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I'm Xiaobei Chen, professor of sociology at Carleton University and the president of the Canadian Sociological Association. On behalf of the Association, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the CSA webinar series on Canadian policing, colonialism and racism. I'm opening today's meeting with the land acknowledgement.

[Slide 2]

We want to acknowledge the Indigenous nations on whose lands we are meeting today, wherever that may be, to thank them for the opportunity to present our thoughts on their territories. We would also like to pay our respects to Elders' of these lands, both past and present.

As the speaker and the moderator are located at the University of Alberta, it is also appropriate to have a land acknowledgement from there.

The University of Alberta respectfully acknowledges that it is located on Treaty 6 territory and Homeland of the Métis, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/ Sauteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community.

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As the debate about policing is becoming a major contentious issue for sociology departments across the country and for Canadian society, it is important that we create public space for discussions about these issues, amongst sociologists and with the wider community.

Our speaker today is Dr. Temitope Oriola. Dr. Oriola is joint Editor-in-Chief of *African Security* and associate professor of criminology and sociology at the University of Alberta. A recipient of the Governor General of Canada Academic Gold Medal, Professor Oriola's research focuses on policing, weaponization and use of force by police, terrorism studies, resource wars or insurgencies, and political kidnapping.

A decorated researcher and teacher, Dr. Oriola regularly contributes to public scholarship through public talks, op-eds, television and radio interviews and expert opinions. Professor Oriola is a two-time recipient of the prestigious Carnegie fellowship, the 2020 recipient of the Kathleen W. Klawe Award for excellence in teaching and president of the Canadian Association of African Studies (CAAS).

We are very grateful today to have Dr. Oriola joining us for a presentation titled *At the Crossroads: Sociologists, policing and social justice*.

[Slide 4]

Today's webinar is moderated by Dr. Sara Dorow. Professor Dorow is also chair at the department of sociology at the University of Alberta. She is the former founding director of the Community Service-Learning Program at the University of Alberta. Her areas of research and teaching are focused on transnationalism, migration, and mobile work; gender, race, and family; and qualitative methodologies and community-engaged learning. After focusing these interests on transracial adoptive families and identities in the first part of her career, she has turned her sights on community and work in the oil sands in the second part; Part 3 is in the works.

Thank you so much to Temitope and Sara for joining us and thank you all for attending this afternoon's event. Sara, I will now turn it over to you.

[Slide 5 - Sara Dorow Speaking]

Thank you so very much. I'm really pleased to be a part of this event today. I'm going to briefly introduce the format for the event and welcome you to pose your questions. Temitope will speak for 35 to 40 minutes or so and then we will have plenty of time for the Q & A period after his remarks. You will see on the screen here that we invite you to communicate with the panelists during the webinar. You can use the chat function at the bottom of your screen (that's where the toolbar appears). You can also post questions through the Q & A and we invite you to do that. You can post questions during the talk and/or after Temitope has concluded his remarks. Please note that in the Q & A function, there's the opportunity for you to also upvote questions. So, if there are questions you especially like or echo what you would ask, please do upvote them, and we'll use that to guide our Q & A. Thank you and I'll pass things over to Dr. Temitope Oriola.

[Temitope Oriola Speaking]

Thank you very much and thank you for the wonderful introduction. I'd like to start by thanking the president of the Canadian Sociological Association, Dr. Xiaobei Chen, the moderator, Dr. Sara Dorow, and Sherry Fox, the executive director of the Canadian Sociological Association. Thanks for all your hard work behind the scenes to make today's event possible. I appreciate our colleagues in the media who have taken time off their busy schedules to join us today. And thanks, of course, to the audience, colleagues, students at all levels, and members of the public.

Some caveats are crucial at this early stage. First, while I recognize that the term sociologist applies to a broad spectrum of academic and non-academic professionals, my primary focus is on individuals in the nearly 100 universities in Canada with tenured or tenure-track positions.

This is a rather limited scope for reasons that should soon become obvious. It means that I am directing this presentation to a small slice of the 28.5% of Canadians with a bachelor's degree or higher or a tiny proportion of the less than 1% of the Canadian population with a PhD. A critique of elitism, therefore is in order. But that precisely underscores my point.

Second, I am a continental African born and raised in postcolonial Nigeria. That means I am socialized for the greater part to think in terms of socioeconomic status rather than race. Therefore, social agitation or disadvantage based on race is something relatively new to me.

Third, I have zero negative experience with the police in Canada. The implication is that my arguments as both a scholar and a black male unencumbered by any personal negative experience, or grievance. Of course, I am aware and reflective of the fact that I am one of the less than 20 black, tenured or tenure-track professors at the University of Alberta out of a total of 2,059 professors. That positionality comes with certain privileges. There are of course, the interaction of minutiae and intersubjective, micro sociological dimensions. As I shared in a recent presentation to my department's newly minted Center for Criminological Research, one US border agent told me a couple of years back, as I've raced through the fast lane as a Nexus global travel member, "Let me guess - you're either a medical doctor or a professor." I smiled and told him one of his suggestions was accurate, but he would likely not survive it if I operated on any part of his body. My left hand is more active than my right, although I am in fact right-handed. And apparently such lack of coordination of hands is not good for surgery. Similarly, in other social spaces in everyday life, people routinely tell me that I look like a pastor. Now that often sounds like a cruel joke given the condition and the size of my face.

So, having noted all the caveats, here we go.

George Floyd was killed in a police encounter on the streets of Minneapolis on the 25th of May 2020. Floyd's digitized and widely disseminated asphyxiation through that knee on the neck as led to global protests against police violence and other forms of oppression. From the UK to Canada, Belgium to Australia, social movements have taken off with the explicit aim of demanding the removal (in some cases, outright destruction) of historical monuments and other symbols of colonialism and slavery. Calls for defunding the police have also grown. So has solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. A lot has changed, and much remains unchanged since George Floyd's death.

Two days after George Floyd died, Toronto black woman, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, died from a fall shortly after police responded to her family's call for assistance to deal with her mental crisis. Video evidence from the incident where not made public, but selective leaks appeared in the Toronto Sun. Police oversight organization, The Special Investigations Unit (SIU) noted that

(and I'm quoting now), "Leaks of this nature detract from the public's confidence and the family's confidence in the integrity of the SIU investigation." The integrity and the victimhood of the dead woman was seemingly questioned in the leaks.

On June 6, Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations released a video regarding his maltreatment by Wood Buffalo RCMP in Fort McMurray. The chief noted that (I'm quoting him now), "I could feel that I was going unconscious. And all I can remember is the blood gushing out of my mouth." The picture of his bloody face was widely disseminated. The reason for the encounter with police was an expired license plate. The RCMP charged the chief with resisting arrest and unlawful assault of a police officer. The RCMP officer knocked down Adam with a car though earlier in the same week. Two federal ministers expressed their outrage over the Chiefs abuse and the prime minister said he was quote, "Deeply alarmed by the incident." The charges against the chief were dropped about two weeks later.

Since George Floyd's murder, several Student Associations are challenging sociology departments regarding police violence that ties to the police and broader action on social injustice. It seemed that our students expected more from us as academics and researchers, they associated with a quest for social justice. As I told graduating criminology undergrad students in a recorded faculty message in the summer, "One of the benefits of having a PhD in social science is that you acquire mastery of the language of social justice. We have passed that on to you through our interactions with you, within, and outside the classroom. Truth is, we do not always live up to those ideals you've heard us talk about, and my colleagues and I hope that you go farther than us and be a voice for meaningful change wherever you may be."

Nonetheless, in August 2020, the Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Carleton University ended student internships with police and Correctional Services. The institute noted that quote, "Producing transformative change requires the center in the police and prisons in our collective efforts to reimagine how we govern harm, engage with social problems, and articulate our desires for a more just a more humane and a more egalitarian society."

The decision has attracted both commendation and criticism. The debate over the institute's decision presents an opportunity to examine the role of sociologists in the global movement against police brutality, and social injustice. This presentation addresses two main questions.

What is the role of sociologists in the debate over police violence and social injustice?

How can sociology departments respond to the underlying call for action on equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonization?

My central argument is bifurcated. First, sociologists have been too complacent regarding social injustice. And second, sociology as a discipline runs the risk of irrelevance and ridicule. The sociologists do not make use of this moment to articulate where they stand in the ongoing

movement against police violence. Let's contemplate a little clarification. What is the role of sociology?

This has historically been a matter of serious debate. From the Arab scholar, Ibn Khaldun whose work *Muqaddimah* focus on what he called 'Asabiyyah or social cohesion, which he believed was responsible for the ascendance of clans or tribal groups to power and the inherent seeds for the concomitant downfall to Auguste Comte, who considered sociology a positive science devoted to searching for invariant laws of the natural and social world. Sociology is a societal barometer. British philosopher Peter Winch in his 1958 book called *The Idea of a Social Science* argues that quote, "The central problem of sociology, that of giving an account of the nature of social phenomena, in general itself belongs to philosophy. In fact, this part of sociology is really misbegotten epistemology. I say misbegotten because its problems of enlightening misconstrued and therefore, mishandled as a specie of scientific problem." In other words, for Peter Winch, sociology should not be an empirical science, but a branch of philosophy.

Now, let's just say that many sociologists were not particularly pleased with such a friendship. In, *The Poverty of Historicism*, first published in 1957, philosopher Karl Popper notes that sociology is quote, "An attempt to solve the whole problem of foretelling the future, not so much the future of the individual as that of groups and of the human race. It is a science of things to come of impending developments. If the attempt to furnish the political foresight of scientific validity were to succeed, then sociology would prove to be of the greatest value to politicians, especially to those whose vision extends beyond the exigencies of the present to politicians with a sense of historic destiny." Karl Popper goes on to argue that "Sociological study should have revealed the political future and that it could thereby become the foremost instrument of farsighted practical politics." Now, while the capacity of any discipline to tell the future is debatable, that should not detract from the broader point. Karl Popper takes for granted the ability of sociology to showcase excellent policy relevant research.

In Book Two of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle points out that human excellence is of two kinds, the intellectual and the moral. Aristotle argues that "Intellectual code springs originally and is increased subsequently, from teaching." To that may be added "learning" but what I find most salient in Aristotle's point about moral virtues is his argument that, quote, "Matters of moral action, and expediency of no fixedness but must be left to the individual agents to look to the exigencies of the particular case, as a tease in the art of healing, or that of navigating a ship."

Emile Durkheim as we all know, focused on broad macro level variables and the impact of individual action rather than vice versa and I would turn to this theme in the concluding part of my presentation.

The volume of work being produced within Canadian sociology and expansion of the discipline suggest that the discipline remains well in life in its intellectual pursuit. But how are we doing with respect to what Aristotle conceives as the second part of human excellence - moral excellence? Are we right to stay silent? Or to use my favorite description of the state of affairs, neutral in the global movement against social injustice of which policing as a small but fundamental part. As Howard Becker noted in 1967, "The question is not whether we should take sides since we inevitably will, but rather, whose side are we on?" What kind of sociology do we wish to produce in Canada? To decide to stay neutral in this moment is to take a position of prior willful blindness.

In late 2008, Nicole Neverson from Ryerson University, Charles T. Adeyanju from the University of Prince Edward Island and I began to conduct research on use of electromagnetic disruption technologies or conducted energy weapons such as tasers in Canada. The research was influenced by the televised death of Polish immigrant Robert Dziekanski on the floor of the Vancouver airport. Growing fatalities following deployment of tools such as tasers and overall limited research in the Canadian literature. Our first publication which was released in 2010, is an anatomy of police use of conducted energy weapons and its social consequences in Canada. My colleagues and I warned against what we termed a 'new urban terrorism'. This was in 2012, the publication after the first one, particularly within city spaces, the amphitheater of sociopolitical contestation. We problematized the gaze of law enforcement on poor, mentally challenged, racialized individuals rendered concurrently visible and invisible by law enforcement.

We argued that it was time to "Rethorize the notion of urban terrorism in recognition of the economy of violence that its downtrodden race in socially devalued cities, spaces and interactions with police." This has been proved through prescient by recent events. Analysis from a CBC database on use of deadly force by police from the year 2000 to June 2020 demonstrate that 16% of those killed by police are Indigenous while Black people comprise 8.63% of victims. These numbers are alarming given that Indigenous people and Black people constitute 4.21% and 2.92% of the Canadian population, respectively.

The report notes that the year 2020 as "Already been a particularly deadly year in terms of people killed in encounters with police in Canada." As I look back nearly 12 years after commencing research on police use of force in Canada, I recall the difficulty in publishing findings, researching challenge academic reticence regarding how police deployed force. Initial external reviews were quite scathing, often on conservative ideological grounds, rather than what was lacking in the submission or ways in which it could be improved. We got some very angry reviews. Thankfully, we have since published in several of the same outlets that rejected our initial submissions on police use of force. Those publications have largely been on less controversial global criminological issues.

Some politicians are now far ahead of academic sociologists on the matter of police violence, and social justice generally. Karl Popper who largely thought highly of sociology, would be shocked that sociologists no longer charted society's path. So, there is Martin Luther King Jr. on our end, the Madiba, Nelson Mandela and so forth, who taught scholars and by implication education at enormous power to bring about social change. There are sociologists, who still presuppose that taking a clear stance against police violence means you are biased. Others simply remain silent, and continue to work on the fine, rigorous paper that will be read most likely by 121 people after seven years, mostly by grad students for whom it is required reading.

It is remarkable that some politicians are now ahead of the curve relative to sociologists on matters of social justice. One example may suffice.

RCMP Commissioner, Brenda Lucki, informed the Globe and Mail on June 10 (so just over two weeks after George Floyd died), that "I have to admit, I really struggle with the term 'systemic racism'. I have heard about five or ten different definitions on TV. I think that if systemic racism is meaning that racism is entrenched in our policies and procedures, I would say that we don't have 'systemic racism'.

When asked about the commissioner statement a day later, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in front of the media that I'm quoting Justin Trudeau now, "Systemic racism is an issue right across the country, in our institutions, including in all of our police forces, including the RCMP. That's what systemic racism is."

It was a direct response to Commissioner Lucki. Barely 24 hours after the Prime Minister's comments and two days after her initial remarks, Commissioner Lucki changed her perspective, clarifying among other things that, quoting the commissioner now, "I did not say definitively that systemic racism exists there in the RCMP, I should have." Perhaps the RCMP Commissioner came across some fine incontrovertible nomothetic socio-scientific data hours after the Prime Minister's comments. Alberta RCMP Deputy Commissioner, Curtis Zablocki, also walked away from his earlier stance, and I found the episode quite fascinating.

The point is the Prime Minister communicated a strong and unambiguous political position. The RCMP Commissioner was arguably aware she could not maintain her curious position discursively and literally, while at odds with the standpoint of the federal government. The Prime Minister busted the institutional apologists talk of the RCMP. To say this is interesting coming from a head of government whose survival depends on public opinion essentially being liked by the public. While fully tenured university professors wish to remain neutral in the face of suffering of fellow citizens.

I can understand neutrality from grad students and contract or sessional instructors who are in a precarious situation. But I do not understand why a tenured university professor (a sociologist, no less) thinks that speaking against police violence or social injustice, compromises their academic credibility. Now that demonstrates a basic misunderstanding of the role of the scholar in society and the positionality of the sociologists. To be fair, this has long been a point of concern.

C. Wright Mills notes in his book, *Images of Man* published in 1960, “How different social scientists go about their work. And what they aim to accomplish by it often do not seem to have a common denominator. Let us admit the case of our critics from the humanities, and from the experimental sciences. Social Science as a whole is both intellectually and morally confused. And what is called sociology is very much in the middle of this confusion.” Those were the words of C. Wright Mills. Sixty years after those words were printed, it is debatable that C. Wright Mills was wrong. The widely acknowledged conservative nature of sociology has been linked to its intellectual indebtedness to the American Midwest. Sociologists as Leon Tchaikovsky points out, have been influenced by quote, “..the bedrock of both moderate conservative political thinking and of moderate reform philosophy.” In other words, Tchaikovsky’s argument is that we seem to have a profound inclination towards half measures.

Human history, a school of supposed neutrality, complicity, an active participation of academics at various historical moments. Phrenology and quinology played a huge role in the historical justification of slavery. Anthropology played a role in colonialism. Anthropologists are still viewed as suspect in some developing countries to this day. The humanities were tangled in the Nazi enterprise. Some philosophers in particular played a role in Nazi Germany. In the book, *Nazi Germany and the Humanities: How German Academics Embraced Marxism* published in just 2007, Wolfgang Bialas and Anson Rabinbach note, “The complex ways in which scholars in a variety of disciplines were able to advance their careers during the Third Reich by lending their skills and professional expertise to well-funded national research communities and to the wartime mobilization of the humanities.” Citing Stephen P. Remy’s study of Heidelberg University, Bialas and Rabinbach argue that “With few exceptions, the academic elite welcomed and justified the acts of the Nazi regime, uttered not a word of protest when their Jewish and liberal colleagues were dismissed and did not stir when Jewish students were barred admission.”

Canada is not Nazi Germany. Canada is a free and liberal democratic society, easily one of the finest in the world by my reckoning. Consequently, we can assume that each member of the professoriate is an agentic entity and whatever constraints your actions is likely a matter of free will or relatively mild tepid circumstances. Therefore, no one is forcing any scholar to join a national political movement. The life of any sociologist in Canada to my knowledge is not a stick on this matter. Sociologists have a choice regarding how we engage with the issue of police

violence and social injustice. In particular, sociologists of crime (criminologists) must be careful about how they lend their voice and expertise at this historical juncture. Is research access worth the damage to your reputation?

Despite our many exciting research agendas across Canada, as evident in national and international publications, there seems to be on one hand an imminent ultra-conservative bias on matters relating to the criminal justice process, and on the other hand, the presupposition that our job ends on the altar of analysis and publication of findings.

My point is, we must not justify or rationalize police violence. Our task must also go beyond merely publishing findings and advancing our careers. Sociologists ought to be part of the epicenter of a global movement to eradicate social injustice. Commitment to such an endeavor is not momentarily ephemeral or an exercise in rhetorical performativity. The change may in fact begin with academia or within academia. Various departments, units, and faculties ought to evaluate policies and practices undergirding their hiring decisions, promotion, merit incrementation, award nomination, or decision-making regarding students and faculty, as well as appointment to administrative positions, among others.

At the micro sociological level, I'm often surprised that there are some scholars with 20 or 25-year experience who have never, in fact mentored a single minority student. Scholars receiving funding on social problems affecting specific communities but have never hired a single member of that community as a research assistant.

Some departments in the social sciences are close to reaching gender parity. This is a welcome development. However, opportunities for women in academia has not necessarily translated to opportunities for women of all backgrounds.

My point is that sociologists must challenge the status quo. Discourses on terms such as social justice, deconstruction, intersectionality and social inequality among others must go beyond the phraseology of the trade or what I call 'academic chatter' by people with PhDs.

Talcott Parsons, one of the major figures of the discipline, understood the significance of individual actions in his general theory of action systems. Parsons argued, I'm quoting Parsons now, "Social system is only one of three aspects of the structure and have a completely complete system of social action. The other two are the 'personality systems' of the individual actors and a 'cultural system' which is built into the action. Each of the three modes we consider to be an independent focus of the organization of the elements of the action system. In the sense of no one of them is theoretically reducible to terms of one or a combination of the other. No one of them is theoretically reducible to terms of one or a combination of the other two.

My point is, each individual sociologist has a role to play despite external constraints. There is no basis in law or morality, or the kind of egregious actions we have witnessed for some time now. This is not a call for slacktivism or activism. Clicking 'like' or sharing a post on social media is one thing, what causes we support in real life, we vote when it matters, and our contributions to major and minor decisions within our sphere of influence, all go a long way to promote or stifle social justice.

In *Equality and Democracy*, Philip Green warns against, quote, "A politics of victimization, in which there is no sympathy for suffering in general, but only sympathy for the suffering of people who are exactly like oneself." We may replace the term 'sympathy' in that quote, from Philip Green with the term 'support'. We must learn to support those who are unlike us. As academics, the society imbues in us the level of respect, that is rarely accorded people in several other professions. Martin Luther King Jr, puts it best in his autobiography and rarely quoted part of his work. He states and I quote, now, "When you are aware that you are a symbol, it causes you to search your soul constantly, to go through this job of self-analysis, to see if you live up to the high and noble principles that people surround you with, and to try at all times to keep the gulf between the public self and the private self at a minimum."

A new society is possible. I was encouraged by the 15,000-strong Black Lives Matter protests in Edmonton in June this year. I am encouraged by the largely non-violent demonstrations in my country of birth, Nigeria. We had a political elite who for decades failed to deliver good governance and trampled on the talents and destinies of millions of young people. I'm encouraged by the refusal of young people around the world to fall into familiar silos of trial and tongue. I'm encouraged by the demands being made by students across Canada for decolonizing academia and ensuring diversity in the professorial and social justice in our universities. I am confident that a new society can emerge from the tumult of the present age. Thank you.

[\[Sara Dorow\]](#)

Many thanks Temitope for that stimulating talk and lots to chew on and think about there and really appreciate it. So, we'll open it up to Q&A and I don't see any questions posed there yet, but we'll give people a minute to collect their thoughts and post a question and then I'll share them with Temitope. Please don't be shy - there's plenty for us to talk about!

[Question Period as moderated by Sara Dorow]

Can you speak to SARS in Nigeria right now, as part of failure to give good governance?

[Temitope Oriola]

SARS was established decades ago (I believe in the 1980's) has this special anti-robbery squad and but has since become a law unto itself. Successive administrations kept it alive for of course, their own purposes. But there have also been multiple instances, I believe, up to five times in the last ten years when SARS was in fact, supposedly banned.

But somehow, like a cat with multiple lives, it just kept coming back. The making of what we're seeing now regarding SARS, has been long coming. And in fact, a lot of individuals who have observed Nigeria will leave Nigeria for a while wondering how and why it took so long for the for the masses to take to the streets, to demand for their rights. Part of that, of course, this is the mass exodus of some of the finest brains out of the country in the last several years, spread all across the world, US, Canada, and so forth. But it's nice to see that awakening. Personally, I think it's long overdue and we hope that the protests generate the desired change in Nigeria, but this is, in my mind, resistance from below.

[Sara Dorow]

Great, thank you, Temitope. While we're waiting for additional questions, I'll go ahead and pose one. Something that was really on my mind as you were talking was the need to decolonize sociology itself, as a discipline. Your invitation urging for sociology to be at the front end of social justice and social change also begs the question of how we look at our own roots, our own research methods and theories, that we espouse or not. And so, I wonder if you might speak to how we look at our discipline and its very formation in relation to this social theme. How it's incumbent on us to be part of, and at the head of, social conversations?

[Temitope Oriola]

Well, thank you for that. I believe we have the ingredients to be at the very forefront of social justice, advocacy, in a way that would not jeopardize our academic credibility in terms of the kinds of research we do, the degree of symbolic power that members of society invest in us. When you are introduced as a university professor of any discipline, people listen (at least for the greater part) they want to hear what you have to say. But I find this this reticence, this reluctance. So that the society is one thing and then academia is another. We just remain in highly private cocoon and just do our thing content to publish papers in the best journals we can find. And then whether or not it is defined or useful for anything isn't really our business. That is something that we need to change.

One of the lessons that I learned personally, over the course of the summer, was the need to engage the public. In these are the sharing of research findings. Just a single article about 1,200 to 2,400 words in *The Conversation* went viral and was republished by over 20 media organizations within and outside Canada. I had never seen that level of interest in the kinds of work that we do. Interestingly, a lot of the findings that I put together along with the ones that my research team and the ones from all the scholars were things that we had published a decade ago, eight years ago, but we never bothered to actually put the findings out there. And we assume that the average member of the public has time for a 10,000-word essay. Guess what? They don't! So, I think it then makes sense for us to start thinking of these short editorial op-ed pieces (easily accessible) from our major research findings and ensure that we make them available to the public. We will be amazed at how interested members of the public are in the things that we do. Others may choose to join protests and all of that. I'm not necessarily calling for that, but I believe there are things that we can do as scholars to have an engaged public, and to put our voice out there on these social issues of our time.

[Sara Dorow]

Thank you very much. We have a message from one of the audience members,
Thank you, Dr. Oriola for such a brilliant presentation. I have learned a lot from your presentation.

Another question -

What responsibility do our universities have to shield us from the dangers of public intellectualism and the ways those dangers are racialized and gendered?

[Temitope Oriola]

That is an interesting one because on the one hand, in the last couple of decades, there has been a push (in some quarters) towards public intellectualism and not all of those public intellectuals were necessarily scholars. Oftentimes, you would have someone who attended the stature of a public intellectual, simply because they have published a book that was very well received. And therefore, they became perceived as experts in the area and then began to have speaking engagements in those issues, and so on and so forth.

There have been a few cases where academics and some of them tenured took on the role. For those who were in fact, non-academics whose only claim to public intellectualism is because of one or two media articles or book that they published, what they have done, is to occupy a space that scholars did not fill. And so, in a certain sense, there was a vacuum, and therefore, individuals are going into it. I do not consider that public intellectualism is wrong or boring in and of itself. The question is, who are the public intellectuals? And what is their qualification? What is their pedigree, to speak to those issues for which they claim expertise? I think that's the major issue. As long as we remain in our offices, or homes now that there is COVID going on, and do

not get into the public sphere into the public debate, we're going to have all kinds of characters coming up to claim that space.

I'm sure that pretty much every one of us has had instances where you see someone in the media speaking about an issue, and if you didn't know the person, you wonder what your expertise is, to speak on that issue, because you probably know them or know what their qualifications might be. That arises because we have abdicated that responsibility. Scholars have to get into the public sphere some more while still remaining grounded in academics. Those are my thoughts about that, I think we should get involved in the public sphere.

[Sara Dorow]

That would also seem to speak to sociology's responsibility towards a kind of literacy and that overused phrase 'critical thinking', for people actually engaging with and making sense of public intellectual proclamations.

And now a question from Xiaobei.

[Xiaobei Chen]

Thank you so much for your really insightful and brilliant presentation and pleading for soul searching among sociologists.

I'm curious about your classroom. How do you inspire your students to pursue not just intellectual excellence, but also moral excellence? I asked that because I think that's something that we should all do. I would like to hear what you do and get some insights from that. Another related question. Universities today are very different. We have been thoroughly restructured by neoliberalist and corporatist changes. To what extent do you think the deep politicization of those processes is also part of the problem of our complacency with remaining quiet and being the silent sociologist?

[Sara Dorow]

I'll just add to that as there is a question in the Q & A also about teaching.
Could you discuss if you see our teaching as being part of our social activism?

[Temitope Oriola]

The connection was unstable so I did miss the second half of Xiaobei's question, but I am happy to respond on the whole issue of engaging students, with regard to moral excellence and so forth.

Part of what I try to do is to get students involved or engaged in issues that do not directly concern them by providing a transnational globalist approach to teaching and learning.

So, in one breath of responding to a question, giving them illustrations from countries as diverse as Canada, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Nigeria, Belgium, and so forth, particularly my graduate seminars, and undergrad seminars, it's easy, obviously, to do that, in those settings than the larger sort of classes. But even in those, I introduce our topics that perhaps not conventional for those courses.

My intro criminology classes, for instance, are big on issues of counter terrorist strategies by liberal democratic states. In the case of Canada, the use of what is called the 'security certificate provision', which is a tiny part of a 1978 law in Canada, that allows the state to detain you indefinitely. And I show a video clip of a family man who was held on the certificate and implications. I then give room for students to interact. I think students know a lot more than we give them credit for. I do not see students as tabula rasa, or blank pieces of paper, I think they know quite a bit. And that if we work with them and we acknowledge them and engage them based on where they are, and what they know, I think they will be positively amazed at the response that they bring, in the glow on their faces, that they are learning these new topics. They are learning about these new geographies, about individuals they will never meet and issues affecting those lives and why they should care about those issues. That's been my approach, which is back to moral excellence.

[Sara Dorow]

There was also the question about social activism in relation to teaching as well. You began to answer that but I wondered if you wanted to say anything more?

[Temitope Oriola]

I think one of the things we can do is (again, depending on what discipline you are, what subfield, what you're teaching) I would expect, with all SARS protests in Nigeria, that someone somewhere would develop a course on the socio-genesis of that.

Our courses have to be living breathing organisms, in terms of the design, in terms of their content, and the context that they tackle. Also, illustrations that we give in class. That means they would have to have contemporaneity and the legal of those illustrations. Just by virtue of the kinds of courses that I teach, I have to be abreast of what's going on in the news, and so on because these are essential to the things that I teach. So, if there was a terrorist attack somewhere last night, if that might one of my students will bring that up in class this morning. That's just how it works.

I think that's one way; the design of our courses, in the kinds of illustrations we use in class, in the themes that we introduce. Even if we can't have an entire course devoted to that, let's have a lecture or a couple of lectures devoted to these things, and give room for student comment and feedback, and then have this dialogical process of engaging them. I think we would go a long way. Obviously, we can't tell them that, "You should go and march on the streets." That is entirely left to them, but I think when they understand the issues.

A colleague emailed me as recently as last night. They were not going to be at this talk today because they had a meeting that clashed with this talk. But they wanted to let me know that their grade 10 daughter, had been following several of my public activities, and op-eds and media interviews and so forth as well as a colleague in the Faculty of Law. So, you'll be amazed there is real hunger for these issues, a real hunger to help people understand what is going on around them, to make sense of our world. I believe there's a need for us to embrace that role, a lot more than we are currently doing.

[Sara Dorow]

A couple of people are asking questions with regard to policing and alternatives to policing, so I'll try to combine them.

As a student in criminology, I am working with well-established criminological theories that take police for granted as belonging in society. How do you recommend engaging with these theories in a way that acknowledges that alternatives (i.e. defunding of police) are possible?

Can you speak to sociologists' role in exploring alternatives to policing and defunding police institutions?

[Temitope Oriola]

I was praying someone would ask this and I'm glad that is this came up.

I've written about this in through op-eds and so forth. This is my characterization of this contemporary issue. There are two perspectives on defending police.

One, again, the it's just the view of left leaning groups on the far left the groups like an Antifa, and so forth, who believe that policing is fundamentally and absolutely broken and cannot be fixed. And the solution is to cancel it, abolish it completely. That is one perspective.

The second perspective holds that much of what counts as policing today, in fact, has little to do with conventional policing. The police have used soft roles and duties for which a) they are ill equipped b) that they execute poorly and to devastating consequences.

For instance, a growing proportion of calls for police service, in fact, about psychotic episodes of citizens, public drunkenness, homelessness, and so on. None of those things are traditionally policing issues. Social workers, psychologists, psychiatric nurses are in fact better suited to those issues.

Those are the two competing perspectives but the question then becomes, what do we make of these two approaches? My standpoint (and I welcome any member of the audience to disagree with me) comes close to the second one. Which is, that there are ways in which we can change things with being police and policing, to ensure that the kinds of effects that we see the kinds of consequences I will see and not so anymore.

One of those consequences is that up to 70% of police fatalities are individuals who had mental health crisis and/or had substance abuse issues. Clearly, there's something wrong there. There is a disjuncture. The police are not approaching these individuals the way that they ought to, and are cause for fundamental changes. We can respond to that as a society in a number of ways.

One is to channel some of the funding that the police get for tackling those issues, to social welfare services. Another approach is to ensure that police organizations hire as trained officers, professionals with the skills and the qualifications for dealing with those issues.

At the moment, to get into the RCMP or APS and so forth, you need roughly grade 12. I have argued in multiple fora that grade 12 level education is no longer sufficient for 21st Century policing. And of course, there are other measures; gender balance, accountability, the weight and policies around discipline. Not allowing officers to just rack up huge disciplinary episodes and in their files and so on and so forth. All of these are ways in which these issues can be tackled.

But with respect to the role of sociologists on this matter, I think that in terms of what is publicly expressed, sociologists are generally very conservative people. I'm not sure just on a bend, that's a very broad brush and not sure that there has been a lot of, I would with very few exceptions like Carleton and so forth, I believe that most sociologists have either not said anything publicly about this particular issue or those who have said anything about it more often than not have a PhD or tense with police as currently constituted.

That seems to me (I could be wrong) to be the state of affairs. But what we can do is essentially present our findings and those findings are very clear in terms of the cause and effects of these issues. And that would mean making ourselves available for any kind of work or committee tasks.

Assignments that may be required to shape these policies will remain in our offices, will remain within the university campus without getting involved in the in that very difficult job of policy formulation and implementation. I would like to see sociologists engage in that a lot more.

The other part of it of course, is that when you have become very outspoken and your perspective is known, that may block any of those kinds of consideration, but that does not mean we stop. That's why my approach is not some overly idealistic, impractical, non-implementable approach, I have proposed very concrete, implementable sober solutions that I think..

<video freezes - audio is lost>

The first step therefore has to be popularizing, making them known, just sharing them. And with the advent of social media, Twitter, Facebook, and so forth, we should be sharing those findings with the public and be available to speak within media when and if we're called upon to share our views about social issues around us.

[Sara Dorow]

It seems that sometimes critical findings and recommendations make their way into the corridors of power, but not into the public. And I think that's another kind of scenario as well, right? That we might not be aware of the ways in which our work is traveling, or the public might not be aware.

A question about critical race theory.

Critical Race Theory scholars, has been in the forefront in the fight against institutional racism, favouritism, as well as, centering the experiences of Blacks and other people of colour in their interpretations of the law and its workings. What is the relevance of this theory in today's discussion about race and racism in a Canadian context?

[Temitope Oriola]

I think it's absolutely critical. This is a precursor of many, many of the conversations that we're now beginning to have - the idea that the law is not colour-blind. This is one of the fundamental presuppositions within critical race theory. Racism in the criminal justice process is not an aberration. It is normal, it is a routine, regular practice. I see critical race theory as front and center of the number of these issues. But what does that then mean for us?

Well, what that means is at the minimum an acknowledgement that this issue is prevalent in society. In a recent presentation to our department's newly minted Center for Criminological Research, I did talk about some of some of these issues as regards the law and the way that it works and the way that the criminal justice process currently works. I'll give an instance.

In first-year law, there is the whole conversation around the common law system, the workings, essentially the minutiae of the common law. One of the fundamental tenets of a common law system is that you are tried by a jury of your peers. This is a fundamentally broken system and is responsible almost singularly for a lot of miscarriage of justice. And how does it work? Well, they select certain members of the public and then through a preset process, select a number of people who are given instructions, and so on and so forth. That process is fraught with major problems. It is a reason why certain cases, particularly highly sensationalized cases, in the media that we thought was slamming dunk cases often end up in zero convictions. And indeed, people wonder what happened.

Sometimes prosecutors have, in fact, done everything they could, sometimes even the police have done everything they could, but because jurors are members of society, and you're asking individuals to come in perform those duties, and because they feel obligated to as citizens, but the sentiments, that lie in society then become expressed in the courtroom, in terms of empathy, or sympathy towards an accused person who ordinarily should be found guilty.

In fact, it makes the work of the prosecutors more difficult. I recall the case of George Zimmerman in the United States. That was the guy who killed a teenager was walking to the home of his father's girlfriend. He was told on the phone "Don't go after him." He did and killed him and still claimed self-defense. I was in the US at the time, just about leaving the University of Massachusetts in Boston for the University of Alberta, and we were at the National Science Foundation sponsored workshop in Columbus, Ohio. I recall the fear all over the place, because it seemed that there would be trouble, that there might be violence. One of the jurors was on CNN that day the judgmental passed, (which was a not guilty judgment) and kept talking about how she felt that George was just trying to protect the community. And it was astonishing how she felt this camaraderie this, this comfort this, this support for somebody standing trial for murder.

There was no evidence on Earth that was going to convince her that George Zimmerman was guilty. But that's the trial by jury. That's how it works. And there are times when he works really well, there are times when it does not. Those are some of the issues that critical race theory as long revealed, and therefore that necessitates we working on some of these aspects of the current criminal justice system.

So, instead of that, should we have a panel of judges seven judges instead of one and no jury. Professionals, well trained individuals, and presumably, ideally, objective individuals, career adjudications, career interpreters have the law, to look at the letter of the law and weigh the facts and then make a decision rather than the current arrangement?

It's a standard question actually enforce the law in most law schools, the brokenness of the trial by jury system. Critical race theory, as we know is at the forefront of exposing some of these glaring issues within the criminal justice system.

[Sara Dorow]

I think the next question follows well.

The recent public interest in age old abolitionist knowledge has recently reasserted how contemporary examples of police brutality speak not to how policing as an institution is broken but how it is working precisely as it was designed; from RCMP's usage to 'clear the west' to the current context of RCMP apathy in Nova Scotia. Police are, under this approach, endorsed to commit violence and support white supremacist civilian violence to stabilize and suppress public resistance under the terms of racial capitalism and settler colonialism. This is different from the assertion that policing is broken. I wonder where you see this fitting within the current calls to defund the police?

[Temitope Oriola]

You can make the argument that policing is functioning precisely the way it was designed. And you will be correct to assert that. From the excessive use of force by police in Canada against Indigenous people, against Black people in the United States as well as Latinos, New Zealand, the Maori people, Australia, Indigenous people, in Germany, Turkish people in Turkey, Kurdish people - you can see the patterns.

When you look at it, even globally, and in former colonized countries, like Nigeria, for instance, you still find similar instances of excessive use of force. In a society where there are no races, there are no distinct racial patterns, at least not in the Euro-American sense. But it is an was a colonial creation in that colonial hangover and that mentality remains that they are a force and they don't pretend that it is a service, it's still called the Nigerian police force. It's not a service.

Therefore, they have always aligned themselves with the powers that be, regardless of what kind of government (military or civilian), regardless of what political parties are in power, they do the beating. When the consequences of decades of doing that are now being felt on the streets of Nigeria. This is a global problem - that's my fourth point about that. The origins matter.

The other part of it concerns training. In Canada, that is roughly six months and it is the same in the US. Most of which is spent (or at least a significant proportion of which is spent) on marksmanship rather than de-escalation techniques. And they also have a lot of room for defensive driving, and so on and so forth. Things that are technically useful, but skills that you would rarely need while on the job.

You can have a solid 25 to 30-year policing career and never draw your gun out of its holster because most of the issues that you will be called to are things like dealing with abusive spouses, drunken citizens, all those causing a public nuisance, homelessness, and so forth.

In other words, there is a disjuncture between the training that our police officers get and the realities of the job that they perform. I've argued at some other public fora that it's in fact unfair to those officers themselves, that your training does not in fact, prepare them for the at least not anymore to the realities of what they will encounter on the streets.

The racialization is used in some other context, it is a question of social class, rather than race. In Nigeria, for instance, it is a class issue, rather than a racial issue. I like to have this sort of catalytic in very broad global perspective about it. Race or race specifically does not have the same connotation everywhere. It's actually quite variable. It's quite malleable in different geographies. It means places like Ghana, Nigeria and so forth, it's a question of your social class and the evidence of your social class that will determine how you're dealt with by the police, whether politely or impolitely. But we must be careful about the nihilistic and in other words, that all nothing works. Therefore, we give up. Abolition is massive, I'm not an I've never called for abolishing the police.

I think that at least within the Canadian context, we can still reform of police services. I would probably not say the same for certain police organizations in the US, because by the early 20th century they had had a well-established reputation for brutality. But I think that with one or two exceptions in Canada, police services, as currently constituted, can be fundamentally reformed.

It's a question of flushing out those with bad disciplinary records, bringing in the right set of people with the right level of qualification and experience, and of course, redefining the ethos of the profession and the underlying philosophy of what they do.

In other words, we're not trying to settle the western frontier anymore, this is no longer the North West police force. This this is different. This is 2020. These individuals are fellow citizens and must be treated with dignity and respect. With the exception of one or two police departments in this country, I think every other one can be reformed. And I'm happy to say that the Edmonton police is one of those I consider reformable. And most of those that I think are almost beyond redemption and not in our province.

And so, I think we can make those changes. I absolutely like that, while I'm fascinated by that argument, but I think that we should ensure that we don't give into this feeling that nothing works and therefore, that's it.

Yes, the conditions are horrible, but I still think that changes can be made. But those changes cannot be superficial changes. They have to be profound changes around training, around accountability, around personnel, around material. And I think the average person living in Canada, the US may not necessarily recognize (not explicitly) that there are police organizations elsewhere, that do not routinely carry guns. In England and Wales, for instance, most of the police officers do not in fact, routinely carry guns. They have batons, they have other things, but not guns, because they know that it's rare that they need that level of weaponry. So, we need to rethink those things, we need to reimagine policing.

But I'm not at the space where I think it should be abolished. I think that profound changes need to be made. And those changes are identifiable. I have written extensively about them. And I think that if we would follow those parameters, we can in fact, change the texture of policing in Canada.

[Sara Dorow]

We've one more question in the in the Q & A.

In practice, what is the difference between fundamental systemic change and abolishment?

[Temitope Oriola]

I think those who are calling for abolishing the police is simply saying, 'let's just dissolve the police and then think off something else'. I haven't seen a coherent or succinct proposal for what that would look like. And yet to see that, and I would be willing to look and perhaps reassess my own stance on it when I see it so I have not come across it.

What I am calling for very specific and forcible implementable measures, beginning with psychological testing of potential recruits, gender bars with the minimum threshold of 40% and rise into 50% male / female ratio amongst uniformed officers. Up to accountability, I have proposed a two-tier disciplinary regimen, that any police officer who kills a citizen an unarmed citizen has to go, they have to be let go. And again, keep in mind being armed is not necessarily illegal. People have permits in some cases to carry weapons. The question is, were they posing any harm or risk to you? But any police officer who killed an unarmed civilian or civilian who was harmed or pose no threat should leave the force.

The second part of that two-tier approach is what I've termed again, borrowing from the whole three strikes metaphor used back in California regarding punishment of criminals is to say, each police officer across their career has two pardonable offensives. In other words, minor issues in relation to citizens where nobody died. Nobody had any grievous bodily harm, but you abused their rights. Count one. Let us put in your in your file regarding that. Count two, same process. By count three (the third strike) the charged police officer should be let go. Because having such

officers in service makes life difficult for police officers who do their jobs with respect for citizens. So that's, that's another thing we've called for.

The political environment also matters. What's coming from the mouth of the politicians and so forth. As I said in my presentation, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau signified in very clear and unambiguous political position. One of the points that I made in my CCR presentation a few days back was that protest, in fact, should be directed to the elected politicians, rather than to police stations or police officers. Change in police organizations rarely come from within. It rarely happens from within. The impetus has to come from outside. Police organizations in the hundreds of years of policing literature or anything close to a policing literature, which show that the impetus to change rarely comes from police organizations because they are like other organizations self-interested self-perpetuating. Forget the discourse about service. And so far, I'm sure that's important to many in the service.

But it's a wonderful career path, at least in Canada and most parts of the US. Within 36 months of being an RCMP officer, for instance, mostly with grade 12, and so forth, individuals make \$85,000 to \$86,000 a year, that's a lot of money. Not all PhD holders make that kind of money. If we're paying officers that we should be getting value for money. And I have argued in multiple media platforms, multiple public presentations, that we should be recruiting the right kinds of people that I believe is what is missing. We cannot continue to give the police uniform to somebody who is a year or two out of high school.

It was setting them up for failure. Not a lot of people can handle that level of power. They are too malleable, they're too impressionable. They simply join whatever micro culture exists in the department. And sometimes that is not always positive for society. We need to have a university graduate only police service, and then have accountability policies in place to ensure that people do not continue to get away with major disciplinary problems. So those are a few of the reasons why I think these are fundamental changes that are not about abolishing the police, but will go along the way in recalibrating resetting, rearranging the DNA of policing, as we know it today in Canada.

[Sara Dorow]

Okay, thank you, Temitope. I'm not seeing any questions pop up. But there are a number of expressions of thanks rolling through the Q & A so know that people are very much appreciative the talk. Thank you very much.

[Temitope Oriola]

Thank you for having me. Xiaobei, Sherry, and Sara, thank you for the wonderful work. Appreciate it.

[Xiaobei Chen]

Thank you so much, Temitope. As you know, just today we hear in the news that the Ottawa police constable Daniel Montsion was found not guilty of all charges in the case leading to the death of Abdirahman Abdi that was four years ago. This is painful news to the family and the community. It speaks to the importance and urgency of the of this topic. Thank you so much for coming here to share your work with us.

And thank you, Sara, for your great moderating. Thank you, Sherry too, for without your behind the scenes work, this would not have come to fruition. Thank you, and thanks to the audience for making time to attend.