Panel 1: Context

Barbie Zelizer

Good morning, everyone. I'm Barbie Zelizer, Director of the Center for Media at Risk. I'm very happy to welcome you back to the symposium, *When Media Put Social Justice at Risk*. Today follows a scene-setting keynote from Wesley Lowery last night and draws from a long tradition of student directed symposia that tackle a topic of real urgency in the world, situating it within a cognitive hotspot for the day and a half that we discuss it. This year, our symposium is co-directed with the Annenberg Center for Collaborative Communication, which is run by our dean, Sarah Banet-Weiser. I'm going to turn over the podium for her to say more, but just in the meantime, I want to log a thanks to all of our hard-working staff: Joanna Birkner, Madison Miller, Danielle Wolfson, our IT staff Edwin Garcia Ramos and Rich Cardona, and Deb Porter.

Sarah Banet-Weiser

Welcome, everyone. I hope you're all ready for the treat that is today. We have an amazing lineup of speakers and questions from interlocutors. So, I'm really excited about the day. I just wanted to say a few words about the topic of the symposium today: when media put social justice at risk. Traditionally, this is a media at risk symposium. And traditionally, this has been something that has been really student driven and this year is no different. Before I get into the actual topic of the day, I'm going to embarrass all of the students who helped plan, who are live tweeting, who wrote incredibly important and coaching questions, and who identified all the names of people who are here today as people who are writing about this issue at this very moment. I'd like us all to acknowledge those students: Anjali DasSarma, Cienna Davis, Sim Gilll, Emilie Grybos, Louisa Lincoln, Sophie Maddocks, Valentina Proust, and Jeanna Sybert. Thank you all for your planning of this incredible symposium. It obviously couldn't have been done without all of you. So, thank you.

Just a few words about the idea for this symposium, *When Media Put Social Justice at Risk*. If there are those of you who have been to Center for Media at Risk symposiums before, you know that they're always framed around a crucial and urgent question. And right now, at this current moment, I think that we can all probably agree, even if we don't agree on anything else, that social media and risk are crucial and urgent cultural, political, and economic issues of the day. One of the things that we talked about while planning this theme was the idea that social media platforms often thwart social justice efforts and movements. That ranges from misinformation, false information, deep fakes, misogyny, racism, Islamophobia, antisemitism—we see it all happening on media platforms. And this thwarts social justice movements. However, we also see what André Brock has written about so eloquently. He's also encouraged us to think about media platforms as a space for joy, as a space for generative conversations, as a place that is capacious, and that can actually yield social justice. This kind of ambivalent relationship of media and social justice is what we're going to be discussing today.

We've organized the three panels around three themes: context, conditions, and consequences. Obviously, there are overlaps between all three panels. There are ways in which consequences are present in all of the panels and the conditions for this current moment are present in all the panels. There are definite overlaps, but we hope to give you a broad picture and provide important discussions and conversations about this topic, when media put social justice at risk. So, welcome and thank you. We will begin our first panel.

Cienna Davis

Thank you all so much for being here. I'm really excited to be moderating this morning's panel where we're going to be thinking about the contextual factors that influence and put social justice at risk. My name is Cienna Davis. I'm a doctoral student here at the Annenberg School.

We can all recognize that there are a lot of issues facing social justice today that are driven by the media, as our dean just laid out. We're in a moment where we're witnessing a lot of the backlash to placing and leaving our faith and trust in media, especially those platforms, those media environments, and technologies that we've kind of hoped or believed would be more democratizing, giving people greater access to information and opportunities for justice. Now we're seeing how that can, in fact, jeopardize those very things. I think we can all agree that it's an important time to look towards the past, to look towards historical trends and patterns, as maybe a way out or maybe a way forward towards media repair and towards social justice. Lucky for us all, we have an incredible group of panelists here who are experts, scholars, and practitioners, and who understand very key contextual factors that impact media and social justice today. I'm gonna go ahead and introduce everyone here on our panel. I'm going to start with Alicia Bell. Alicia Bell uses they/she pronouns. They are the director of the Racial Equity in Journalism Fund and a nationally recognized expert in community engagement, media repair, and BIPOC journalism. They came to this work as an extension of the work they've been doing to create repair and restitution in our media systems. They brought relationship insights as a strategist and community organizer and a willingness to show up for the various partners across and adjacent to the journalism sector. They also brought their lived experiences as a Black, queer, non-binary parent, elder caretaker, sibling to an incarcerated and formerly incarcerated sister, and land steward in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Next on the panel is Alison Hearn, who is a professor of Media Studies in the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario. Alison is also currently a visiting scholar at the Annenberg School. She is a media theorist and academic labor activist who studies the convergence between identity, sociality, technology, culture, and capitalism. She also writes about the university as a cultural and political site and has published widely on these issues in

such journals as *Social Media and Society*, *Cultural Studies*, and the *Journal of Consumer Culture*, as well as in edited volumes like *The Media and Social Theory* and *Commodity Activism*. She is the co-author of *Outside the Lines: Issues in Interdisciplinary Research*, and the co-editor of *Organizing Equality: Dispatches from a Global Struggle*. She has also served as chair of the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee of the Canadian Association of University Teachers.

Following Alison, we have Kelli Moore. Kelli Moore is an associate professor of Media, Culture, and Communication at NYU, whose research focuses on Black studies, critical legal studies, rhetoric, and visual cultures. Her monograph, *Legal Spectatorship: Slavery and the Visual Culture of Domestic Violence,* is a study of courtroom mediation and the role of photographic evidence in facilitating the performance of witness testimony in domestic violence cases. The book draws on the history of slavery, US constitutional law, and visual culture to analyze courtroom rhetorical practices within ongoing debates about trauma, cybernetics, facilitated communication, feminist jurisprudence, visual literacy, and abolition. It also won honorable mention for the Lora Romero First Book Prize at the American Studies Association. Other writings from Kelli Moore can be found in *Anglistica Aion, Black Camera*, *Feminist Surveillance Studies, Journal of Visual Culture*, *International Journal of Communication, Law and the Visible*, *Meridians, Parapraxis Magazine*, and *First Monday*.

Last but not least on our panel is Allissa Richardson. Allissa Richardson is an associate professor of Journalism and Communication at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School, where she is the founding director of the Charlotta Bass Journalism and Justice Lab. Richardson's research examines how African Americans use mobile and social media to produce innovative forms of journalism, especially in times of crisis. Her research on Black citizen journalism has been published in the *Journal of Communication*, *Digital Journalism*, *Journalism Studies*, and many other venues. She is a frequent commentator for news outlets like ABC, BBC, CBC, *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Los Angeles Times*, MSNBC, NPR, *Teen Vogue*, and *Vox*. She is the author of *Bearing Witness While Black: African Americans, Smartphones, and the New Protest #Journalism*.

This is our incredible panel who, as you can see, are very well placed to speak to today's theme of context. So, without further ado, I'll turn it over to our panelists for their prepared remarks and then we'll follow it up with audience discussion.

Alicia Bell

Good morning, everyone. I am really glad to be here with you all today and really thankful for this panel of folks. Some folks who I have known only on Zoom, some folks who I have never met before. And I'm thankful for all of the folks in the room. Some of you who I've never met before but will meet now, some of you who I've known for years. So, I'm really

glad to be in this space with all of those connections and all of those tethers.

Normally when I talk about this work, folks will ask me how I came into this. I'll meet baristas, I'll meet restaurant workers, I'll meet folks in my neighborhood. And they'll say, "How did you get into this? Have you always been a journalist?" And I usually say, "No, no, no, no, no; I started in this work back in 2017." But today, I want to go a little further back than that, to give some context for how I got here, but also some context for this work that we're doing.

This right here is my father, Anderson Davis, sitting on his porch with a broom that I made, because I'm also a broom-maker. And some of the stories that I was thinking about when I was thinking about Anderson, thinking about his life, go all the way back to the 1950s. My father's from Mississippi, my folks have been in the South for quite a few generations, and there was a day in the 1950s when he was out with a friend of his playing hooky, as teenagers do. Now his grandmother, my great grandmother, had horses. So, he was accustomed to taking care of animals, he was accustomed to agricultural things. And he saw a cow that was down and went to go check on it with his friend. A White passerby decided that they had attempted to kill the cow and reported it to the police. That began his interactions with reform school, and also with incarceration. So, for several years of his life, after that, he would be in and out of reform school, jobs programs, and programs for folks who are formerly incarcerated, and went on to be incarcerated as an adult.

One of the things that happened in that back and forth is that he inherited property. But he didn't know anything about property taxes. And so, he didn't know to pay the property taxes, and that land was taken. Who knows where it is now. Somebody in Mississippi is living on that land. Maybe living in the house that my grandfather, who was a railroad conductor and a railroad worker, built, because my father didn't know about property taxes. His story, of course, doesn't end there. He actually now runs a nonprofit in Asheville, North Carolina, and works with high school students who have been expelled or suspended from school to make sure they don't get left behind, so that they can continue in their education.

But these things that he experienced actually started back in 1704. Because in 1704, the *Boston News-Letter*, which was one of the first continuously published newspapers in the United States, published its first ad, a month after its founding, for the selling of enslaved people. Later letting folks know that the local Black population was "much addicted to Stealing, Lying, and Purloining." So, this narrative about Black folks, who are maybe caring or checking in on cows or animals or agriculture, actually being murderers, thieves, or vagrants isn't something that started in the 1950s. It was something that had been building in our media systems, through our journalism, through our newspapers, since the 1700s. To your right, you'll see this excerpt ["Klan needs to ride again"]. This is a recent

excerpt from 2019 in the *Democrat-Reporter* in Alabama. But I wanted to lift up the *Democrat-Reporter* in Alabama, because they are one of several newspapers who practice redlining, what we call "distribution redlining." And they decided that while they were distributing their papers, they were not going to distribute the business section to Black communities, because Black communities don't need to know about business, and they weren't smart enough to understand the business section anyway. And so, when I consider the experiences that my father experienced, the experiences around reform school, incarceration, the experiences around not knowing about property taxes, the experiences around loss of property, that is something that he experiences which impacts me. But it's also just a microcosm of the experiences of so many Black folks in the United States. And we have the *Boston News-Letter*, the *Democrat-Reporter*, and several of their colleagues to thank for being co-conspirators in those lives.

And I'll pivot to my mother, Chellie. For anyone who does know me in here, don't want you to be alarmed, because I talk about my mama a lot. But my mama is actually my grandmother, because I'm from the South and I live in North Carolina. This is my mother. She's the one who birthed me. So, I wanted to lift up her. When I think about Chellie, back in 2012, when her husband (who was my stepfather) passed away, one of the things that happened was that she went to the hospital for mental health care. During that time, she was outed for having HIV to a lot of her community. And a lot of her community abandoned her, forsook her, decided they didn't want to be around her because HIV was dirty, HIV was unclean, and they couldn't have that in their communities. We spent a lot of time talking in that year, and in the following years, about how to shift the narrative around HIV and AIDS, and how to really lift up the fullness of HIV and AIDS. The ways that it impacts, the way that it lives with folks. That would be something that she would carry with her until 2016, when she ended up dying of HIV and poverty.

I say HIV and poverty because she wasn't able to afford her medicine anymore. So technically, on paper, she died of sepsis. But that's pretty avoidable. It's pretty treatable, sometimes you can catch those kinds of things. But that was not something that she got to experience. And, to no surprise, this also didn't start in 2012. And it also didn't start in 2016. On the right side [of the slide] is an excerpt of a 1914 article from the great *New York Times*: "Negro Cocaine 'Fiends' Are a New Southern Menace." This is one of the ways that drugs were criminalized. The addiction was criminalized. It was one of the things that ended up feeding into a lot of narratives around AIDS and HIV, because there was a lot of commentary and a lot of narratives around the connection between drug use and HIV/AIDS, as well. But I also wanted to lift up this quote from the report, "The Color of AIDS," which said, "Unless the American media's core constituency of middle-class individuals is perceived to be at risk, a rampant disease like AIDS does not constitute a news story with high news value." So, you don't see stories in 2016 about people

who can't pay for their HIV medicine. Because that's not something that matters. It's not something that impacts enough people. And that came out of anti-Black coverage and newspapers.

You might have noticed my mother is a White woman. These anti-Black narratives are also the things that led to her death. If we're going to have a multiracial democracy, if we're going to have a healthy democracy, if we're going to have this system of lifting up these elements of civic participation, of elections, of civil society, if we're going to have full civic participation, and we're going to have an engaged public, then, one, we need to have an alive public. We need to have a public that's not dying from undue risk, unnecessary death, things that could be prevented, were it not for the narratives that our media systems were perpetuating. We also need an electorate and a public that can participate in elections, that can participate in civil society, that can participate in governing institutions, and for so many of our incarcerated and formerly incarcerated folks that is not the case. That's not a democracy.

If we don't figure out how to care for folks, then we can't figure out how to stop this violence. One of the things that motivates me to do this work, and one of the things that is a framework for this work, is media reparations, because media reparations is the way that we repair this work. It's the way that we care. It's the way that we create systemic care. And I don't just mean care in the kind of free hugs way. Let me tap you on the shoulder way. I mean, care at a structural, institutional, and policy level. What would it look like if our global policy was motivated by care? What would it look like if our media policy and our media institutions were governed by care for all people, for a thriving multiracial democracy? This reparations cycle will take you through all of the pieces that it takes to get there: reckoning, acknowledgement, accountability, redress. And I say that media reparations is the way that we get to multiracial democracy, because I can bet you that all of the work you're going to hear about today falls somewhere in relationship to one of these four things or are adjacent to, are close enough, that it gets us closer and closer to media reparations. Because the only things that are moving us forward and transforming media are those things that are taking on media reparations, whether folks are calling them that or not.

I wanted to highlight the work of my colleagues, Joe [Torres]. Shout out to Anjali [DasSarma] who was mentioned earlier, who has been a research assistant with Media 2070. Joseph Torres is one of the cofounders of Media 2070, and also one of the co-creators of the media reparations framework. Because Media 2070 is actively taking on this work to move this media reparations framework forward by facilitating a network of folks who are moving media reparations, by curating media marronage installations of times where media reparations has been made real. They're facilitating newsrooms moving through the reparations cycle. They're accompanying political allies as they create media reparations policy. And I used to get to work with them

every day. But I decided that I was gonna go and be the director of the Racial Equity in Journalism Fund. But it's fine, because the Racial Equity in Journalism Fund is also a space for the reckoning for the acknowledgement for the accountability and for the redress. Because the work that we're doing is organizing and mobilizing people and resources to invest in and increase the economic, social, political capital necessary for the sustainability of Black, Indigenous, Latino/a, Asian, and Middle Eastern-led organizations that are either producing journalism and/or producing change in the journalism ecosystem. Without that resourcing, the work that folks are doing, the alternative economies that they're creating, the solutions that they're creating for when folks divest from media because of media harm, would not exist. And so, I'm thankful for this work. And I'm thankful that it lives in this lineage.

But there's so much more work to do. You see all of these quotes, these words up here, right? “What stories do you long to see in the media?” These are all stories that folks submitted themselves at the launch of the Black Future Newsstand this past summer. All of these stories can be told in abundance. And there's so much more. Like I said, I imagine the rest of the day, you're gonna hear about that more. And I imagine it'll be found somewhere in one of those four quadrants. It'll either be reckoning, or it’ll be acknowledgment, or it’ll be accountability, or it'll be redress. And so, I'll just end with these questions for y'all. And a question that I hold close to my heart is how will we ensure—how will you ensure—that the work you do, the things you love, the things you're passionate about and good at, get us closer to media reparations in a multiracial democracy where everyone thrives? And I want to be clear that this can be a professional work or your personal work. If you're raising kids, that is also work, if you're taking care of elders, that is also work. And I encourage you to think about the baby steps that you can take now, tomorrow, next week and next month, to make those things real.

Alison Hearn

Thanks so much, Alicia. That was such a great way to start today. Thanks so much for having me. I want to really especially thank Barbie and Sarah for hosting me this past semester. It's been an incredible experience to be here at Annenberg and in Philly, getting to know the city. And also want to thank, of course, Danielle, Joanna, Madison, Edwin, and Rich for all their efforts putting on the symposium. I'm really thrilled to be here and to be on such a distinguished panel.

I want to give you time to read this quote from Marx that he wrote in 1852, where he basically acknowledges that capitalism rests on pauperization, basically the creation of poverty. But I'm going to start somewhere completely different. At the Agbogbloshie Market in the heart of Accra, Ghana where Akose, a local vendor, describes the welfare association she set up for her fellow traders. Called *Anidaso ne Awurade* or “the Lord Is Our Hope,” the association of almost 150 traders meets every Monday, each one paying

dues of two Ghanaian Cedis a week. Akose says if a person loses their close relative, or gets married, or needs to get treatment at a hospital, the group gives that person 2000 Cedis from the dues. The decision of who receives funds and how much they get is made collectively amongst the members. So Akose's welfare association is just one small example of the ways in which people in the Global South and North are practicing informal kinds of financial community care, or "commoning," in opposition to finance capitalism's attempts to enclose them in the formal banking system. Today, I want to explore perhaps the most pernicious and under examined of all contextual conditions, shaping our struggles for social justice, that of digital finance, capitalism, and the rapid convergence now taking place between big finance, big tech, and big telecom; otherwise known as fintech. Rather than looking at the ways venture capital and financial markets shape legacy and digital media industries, or journalism or cultural products, which is a worthy task indeed, today I want to argue that finance capitalism is media, in and of itself, as it has become digitized and platformed in myriad ways over the past decade or so. So, I want to spend my time exploring some of the impacts of these financial technologies on people who are poor, especially those in the Global South, and on their struggles for social and economic justice.

It's no secret that finance capitalism emerged alongside and was entirely bound up with the slave trade, public debt, private banking, formalized credit instruments, and stock speculation in Europe in the 17th and 18th-centuries. All were driven by practices of colonization, based on the appropriation and dehumanization of Black and Indigenous peoples. Colonial exploits, the slave trade chief among them, comprised, as Marx writes, the "forcing-house for the credit system." From the ways the slave trade consolidated and credited an abstract fiction of value for human bodies, via its maritime insurance policies, to the feminization of financial speculation and discourse (but simultaneous barring of women from actual investment practices), from the weaponization of English property law in order to seize Indigenous lands, to the continued exclusion and marginalization of women and people of color in the banking and credit system, finance Capitalism has always been a racist and patriarchal project. Racism, extraction, immiseration, and exploitation and practices of finance continue today, of course, intensified by the rise of fintechs. Driven by big data analytics and machine learning, financial technologies have exploded in number over the past decade. Piggybacking at least discursively on broader trends working to disrupt the financial sector, and introducing third parties, like tech platforms and telecoms, into all kinds of financial transactions. Consumer facing fintechs include mobile payment apps that we are all familiar with like: Venmo or, on the African continent, M-PESA; virtual bank cards offered by neobanks, and there's a whole bunch of these like Monzo; "Buy Now, Pay Later" services such as Afterpay; alternative lending and credit scoring apps that offer small loans or improved credit scores in exchange for users data, such as Self or Elevate; and various cryptocurrencies, which I'm not getting near

today.

More and more of the world's population, especially the so-called “unbanked” populations in the Global South, are coming to rely on these dematerialized and very lightly regulated forms of money and credit in order to survive. Unsurprisingly, most fintechs promote themselves as contributing to the social good, offering solutions to the problem of financial inclusion, claiming to lift people out of poverty and tying themselves to the development agendas of the IMF, the World Bank, and the UN, who are intent themselves on expanding citizens financial capabilities. South African based fintech JUMO, for example, is a mobile financial services platform that matches mobile network subscribers with other banks and fintechs, offering small loans and insurance products. Founded in 2015, JUMO proudly touts its social mission, claiming to have brought 22 million people and small businesses into the formal banked economy, dispersed over 5 billion US dollars in funds, and helped its users take out a total of $160 billion in loans. JUMO hopes to become the Amazon of financial services in Africa. JUMO is part of what is generally recognized as a fintech boom on the African continent, built on the success of mobile money provider M-PESA, which was launched in 2007 by Vodafone and Safaricom. McKinsey estimates that there were 5200 fintech startups in Africa in 2021, with overall estimated revenue for fintechs expected to reach 30 billion by 2025. Africa is seen as a prime leapfrogging opportunity for the fintech industry, because little financial infrastructure exists, 90% of transactions still involve cash, the population is young, and mobile phone use is very high. So, it's a prime area to develop the industry.

JUMO itself has received multiple rounds of venture capital investment including money from Goldman Sachs, France’s Agence Française de Dévéloppment (AFD), and London-based Odyssey Management. One of JUMO’s most popular loan products is Qwikloan, which it offers with partners with Letshego Bank and telecom company MTN in Ghana. Qwikloan is hosted on MTN’s remittance platform. It offers small, what are called, “nanoloans,” financed by Letshego Bank, and is powered by JUMO’s credit scoring AI. When a consumer requests a loan on their mobile phone JUMO uses the mobile and transactional data provided by MTN to assess their creditability. It is basing its decisions on what it claims to be over 7000 data variables. And these include—and these are just a few—the number of calls made, the time they are made, how much airtime is used, the type of phone being used, how often it's topped up, GPS data, WiFi network information, and how often SIM cards are changed, even how often customers “let” their phone battery die or leave their phone off entirely, which are seen to be bad signs. It also tracks users’ behaviors around digital remittances and mobile money. All of these elements play a role in determining the amounts and interest rates available to each individual consumer.

JUMO leans into its social mission of financial inclusion by regularly sending text

messages, or "digital nudges," to all of its users, even those who do not have a loan or who are not in debt. These texts are figured as forms of beneficent education, or advice, reminding consumers to behave in a financially responsible manner. If a borrower ignores these nudges to repay, or are late in their repayments, however, the algorithm is quick to retaliate. The APR of a Qwikloan can go right up to 84% with late fees of 12.5% chargeable on any remaining balance. Like payday lenders in the Global North, Qwikloan is designed for regular use. And for "rollovers," which is an industry term of art for individuals who can't pay back on time, are charged usurious rates as a result, and subsequently get caught in a state of permanent and mounting indebtedness.

JUMO's embrace of the rhetoric of financial inclusion and educational nudges is informed by the recent turn to behavioral economics in the finance industry, and the development agendas of the World Bank, IMF, and UN. In true neoliberal fashion, behavioral economics involves a shift in focus from seeing market failures as institutional or structural problems, to attempting to correct "failing individuals" and creating "responsible financial subjects," relying on research that suggests that poverty imposes—and I'm not kidding you—"a cognitive tax" that impairs people's capacity to make deliberative decisions. Finance companies and development agencies are now taking it upon themselves to optimize consumers, nudging them towards better life choices. According to the World Bank, consumers are expected to find meaning, value, and self-expression through their participation in financial activities. And if they cannot, they're construed as suffering from behavioral problems, issues of self-control, shortages of cognitive resources. These efforts to change or optimize consumer behavior on the part of fintechs are entirely facilitated by digital surveillance, data analytics, and data extracted practices, of course. Indeed, for fintechs like JUMO, data, not the enhanced life chances and productivity of its users, is paramount. As Marie Langevin points out, fintech lending platforms have become "dangerously hermetic to careful consideration of the productive capacities of those being targeted for inclusion into the formal financial system." Rather, they are deployed primarily as a way to maintain consumption levels among the poor.

Perhaps even more worrisome than the behavioral impacts of these practices on individuals are the ways they contribute to broader forms of social sorting and population control, and of course, racialized forms of neocolonialism. JUMO's AI works to stratify and reorder large swathes of its user population—approximately 25% of the entire population of Ghana alone—according to their mobile phone and digital remittance behavior. In this way, JUMO contributes, in the words of Paul Langley and Andrew Leyshon, "processes of platformed and racialized expropriation that serve to foreclose, more broadly, the economic futures of African populations," commodifying a new class of financial consumer in the process.

In, what Daniela Gabor and Sally Brooks call

the “fintech-philanthropy-development complex,” states, private banks, telecoms, fintech startups, and philanthropic groups band together to take advantage of emerging markets of unbanked individuals, and poverty becomes the new frontier for profit making and accumulation. Not only are poor people inserted into the network flows of finance capitalism via the digital footprints they are compelled to produce, but they are also disciplined, socially sorted, and traded in the process. They are loans packaged and rendered into securities to be traded on global financial markets. Today, people who are poor in the Global South remain sites of dispossession, just as they were in the colonial era. Only this time, it is not only by nation states, but primarily by titans of global digital finance capitalism. Under these conditions, as Langley and Leyshon write, “‘unbanked’ becomes a racial signifier for colonized populations of would-be fintech users that become known through data analytics and thereby rendered expropriatable anew.”

So, just to wrap up, in his book *A Critical History of Finance*, which I highly recommend, Nick Bernards argues that alleviating poverty by bringing poor individuals into the global financial system is little more than a politically driven fantasy and a mode of justification for continued economic exploitation. Finance cannot possibly change the underlying conditions that produce poverty and social inequality when its own practices and goals quite literally comprise those same conditions. As fintech platforms inflict their data obsessed logics, their promotional edicts, and moral injunctions on people and communities, they fail to build economic productivity, intensify levels of indebtedness, re-inscribe colonial patterns of expropriation, and strive to undermine informal economic practices such as lending and rotational savings circles, kinship networks, and welfare associations. But in doing so, they succeed only in revealing their own contradictory, myopic, and self-referential logics, worsening the very conditions they ostensibly seek to improve.

Informal commoning practices like Akose’s welfare association are what George Caffentzis calls “the ‘dark matter’ of the economic world.” They're built on organic networks of personal trust, community bonds that have kept people connected and resourced and caring for each other for decades and centuries. These practices of community care are not problems to be solved by financial inclusion, but rather should be read as purposeful reactions to the exploitative and untrustworthy machinations of traditional banks and fintechs. They are organized efforts to counteract what Luci Cavallero and Verónica Gago have called forms of financial terror, imposed by structures of obedience that personalize the broader extractive logics of public debt and structural adjustment programs, embedding them deep into the bodies and lives of poor people around the globe. The persistence of commoning practices, like Akose’s welfare association, are not anachronistic arrangements that are ripe for displacement by shiny tech solutions, but rather they are sites of financial defiance and practical debt resistance. Central places where ongoing struggles for social and economic

justice themselves are enacted and play out. Thanks very much.

Kelli Moore

Thank you very, very much for the invitation. My paper is called "Judgements Tableaux: The Court Made Public." And I just wanted to thank the students so much for the questions that you've asked about context. That is what I'll be talking about today. I'm going to offer you a bit of discussion on a new book project I'm trying to launch that comes out of the method that I used in my first book project, which was a critical history of domestic violence evidence. You heard a little bit about that in my background notes. This was a method where I was sitting in the courtroom audience watching domestic violence trials. In that first book, I come out with very, I think, pessimistic views about how photographic evidence of domestic violence works, what its potentials and possibilities are. One of the book chapters talks about a terrible failure of that evidence. This project, which this paper is about, takes a more optimistic look at the potential for the media practices that are generated by the courtroom audience. "Media generated in the court room audience," you say. Yes, that actually happens.

A seated court officer checks his smartphone. Behind him a bulky SMART Board broadcasts Honorable Judge Hosa A. Kingo's face on into the courtroom, a reminder of the continued reliance on hybridizing tech tools in post-pandemic New York. The actions of both are captioned in ways that offer a subtle evaluation and judgment of the two legal roles represented by the men. The judge says, "Trying to think the best way to do it." The officer is captioned, "Looking @ phone the whole time," and this is the way that it's drawn. Obviously, the drawing was completed by a college student in a class that I teach at NYU. A research practicum at the Superior Court, a criminal court in New York City in 2022. At the center of the drawing is a reference to the court respondents. They are the reason the judge is trying to think of "a best way." The facts of the relationship that bring the respondents to court are contained in the phrase "Mom & Son." This drawing and others like it employ various forms of captioning, punctuating, and abbreviation to make sense of courtroom space. In doing so, they signal both muted and over-present forms of embodiment. The judge is rendered as a talking head encased by smart technology. His authorial statements are presented in quotes. Similarly, etched in the court officers heavily shaded uniform is the severity of power bestowed by his office. The use of the @ sign, i.e. "looking @ the phone the whole time," is a mark of the many texting vernaculars incorporated by mobile technology. Unlike the judge and the court officer, mother and son are muted, they can only assume a body and relation through lettered form.

Court watching is an organized practice of making court functioning public. During court watching, drawing and writing are the primary recording methods that resolve the problem of US courtrooms forbidding the use of telephones and radio inside, leaving their presence to the discretion of presiding judges. Though courts circulate more images than

ever before, they also vigorously interdict the recording of live courtroom events by the public. Audience members are forbidden to photograph, video, and audio record courtroom activity. Drawing them is the best way—and in fact a kind of steampunk way—to capture the everyday functioning of the courts. Tiny details transformed the mundane into moments of interest and discovery. I first became involved in court watching as a method for observing the production and circulation of images of domestic violence while researching my first book, *Legal Spectatorship*, in which I provide a critical history of visual evidence and domestic abuse trials. My analyses drew upon the archive of New World slavery to demonstrate how limitations imposed upon the testimony of enslaved people were inscribed into courtroom poetics of contemporary domestic violence forms of adjudication. The victim testimonies mediated in part by interactions with photographic evidence of abuse that I analyzed are written from the vantage point of the courtroom audience. That's where I was, in an increasingly politicized formation, both physically and politically.

In order to examine law in action, my project had to grapple with the problem of liveness and the interdiction of cameras in the courtroom. I wanted to know more about the procedures for making and displaying visual evidence of abuse: who takes the images, under what power dynamics, what entity owns the photographs, how are the images shown in court and discussed, and so on. The courtroom with its live, networked computers is alive with the traditional figures of the judge, bailiff, attorneys, and court officers administering the court in sudden starts and stops. Watching and noting the flow of the courtroom allowed me to study the laws, standards, and routines for arguing about visual evidence and adjudicating domestic violence. Often, I would sketch what I observed when what I was hearing became too jargon filled. During the activities of the courtroom the courtroom allowed me to work through the onset of boredom by solving the problem of representing the complex communicative interactions in a domestic violence courtroom. I would transition from a state of confusion to boredom, and then to an attentive interest and investment in the drawings that I was making, as more value from the scene emerged in my sketches.

Drawing courtroom activity then is an optimal practice for unfolding legal consciousness, the individual's apprehension of the experience of law in everyday life. Recently, attention has also turned to what individuals *do not* think about law, suggesting that legal consciousness is equally comprised of a host of repressions and assumptions that are subterranean to individual consciousness. This leads to the problem of how we assess something like a legal unconsciousness emerging in the context of rules against cameras in the courtroom. The affordances of drawing and writing are helpful in addressing the problem of how *a scene*, and what becomes available to be *seen*, are made through repetition and practice. Drawing and writing are dominant media making practices that emerge in US law through the interlocking First and Sixth Constitutional Amendments. The amendments interlock the

moment when public assembly, the First Amendment, and having a trial by one's peers, the Sixth Amendment, are protected. This portion of law effectively calls a practice of assembling, much like court watching, into being as both a right and a civic duty. Legal scholar Jocelyn Simonson observes that disciplinary attention to this political obligation is preoccupied with the duties entrusted to juries rather than to courtroom audiences, which is a demographic usually made up of friends and family and supporters of courtroom defendants who are traditionally cash poor, non-White, and without stable living addresses. Without compunction I would argue that these are the some of the people that Alison was talking about in terms of the unbanked.

Juries by comparison, are enfranchised, voting citizens with stable living addresses. These social dynamics silently encode the spatial dynamics of the courtroom. That is the context I'm talking about. Yet, even as they structurally privilege the jury over the audience, the interlocking amendments leave philosophically open exactly what we're supposed to be doing when we are in the courtroom audience, when we are freely assembled. Thus, a theory of media, memory, and motivation is latent in this moment of law and its repression of digital recording and the courtroom audience. The courtroom audience, then, are typically dispossessed folks. They are the kind of folks Stefano Harney and Fred Moten are thinking about when they reconsider the debtor-creditor relationship as being one in which the debtor position needs refuge and embrace. "Debt is social and credit is asocial," they write. "Debt is mutual. Credit only runs one way. But debt runs in every direction, scatters, escapes, seeks refuge. The debtor seeks refuge among other debtors, acquires debt from them, offers debt to them. The place of refuge is the place to which you can only owe more and more because there is no creditor, no payment possible. This place of refuge, this place of bad debt, is what we call the fugitive public." I'm trying to understand the courtroom audiences as one such public. Court watching exchanges precisely the bad debt promulgated by Harney and Moten by thinking with the commodity. The commodity in this instance is these drawings that I am asking students to make as assignments. As Simonson details in her book, *Radical Acts of Justice*, paying a stranger's bail and acts of witnessing and storytelling all conform to the practices of study and bad debt exchange between the *lumpen* classes of the courtroom audience and the bourgeois class aspiration of university students, who are the folks I'm working with. One of the discoveries of the court watching movement is the untapped potential of watchers coming from the university. This is because courts operate during the day, which is the time that we are all working, or you know, it's some kind of work, right? Within its economy of an affect and desire, the sociality of court watching and drawing develops the legal unconscious.

But we need to be clear about what court watching is and what it is not. There is nothing inherently abolitionist about court watching or its incitement to media making. Although court watching undertakes serious field research in the courtroom, this was not

always the case. In the United States, where public squares and courthouses often appear in close proximity, court watching practices could equally describe the history of organized mobs of White citizens assembled to watch a Black person lynched after being found guilty before and after Jim Crow segregation. Lynching images record the workings of mob justice and anti-Black punishment in the town square and courthouse. The archive of lynching photography freely circulating today is a testament to the incitement of media making conditioned precisely by the free assembly of White folks called to watch in the special setting of the town square and courthouse. Sovereign power has retained its brutal force. This is a work by Ken Gonzalez-Day, "Erased Lynchings," where he engages the lynching archive artistically and removes the bodies of the victims so that you can only see the participants freely assembled.

Given the creep of social media into the courtroom—consider the recent domestic violence or domestic defamation and countersuit in the Johnny Depp and Amber Heard case—some have asked if there is any point for court watchers to be present in the courtroom audience at all. And what is a court anyway? Digital Black feminist research draws our attention to online publics, veritable courts of public opinion that perform as extra-legal sites of condemnation and punishment, meted out especially for dispossessed women. Whereas online courts of public opinion create accountability through content moderation, court watching offers accountability through content mediation. This is why I'm so pro-drawing rather than just sitting there and listening. Court watching can bring accountability to the courtroom dynamic. Attending to the live body, in the words of Nick Gill and Jo Hines, "court watching can help us draw attention to the ways in which legal processes are effective, intimate, and embodied." This is especially the case among abolition feminists. Mothers, daughters, friends, and lovers sitting in US courtrooms for decades, while prosecutors aggressively removed Black and Brown kinfolk and kithfolk from our communities. From Ruth Wilson Gilmore's co-founding of Critical Resistance, to her description of the Mothers Reclaiming Our Children group (who are a group of mother court watchers), to video work of abused women and allies fighting for clemency for abused women through the Survived + Punished project, to Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Erika R. Meiners, and Beth E Ritchie's book *Abolition Feminism Now*, through including Black feminist work in online publics like Moya Bailey's *Misogynoir Transformed: Black Women's Digital Resistance* (which thinks about joy online and online publics), to Catherine Knight Steele's *Digital Black Feminism*, abolition feminists have brought their embodied knowledge to the courts and online courts of public opinion alike.

These are some of the drawings and responses that my students have made. Likewise, it is also important to clarify that explicating the silence of the laws on free assembly and trial by one's peers is an investment in the US Constitution as a legitimate contract. This is in conflict with the stunning and correct

Afropessimist indictment of a civil society that makes possible a form of free assembly by violently and capriciously refusing it to Black folks. In a recent analysis of the drawings by Kenyatta A.C. Hinkle, Titus Kaphar, and Whitfield Lovell, critic Bridget R. Cooks observes the dual meaning of the verb to draw as that which is drawn to you and that which is drawn out of you. Toward whom might court or court watchers draw? What might be drawn out of the student court watcher and others comprising the courtroom audience? Court watching creates an entanglement, free association between the university student and the audience. (In a larger chapter I talk about the relationship between Marx's and Freud's respective uses of the idea of free association to get there. I've published this chapter in a psychoanalytic magazine precisely to bring up the consciousness in psychoanalysis aspect that's in this project.)

Can doodles, scribbles, and marginalia mediate courtroom audience formations? Who are these people that are sitting in the audience? And what is it that we're supposed to do? After sitting in court do you go home and you just start talking? Does that make this talk or what is to be learned gossip? Is it rumor? Is it fact? Is it understanding? This is a real hole that we are just kind of beginning to think about critically. The courtroom is a primary site of image production and circulation, according to a realist aesthetic of transparency. With its varied history, court watching is an important form of civil justice research. As more areas of need for legal services are exposed within the courts, student court watchers are uniquely positioned to make an unofficial record of courtroom activity through drawing. What I'm arguing in a larger chapter in the book, too, is that court watching drawings and any kind of writing that is made is actually an absent labor history of the courtroom audience. Therefore, we actually have to have some kind of media material that comes out or is generated out of those seats. Not from the jury, not from the law professionals who are there, but from the audience. Court watching and its accompanying drawings can be an experiment among courtroom audiences, who are often the dispossessed of the courtroom milieu. The decolonial aesthetics emerging from this growing body of images demands its day in court.

In the question-and-answer time I would love to talk to you about the reading practices that I'm coming up with to interpret these images, because I don't want to read them as beautiful art. There are different stakes here for these images and statements made by students. So, please ask me about that and I'll show you more about that. Thank you.

Allissa Richardson

Thank you all for inviting me to this wonderful event. Today, I also want to talk about a book project that is in progress. And if anyone's ever written a book, you start out writing one thing and it ends up being something. I want to talk about what the something else is today. My first book, *Bearing Witness While Black: African Americans, Smartphones, and the New Protest*

#*Journalism*, really focused on how African Americans were using smartphones to create not only their own networks of care, but their own networks of journalism and reporting when other official sources were either wrong or just plain not listening to them. That really birthed this whole new movement of cancel culture and the argument that we're in right now. If we think about some of the incidents like Christian Cooper in the park with Amy Cooper—all of those Karens that we've been kind of laughing about—those are all aided by what was recorded by someone's phone. That's the book I thought I was gonna write, about how smartphones made that possible. But a lot of that has changed since I started writing that in 2021 and that's what I hope to share.

So, I want to ground us and start thinking about something that made me think about Black witnessing in a totally different way. This is a James Baldwin's quote [“Black people need witnesses in this hostile world”] that I came across during my first week of graduate school in August of 2014. If anyone remembers August 2014, that was the week that Mike Brown was killed, that Michael Brown Jr. lie in the street for four hours uncovered in Ferguson. And again, thinking I'm going to be a student who is going to graduate school and writing about mobile journalism in one frame, but then seeing how people are just subverting CNN and all the other major players to create their own networks, and then coming across this quote really put me on the path that I'm on today.

James Baldwin wrote, “Black people need witnesses in this hostile world.” And I remember underlining the word “witnesses” a ton of times thinking, why that word witness? It's heavy, it's loaded. It has a moral weight to it, as if someone is pledging to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, as Kelli is urging us to think about in the courtroom setting. It also has a religious kind of weight to it. And I know James Baldwin's background, as someone who is Christian and always kind of questioning Christianity. “Can I get a witness,” is one of the things you may hear in a Baptist church, “What has God done for you lately?” But then there's the news element. As a journalism scholar I’m always thinking about the eyewitness who was there. So, I'm playing with all of those three different terms, those three different ways of witnessing that we've been thinking about.

It took me back to 2010, when I was 25 years old, a little youngin’ in the newsroom. Baby Allissa playing around with smartphones with my students. We were trying to figure out what this smartphone was. This was the year that the iPhone had a front *and* rear facing camera on it. And we were like, “Oh, we can do our own stand ups. We don't need fancy satellite trucks. This is going to change the game.” I was at an HBCU called Morgan State University and so we called ourselves the “Morgan MOJO Lab.” This is what we are going to train everybody to do, to be MOJOS. We made this commercial to explain to people what mobile journalism is, because everybody just said “It's grainy, it’s jumpy, no one's going to trust that, sometimes the audio is not great. What are you all making?” And so, we took it on the road, we went to all these different

conferences trying to convince people this was the next frontier in journalism and to please listen to it.

We were actually invited by an organization called Global Girl Media to come to South Africa a year after their World Cup had just left the country. And they were saying, “We had such great energy here last year. What can we do to keep the youth sustained?” So, the State Department asked Global Girl Media to create some kind of media program for youth. This is where going to all these conferences really paid off. When meeting the founder of Global Girl Media she said, “Please create a MOJO curriculum for South African girls.” I said, “This will be wonderful.” She said that the only thing is there’s a catch. Each girl has already openly stated that she's HIV positive and so “we don't want you to get very attached. Some of the girls are very, very ill and they may not make it through the end of the program. But it is very important for you to capture their voices.” So again, you're mentally trying to prepare yourself for that, because coming from the sister city of Baltimore, which also had a very high rate of HIV, we were very familiar as students and as faculty with what the stakes were. We went there for 11 weeks and created a program.

This is one of my favorite students, and I know that you’re not supposed to have favorites, but Lerato would always say, “MOJO is magic.” We would be in the vans, editing our copy, and editing all of our videos, using these very, very old iPod Touches, it’s like the OG iPhone. And we used those, and she was editing in the car and would always be finished before everyone else. Lerato, unfortunately, did pass away of TB a few months after I got back home, and the book is dedicated to her. But one of the things I learned when I was in South Africa is that there was a change, a switch around 2011, where we were no longer playing around with these devices and the stakes became much, much higher. This is us [referencing slide] still having fun reporting in Nelson Mandela's hometown of Kliptown. And we're asking young boys, “What will you do when Madiba passes,” because he was very, very sick at the time. And they got all kinds of ideas about how they would keep his legacy going.

The switch I mentioned just now is in 2011, when the Arab Spring erupted. And we were still on the continent at the time. And we're going back to our bed and breakfast every evening kind of mulling over the privilege that exists of being able to step out of a situation for a few minutes and catch your breath. And that guilt, and a lot of that pressure to keep creating new things and have fun with these youth amid such high stakes really started to make me jot some notes down. So, in 2011, we were invited by the King of Morocco to come to create a MOJO Program, very similar to what we did in South Africa. They asked the State Department to make it a peacekeeping one because there had been so much unrest in Egypt, in Tunisia, and in Libya. They had just seen, for example, Muammar Qaddafi, be killed via camera, via cell phone. The King of Morocco did not want that kind of unrest in the country and so then asked the State Department to bring back the

MOJO program. And so, this is me speaking in Morocco. We were not allowed to go out in Morocco without male accompaniment, so that's why you see the chaperones in the background. That was very different for me.

However, that's not to say that men weren't supportive of this program. One of my favorite moments in Morocco is when a dad yells out of the window, “Hey, are you the girls on the street?” And we were like, “What’s girls on the street?” And they're like, “You guys are trending on Twitter.” And we were like, oh, because there's like, 40 of us walking around. Obviously, I'm not very tall. There's forty people walking behind me, young kids, and all the folks were like, “What are they doing?” So, his girls came downstairs, he said, “I have six daughters and a son, and I'd like them to participate in your program.” And I was like, “Oh my gosh, can we take a picture of them?” And he says, “No, but you can take a picture of me.” So that's where this photo comes from. But one of my favorite moments, though, was meeting people like him who said, “Yes, women should have a voice. Girls should be taught journalism.”

I’m fascinated by these devices. This is a picture of our girls in the open-air market, called the souk. One of their favorite moments there is when people have their big, bulky cameras, trying to report on what our girls were doing while they had these tiny touch devices.

When I came home, I took a fellowship at Harvard for their Nieman program. That's really where I said, “I’ve been off the continent for a while. I'm home, I really want to debrief and think about what did I just do for almost a year? What did we make? What were the stakes? Is this going to last?” And that's when I decided to go back to school, so that I have more time to think because as a lecturer, I didn't really have a lot of time to think with a four-four teaching load.

And so, I went back to school. This photo is my kids very happy that I could come outside again. They're like, “Finally, you finished school!” But that wasn't the end of it, right? Because, as I'm beginning to think about how I've just seen the Arab Spring powered by smartphones, and all that literature exists. I've seen Occupy Wall Street powered by smartphones, and all of that literature exists. What I didn't see was this moment [referencing a video of Rodney King being beaten by LA Police Officers], which was very titular to me as a young Black girl sitting next to her dad, watching this, and wondering what is happening. It was the first time I saw my dad near tears. The only other time I would actually see him cry is when his father passed away. And so, this was one of the incidents that I think was a watershed moment for not only cop watching, but trying to get accountability for what we saw police do. I didn't see much in the literature about how impactful that Rodney King video was, and how citizen journalism done by Black and Brown people could be powerful. I mentioned at the top of this talk that Ferguson erupted my first week of school, and so then I'm seeing lots of people in the streets with their own

smartphones doing their own journalism. I'm seeing major newscasters, who I won't name, just being debunked, and pilloried, quite frankly, online. And I thought, wow, this is a huge shift. I think there is something here.

This is where I began to braid together this theory of Black witnessing, which has three components. It is souveillant in nature, which is the opposite of surveillance, which looks up on high, souveillance looks from below and says: “You're watching me and I'm watching you too. I see you as well.” But it also has this element of leveraging any social network that it needs to at the time as an ad hoc newswire. Whatever is hot at the time, and Twitter was the thing back then, that's what it will hack or use to get the message out. And the last element that makes Black witnessing what it is, is that it will harness these overlapping Black public spheres that exist (and I'm really referencing Catherine Squires theory here), of the least powerful, if you will, or the working class that is always assumed to be so busy making a living that they can't bother to make journalism. That is a complete myth, because Black witnessing really relies on working class Black folks. And then folks as wealthy, as uberfamous as LeBron James, who are tweeting out the same things at the same time. That's where that power comes from. So again, you have the souveillance, you have the technology, and you have a vast, diverse community of African Americans who are willing at a moment's notice to say, “Look at this, this is important.”

This has been happening, not with the advent of smartphones. But it happened way beyond that, as I began to do more research on when this all started, I realized that we've really been Black witnessing for as long as we’ve been in this country. We've had three overlapping eras of domestic terror against Black people. I noticed that when we were enslaved people, we were witnessing slavery through slave pamphlets and abolitionist newspapers. When slavery is abolished, it then gives way to lynching. White supremacy must be maintained, it must be maintained by violence, and so lynching is documented heavily by newspapers, and by photographs, and often not by Black people themselves. And that then transitions into witnessing police brutality, which begins in the Civil Rights Movements with us observing Black bodies being tossed about by fire hoses, or being bitten by dogs, transitioning all the way to George Floyd. So, in this book I traced that 200-year lineage of Black people, again, using any technology that they can get their hands on, to get the word out that this beast of White supremacy is not going anywhere. It's just morphing and changing formats. And that's what *Bearing Witness While Black* is about.

In that book, I talk about the exemplars. I talk about people like Frederick Douglass, who was using newspapers masterfully. And I've read beautiful letters of his where he's passing the torch to Ida B. Wells, who posthumously received the Pulitzer Prize for documenting lynching so meticulously. And then we bring that to the visual turn, the visual era, when we see, purposely, people like John Lewis using SNCC and students, these young people, who've decided to stage their sit-ins and

demonstrations around the time that Walter Cronkite and those guys would have been in town. News only lasted 15-minutes back then, it didn't last 24 hours. So, you had a quick moment in time to create that lasting image that was going to be compelling.

That brings us to now when I interviewed some of our current smartphone witnesses. These are the folks who comprise the book. At the time when I wrote it, between 2014 and 2018, I thought that this would be a snapshot of what people were doing in the couple of waves of the Black Lives Matter movement that I observed at that time. I did not know that in 2020 it would become necessary to keep building on this concept. That is the year that all of us watched as Mr. Floyd was murdered. I think one of the things that strikes me most about this painting [referencing painting on slide] is that it does in one painting what I attempted to do in almost 300 pages of book. It describes this overlapping era of domestic terror against Black people, from the Middle Passage at the bottom, all the way to the Rodney King video in the middle, as well as having Emmett Till here, and Breanna Taylor here, and the NAACP's "A man was lynched yesterday" banner. All of this is interwoven and we're all looking at this through Black witnesses' eyes.

But one of the things I cautioned people about in 2020 is that if we look too casually at these smartphone videos, we do run the risk of participating almost in a lynch mob. Because we would be very, very careful about how we posted a lynching photograph on our social media platforms. But people weren't being very careful about posting the entire video of George Floyd on their social media. Nor were the news networks, they were guilty of this too. They were putting it online and on air without any trigger warnings at all. They weren't blurring his face at times. It really reminding me of this era. And so, I wrote a piece and said, Let's try to think of these videos as really urgent dispatches that somebody has put their body in harm's way to document and as such, they should be considered sacred. We still need them for evidence in court and families, should they want to see them, should have them for that closure. But I think that we have seen enough of these. We need to leave it up to the families, just as we did with Mamie Till-Mobley, when she decided "I want that casket to be open. I want everyone to see what they did to my baby, Emmett Till." We should give that same freedom and agency back to family so that they can decide. We did see that with the case of Tyre Nichols recently in Tennessee.

I went on various networks and tried to tell our colleagues in the news, this is what I think we should do. This is how I think we should handle it. They said, "What if it's just boring? What if it's just people dancing or doing the cha cha slide?" I said, "That's what you air." It doesn't always have to be the fire and brimstone because sometimes protests are pretty boring, or they are filled with joy, joyful moments and love, and sometimes barbecues and things like that. So put those things on. I continued this campaign for a little over a year. Writing in *The Atlantic* to be careful with these police shooting videos. I think one of the

things that really turned for me, as I closed out that part of the scholarship, was thinking what has all of this looking wrought? Looking has consequences. We were never meant to be looking into this space. If we think about these three overlapping eras of domestic terror against Black folks, Black people were not allowed to look in real time when they were enslaved. I think about a titular part of *12 Years a Slave* when the character is hanging, and there are Black people behind him. They're sweeping up and doing chores, trying not to get in trouble themselves. They can't look in real time. The same thing for lynching photographs, we don't see Black people in the margins also looking up and pointing. The newspapers tell us that they left in mass, 300, 400, or 500 people at a time, or even more when a racial massacre occurred. But this moment that we are in now has allowed a youngster, like Darnella Frazier, to stand perfectly still, and be quiet, and record George Floyd's last moments. In doing that, what she's saying is, "I'm not going to leave you. I'm going to stay here with you. I'm going to make sure somebody knows your name and knows what happened to you." Now, even within that, we saw the court case and we saw them say, well, we don't know what happened before that, we don't know maybe what happened after that. That's always been the chief criticism of this Black witnessing and Black citizen journalism: "I want to see the entire exchange."

One of the things I'm going to write about in this next book, *Cancelled*, where we talk about cancel culture, is that one of the threats to looking now is not just the fact that people didn't want us to do it in the first place. The threat is the technology itself. There's a new commercial out for Google Pixel, that some of you may have seen. [The ad shows the ability via AI to change faces of individuals in photographs and ends with someone saying, "Wow."] When saw it I said wow too, but for a different reason. I was like, "Oh no, this is not great." If we can do that with a photograph what's happening with video soon. Will we be able to doctor video so that a police officer will say, "Wasn't me. I wasn't there"? That's threat number one in this whole context. The second threat that I'm writing about is the police protection angle.

The second threat is more immediate and perhaps sinister in the form of three states who are leading the way in trying to end cop watching. In Arizona, the argument is, a lot of these police are cancelled when you record them because you're doxing them, in a way. When you say, "Find this police office. Come on Black Twitter. Let's rally. Let's find out who this person is," the police are arguing that that is a form of doxing, that it is harmful to them, and so we need to stop cop watching. In Oklahoma police officials and lobbyists are saying that cop watching should not exist because it actually interferes with policing, because people are getting too close. And they said, if you are within eight feet of police then you are in you are interfering with him actually doing his job, and you may actually escalate the issue. Florida is the most extreme, saying if you're filming police then you're inciting a riot, you are a rioter. And that is something that should be punishable by not just a fine, but as a felonious act. So, all three

have been moving through various phases of state approval. Arizona's got the furthest and actually was voted on and was approved, and then got kicked back down by the Federal Government that said it violates the First Amendment.

That is what I'm constantly watching and why this book is taking so long to write. Because I see so many different states who are cutting and pasting from this template, trying to push things forward quietly as well. We are going into an election year. And I worry that if we keep arguing about the latest incendiary tweet, or comment that someone made on social media, or if we keep worrying about whoever your candidate is, if you don't like them, and you're worried about what they're saying to each other, then you're not paying attention to things like this. This is the stuff that's not that interesting as it's passing through, but it's the stuff that has so much impact.

I just want to play very quickly for you [an example of] one of the states that's thinking about adopting one of these laws. This is the mayor of New York City, Eric Adams, and this is what he has to say about cop watching:

“Without a doubt, and that is one thing that we're going to do, we're going to teach the public how to properly document. If an officer is on the ground wrestling with someone that has a gun, they should not have to worry about someone standing over them with a camera, while they are arresting someone. If an officer is trying to prevent a dispute from taking place and deescalate a dispute, they shouldn't have someone standing over the shoulders with a camera in their face, yelling and screaming at them without even realizing what the encounter is all about. There's a proper way to police. And there's a proper way to document. If your iPhone can’t catch that picture, without you being in a safe distance, then you need to upgrade your iPhone. Stop getting on top of my police officers while they carry out their jobs. That is not acceptable, and it won't be tolerated. That is a very dangerous environment you are creating, when you are on top of that officer who has an understanding of what he's doing at the time, yelling police brutality, yelling at the officer, calling them names. Now he has to worry about who's behind him, is he part of the process that he is trying to deescalate. That has gotten out of control. You can safely document an incident, we can use that footage to analyze what happened, but that's not what's happening right now in our city. We are finding people who are standing on top of the officer while he's involved in a dangerous encounter. Not acceptable. It's not going to continue to happen. Thank you.”

So that is the Mayor of New York who is very seriously considering speaking with the Governor of New York to pass a statewide law that talks about protecting police in this way. So, one of the questions about cancel culture and all that this looking has wrought is, where do we go from here? As a journalism professor and as a scholar I am often thinking in two different lanes. What can I teach my students now about reporting that can improve

this climate? And in the long run, what can we put in a time capsule and analyze in a cautionary way?

The more immediate thing that I've done, with the help of Alicia, with her funding, is to launch the Charlotta Bass Journalism and Justice Lab. It is named after the first Black woman who was nominated for Vice President in the United States and the first Black woman to own a paper on the West Coast, where I'm based. And one of the things that we have launched is called the Second Draft Project. It plays on this idea that media is the first draft of history. We love to say that a lot of people did not get a good first draft, and we didn't come back and apologize. We did not really care about the collateral damage to their loved ones. So, in the Second Draft Project, one of the more immediate interventions that we've made in this context is try to give voice to the families, or if the people are still living, those who have been maligned by the press.

Our very first person we interviewed was Lora King, and she is the daughter of Rodney King. We spent a day with her, talking to her about what she thinks people should know about her late father and what he lost that day, even though he did not die during his police encounter. She said a piece of him was never the same. In fact, he never received any mental health care surrounding it and had 55 broken bones from the incident, including a crack to his skull, which they had to replace, kind of reset his eyeball. She said, those are the things people do not discuss. And when they say, "Oh, he was on drugs," she said that they don't mention the kinds of drug. That it was a painkiller that he often had to take, because of the residual pain. And I said, I'm guilty. I didn't learn that about him. And if I did hear that it was a drug, it definitely was not prescribed.

So, these are some of the things the Second Draft Project tries to correct. This semester I added students to it. The first semester was an experiment, this semester it's a fixed class, a special topics class, at the school, and students helped interview Ilyasah Shabazz. This is the daughter of Malcolm X. It's on the eve of his 100th birthday that we are talking to her, asking "What did we get wrong about your dad? We see that you are launching this huge lawsuit against various federal agencies for colluding in his death. What is that about?" And she told us in a day. I had my students participate in this process via zoom, because she's in New York and we are based in California. But it is really enriching work in that we're able to give a measure of apology and repair and engage in Alicia's reparative cycle, giving some of these families a chance to speak again about what we missed and what we didn't get right.

Witnessing is heavy work. Here [referencing photo] we are actually in her Shabazz Center, where her father was assassinated. She wanted to do the interview there, in the former Audubon Ballroom, because she said she felt it gave her strength to be there. And one of the things she also mentioned is that her father was never without his camera, because, she said, "If you look at pictures of my dad, he

always had a camera, because he wanted to document things on his own, because he knew that would misquote them, or take the most incendiary parts of his speeches." And again, I was floored.

So, the work now just reminds me that I need to be listening to witnesses. I need to be giving them space, and some of our more privileged spaces, like museums and colleges, to tell their stories. But the work also continues on the analytic side. How is the long tail of all this looking? And how does this cancel culture that we have right now, how is it a backlash, really, to all of the looking that we've seen in just these last four or five years or so? So, I'll leave the question-and-answer part for you all to critique and play with, but that's what I'm thinking about right now.

Cienna Davis

Thank you all so much for these very thought-provoking presentations. I'm sure that you all have questions. If anyone has any immediate questions, we can just get straight into it.

Perry Johnson

Thank you very much. Perry Johnson. I'm a lecturer at the other Annenberg at USC, thank you so much, for a really urgent, rigorous panel. I'm still thinking about lots of this. Dr. Moore, I want to take your invitation to ask you about reading practices, which I know others may have thoughts on as well. You know, before you mentioned the Depp-Heard trial, I was sort of thinking through it in the conversations that you were having, and I've talked about this with students, as well of the mediation of the courtroom space. Of course, that's not at all the only example. But in grappling with this with my own students and thinking through the reading practices of this, I always struggle with moments of mediation, of courtroom drawing (which I hadn't thought much about at all, so thank you for opening that up to me), the ways in which alleged perpetrators and victims can become protagonists in a spectacle rather than as individuals, humanized individuals, in the midst of a trial and all of the complications that happened there. A right to a trial by our peers shifts to sort of a trial by audiences in the way that mediation creates a spectacle of these spaces in the courtroom, then becomes or moves outside of the architecture of the structure of an actual courtroom. So, I'm thinking through these things, but how do we get back to subjects rather than protagonists? Or the sort of mediated figures that become dehumanized and or then become sort of snippets, in a way that makes them artistic or romanticizes the trial, romanticizes the space of a courtroom itself.

Kelli Moore

With students it's not what I would call like a hippie-dippie process where we go in and things are fixed within the trial, and then they come out and they're fixed people, or they have fixed ideas, and they're more welcoming, peaceful people who love equality, fraternity, and justice and all those things. What I'm finding is I've begun to read these images and figure out a reading practice for analyzing them. And I've begun, in part because of the

question that got asked about context, to think about these images in terms of palimpsest. For example, in this first one I showed you, you can see the outline of the drawing on the other page. I give students these notebooks and the palimpsest, this outline of the image in the back, I realized I can find in other images that students have drawn such as this one, particularly when I know something about the student. All the drawings are anonymous, but I know something about them. This one was drawn by a Muslim practicing student who had a background in calligraphy. So, while this is about the courtroom that she's sitting in, in a global campus, in NYU, in New York City, a kind of court situation she's not familiar with, this really looks like a beautiful religious text that was drawn almost even as a classical or medieval drawing. So, this idea of palimpsest really helps me realize that whatever I'm seeing in their drawings may be the palimpsest of an entire other media tradition. So, for example, the calligraphy that we just saw.

This is a student who I happen to know is a Korean exchange student. Going into court she's sort of channeling K-Drama, and all of the television shows that are about law culture in Korea. That is happening to her in the context of the US court. So, certainly there are ways in which all of these drawings are about the context in the moment but are also kind of telegraphing other media traditions and other issues. So certainly, that issue is there.

I also have some quotes here about a student I had who would need to shower afterward. She thought the people and the situation of the courtroom was grimy and gross. And so, from that question, where we don't think about who is on trial, and what people are actually going through in the kinds of ways that the court treats them, the volume on that information is turned down, so that they can really sort start getting fixated on the dilapidated nature of the courtroom, how grimy things are, how dirty they are. Then they want to fix the court. And that's not the fix, right? That's not the fix that I'm hoping that we'll come to together. So that issue exists in this project. And I'm really hoping that the reading practice I'm trying to develop around the images, moving away from art images into thinking about the substance of what's there in the law for people. I'm hoping that that reading practice will allow me to have a more objective critique, like the one that you're asking me about where students don't leave it as this sort of wonderful lesson that I learned in civics. It's more complicated. I hope that answers that a little bit.

Audience Member

My question is for Allison. You mentioned something which intrigued me, which is like financial capitalism is our media or fintech is our media. And I think one way was, of course, that telecom companies and big tech is also now that, and also the mobile phone is involved. But is it also about a certain kind of communicating the communicative politics of digital lending through ads and interfaces that you're interested in?

And very quickly, a second part. I was very

interested in the way you were thinking through informal financial lending and others. And I was curious in this ongoing march of platformization of finance, where these terms are trumped up like, convenience, instantaneity, how again and again, as problematic as this kind of gathering of behavioral alternative financial data is and the way these variables are being used, how much do you see the role for alternatives like in other forms of platformization? Like in a ride sharing? It seems that there's constantly this aspect of predatory inclusion, sort of including more people just to place them more in the trap of debt. Thank you.

Alison Hearn

Well, there's a ton to say. The argument that fintech is media is being a bit liberal with the brief here. But on the other hand, it's important to understand that what we're seeing, which is a function of what Nick Srnicek calls platform capitalism, is a tendency towards monopoly and convergence. So, banks are mobile phone companies, and mobile phone companies are banks, and retail stores are banks. And there's just this whole kind of integration into the logic of finance, which is overlaid by this logic of datafication. All of us are entangled in these filaments of the data factory, no matter whether we bank online or whatever we do.

I was talking about JUMO and Africa, which is the most extreme example of expropriation that I can see. India would be another place where it's really, really intense. But in North America as well, I mean, everywhere you look. It is this logic that in exchange for your personal data you can get a deal, whether it's putting something in your car to reduce your insurance rates that tracks how often you break. Or whether it's actually looking for a loan and your FICO score is crappy, or you've never even been able to be scored. This is the argument in the Global North: just improve your credit score by giving us access to your whole life, because we can get a more holistic picture of who you are, rather than just your financial behavior.

I mean, your question is really big. I think that the kicker for me was when I started to really dig up some of these alternative financial practices of commoning. First of all, how long their history is and the view that fintechs and the finance capitalists have that they're actually going to infiltrate them. There have been amazing ethnographies done with some of the executives of these fintechs in Ghana where they basically say, “Yeah, we know people keep their money under their bed. Our goal is to get that money out from their bed and put it into the formal banking system.” And people are resisting. Akose is resisting. They might not see it that way. But the view from the finance industry is these are anachronistic practices that are ripe for exploitation. The view more organically from people who are engaging in them is that “We don't trust the banks. They haven't treated us well.” And they see, like in Ghana with Qwikloan, for example, it's been revealed to be as predatory as it actually is. So many of these fintechs are predatory. There are hair raising stories. I've written a lot more about this. But fintechs in the Global North, like

Elevate for example, are just no holds barred. They trap people. They're payday lenders. That's what they are, but they're dressed up in the Silicon Valley veneer of inclusion and all of the kind of aspirational language of getting credit as though it's a reward. And I love that you [Kelli Moore] were talking about Moten and Harney's idea of creditability or credit being a one-way street. Credit is a form of discipline. Always has been. It's about making us legible to capital so that it can appropriate from us.

Caitlin Petre

Thank you all so much for this fantastic panel. I'm Caitlin Petrie. I'm an associate professor at Rutgers University in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies. This is a question I guess for the whole panel, but maybe specifically for Alicia and Allissa. I'm thinking a lot about media harm and about accountability, reparation, redressing that harm. And I'm also thinking about all of this in the context of Wesley Lowery's remarks last night. And I guess I'm wondering, when I think about redressing a harm or reparation, I think that something needs to come from the perpetrators of the harm, whether that's far removed in the past. So I'm wondering, when you think about redressing media harm, do you think that there's a role for I mean—I was thinking of the, you know, when the New York Times said Mike Brown was no angel—do you think there's a role for those institutions that have done the first draft in this way that caused harm, for them to redress? Does some of it have to come from them? Or not come from them? What is the role of some of the media institutions that have caused some of these harms?

Alicia Bell

First of all, yes, I will say just with the New York Times, as an example, the New York Times is a grant seeker and it's also a grant maker. A very easy way for the New York Times to redistribute wealth is to stop being a grant seeker. So that those resources can be redistributed to people who have experienced harm because of their journalism. Another way for them to redress that work is with their grant-making, to be really intentional, or really specific about that as reparative work. That's not the case right now. And across the board, when we see news institutions and organizations who maybe apologize, very rarely is there any sort of—well, first of all, not everyone's apologizing or acknowledging the harm—but even if and when they do, very rarely is there any sort of accountability or redress that has to do with moving resources or creating a new culture. That is a reparative culture. So, I think the framework that the BBC laid out is probably the clearest framework that includes the most aspects of reparations. And I say that because in that framework it was laid out that there would be internal shifts around who was employed, there would be internal cultural shifts, but there would also be grant-making that would happen in places where their profits had helped make slavery possible. Places like Jamaica, places like Lowcountry Gullah Geechee land in South Carolina, and across the Southeast. I am not sure where they are in that process right now, but I would say that that articulation is the most holistic articulation that I've seen from a newsroom.

The other thing is that I think all of these institutions, whether they are hedge fund owned, whether they are just largely profiting conglomerates of news—thinking about folks like Gannett—those folks can redistribute wealth and still function. That is possible. They are profitable institutions if they choose to be. I think one of the things that happens a lot in journalism space is that folks conflate sustainability and growth. They talk about sustainability strategies when they actually mean growth strategies and scale strategies, and they use the word sustainability. So, there are a lot of organizations that believe that their efforts at sustainability are wrapped up in growth and scale. But you can be sustainable with two people in an organization. Your work will be different, but you can be sustainable.

Also, I will say outside of these individual organizations, because I do believe that these actors have a role to play when it comes to impacting the rest of the journalism landscape. I think they also have a role to play in the harm that they've created for communities. So, when I'm talking about the redistribution of power, the redistribution of capital—whether that is social capital, political capital, economic capital—I'm talking about that to other Black journalists, to other journalists in the field, and I'm also talking about that to the communities that they've harmed and figuring out ways to do that.

And then finally, I'll just say, the thing that I really love about this reparations cycle—in the way that it moves through reckoning, acknowledgement, accountability, and redress—is that it is a cultural cycle. It is something that we can carry into the future without the expectation of utopia. We can expect that there might be harm, that there might be conflicts. And still in that conflict and in that harm, we can be nimble, and we can be buoyant, and we can reckon with it, we can acknowledge it, we can be accountable for it, and we can redress it. And so the thing that I think these larger institutions can do, but also every single journalism and media institution regardless of size, is invest in the creation of a reparative culture, to take stock of their work, and, even if they are not the ones who have been historically been around for all of these different harms, to figure out the ways that it builds on that harm, to figure out the way to break that, and to instead incorporate a reparative culture in their organization now.

Allissa Richardson

I'll just add one thing to that. Repair also, for me, occurs earlier in the cycle. Before we even ask the New York Times to make an apology or to reckon with what they've done, we do have another opportunity to engage with students who are thinking of doing this for the rest of their lives. And so, for me, it's getting them when they are younger, when they have this anger, if you will, that they've seen from TikTok videos of all of the generations past who have done it wrong. And then you give them the tools to analyze how we went wrong. Each of our Second Draft Project starts with a content analysis. What did the LA Times say about Rodney King when he was alive? What did the press, Black and White, say about Malcolm X when he was

alive? And the kids were stunned. They were like, “This doesn't even quote people half of the time. Some of the times it reads like opinion. It's not fact-based at all. I can't believe this was published in these big papers.” I'm just quietly on the perch like, the kids are going to be okay, because they are analyzing for themselves all of the holes that existed there.

I think in the Second Draft Project, one of the things that it gives back to the students is a sense of peace knowing that the family member then got a chance to tell who their loved one really was. And I think that is immeasurable. Because we think about Lora and the things that she talked about in her interview, being out at McDonald's with her dad and having people shout mean things at him. “You ruined the city,” and even more expletive-laced things. And she's seven. She's the same age that George Floyd's daughter was when she lost her dad. And her heart went out to her for when she realized how old she was. This is the kind of media harm that we don't always calculate. That the things that we write, and broadcast can cause a family to not even enjoy a day out on the beach, not enjoy a day out in a restaurant. Or for Ilyasah Shabazz, who was two when her father was killed, her mother shielded the entire family, the three girls who were yet living and the two in her belly, twins in her belly, shielded them as he's being shot to death. Shot 21 times. She has blocked out most of that and has a little bit of memory, but she has not been able to block out the extreme loss, the hole, of not having her father there. And the way we remember him as the polar opposite of King. Totally not the case, right? When we could begin to read their ideology side by side, they are so similar. So, I think those are some of the things that we hope to give back when we address media harm is, to consider the families, because they're the ones who are left behind.

Cienna Davis

All right, thank you everyone. I'd like to thank Alicia, Alison, Kelli, and Allissa. Thank you all for being here.