place and you realize that the minute someone makes a call, they are put on a roller coaster ride within this system that never stops, then you really do have to say, "Okay, how do we go about creating more guardrails, and stop signs, and junctures so that we can stop this forever pipeline of punishment and criminalization of poverty?"

. . . [Y]ou have to talk about the responses that you get when you call law enforcement. There are certain folks who say: "I've had a very simple relationship with law enforcement when I've called. They didn't impede on my civil liberties. I was not asked questions that were inappropriate. I was not taken into custody as the 'alleged victim.'" All of the roles were played in a way where everyone stays in their lane. I would assume that the folks who say, "I've had successful interactions with police," would probably share those kinds of stories.

I think many folks are saying if that's going to happen, then that should be something that is shared across all kinds of backgrounds ethnicities, genders, sexual orientation spaces, et cetera. And too much data says that that's just not the case. There's a reason why 92 percent of the folks that are in the California gang database are Black and Brown people. There is a reason why the majority of Black and Brown folks get longer sentences, have higher bail, are stopped and monitored by police for longer and more ferociously—are killed by police more ferociously. You know that data is out there and it is raw, but it is also very honest. Again, I think have to push back on some of the statements to say: "Well are you getting privileged treatment? Maybe because of your privilege?"

***Lisa Sangoi, Movement for Family Power***

At [Movement for Family Power] we conceive of the foster system broadly as the family regulation system, the family punishment system, the system put in place in this country since the mid-1800s to engage in “child saving.” It claims to protect children from their parents who are just out there to abuse and harm them. Along with so many people who have had their kids taken away—activists, academics, researchers, organizers—we’ve seen it’s sold us a bill of bad goods, and it operates very similarly to the criminal legal system, and CPS workers operate very, very, very similarly to the police.

... In terms of the history of policing, it came out of very oppressive institutions—namely slavery. If you look back at the history of the foster system, it too came out of a very oppressive institution—trying to assimilate immigrants into this country. Back in the 1850s, the actual invention of the foster system was by “progressive” white men in New York City. They saw all these immigrant children coming over from Europe, children who are not, at the time, racialized as white—Irish Catholic and Italian Catholic children. They are very, very worried about what Catholic culture would do to this “decent” Protestant middle-class society, so they literally invented the foster system to justify the mass removal of children from their parents, and they ship these children off to farms all over the country where they would serve as indentured and slave labor.

That was the genesis of the modern child welfare system. It was always used as a tool of assimilation, of genocide. And that is really critical to understanding the role the foster system plays in society today. Going back to the 1850s, if you look at the case docket of the Children’s Aid Society that was developed by this white man, Charles Loring Brace, a huge number of cases were about not having housing. Many kids were removed from their parents’ homes because their parents were without housing, and the parents lack of access to housing was blamed on the parents’ own deficiency. It was backwards reasoning: “you don’t have housing because you have a mental illness” or “because you have a substance use disorder,” when in fact, an incredibly economically violent system in the United States resulted in them not having housing, which then resulted in a reasonable reaction, which is substance use or whatever their coping mechanism.

And that remains true to this day. If you look at the Children’s Aid Society docket right now, over 30 percent of cases are because of lack of housing. And what does the foster system do? It takes this country’s refusal to recognize generations of oppression, of racial oppression, of class oppression, of redlining, and it completely ignores that. It takes a situation of not having housing and it says that’s the parent’s fault.

How do we face policing in the work? We are building that narrative around how the foster system is just like the criminal legal system. It polices marginalization, and it doesn’t do it by accident. It does it to maintain a social order, an economic order, a racial order. Another

challenge we face is that the overwhelming docket of child welfare cases are around [parents] not having housing and not having childcare and not having transportation—things that can be fixed if this country just had some commitment to not being totally oppressive toward people without money. That’s not to say that you don’t have cases of harm against people. Intimate partner violence, domestic violence—that is all there. But one of the challenges we face is because of the incredible success of the white feminist movement in removing that from structural forces. The child welfare system continues to look at intimate partner violence as if it’s just about the relationship between two people, and never takes a structural view of it . . . . The foster system does an enormously good job taking it to personal harm and stripping it of its structural analysis, so we can just paint people as defective, as less than, and paint white wealthy people as deserving, as having achieved all that they have.

. . . So, if we understand the system as such, then absolutely we need to call for its abolition. Because what the hell is it doing to actually take care of people who are at risk of harm? It’s not doing anything.

### ***Mariah Monsanto, She Safe/We Safe Campaign***

A lot of our work is literally just listening to community, holding what we’re calling “kitchen table conversations” where we are literally asking community, “What do you need to keep yourself safe? And what does that look like?”

Some of that looks like just redefining and reclaiming what the word “community” means. In the activism that’s been happening since Black Lives Matter popped off around eight years ago, the word “community” [has] been thrown around very haphazardly. But in reality, community is just a knowing of people and taking care of people. It’s really opposite of how we are socialized in the United States—this individualism, that every fault is yours, and any shortcomings that you have are not due to the structures that are in place.

When asking what community needs, community said that they need resources. So, what are the organizations that are happening locally? When you want somebody to intervene on violence, do you have the training to do that? Part of what’s been coming up has been pods. Your pods of people, who are the main ones you go to when something is wrong. These are the people who you can trust. Do the people in your circle know how to intervene and advocate for somebody who’s been a victim of interpersonal violence? Where are the organizations that are able to train your communities to actually do those things? And again, where’s the money coming from?

In terms of government, turn out your pockets and listen to community. And then community, if your community knows what you need, communicate so the organizers and the activists can advocate for what that means and what that looks like come budget season.

. . . There's a few things I think about in terms of what counter narratives need to be pushed in order to get everybody on board—that, you know, police are not a necessary entity and should be abolished. The funding is a path to abolishing, but I start with just asking people to imagine, like, truly what safety looks and feels like. If this if this was one of my calls with [Black Youth Project] 100, I'll be asking people to close their eyes, and imagine with me what safety looks like. If it's a Saturday afternoon, the sun is shining, the streets are clear, there's kids playing outside, there's ice pops, there's water flowing, there's music in the air, there's laughter. When I imagine that and am feeling safe, I never see a cage. I never see police. I literally see people that I care about having what they need.

When there's questions about people not feeling safe because of high crime, what's actually happening? Our house is being broken into. Houses are being broken into because houses have resources. Cars are broken into because you might see something in the car that somebody needs, somebody can sell because there's literally not money to be had by this person.

. . . The idea of police is, “If there are police around people won't do crime.” No—people just get better at doing crime or more creative about it in order to get what they need. Since again, the government is not actually providing the people things that people need in order to take care of themselves and live full lives.

### III. School

#### *Sarah Djato, L.A. Students Deserve & Student, Dorsey High School (Los Angeles)*

I am a full believer that schools are a reflection and are representative of how society treats their people. So, when you see issues with policing within schools, or in my high school experience, you see that the most vulnerable within our society are the people who are the most vulnerable within schools and when it comes to police interaction. Students Deserve, when researching who is affected by police, found that Black girls and gender nonconforming folks are targeted by police and have a lot of negative interactions with police. And there isn't this sense for the district to try to resolve that. Because it's not getting much attention. Within our society, no one really listens to Black women or gender nonconforming folk, or trans people, or queer people. So the district continues to do the same.

With policing and education and within our school, we see that there is a lack of resources for our students. With peer counseling or nurses or grief counselors or psychiatric social workers, there aren't enough on our campuses. Within these Black neighborhoods, there are overcrowded classrooms, overcrowded schools. And there's just simply not enough resources to tackle, or to give to every single student, individually or in smaller groups. And then resources are being divested from what we

need, which are those college counselors, those [psychiatric social workers], which are not being prioritized within budgeting. But policing is. So they continue to invest in patrolling or police officers arresting and being able to use weapons—you know, pepper spray.

I believe LAUSD is the only district with police who have a license to kill. So, students are being harmed in that way, and they continue to invest in policing, and where you put your money, you show who you prioritize. LAUSD is obviously not prioritizing Black students, and I think once they leave high school they leave with this knowledge of knowing that they're not enough or they leave with this knowledge that, you know: "school is not a place where I should feel safe. It's not a place where I should thrive" and they end up latching onto things that, you know, don't necessarily aid them within our society.

***Jason P. Nance, Professor of Law, University of Florida Levin College of Law***

It is very unfortunate that we are investing so many resources into school resource officer programs or police programs, instead of really prioritizing the things that keep students safe.

That is not the way to do it. And so why is this happening? In many ways, this is stemming from high-profile incidents, for example, in Columbine, and in Sandy Hook, and then Parkland. It strikes a lot of fear into the hearts of policymakers and parents and others that are saying, "we need to do something." The response for many of the school district is: "Okay, we need to invest in more security. We need to show that we're doing it." We want to demonstrate tangibly that we're doing something to make school safer. So we have the federal government, state governments that infuse all of this cash into schools, which is really unfortunate because I'd love to see that going into teachers. I love to see that going into school psychologists and counselors and other programs to really help students be safe. And unfortunately, it's being funneled into police, metal detectors and other security cameras and other measures that, quote unquote, are trying to keep students safe.

I don't think that those are true measures of keeping students safe. Following Columbine, the U.S. Department of Education and the Secret Service did a study that looked at the characteristics of how to keep school safe. You've had other studies as well—one out of Chicago Public Schools that also looked at the character in pretty at-risk environments. What are the types of environments to keep school students safe? And they came up with similar things. What they're finding is that it has more much more to do with the relationships. It has to do with the relationships between students and teachers, between teachers and the parents, and the overall school climate. That's how you create a safe environment. It needs to be an environment that people want to be a part of, that they feel special, that they feel included. An environment in which they can disclose when things are happening. When things are bothering them,

they feel safe to go to other students, they feel safe to go to teachers—when they feel safe to express who they really are. Those are the types of environments that are going to keep kids safe.

Paradoxically, we're having more police officers and more highly secure test environments. And that really disrupts that trust that can be built among students and trust that can be built among teachers and students. And so I think we're going about this in the wrong way. And I wish that we would rethink that.

I appreciate the comments of SA [Smythe] and Sarah [Djato] because they've reminded me of students that have talked about their experience. I'm reminded of a student that I read about. Her name is Minerva Dixon. Minerva Dixon grew up in New York, and she described her day-to-day experience. This was following Columbine. Every day that she had to go to school, she had to go through this regimen. She had to walk through all of these metal detectors and she had to remove her belt. She had to remove her backpack. They would search through her belongings. They would scan her with some type of security wand, and then after, she'd collect her belongings and then hurry off to school. And they asked her, "How does that make you feel?" And she said, "I hate school. I can't believe that I have to go through this every day. They treat me like a criminal. They don't trust me." That was really inhibiting that relationship, and that sense of trust, that sense of belonging, a sense of safety for that particular student.

She was African American, and once she found out that other students at another part of the city didn't have to go through that process, she just couldn't believe it. She's like, "I can't believe that they make us go through something like this, but they don't have to go through something like that." What message does that send to this student and other students? It sends a message that white students have greater privacy rights, that white students are privileged. And I find that to be very, very problematic. I find it to be very problematic that we send this message that white students don't have to go through this, but these students do.

I think that that fuels a lot of the racial tensions that we experienced. It also disrupts that trust that many of our students feel toward government institutions. Why are they going to trust government institutions when their experiences at the schools have been, "Well you don't trust me. You think that I'm a criminal, so why should I trust you." I think that has lasting consequences, and I think it needs to be addressed—and schools are the very place to do it. Because that's the place that we're trying to teach students about their constitutional rights, that's the place in which we're trying to teach students that they ought to be thinking differently about race and about society, that we have to figure out a way to resolve our differences in a peaceful way so that we can enjoy our experience together.

***SA Smythe, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of African American Studies, UCLA***

Anti-Blackness is the overwhelming, over-determining factor that shapes all of our lived experiences . . . . Anti-Blackness, which impacts class, which articulated gender and other colonial sorts of formations is precisely what it is that we're navigating when we say we want cops off campus or we don't want police in our lives.

By the time we get to the high school [or] to a university, if that person is Black, that person is already predisposed to other overwhelming forms of racialized violence and harm. Therefore, the matter of whether or not it's about additional [school resource officers], other officers, or police impact and presence, it is important to link policing with colonialism, imperialism, other modes of harm, because when we start at the police presence in a particular building on a particular day, we're already too late. You need to get to the root of the matter, which is the foundational anti-Blackness and the ongoing state sanctioned oppression that policing contributes to, which, before the United States existed, was an ongoing colonial model of violence.

. . . I'm actually a little bit opposed to that [behavioral conditioning] model. If there were any sort of conditioning, it would be a historiographical conditioning, where it's not that students today or children today are conditioned to distrust the police, but rather for over 400 years Black people, indigenous people, Latinx people, sometimes the combination of all of the above, have been oppressed structurally, modally, epistemologically, and with an unrelenting force from various iterations of the state, which is to say, the police, which is also to say education in the [United States].

. . . It's not a sort of contemporary matter that we can address just by boxing off education, or just by boxing off policing, but to rather understand institutions in this country and the ongoing violence that they portend . . . . [W]e actually have to think about ongoing oppression and violence prior to entering the high school, prior to entering the academy. Otherwise, we're just recapitulating state sanctioned models. We're living in a moment where Donald J. Trump wrote an executive order against Critical Race Theory. We're talking about education and what we're teaching our students, as though there is not an overarching state, federal force to oppress us into and out of certain modes of knowledge . . . . We need to be asking bigger questions than focusing on one pipeline, for example the school to prison pipeline—as though the overarching model of the West is not forged in this anti-Black, colonial moment that has been existing from 1492 to present.

When [Jason P. Nance] mentioned Columbine, and then also Sandy Hook, those were two white boys. Most of the school shootings that have happened on this land have been from white boys. And so perhaps when we agree that we want to divert funds to teachers, to communities, and have them be experienced in a more equitable manner, then it will be really useful for us to speak the truth and to not just say, "Let's address the

racial tensions as they arise,” because they’ve been arisen from 1492 to present. Perhaps we can then say, “we need to talk about whiteness and the work that whiteness does,” and take that seriously, rather than trying to fix the problem and securitize the problem, which means more police and then more racialized violence. If the problem is what whiteness is and does, then we cannot talk about inner cities, outer cities or suburban areas. As we know from people like Eve Ewing, black people and brown people are primarily educated in the suburbs. So inner cities are a myth. White violence versus black and brown violence is also a myth. We need to think beyond the data sets that we’ve been offered and get to the heart of the problem: white supremacy, nationalism, and colonialism.