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Tamari Kitossa © 2020

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**Sherry Fox - Canadian Sociological Association Executive Director**

Hello, everyone. Welcome to the Race and Ethnicity research cluster special presentation. Thank you for joining us today.

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**Sherry Fox**

We invite you to interact with our speaker by using your chat function. Note that only panelists can see the chats. If you have a question, please use the Q and A button and your questions will be answered in priority. If you see a question asked by someone else that you would also like to know, please feel free to use the thumbs up icon and that will prioritize it in the sequence of questions. I'd now like to introduce you to the chair of the cluster Jennifer Atkins.

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**Jennifer Adkins - Chair of the Race and Ethnicity Research Cluster and Moderator**

Hello, everyone. I'm Jennifer Adkins. I just want to thank you all for joining us. I'm amazed at how many people showed interest in this event. I am happy to see the reception that we got with this.

I just wanted to first of all introduce myself. I am Jennifer Adkins and I'm a PhD candidate at the University of British Columbia. I'm the chair of CSA Race and Ethnicity Research Cluster, but I am not working alone. I started the cluster in 2016 on my own, and Jessica Stallone from the University of Toronto came along in 2018. She did an incredible job professionalizing the sessions and participant relations in particular. And then in 2019, Carlo Charles from the University of McMaster came along and assisted Jessica as a co-organizer for the conference sessions. They did an incredible job and we are really excited to take part in this session today.

I want to introduce you to thank Sherry Fox. She has done an incredible job for us and we just want to thank her for all of her contributions in facilitating this session.

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**Jennifer Adkins**

Let's introduce Dr. Tamari Kitossa. He is a Professor of Sociology from Brock University. His interests include convergences of race, racism and criminology, anti-blackness, anti-criminology, prison abolition, racial profiling, sociology, knowledge and interracial unions. In 2019, Dr. Kitossa, along with Dr. Erica Lawson and Dr. Philip Howard released *African Canadian Leadership Continuity, Transition and Transformation* at the University of Toronto press. And this is a collection of original essays offer which offers fresh perspectives and critical examination of African Canadian leadership. His forthcoming book, *Nuances of Blackness in the Canadian Academy*, which is also University of Toronto press, was co-edited with Dr. Awad, Ebrahim, Dr. Belinda Smith, and Dr. Handle K. Right. He is a co-editor and contributor to this

collection of ethnographic and theoretic of blackness in Canada, which explores the experiences in the work of African Canadian academics. Finally, Dr. Kitossa is the editor of the forthcoming book *Appealing Because He is Appalling: Black Masculinities, Colonialism and Erotic Racism* from University of Alberta press. A collection of original and pathbreaking essays by a transnational team of scholars. This collection breaks into conversation, the critical insights of James Baldwin and Franz Fanon on erotic racism and the implications of sexual tropes about gay straight and transgender black men across time and around the world. I think now we're going to go right into our presentation.

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**Jennifer Adkins**

You would have received information on Dr. Kitossa's op-ed after the killings of Ahmaud Aubrey, Briana Taylor, George Floyd and we can add Elijah McCain to this as well. There has been obviously a lot of discussion about anti-black racism. Hopefully you had a chance to look at his op-ed as he will refer to it in his lecture. And I'd like you to just consider some of the questions that you might have so that we could bring them up and have a great conversation after

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*Transition to Dr. Kitossa's presentation.*

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**Tamari Kitossa - Brock University and Guest Speaker**

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much, Jennifer for suggesting this topic and for giving me the opportunity to follow up on the op-ed that I wrote in *The Conversation*. I'd also like to thank Jessica Stallone and Carlo Handy Charles for helping to organize the Race and Ethnicity Research Cluster. I wish to thank also past-president of the CSA Tina Fetner, and to acknowledge the current president, Xiaobei Chen. And I also want to acknowledge Howard Ramos, who was president of the CSA I think about three years ago. Howard has been encouraging me to do more service work with the CSA. So this is the beginning of that service work. And finally, I want to thank Sherry Fox for all the amazing work that she's done in such a really short order in helping me to navigate some of this technology.

I wrote this op-ed in *The Conversation* about two weeks ago and one of the things that I'd like to do today with this conversation is not so much go over precisely all the details of what I argued in that op-ed, but to use it as an opportunity to engage with others in a broader conversation about the value of sociological theory. I'm trying to use this as an opportunity to demonstrate the practical value of theory in general, but sociological theory in particular, so I feel I need to make just a brief statement about what qualifies me to comment on this on this issue.

One of the things that I'm quite interested in criminology is not crime itself, which clearly, I don't believe exists if you have to create a law to construct it. But I'm really fascinated with the way that criminologists themselves particularly authoritarian and conservative criminologist, the way that they use criminological theory in ways to rationalize the operations of the criminal legal system. So in that way, I'm in some ways taking up an anthropological perspective in terms of looking at the way that these scholars who I regard as basically state functionaries, the way that

they use theory to rationalize surveillance, policing, and just the way that the state tries to make its citizens legible. So, I've been over the last number of years producing scholarship that is trying to get at exactly what theory is in terms of criminology and how people mobilize it to rationalize the conduct or the existence of the criminal legal system, and policing in particular.

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**Tamari Kitossa**

What I want to deal with today is theory. Now, most of the times when I'm in the classroom, and I'm talking to my students about theory, generally when I mention theory eyes begin to glaze over. There's something about theory that turns people off, enables their minds to wander in ways that it would not otherwise do. This is what I hear from my colleagues that do statistics in my department. There's a tremendous fear of statistics. There's a tremendous fear of trying to interpret numbers and what they mean. And really, I think that it's important for all of us to understand that whether we're talking about theory in general or statistics, there is a theory behind statistics. What we are trying to do is to develop a way of making sense of the phenomena around us. So, 'What is theory?' is very simple. It's simply trying to advance an explanation for phenomena that are around us and to which we contribute. The key thing about theory is that you can't prove a theory, you can't disprove a theory, you can prove or disprove a hypothesis. But theories are either valid in terms of their capacity to explain more and better, or they just lack the capacity to explain things in a coherent way. And so this is the important thing about theory. I want to talk about why we should care and how we can apply it. Why we should care is because theory is important. We all do theory, every single one of us every moment of the day, and it's really important in political terms and that's how I want to be addressing theory.

If we think about a theory in this way, the moment that you hear a child that's three, four or five years old, asking, "But why? How does that happen? Why does that happen?" What basically they're doing is trying to use the conceptual tools through language that they're learning to map onto all of what they've already taken in, in terms of their cognition. They're trying to develop a cognitive sense of how the world works, which is an explanation, which is rational, and which is interactive and dynamic because it only makes sense to them, if it can make sense to us. When we're talking about theory, we're talking about a social process of sharing our cognitive conceptual and perceptions of the world.

One of the important things about theory is that we need to consider is that the ideas that inhabit our minds, in our heads, that these pre-existed us. These were created by generations before us through language, through metaphors and through other cognitive instruments and tools that we use to make sense of the world. So anytime that we're dealing with theory, we're dealing with something which pre-existed us, and then we're trying to figure out what in the theory makes sense for us in terms of explaining the world because at a certain point in time, everything that you have been taught or told, when you go to school, it gets reinforced, but then something happens when you begin to question some of what you've been socialized into be into believing.

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**Tamari Kitossa**

Marx is helping us to think through these issues of theory by talking about the fact that we enter into a world that already exists, and then at a certain point we become participants and

contributors toward changing, modifying or perpetuating that world. Antonio Gramsci, quite specifically in the *Prison Notebooks*, helps us to think about this in an additional way. Because he is talking about that precise point that at some point, we're asking ourselves, "Who are we? How do we come to be? And what is our relationship with other people?" So we're talking about a historical process he says, which has deposited in us an infinity of traces without leaving an inventory. Now, if you see that what I have there in the bold and italicized letters, if you read the *Prison Notebooks* edited by Quintin Hoare, you will find that statement is not there. I actually found that when reading *Orientalism* by Edward Said who pointed out that that translation does not include this following statement from Antonio Gramsci were he is saying it is imperative at the outset that you create such an inventory. So we have to create a map of our world, how it comes to be through signs, symbols and language, because that helps us to navigate that world and to organize behavior here.

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**Tamari Kitossa**

So why is this important? The logic for sociology, a tremendous society in the United States at the time. And if you go back to Durkheim in the late 1800s, early 1900s talking about anomie and the sense of rootlessness. Mills was one of those sociologists working from that Durkheimian tradition. He continued in Dubois's tradition of trying to make sense of how people come to terms with a social reality that they feel they do not control. And so one of the things that Mills was pointing out was that people have a tremendous sense of alienation, anxiety, because so much of what is happening around us is faster than our values are to catch up to and to explain it. And so what do you try to do in the sociological imagination was to develop a conceptual way of understanding how we might understand what's happening around us. He says that what people need and what they feel they need is a quality of mind that will help them to use information and to develop a reason in order to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening with themselves.

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**Tamari Kitossa**

So, we have two pieces to that where he talked about personal troubles and social issues. Every single one of us has social or have has personal troubles. We might feel depressed, we might feel happy, we might feel unhappy. There'll be definitely our family, so on and so forth. So we all have personal troubles, we never exist without them. But what happens when 100,000 people have the same problem, then it's no longer your personal trouble. We all says it's a social issue. And in order to do to make sense of that social issue, then we have to look at things like public policy. We have to look at social relations, to make sense of how so many people come to experience the same phenomenon. So he's asking us to go beyond our immediate personal experience, and to see ourselves in relationship to other people. One of the things that Mills is encouraging us to do is to develop that quality of mind to think independently, critically for ourselves.

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**Tamari Kitossa**

James Baldwin gave a talk in 1963, in New York City to teachers. And one of the things he said in that lecture is that the purpose of education is to help us to figure out for ourselves, how we relate to the world. Do we see it as black or white or gray? Is there a God in heaven or is there not? But one of the more important aspects of what he said in that talk is that that no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. But the child that is continually asking why and how, at a certain point, gets to be a nuisance. But that is not the child's problem. That is really our problem. And when we expand that out to those that are our political and economic masters, when we ask questions of them, they treat us equally impatiently, as children who do not have the right to ask questions. And so Baldwin is insisting that we're dealing with a particular relationship here were really teachers, lawyers, police officers, nurses, physicians, professors, we don't want to be bothered by questions. And we need to understand that that is a fundamental right of all persons is to ask questions, because that's how they're actually demonstrating that they have a right to make sense of the reality in which they're living.

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**Tamari Kitossa**

Speaking of politicians, Stephen Harper in 2013, advised Canadians not to 'commit sociology'. Basically, stop asking questions about our 'security agencies' and its needs to be demonstrated. What do they produce security or insecurity? What again, that's a perspective, right that they produce security. For some, they also produce insecurity. So Harper was asking that fundamental question, assuming that we all accept that the apparatuses produce security, then we need to stop asking questions about how they are endowed with that authority and that power to surveil and to regulate. Now, one of the things that I will hasten to add is that Stephen Harper made that comment in 2013. And for most Canadians who will go back into the file cabinets in their minds in 2011.

Stephen Harper's government pretty much went along with an illegal war, a criminal war, and bombed the hell out of Libya. Peter Mackay told us that "Oh, it'll only cost you Canadians \$150 million of your tax dollars." By the time it was all said and done, it was \$300 million dollars. So because I think people did not stop long enough to ask questions, or have the mechanisms to ask questions, the avenues were not fundamentally there other than street protests. We ended up subsidizing the destruction of Libya.

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**Tamari Kitossa**

What I want to briefly do now is to turn to the socio-historical context of policing. I did some of that in the op-ed but I just want to do something very brief here is to demonstrate that when we're talking about issues of police and policy, that we're dealing with something called the polis. This is the Greek word for the city and policies are those instruments that compel people to into obedience that is consistent with the interests of those who organized and run the policies.

Police are vital to maintaining that particular social order. So what I've created here is this tripartite relationship that is really circular, which demonstrates that colonialism, capitalism and racism are all one of a piece. And we cannot separate these out, even if we look at the

development of capitalism, starting in England, because one of the important things about that is Sir Robert Peel, who founded the uniform police in the British experience, was also a governor of Ireland before that. One of the things that he did was to establish the Royal Irish Constabulary and that was a paramilitary force to maintain colonialism in Ireland, and that was part of a racist project of colonial domination. So the racist colonial domination of the Irish, which was important to extracting wealth and resources from Ireland to feed British capitalism ended up being the basis the British used to establish slavery and colonialism in the Americas. We cannot separate these whether it happened in Ireland, in the UK or in the Caribbean. It's all of a piece. And so this should indicate to us that there is a very deep and abiding connection between police colonialism and racism. And just a final point on this, when sir John A. McDonald in the early 1870s, established the Northwest Mounted Police, he actually drew the first officers to administrate that apparatus from the Royal Irish Constabulary and the primary purpose was to manage the pacification of the first nation Aboriginal Metis peoples on the prairies. That's why to this day, the highest per capita ratio of police to population is wherever we find first nation, Aboriginal Metis and Inuit people. That makes us very aware of that relationship between colonialism, capitalism, racism and in the context of the police.

What I want to quickly do now is to walk through some of the theories that might be used to explain police violence. And again, these PowerPoint slides are going to be made available by Sherry so folks will be able to go over this afterwards as a resource.

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### **Tamari Kitossa**

If we use the theory of personal attributes, it would say that well, it's because there are good people, and there are bad people. It says that if there are police beating up people, killing them, tasing them, that's because those are the bad apples. Those are the bad people. Those are the people that have the authoritarian personality. When we look at the research evidence, however, from either Stanley Milgram or Philip Zimbardo, what we find is that good people can end up doing very bad things. So the idea that we can explain police violence, through the concept of bad people and bad apples, does not do justice to the way in which an “institutional setting” might actually enable people to do things that end up being very bad.

So here we need to consider Lord Acton's phrase or statement that “Power tends to corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely.” This also fits in line with Rollo May's thesis that the feelings of powerlessness tend also to corrupt; an absolute experience of absolute powerlessness corrupts absolutely. What this means is that the very police officer that enforces the law, to some extent, is also themselves in a position of powerlessness because they have to obey the rules to enforce the law in particular types of ways. There is actually record in the United States of police officers being fired, because they did not draw their weapons to kill. They use their words to negotiate and to talk down people out of conflictual situations. So there's something then about policy that demands (in some jurisdictions) our police officers to actually draw their weapons and shoot to kill, or else they can be disciplined.

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**Tamari Kitossa**

So if we assume that it's bad people that are the problem in policing, then we might assume that if we hire more officers of color that they will be less authoritarian.

James Baldwin in *The Devil Finds Work* has this interesting paragraph where he says, “Blacks know something about black cops too. Even those so-called Mr. in Philadelphia. They know that their presence on the force doesn't change the force, or the judges or the lawyers or the bondsman or the jails.” And he goes on to add, “They know how much black cops have to prove, and how limited are their means of proving it.” Where I grew up, black cops were yet more terrifying than white cops. The research indicates that having a black cop or black cops, Asian cops, brown cops on the police force, having women police officers does not in fact, reduce the level or the extent to which police officers are willing and are sometimes literally mandated to use force - sometimes deadly force.

It might also be assumed that if we hire more police of color that citizens of color will be better able to relate to them. It could be assumed that that by virtue of being persons on the margins, women, people of color, that they'd be more likely or less likely to get sucked into the ‘Brotherhood’.

And finally, there's the assumption that if we hire more police of color, it implicitly assumes that most white cops are racist. And I'm not certain that anyone can empirically demonstrate that any one person in policing is any more racist than any other.

So once again, the key point that I want to get out here is that this is not good or bad people. And if we take the bad apple thesis, then some people might be willing to assume that if you use anti bias training, that this would reduce the level of police violence and the use of force. So this assumes that humans are ethically and morally adaptable, and that humans are reasonable when shown evidence that might contradict their prior assumptions.

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**Tamari Kitossa**

If we turn now to the theory of impersonal structures, this is where we talk about institutions and systems. Institutional discrimination supposes that it is a policy within particular institutions, within particular police forces, that they will use ascribed features such as race, religion or sex to enforce the law.

They may also use achieved statuses such as your class, your dress, or your residence or type of car. So if it is not your race, if you are, let's say an African Canadian person who is middle class driving a late model car, you're probably more likely to be stopped by virtue of that as noted by the Human Rights Commission then let's say a poor working class African Canadian person. So class is not a barrier to racial discrimination because the policy is that you go after these people because they are, ‘out of place’. Or it might be indicative that they are doing something illicit or illegal.

Systemic discrimination. This is where it's basically the standard operating procedure of the way that an institution works. So, for example, law enforcement personnel might be more likely to be allocated to certain communities to certain areas. As I pointed out, we have a higher per capita ratio of police to First Nation independent, indigenous and Metis people in Canada. And so this is like the modus operandi. This is the reason why this thing exists is to actually keep particular populations in check.

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**Tamari Kitossa**

What might the changes look like with institutional discrimination? We might look to lawsuits. This is where we might be able to ensure the citizens have the right to sue any institution for violating their rights. We might also consider the changing of policies and applying human rights framework to that institution. Now, I quickly want to add that if ever anyone is suing the police, you're technically speaking suing the citizens, because you're suing the citizens of Canada of Ontario of your municipality, because the police are paid by the municipality to your tax dollars, and they have indemnity for the violation insurance for indemnifying them against violations of rights systemic discrimination.

This is where it is assumed that if we do more awareness training, for example, if we increase professionalization (having more police officers with college certificates and university degrees) that this will then ensure that they have the capacity to navigate conflict through negotiation. The empirical evidence does not bear this out.

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**Tamari Kitossa**

And finally, there's a theory of relations. So this is the idea that the social world consists of relations between humans that are bounded by authority and power. Now, this can occur in asymmetrical ways. So that's between those who have power to exercise power versus those who are subject to that power. That relationship is asymmetrical, or you can have a symmetrical relationship between relative power holders. Between you, me and another citizen, we have symmetrical relationship with each other. No one is more empowered and powered than the other in principle, but when we bring factors in such as race, what tends to happen is the state is imagined as a property of whiteness. And then for white people imagine that the state is there more likely to support their interests. Nevertheless, we have both of these functioning within the context of any social order.

The interesting thing about this is that when we're talking about a theory of relationships, then we're not talking so much about bad persons versus good persons. We're not talking about the abstraction of systems. We're talking about people's belief and commitment to a particular type of social order. Because if they do not obey the rules, they can be disciplined and they can be disciplined. They can be punished. Let's, for example, the guard at the Grand Valley Institute for women, where Ashley Smith committed suicide. He was told by the warden, "Under no circumstances are you to enter into her cell to stop her from doing anything that she's doing." That guard, if he entered the room, likely would have been fired. So someone can issue a



command dictating obedience. This means we can all take a step back to look at relationships and ask ourselves, what are the primary, secondary and tertiary objectives for which police exist?

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**Tamari Kitossa**

I want to move very briefly to the issue of defunding the police, which is an issue that we're hearing quite a lot about. This is an old idea. It's not new. But it's predicated upon the idea that we need to assess our investment in policing and that assessment means to re-assess. Is it actually proving its self-worth in terms of public safety? Or is it creating insecurity? Is it creating the more likelihood of the amplification of violence? So once we do that reassessment, we can then reprioritize where we're going to allocate our public funds into supporting and sustaining communities. I'll be pointing it out in a number of ways that we might be able to do that.

One of them is toward de-escalation and use of force priorities. So to reduce, allocate the allocation of funding into policing, reduce the number of police officers, and for those that remain, make sure they're well trained in de-escalation techniques, and use of force priorities. It has been demonstrated, for example, in places like Memphis that went police officers use de-escalation as a primary means of intervention, it is safer for police officers and safer for the public. Second, increased citizen regulation of police grounded into community needs in an ongoing way that assesses and reviews that relationship between police and communities. Ongoing training and alternative dispute resolution and conflict resolution mechanisms, principally for citizens. We have lost the capacity to navigate and negotiate conflict in the public domain. Because we constantly call police to solve our problems for us, we need to have mechanisms where if we cannot solve our problems among ourselves first, then and only then do we call the appropriate authorities such as the mental health, mental well-being authorities and so on and so forth, to help facilitate the resolution of conflict. This needs to be done through formal and informal mechanisms. Now, what this assumes is that we need to look at the ways or the assumption that policing defends social order. Policing does defend social order so if we alter and change the social order, then the nature of policing will be inherently then of a different character and the nature. And second, if we increase citizen participation in public policy and enforcement, this is vital to democratic life.

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**Tamari Kitossa**

At the end here, I've got a number of resources to which I think folks might be able to turn to, to enable them to further their capacity to think through develop the cognitive means and intellectual resources to further their conversations around the issue of violence in policing. Thank you.

[Discussion between moderator and guest speaker]

**Jennifer Adkins**

Thank you so much, Tamari. That was very riveting! I think that you've provided us a way to look at and examine policing very differently. I'm going to ask anyone who has questions to use your Q & A function. But Tamari, if you don't mind me asking you right off the bat, we hear a

lot about defunding, and you touched on it just lightly. But the way I've been hearing it is that we should, rather than putting the money in the police force, remove it, and put it into social work and different other organizations. What are your thoughts on that? You didn't mention really removing the money and placing it elsewhere, it sounded more like a different way of approaching policing. So could you provide us with a little bit more information on that?

### **Tamari Kitossa**

I totally support the idea of establishing and expanding the domain of social work, for example. But keep in mind the social work is merely another form of policing and surveillance. Social work itself needs to be modified and not simply modified, radically changed, just like how we need to do the same with policing in terms of altering the way that police interact and engage with the community. There are certain schools of Social Work that are advancing a radical perspective on social work because the origins of social work, have everything to do with the regulation of the poor and huddled masses, because it follows the policy of regulating poor and working-class people. There's an inherent way in which a social work is also about policing. So, to my mind, if we reassess and reallocate, then we're taking the substantial chunk of money from policing and investing in community programs. skills, training and development, employment, childcare. All these fundamental resources that communities need to sustain themselves. Communities (poor and working-class communities) that bear the brunt of policing are not asked, 'What is it that you want? What is it that you need?' So when you look at unemployment in many poor and working-class communities in Toronto, most notably those that are immigrant and those that are poor and largely African Canadian, youth unemployment runs twice as high. How can we be investing in policing when we need to be investing in employment and opportunities for youth? For me, it's not simply about enhancing social work. It's about changing social work, but it's also about figuring out what are the priorities, what is it that these communities need, and that communities are involved in designing and the development and the assessment of those resources and its disbursement in the community.

### **Jennifer Adkins**

It sounds as if, though, for social work, and I'll back that up to educating social workers, healthcare, criminal justice, there's a need for some sort of systemic change to take place. In one of your theories, you mentioned that but alluded to not being the most effective approach. So, in applying your last theory with maybe you don't at all believe that systemic changes need to be made, how do you make them meet? How do the two of them join up enough so that the organizations are changing in tandem with relations changing?

### **Tamari Kitossa**

That's an excellent question. It's a detailed and would require very long-winded response from me, but I think it's one of those responses that really needs the participation of others because we're talking about figuring out how we can work collectively to resolving social problems. And so for me, the idea of social relations is that we're looking at establishing relationships with each other, where we can begin as much as possible to horizontalize the power relationships to make them as much symmetrical as possible. And that means having more people at the table than Tamari Kitossa providing a response to you to that important question. But for me that it says that we need to have precisely those processes and mechanisms to have communities at the table to have a conversation with policymakers about resourcing and the empowering communities to

sit at the table in judgment and to assess and to determine whether these programs and these institutions are working as they're supposed to, for the community.

### **Jennifer Adkins**

I could push back and say how do we have power, even as citizens, community sitting at the table? There still has to be a breakthrough in the structure. You gave the great example of Prime Minister Harper, basically saying, you know, don't ask any more questions, leave it to me stay in your lane. How do we have enough attention that we could impact the power dynamics?

### **Tamari Kitossa**

Another interesting question. I would answer it in two ways. One, the power is in the hands of the people. We're seeing that in the United States, in Canada and around the world, where citizens are beginning to realize that the state, the government, is only one center of power and it's a partial center of power. Now folks are figuring out that they can have conversations with each other in terms of putting pressure to bear on the state, and various institutions and apparatuses within the state to ensure that there are processes for democratizing those institutions.

The second part to that is that the power holders, they need to learn. There's one fundamental principle that Sun Tzu pointed out in *The Art of War*, that when you use force, you automatically lose your credibility. You don't lose your legitimacy, because power-holders reference other power-holders. That is the asymmetrical relationship where people in power, they actually speak to each other and they don't give a damn about anybody below them. So what happens is that unless someone in a position of power realizes that they're not the only center of power, that what they end up doing is losing the capacity to govern, because you're not governing with the consent of the people in the first place. And so now what we're seeing is that the people are saying, 'You must govern with our consent.'

The third piece of my response to that is the role and responsibility of intellectuals. All of us as intellectuals have a part to play. And not simply the intellectuals in the academy, the intellectuals in Ferguson, the intellectuals in Jane and Finch, the people that are the hip hop artists, the street artists, those are intellectuals too. And so those are the folks that are able to articulate the voices and the concerns of their communities who themselves are expressing themselves through protests. We need to alter the ways that we look at the different sites of power and figure out how we can then create frameworks, whereby we can strengthen the capacity of people to have relationships that are asymmetrical, because that's the best way to meet the most needs of the most people.

### **Jennifer Adkins**

I don't want to press you on this. I'm going to assume that other people may be asking the same question maybe that isn't right for me to assume. But if we're to look at it in a step by step process, so from the street protesting to what? If we are going to flatten the hierarchy? Again, it feels very grassroots, which I 100% agree. How does that meet? We are actually in control. We've been lulled to sleep to not believe we are. How do we get that point across that there was a changed relationship with the population with citizens and with the governing bodies?

**Tamari Kitossa**

I think this is exactly what's happening when people are talking about defunding the police. Looking at, 'How does it come to be that our tax dollars that are extorted from us are being used against us?' We have a situation where police are really, really upset and are now basically saying, we're not going to enforce the law. And nothing else confirms the fact that they are running an extortion racket than that: 'If we don't get to taser you, if we don't get to kill you, if we don't get to beat you, you can't have us.' And the people in the streets are saying, 'Go, we don't want you.' So the question becomes, then when we assess the merits of policing as an enterprise that creates public safety, we have to take a step back to assess public policy. Was the Public Policy created in the first instance on the basis of evidence? What research did Robert Peel do to create the London Metropolitan Police? What was his evidence? His evidence was the Royal Irish Constabulary, a colonial expeditionary paramilitary force that was created to control the Irish. That's the evidence.

So we know after 250 years after our asking ourselves questions about the value or the merits of policing. That means that we need to go back to the origins of policing, because it's *modus vivendi*, the reason for which it was created, remains the same is that we just papered over the idea that they solve crime, prevent crime, negotiate conflict. None of that is empirically verified; the very empirical basis for having the police actually invalid.

**Jennifer Adkins**

That's brilliant.

Jessica Stallone is saying that she wants to thank you very much for the talk. She says "I was curious if we can turn inwards and looking at our own discipline, and particularly the sociology of criminology. Would you be able to talk a bit about your critical stance on criminology and how the sociology of crime can reinforce state police power?"

**Tamari Kitossa**

Thank you for that question, Jessica.

Going back historically, when we look at criminology, it emerged roughly the same time as municipal policing in Europe. The earliest criminologists were in the early 1840s in France, and then it migrated over to the UK. And the whole point of the early criminologist was to figure out how do we gather data and material that will more effectively enable the state to govern the poor and the working classes, the dangerous classes? The earliest criminologists in France for example, they began to 'map crime'. Right. You map crime based on police arrest, police allocation, and where calls might come in, for to the police for systems, so criminologist for from the very start are trying to figure out how to gather the essential analytical information that will enable the state and the police to more effectively manage poor and working class populations. That's the origins of criminology. It was only really in the 1960s, that people began to ask critical questions of policing. If you think about that the Chicago school, they were asking questions in the early 1900s, about the poor, about the immigrants and so on and so forth. That was not all that critical, right? That was about figuring out how do we map these communities once again, to manage their integration into us culture and society.

Critical criminology emerged in the 1960s, where people began to look at the work of Karl Marx, to ask questions about in whose interest is policing done whose interests do people theorize about this thing called crime? Because they were asking the fundamental question. If soldiers drop napalm, destroy Vietnam, kill 4.5 million people, that is not considered murder. That is not considered genocide. And that's the question that they asked, why is that not considered genocide, but merely the state, protecting the interests of capital? When we can begin to ask questions of criminologists in terms of where does your theory come from? What are the implicit assumptions of your theory in terms of enabling the state to rationalize its conduct. Only then can we begin to establish that criminologists themselves are effectively state operatives and we have to ask that question of them.

### **Jennifer Akins**

(An audience member) asks, "While the tension between conservatives and liberals are divided on defunding, how can we be successful in defunding movements? Research is evident that return on social development works. How do you see this paradigm shift, which has been around crime prevention?"

### **Tamari Kitossa**

That is an interesting question. And I, I'm not dodging it, but a part of me hesitates to answer. Because one of the things I'm really conscious of is that as an academic, as an intellectual, I am connected to community but I'm on the periphery. I think that question needs to be put at around table to community intellectuals, community advocates, community activists, because to me, they are the ones that that have their finger on the pulse. I think academics should be at the table. Because we might bring a way of articulating theory that might help people to be much more clear about what their motivations are. I think this is the value of a thesis question for academics. We bring the conceptual tools, or at least critical academics, bring the conceptual tools that should be partnering with community, activists and advocates, because we all have different tasks and responsibilities. As much as some community activists read books, understand and read history, they're actually working with their communities and they don't have the time necessary, and possibly the inclination, to do deep dives into history and into doing empirical research that we, as academics are able to do. So for me the response to this question is about bringing multiple stakeholders together at the level of community, because that's where the needs are greatest and that's where people most understand what their needs are. And I think, for me, as an academic to be able to answer the question, it would be arrogant of me to answer it in a way that would be top down and I think his question is pointing to the ways in which intellectuals and academics and policymakers need to be sitting at the same table.

### **Jennifer Adkins**

It sounds like you're saying it's community, at least the beginning of the process, should be community led, and that intellectuals scholars, even government, should be assisting in that rather than taking lead in that, is that correct to say?

### **Tamari Kitossa**

Absolutely. Because I think that is one of the things we who enter in academia tend to do. There's a book by James Scott called the *Weapons of the Weak*. And what he argues in that book is that generally social movements over time, historically, they have been the prerogative of

intellectuals, and very often not from those groups or those classes of people. But he says that when you look at the weapons of the weak, how the everyday people resist at the everyday level, right in their communities. They might not (give it to them) if the police officer stops them to ask for ID. They might politely decline and say that I'm not giving you ID, I have not done anything wrong. That is resistance. There is more resistance coming in at the level of communities than there is from intellectuals trying to organize social movements, which is really about negotiating with the state to get concessions. Working class communities, poor people, indigenous people around the world, they're saying, we have the power to stop the trains running on time. And that is our greatest power. Once people realize that that is their greatest power, then they can begin to establish ways of organizing themselves and inviting government and academics on their terms, not on the terms of government and academics.

### **Jennifer Adkins**

Do you see this being a shift in the way we run academia, the way we exist in academia? It sounds like you're talking very much about public sociology or public scholar type work. Do you see that being the direction we go in? Or do you think they'll always be a divide in scholarly work versus public work?

### **Tamari Kitossa**

I think there will always be a tension. For me, the divide cuts too sharply. I think there will be a tension. And in my own engagement with community, what I've been trying to educate community members about is that my job description is 40-40-20.

40% in the classroom and instruction, 40% research, and 20% service. I have to negotiate what that relationship looks like. It will never be equal. Sometimes that 20% actually looks and feels like 40%. So my research, that part I have to cut that back sometimes. I can't cut back on the being in the classroom through that instructional part. So the real tension is between the writing dimension and the engagement with community. It's important to understand that not every academic is configured that way, and nor should they be. There are some people where their service component is really small, because they emphasize the research and the scholarly production, and we actually need them to do it. So I would be quiet about passing judgment on how people do scholarly work, because we're all free to do it the way that suits us. And for me, as a sociologist who is more general than anything else, I really depend on people who specialize. So I think we need to take people for what they can offer.

### **Jennifer Adkins**

(Another audience member) asks, "How do we deal with the hypocrisy of functioning correcting and justices within the confines of capitalism, as a system itself is a legacy of imperialism. Is there even a way to correct a system that continually entrenches inequality? What other avenues are available outside of anarchy, as that seems to be the most viable route?"

### **Tamari Kitossa**

Again, that's a huge question. One of the things that I would do as an academic is to direct this audience member to Immanuel Wallerstein's book, *Unthinking Social Sciences*. Really what he's doing in that book, is that he's saying that the way that social movements have been organized over the last 200 years have really been about capturing state power. If not capturing state power,

wringing concessions from state power. And Wallerstein says that, there are multiple sorts and sites of power. The corporations are another. The profits that some corporations make, the revenues, is greater than that of some countries. How is that not a source or site of power? He points out that the third element, or third dimension of power is communities. So it's really about how communities can figure out how to persuade enough of their number to develop a critical mass. We don't need everyone. We just need a critical mass of people to facilitate engaging conversations with other people, asking them questions about thinking differently.

For example, if you're at work, the policy is that you do x without asking questions. You might want to say to your supervisor, "Hey, wait a minute, this is our policy, but it seems to me that it's actually hurting our clients." At that level of the immediate, we don't all have to jump out of what we do, to go out on the streets to 'create anarchy', because what in fact is happening is not anarchy, it is merely the assertion of power by the dispossessed to say to those who are arrogating power, wealth and resources, you are actually harming our collective interest. My position is that what we have now is anarchy. It's simply in the interest of the ruling elite and once we begin to see that what we do in fact have is anarchy. Then the counter to it can never be anarchy. It could be a readjustment, a reallocation, and a transformation.

### **Jennifer Adkins**

(An audience member) asked "Mainstream anti-racism movements in North America and Europe (example Black Lives Matter) commonly tend to frame the issue at hand - police brutality within a dichotomous black/white paradigm. Given the acts of terrorism committed by the far right have increased by 320% over the past five years, to what extent does this line of thinking strengthen as well as provide legitimacy to right wing extremist actions?"

### **Tamari Kitossa**

Excellent question. I have two responses, one of which I'm not certain will be satisfactory. One, we need to make a distinction between the Black Lives Matter movement and the movement for black lives. They're related. Well, the two are not the same. The movement for Black lives was launched the day that Africans were brought here in chains. So we're talking 500 years. So there's nothing new about that. Black Lives Matter movement is a brand that articulates a particular politics from the vantage point of particular people, most notably those in the non-profit industrial complex. And let's understand that the two are not the same.

My next point to that is the first part of the question implies that black people, in order to pursue their interest, have to abdicate their interest for a rainbow solidarity. There's something peculiar about blackness, that everybody needs to understand. No matter who you are, whether you're a First Nations, South Asian, whatever the case may be, blackness is the metric for social progress. Let's get that straight. So don't ask black people to abandon their political reality to support a rainbow coalition that requires their necrosis. Why should black people have to suffer and die for other people to benefit? If anybody has Netflix, Hasan Minhaj, put it really nicely in his commentary on the murder of George Floyd. So that response will not be satisfactory to those who are insisting that this goes beyond black and white. For black people, it does not. Whiteness is dangerous and whiteness is an equal opportunity employer.

Now, the second part of the question follows from that. When you look at the murder of Freddie Grey, the majority of the people involved in that were African American. And some of them were women. And again, this gets back to the issue of what is the purpose of policing. And it gets back to my point with James Baldwin, policing exists for the purpose of repressing and oppressing particular types of people. Poor people first. It just so happens that a substantial number of poor people that the police are focused on, particularly in the United States, happened to be African American. If you look at Montreal, Toronto, Halifax, it happens to be African Canadian. So we need to be able to think in a much more complex way, about the way in which anti-blackness and people's perception about who is poor, who needs to be repressed is entirely consistent with the argument made by people who are coming from the vantage point of the movement for black lives. We, of course can make too sharp a break, which then interrupts our capacity to have that complex conversation about the way in which a whole number of other people are the objects of police oppression and repression. But the moment that we begin to say that black people need to stop talking black and white, because it's more than that. That to me is a red flag, because it's telling me that South Asians, Chinese, Arabs and others are telling me as a black person, that I need to subordinate my interest to support some sort of racial coalition that historically benefits them. When you look at Cesil Foster's book, *They Call Me George*, African Canadian people have been advocating for the rights of others for a very long time. Canada's immigration policies, our human rights policies have to do with the activism of black people. Civil Rights Amendment to the United States has to do with black people. What this means is that those other people that are presuming that black people are getting too much shine, they need to take a step back and look at their own investment in anti-blackness.

### **Jennifer Adkins**

(Another audience member asks) Is socialism a viable solution?

### **Tamari Kitossa**

Let me respond in this way. We have socialism right now. It's for the rich. When you look at Canada's marginal tax rate, just after 1945, something like anything over \$200,000, you were taxed at 80%. Since about 1965 all of that got kaput. So we're looking at a progressive regime of regressive taxation. What is that but socialism for the rich? What does someone need when they make \$250,000 a year? How much more of that do you really need? If we go back to the 1500's, Lewis Mumford in a book called *The Condition of Man*, he writes about the Fugger family, (they were one of the richest families in Germany, if not all of Europe), and the nephews and the children of that family, being good Catholics and knowing the seven deadly sins. They said like, what more money? Of what more do we need of money? So, we do have socialism. And just a final point on this in the 1980s, there was a guy named Michael Milken, a junk bonds king in the United States. He got busted selling these penny stocks. He got busted because he didn't declare \$15,000 on his taxes. He was asked, 'Why didn't you declare the \$15,000?' He said no amount of money is enough. What that tells me is that we presently have a regime of socialism for the rich, and that we need to begin to think about that fundamental fact. And that we will lose nothing except our chains and we will gain the whole world by advocating for socialism for everyone.



**Jennifer Adkins**

Question. We've seen problems in media coverage of police brutality, such as cutting off key contextual video segments of the NYPD driving through crowds. How can we commit sociology in the media sphere?

**Tamari Kitossa**

Very interesting question because it brings us back to the issue of social relations. Which journalist in the newsroom is going to say to their editor, I want to show 15 seconds more footage. When the white supremacists in Charlottesville mowed down the protesters, there were tapes showing that. Why is it not okay in those very same newsrooms to show the cops mowing down protesters? So in the media, we need to make a distinction again between the corporate media and that establishment and the fact that you might have journalists in the newsroom who are chomping at the bit to give context, to give a wider frame of analysis. But their jobs are on the line, they can be fired. So, to some extent, let's have sympathy for the devil. And let's understand that people are doing the best they can where they can, and that it's up to each individual to understand ethically, morally, how far they can push that margin. Because unless we have a free and open media, or journalists are paid independently of whatever their bosses say, journalists will forever be constraining and restricting themselves to satisfy their editors. And this is part of that general dynamic that I'm talking about, where people take it upon themselves, to re-articulate what their relationships with each other will look like. So some people in the newsroom will need to press their editor a little bit more. And the editors need to press the publishers a little bit more, because the publishers are irresponsible in the final analysis, if they are creating a framework of plausible deniability. But they don't have to say, don't show the extra 15 seconds of footage, but everybody knows that you're not supposed to, because you can lose advertisers. So everyone's got decisions to make, and have to be committed to making those decisions, including the advertisers.

**Jennifer Adkins**

Do you think the more this happens, the more change we'll see we're seeing, especially in the US, even in Canada, people being fired if they are caught on tape making a racist rant? Do you feel that this is probably the direction we're heading into or if this is just isolated for this moment?

**Tamari Kitossa**

I think it's isolated for this moment. Why would you fire a racist employee? Let's say this, the CBC journalist got suspended, you will suspend this person for using a racial epithet. But you the CBC might also be constraining and restricting journalists from giving a wider context that will enable the public to do critical sociology to commit sociology. I think this to me is the fundamental problem with capitalism, that capitalists get to be moral agents when it suits them and immoral agents or apolitical or amoral agents. Under 99.9% of other contexts and circumstances, and we need to see that the firing of employees for racism is one method of protecting the 99.99% of the times that they're about business as usual.

**Jennifer Adkins**

What about the psycho sociological structure of racism? I don't know if you're able to answer that. (Audience member asked to give additional context for the question).

Next question. What has the response been like for your op ed? To your op ed?  
(Tamari has no comment)

Next question from the audience who thanks you for a great talk. Thanks to everyone for attending. Building on your ideas of transport, transformative change, some black people have argued that we need to include the scholarly work of black scholars and anti-black racism in mainstream sociological curriculum. Do you think this is a concrete action for change?

**Tamari Kitossa**

I think it's a concrete action that will contribute to change. So thank you for the question. And I will confess that I am by and large guilty in terms of the reading list that I provided, because the only person of African descent there is Sylvia Wynter. Nevertheless, I think it's important that the perspectives of African American, African Canadian, African scholars, that these works be more widely read and cited. Particularly if they're doing that critical sociological work, of contributing to that conversation that will enable us to have different sorts of conversations about the ideas that are floating in our minds that help to organize our lives and our commitments. So I do agree that we should be promoting more widely the work of critical scholars of African descent. And let me hasten to add, by virtue of being black, that doesn't qualify someone as being critical. There are a number of black super uber-conservative intellectuals. Mostly in the United States, less than Canada. There are uber-conservative, South Asian academics (Dinesh D'souza) so you know, I think that when we have that conversation, we come back to (the audience member's) point about these really sharp distinctions between black and non-black, I think we can make that distinction much more sharp than it needs to be. Because it does conceal the nuance and the variety among black scholars, and that we need to be also reading the work of conservative black scholars, we need to read the work of conservative people. If we're really to understand, the distinction that we're making between our values and our intellectual perspectives, versus those who are who are conservative, then we need to make sure that we're reading their work understanding it well, because that helps us to understand our positions all that better.

**Jennifer Adkins**

(Audience member) asks, how can we rely on people you mentioned as intellectuals to inform the community if these intellectuals are not informed enough themselves?

**Tamari Kitossa**

To me that implies making a judgement about what people are doing. And one of the things that James Baldwin insists on, is that anyone who imagines themselves as innocent by virtue of doing a particular type of work, and they judge others by that standard, then they're actually holding others to a standard that is predicated upon their ego. Not everybody's position in the same way, same place at the same time. We have to take what people give us when they can give it to us. Someone might be on their last legs, in terms of their fatigue, because they're doing so much else, with their families, and so on and so forth. We have to take what people commit to the struggle as their commitment. Because the more that we say to someone, that's not enough, then the less that people give.

**Jennifer Adkins**

(Audience question) Can you provide more examples of systemic racism in Canada and what can we do about that?

**Tamari Kitossa**

Thank you for the question, but I cannot provide you with examples of systemic racism because I don't believe systems exist. You only have relationships bonded by authority and power. It can be symmetrical, meaning that the relationship in terms of that authority and power is equal or can be asymmetrical. The reason why I say this is that sociology really struggles with that mechanical 19th century Newtonian language of construct systems. All these metaphors that are mechanical in nature, they do not do justice to the complexity of the social relationships that we're dealing with. So when I say that we're talking about social relationships, it means that there's someone at work. A police officer, for example, who's peer might be roughing someone up. Now, I've interviewed these police officers. What they have done is they've either filed complaints or they have restrained their colleagues on the spot, but they do pay a price. They're no longer part of the Brotherhood. We have to be willing to pay the price of defending the public good, of defending humanity. And that means that whether you work in hospitals as well. So when the indigenous Canadian man came into the hospital in Winnipeg, and he died sitting in his wheelchair, this man who had diabetes, and everybody walked past him. Someone should have said, Sir, are you okay? That is an example of why I have no interest in systemic racism because it absolves people of their moral and ethical responsibility. Someone can say, it's the system. It's the institution, it's not me. It was not a system or an institution that had his knee on George Floyd's neck, somebody did that. There's always somebody doing something. So this abstract idea, these abstract nouns of systems and so on and so forth. I think it's useful if you're going to be launching a suit or something like that. But in terms of ethical and moral responsibility. That's way too many people off the hook.

**Jennifer Adkins**

There's an assumption that how do we explain influences of the system that we talked about (that you don't want to give that much credit) but what we're learning daily that is not showing interpersonal kindness or however you might look at it even moral thinking, how do we explain that influence? What is that?

**Tamari Kitossa**

Well important that comes down to ideology, but it also comes down to abdicating the capacity to think for yourself. This is what James Baldwin is talking about, do you recognize that you are a morally ethically conscious being? So if the policy in your department as a police officer somewhere in the United States, is that you must draw your weapon and you must shoot. Maybe you shouldn't be a police officer. Maybe that's not a place for you to be. Pay your mortgage in some other way, and that goes for all of us, right? People need to make these decisions ethically and morally, as best they can within the framework of that possibility. So someone might not want to give up their job because they have a mortgage, car payments, and kids to send to school. You might be that police officer, you might be that prison guard. Why would I want to take all of that away from you? Because I'm talking about defunding the police, abolishing prisons, if we reallocate the resources, then people can find different ways of using their competencies without defending the status quo.

**Jennifer Adkins**

The next question regards the correlation between discriminatory policing and low-income communities. You said police institutions oppresses the poor first, who often happens to be black in the US. Do you believe there is an implicit bias towards the poor? If yes, why do you think it seems to affect black people more than other minority groups?

**Tamari Kitossa**

There was a there is a moral and ethical imperative in the criminal law that presupposes that poor and working class people are the first target of the law. Because they are the dangerous classes. They are the surplus. They are the redundant. They're the useless. They're the ones that if they develop the consciousness, they might be able to stop the trains running on time. So historically, law has always been in its coercive and repressive nature has always been directed at the most marginal and the most oppressed. The second aspect of that question is that if you ask yourself, what do police produce? Everybody who works produces something. The factory worker in a factory produces widgets we produce essays, books and students that are graduated. What does the police officer produce? You cannot be safety because the measure for safety for police officer is arrest, stops, detentions, frisks, that's how their managers know that they're doing their jobs. That's how police managers and chiefs say to the mayor and the premier, our police officers are doing their job because these are the statistics. Who is the easiest target? If you go after the upper middle class, they got lawyers. And you're more likely to stop and harass the mayor's neighbor, the Premier's neighbor, so the law is not meant to be enforced on them because they're not easy targets. The third and final aspect of this unless we understand that policing in North America comes out of slavery and colonialism, we will never understand policing. Policing is focused on ensuring the commodification of poor and marginal people. African people who are once chattel commodities are commodities for the criminal legal system. What this means is that you've got entire communities across the southern United States that depend on incarceration. Nipissing, Ontario, Kingston, Ontario. They depend on incarceration, the prisons, the jails, they depend on the police officers to provide them their clientele. So this is an incestuous network of repression, that is meant to repress particular populations to defend the interests of capital. Unless we understand the racial connection to that when we go back to that three-part circle that I showed, although we think we know will confuse us.

**Jennifer Adkins**

Powerful. I want to take the time to thank you. I'm not sure how you kept your head through all of that, so many questions, and I felt like I was drilling them at you all at once. So thank you.

**Tamari Kitossa**

Thank you so much.

**Jennifer Adkins**

Thank you so much for doing this for us and for providing the slides I'm sure we'll make good use. But what I want to say before Sherry jumps in is, maybe we can continue this another time. We have a lot of questions we didn't get to. Sherry talked about maybe collecting them so that we could add them to the summary transcript. So if that's a possibility, hopefully we could we could work on that. And thank you. And thank you, Sherry. And thank you, Jessica, and Carlo, are being involved with this.