

TIME OF  
RECKONING

**TOR**

## Report 1: Black Women & Girls

A community led series funded by the Pohlad Family Foundation, Bush Foundation, Joyce Foundation, GHR Foundation. Supported by Minnesota Department of Human Rights



## About the *initiative*

**Time of Reckoning, Healing, Listening, and Action is a series of community engagement and healing justice sessions that culminate in a Black-led town hall and policy action roundtable focusing on the criminal justice system and its collateral consequences on Black people in Minnesota.**

**THE SERIES STRATEGICALLY INCLUDES POLICY MAKERS WITH POWER AND INFLUENCE TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS BROUGHT FORTH BY THE COMMUNITY THROUGH THIS PROCESS.**

Convened by the community and co-chaired by  
**DR. BRITTANY LEWIS OF RESEARCH IN ACTION (RIA)**  
**& DR. JOI LEWIS OF JOI UNLIMITED,**

this work was spurred by the murder of Mr. George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD). This process is an opportunity for true “radical re-imagining” of what is possible within our collective efforts to advance racial justice.

We use healing justice as a framework for this project. In this context, healing is the process of making ourselves or becoming sound or whole again. In this work, we are healing from trauma through radical self care. Healing justice is an evolving political framework shaped by economic and racial justice that recenters the role of healing inside of liberation that seeks to transform, intervene and respond to generational trauma and violence in our movements, communities and lives and to regenerate our traditions of liberatory and resiliency practices that have been lost



## About the *initiative*

or stolen. (Dr. Joi Lewis (2018) *Healing: The Act of Radical Self-Care* and Cara Page & Susan Raffo (2010) *Healing justice at the U.S. Social Forum*).

Time of Reckoning consists of five critical community healing and policy action engagements that aim to illustrate to the nation what community-centered policy change can look like. Each session is structured like a congressional hearing with prepared narratives of lived experiences from Black community members (Testifiers), research and context from Black community leaders providing policy and practice solutions (Contextualizers), questions from policy makers, and a live work session with the goal of developing tangible actions and bold visions for community wellbeing.

Time of Reckoning forums amplify the lived experiences of different members of the Black family - the women, men, transfolx, children, elders, and caregivers.

## December **2020** Forum

**This first forum was focused on the experience of Black women and girls with the criminal justice systems and its collateral consequences.**

**THE STRUCTURE IS MODELED AFTER THE MN TRUST  
BLACK WOMEN AND GIRLS TOWN HALL IN 2019.**

The Time of Reckoning series launched with listening to Black women and girls because of the critical place they hold within families and communities as caretakers and heads of households, ensuring the well-being of not only the Black family but society at large. Additionally, Black women are distinctly impacted by the criminal justice system first hand and through the experiences of the men and boys in their lives, yet are often invisible and considered last in policy interventions.

**FORUM ORGANIZERS FIRMLY BELIEVE WHEN YOU PUT BLACK  
WOMEN AND GIRLS FIRST, THE BLACK FAMILY WINS.**





*“Stop planning for our failure”*

SMALL GROUP PARTICIPANT

## December **2020** Forum

**2,500 people attended through  
Zoom or Facebook Live stream.**

Four Testifiers and three Contextualizers set the stage for the small group conversations focused on producing policy and practice solutions.

The Testifiers' testimony addressed many intersecting and compounding systems and programs that harmed Black women and girls: Education, Legal Systems, Human Services, Housing, Health and Employment.

The Testifiers included

**STAYCI BELL**, mother and grandmother

**VALERIE CASTILE**, mother of Philando Castile

**JEWELAN JACKSON**, long time educator and community grandmother

and **OLIVIA MILLER**, youth.

“This [homeless shelters requiring payment] arrangement has a vested interest in keeping clients in the system’s web, thus ensuring jobs, poverty pimping to the maximum.”

— Jeweleen Jackson

“We are Black mothers whose hearts drop every time our children leave the house hoping that they return to us at the end of the day. For the Black mothers like myself, whose children do not return home, you can never understand the depths of our pain, because it goes beyond the recesses of our souls and we carry it with us like a cloak.”

— Valerie Castile

“I remember asking CPS [Child Protection Services] to help me save my daughter from the streets. A man told me that he had to speak to his supervisor and call me back, because CPS is reactive NOT proactive. My call was never returned.” — Stayci Bell

“I don’t blame my parents because I know they started in love and things just changed. I blame these systems. My parents were just victims of their environments. When you’ve been a victim for so long, your body can’t take it and you die, like my father.” — Olivia Miller

## Testimony *highlights*

The Contextualizers at the forum included:

AARICA COLEMAN, Real Estate Broker and the Housing and Redevelopment Authority Administrator with the City of Bloomington

NEDA KELLOGG, founder of Project DIVA International and

ARTIKA ROLLER, Executive Director for the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA).

They named specific actions from the short-term to the radical reimagined that those in positions of power should and can take to invest in and protect Black women and girls.

These actions are described below as well as ideas shared by empowered community participants in the breakout discussions.



## Call for *action* in Policy Solutions

THE SOLUTIONS RAISED BY TESTIFIERS, CONTEXTUALIZERS AND EVENT ATTENDEES CALLED FOR FIVE KINDS OF ACTION:

### Give community control:

This includes having more individuals from the community in positions of political power as well as ensuring community control of interventions and resources intended to benefit the community.

### Invest:

Solutions call for rethinking how to invest in individuals and community resources to support wealth development and access to meaningful resources.

Underlying this investment is a reframing for asset-based, positive expectations about potential, not blame and criminalization.

### Divest:

Solutions call for moving resources away from policies that undermine healing and justice in the Black community.

### Ensure accountability:

Solutions to ensure full accountability of systems regarding the outcomes for individuals, families, and communities; accountability should be at individual, organization and systematic levels.

### Ground in Healing Justice:

Solutions that recenter the role of healing inside of change to transform, intervene and respond to generational trauma and violence in movements, communities, and lives (Page and Raffo, US Social Forum Detroit)



## Calls for **change now**

**Because the impact of the criminal justice system on the Black family and Black women is the result of intersecting and compounding systems and programs, solutions presented include changes across systems and policies.**

Contextualizers described policy and investment change needed to preserve and protect Black households, including specific investment for Black developers in housing and commercial property and right to return policy and funds for people displaced by government practices, policies or actions.

Additionally, healing justice shows up as a critical solution recognizing that Minnesota's health care system and health care providers typically

overmedicate, mis- and un-diagnose, or directly deny Black women and girls the culturally responsive treatment(s) and care they deserve.

Black women and girls are thus forced to address their health-related issues and crises that come as a result of their interaction with the criminal justice system often in isolation.

**CONTEXTUALIZERS HIGHLIGHTED THAT BLACK MOTHERS CAN BE PARTICULARLY FEARFUL OF SEEKING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AS THEY WORRY THAT CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES WILL BE ALERTED, AND THEIR FAMILIES WILL BE SEPARATED.**

Furthermore, testifiers challenged commissioners to expand their understanding of criminalization and the ways it intersects with other institutions of power, such as the child protection services system.

A group of Black women are shown in a protest, with their arms raised in a fist. They appear to be shouting or chanting. The image is in black and white, with a semi-transparent overlay of the text on the left side.

## Calls for *change now*

**Black mothers, with or without criminal records, face heightened rates of discrimination and policing by child protection case managers and staffers, which result in the disproportionate rates of familial separation in Black female-headed households.**

Education and awareness campaigns about violence toward Black women are important to disrupt the normalization of this violence and remove barriers for survivors.

They also described ways to nurture Black families and youth, from passing the **AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY PRESERVATION ACT** to bringing culturally relevant educational experts to the table to develop a culturally relevant and coherent system of early care and education for Black girls.



# Calls for *change now*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED SIMILAR AND ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR POSSIBLE, SHORT-TERM, TANGIBLE SOLUTIONS:

## Enhance transparency and accountability

Improve access to knowledge of rights, laws, and how systems work

Lower barriers and quick to access legislature (e.g. quick-contact for legislature)

Implement the post-fatality investigation toolkit developed by the Institute for Innovation in Prosecution at John Jay College

Change reasons why drivers can be pulled over

Change engagement protocol for officers to follow with driver and occupants

## Pursue legal system remedies

Sue lending institutions for continued redlining or predatory lending practices

Sue landlords for discrimination (resources have been lacking to hold them accountable)

Extend the statute of limitations for discrimination for at least 10 years

## Calls for Change *long term*

**Contextualizers identified ways to invest in Black individuals, households, and communities.**

Actions such as character-based lending, community-based housing ownership models, and an American Descendants of Enslaved People reparations fund fueled by the tax proceeds of legalized marijuana.

In education, they called for investment in results-driven initiatives that support Black girls to be high-achieving young women. Finally, they named the need for holistic public safety policy, with accountability for law enforcement equal to the standard for civilians.



## Calls for Change *long term*

IN BREAKOUT DISCUSSIONS, PARTICIPANTS ECHOED CALLS FOR INVESTMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY, RECOMMENDING THESE LONGER-TERM SOLUTIONS:

### Form a wrap-around team of support that is focused on the whole person

Form at first contact with the (educational, human services, legal) system

Compose of those with role in system as well as those trusted (e.g. from the community)

Change accountability measures for programs and workers in systems to incentivize attention to positive outcomes for individuals

Share data to help not punish

### Look for opportunities in programs and systems to reframe from blaming individual to focusing on assets of the whole person

Destigmatize asking for help

Undo disenfranchisement and conditioning supporting individuals to demand more for themselves

Listen more to respond to needs and context

Decriminalize addiction

Look beyond the "Strong Black Woman" trope, and recognize the humanity and needs of Black women and girls

### Invest in training and education for police, training to cover how to

Examine personal biases

Be culturally responsive

Recognize and manage fear (for officers)

*“Vibrant self-sustaining and self-generating communities taking care of themselves”*

SMALL GROUP PARTICIPANT

## Calls for Change *long term*

IN BREAKOUT DISCUSSIONS, PARTICIPANTS ECHOED CALLS FOR INVESTMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY, RECOMMENDING THESE LONGER-TERM SOLUTIONS:

### Increase accountability for police officers and departments

Show what corrective actions departments are taking to respond to results from bias assessments

Change standard of proof

Remove federal/local immunity conditions

Extend protections for home to automobile  
(individual cannot be removed)

Implement an officer "customer" service rating

Require liability insurance for all gun owners

Implement peer monitoring and reporting among police officers

### Divest from damaging responses and invest in restorative ones

Invest money into families instead of foster care parents

Support wealth development and access to resources

Send different resources for 911, expand the type of responders in a community

Fund centers and programs by community in community by providing safe and healing spaces. This gives opportunity for individuals to see other community members with shared experience and provide people you can talk to like elders and mentors.

## Radical *reimagining*

Contextualizers envisioned whole systems change across multiple systems. In education, housing, health, safety and economic development.

These changes would result in autonomy and agency for Black youth, centering of Black women and girls and an end to disparities in outcomes.





# Radical *reimagining*

POLICING, AS WE KNOW IT TODAY, WOULD CEASE TO EXIST. IN SMALL GROUPS, PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED THESE RADICAL VISIONS FOR CHANGE:

## Realize greater power and control by the Black community

Ensure accountability of community organizations, press them to be part of the solution (reflection on how some benefit from current systems)

Protect ourselves

Have our own schools

Be more represented in positions of power (Black community)

## Provide support and healing spaces within Black communities

Provide spaces to talk to Black grandmothers and spaces to be heard

Invite trusted "pillars of the community" to work through challenges

Invite those not in need of help to go to these spaces to help others

Organize advocacy coalitions for individuals to engage when needed

# Radical *reimagining*

POLICING, AS WE KNOW IT TODAY, WOULD CEASE TO EXIST. IN SMALL GROUPS, PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED THESE RADICAL VISIONS FOR CHANGE:

## Build community resources

Foster a community with free housing, gardens, libraries, healthcare services, counseling, childcare, college, electricity from solar, and healthy food options

Ensure culturally relevant services are available

Provide an advanced placement school for accelerated learning on the Northside

Pursue character-based lending

Community Land Trust implementation in North Minneapolis that uses profits to provide a monthly stipend to residents



## Our *team*

(FROM LEFT TO RIGHT)

### CO-CHAIRS

Dr. Joi Lewis  
Dr. Brittany Lewis

### CORE TEAM

Lulete Mola  
Marcus Owens  
Hassan As-Sidiq  
Pastor Brian Herron  
D.A. Bullock  
Leslie E. Redmond  
T. Mychael Rambo  
Tish Jones  
Tomme Beevas  
Hani Ali



### COMMUNICATIONS & PRODUCTION TEAM

Shá Cage - Production Lead  
Alex West Steinman - Communications Director  
Nyemadi Louise Dunbar - Project Manager



## Our *partners*

TIME OF RECKONING, HEALING, LISTENING, AND ACTION IS A PROJECT FROM THE HEALING JUSTICE FOUNDATION AND IS SUPPORTED BY THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS. FUNDING PARTNERS INCLUDE:

**Pohlad Family Foundation**

**Bush Foundation**

**Joyce Foundation**

**GHR Foundation**