Shaking The Table Supporting Inclusive Leadership

ZOE FLOWERS: Welcome, welcome, welcome. Zoe flowers here, and I am here to talk with you about creating and supporting inclusive and intersectional programming for victims of crime. And so I am the founder of Soul Requirements, and I am also the lead consultant with the Woman of Color Network. I have been speaking for over 18 years now, specifically on the issues of domestic and sexual violence, particularly in communities of color. And so the goal of this conversation is to really help you create spaces of mutual respect, and to take risks, and support other people in taking risks when you're having these kinds of conversations.

So the first thing I want to do is I want to start off with some foundational concepts to get us all on the same page with intersectional programming. So we have, and I love this particular image because it so clearly states the difference between equality, equity, and liberation. So on the far left, you have the box that says equality, and you have the one gentleman that is standing on the box although he really doesn't need it to see the game. And then you have the person in the middle. He has the box and he can see a little bit of the game. And then you have the smaller person and he can see just a sliver of the game.

So for all intents and purposes, everybody has access to the game. But obviously, they don't have the same view.

Even when you get to equity-- so the person on the left he shared this box, and so the person on the far right, the young child, now he has better access to the game. But they are still not experiencing the game in the same way. And so then we come to liberation and there is no fence and nobody needs anything extra to be able to see the game because the fences, the barriers, the blocks have been removed. So I really love this slide because it just sets the stage for what we're going to talk about.

So I want to go over a few definitions. And so we have diversity and that is based on race, ethnicity, sexual, identity, and gender, et cetera. And it includes, and it accounts for differences within each of those groups. And then we have privilege. And privilege includes the unquestioned, unearned, most often unconscious advantages, choices, benefit, assumptions, and expectations granted on people based on their membership in the culturally dominant group. It is easily named by communities that have been oppressed, but to those who have it, it is invisible.

So for example, when I moved through my everyday life, I am not necessarily thinking about being an able-bodied person. That is the privilege that I have. I get to just move through the world in that way. I speak the language of the dominant culture. And so that allows me some more comfort as I'm through the world as

well. So I encourage you to think about where your privilege is. It is not something that can be given back. There are no exceptional men or white people for whom privilege is not a constant reality. And your intention has no bearing on privilege, because again, you cannot give it back. It's yours to keep.

And so in thinking about privilege, I like to think about the two faces of privilege or talk about the two faces of privilege. So one is granted privilege, and that is the privilege that the society gives to members of the privileged group. And then there is the internalized privilege, and those are the expectations and the assumptions of superiority and entitlement internalized by members of the privileged group. So if I was unaware-- obviously, I'm more aware of being an able-bodied person now because of doing the work. But if I wasn't, then I would probably assume that wherever I went, my needs would be met as an able-bodied person. If I am traveling different places as an English speaker, I might assume that everyone that I come into contact with speaks my language, and I would be able to communicate with them effectively. That would be an internalized privilege that I would have.

So we're going to talk about granted privilege. I'm going to show you this video about Black male privilege in the #MeToo era, so let's just jump into this.

THEO E.J. WILSON: --that my mistakes and the sad narrative on that page. And to think that I was about to end it all because of the story in my head, like I had hope but I needed direction, and more than that, I needed therapy, like we all do. I humbled myself and just got help. And on my specialist's request, I meditated daily and found that I could exist without thinking at all. What a concept? That that freight train of thoughts driving my life off the rails was actually the source of my toxicity and I could stop that. And so much clarity comes in that silence.

I began to examine my ideation and found that I was not alone. In fact, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention states that 47,000--

ZOE FLOWERS: We'll just skip forward a bit of it.

THEO E.J. WILSON: --for help. Here's a shocker, you all, men compartmentalize.

--independent owner, but just because it comes back on one piece doesn't mean he's not shattered.

--very well for. When a straight man fall in love for the first time--

--plus, heartbreak is just a trauma that our culture doesn't prepare men very well for. When straight man fall in love for the first time, it is usually not with the woman that we will marry and

we all in coverage from every angle to practice sex without our hearts involved, the split continues, and that compartment takes on a life of its own. Well, I didn't realize that this was a gendered privilege. Ladies know that as soon as they act out sexually the same way the men do, that slut-shaming is a common because they don't have that privilege. And privilege seems to be a hard conversation to have with men, and race to that equation, and prepare for battle. It's hard enough to get white men to acknowledge their privilege. Even--

AUDIENCE: [APPLAUSE]

THEO E.J. WILSON: Even with them making up 44 of our 45 presidents. Even when their faces on all the currency and Mount Rushmore on land they're not indigenous to--

AUDIENCE: [LAUGHS] [APPLAUSE]

THEO E.J. WILSON: Even with them making up the majority of CEOs and military high command, they still struggle with this idea that this culture privileges them. Just a 400-year coincidence you all keep on winning, right?

AUDIENCE: [LAUGHS]

THEO E.J. WILSON: OK, so imagine talking privilege with Black men. The historically oppressed do not react well when confronted with their role as oppressors. OK, brothers got to

aggressively clapping, hey, hey, it's like, where's my privileged, bruh? You know what I'm saying? Privilege to be 40% more likely to be killed by the police? Privilege to have one in three of us incarcerated at some point? Privilege of being racially profiled and followed around stores? Privilege of being guilty until proven innocent like the Central Park Five? I had those exact same questions when I was confronted with the idea.

And then a Black feminist that I know, she said, Theo, when was the last time you were actually afraid of being sexually assaulted? I was like, well, you know, most of my life is spent walking the streets trying to convince people that I'm not about to do that to them, so. She said, answer the question, brother. I said, well, the only time I was ever afraid of that was during a short stint that I spent in jail. She said, well, every woman you know is in jail.

ZOE FLOWERS: Yeah,

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

THEO E.J. WILSON: Yes?

AUDIENCE: [APPLAUSE]

THEO E.J. WILSON: This realization hit me like a ton of bricks, all right? And I mean, honestly, I had never considered that there was another gender and culture intersection. You see, like many young Black men, I grew up in an area that was overshadowed

by gang violence. Growing up in a crossfire was traumatizing, but it gave me a bridge to a necessary conversation. You see, if you try to talk to the average hoof fella from around by way about toxic masculinity from a feminist lens, you're likely to get cussed down and dismissed.

But if you say to him, brother, toxic masculinity is the reason for almost every funeral in the hood. It is part of the reason why if you get murdered, it will be most likely by somebody who looks just like you. Well, then you got the chance to hear, all right, bro, you got 30 seconds to sell me on this crap, what's up? How do I know? Because we took this conversation to the streets. I called a community forum in some barbershops to discuss the idea of Black men and privilege in relationship to the treatment of our women. And we talked about--

AUDIENCE: [APPLAUSE]

THEO E.J. WILSON: We talked about female physical and sexual safety, was led to talking about culture, was led to talking about the music we grew up under. Guys like Tupac, Notorious B.I.G., Snoop, the Infamous, Dr. Dre--

ZOE FLOWERS: So we will stop there. So I hope that you got a good glimpse right into the complicated conversation of privilege that Theo is engaging the audience with at this TedTalk. Talking

about really recognizing his all-male privilege as a man of color. I hope that you were able to pull some things from that.

And so one of the things that he talked about was when the conversation was asked if he ever feared being sexually assaulted, and he says he spends most of his life walking through the streets trying to make sure people don't feel like he's going to assault them. And so that brings us to this conversation of implicit bias. That is what he is talking about without even having to name it. The attitudes and stereotypes that affect our understanding, our actions, our decisions in an unconscious manner.

I shared last week that I find myself playing into, or used to, playing into the implicit bias. Meaning, as a woman of color-- and I'll talk about this later in the conversation-- how we are often viewed when we stand up for ourselves or speak up for ourselves as the angry Black woman because of that implicit bias. And so how that's played out in the past is me dampening my responses to things or being silent in some arenas because I don't want to be viewed as the angry Black woman. I don't want that implicit bias thrown on me. So I might be quiet instead of standing up. That's how that plays out in real life.

And I've seen others-- it gets internalized, just like internalized privilege gets internalized, internalized implicit bias does as well. Like we are aware of these things and so I see men of color

moving out of my way when I'm walking down the street. Because like he said, he spends half of his life trying to make people feel comfortable around him. And so I've seen them do that if I'm walking down the street and they're walking behind me, I've seen them walk slower so I won't perceive them as a threat. I've seen them back up in the elevator If it's just the two of us so that they won't be perceived as a threat. So these things are very much internalized and it's almost like it's on autopilot. The way that we are programmed to walk through the world, unless we're consciously interrupting the programming.

So one of the other things about privilege is this idea of speaking in universals. If I had privilege and I was in charge of language, I could speak in universals. I could believe that my perspective is the valid one, and the one by which all other people are judged. I would have a false sense of the universality of beliefs, perspectives, perceptions, responses, and knowledge. And what this does is because the people who are in charge of language are the people with privilege, who believe their perspective is the one, their perspective is valid, what that leads to are these stereotypes, these biases, because they are not walking in the shoes of people, they are viewing people through their lens of privilege.

So what does that mean? That means that when you see groups of folks of color gathering, from an outside perspective, they

might be viewed as dangerous, as noisy because of implicit bias, because of the stereotypes of those people. Whereas if you see people from the dominant culture, I don't know, ripping chairs out at a rock concert or destroying an arena after a hockey game or doing whatever, that would be looked at as all those kids are just, they're just burning off steam. They're burning off steam because the perspective of the dominant culture is the one that gets to say what's good and what's bad. So anything other than how the dominant culture behaves, how they speak, how they wear their hair, how they move through the world naturally is going to be a problem because the dominant culture has set the standard.

And so this leads us right into institutional racism, and it is a form of racism that is embedded as normal practice in society or an organization. It's woven into everything that we do. And so here, Michael Welp is going to talk about the granted plus internalized privilege.

MICHAEL WELP: Unconscious bias--

--spouse, I don't want you to fix this, I just want you to listen. Anybody hear that? As white guys, have you ever heard that before? Also, our culture teaches us that we can't be rational and emotional at the same time, so we leave our emotionality behind. Other cultures don't do that. When I live in this, invisible to me, cultural box, I don't even think of it as a culture. I just think of it

as being a good human or a good American. And I judge others by this invisible cultural box and that puts them in a place where they feel judged.

Unconscious bias, that's what it is for me which is that it's like a background operating system on autopilot, that I don't even know is running in myself. I might say I'm culture-blind or I might say I'm gender-blind and that I just treat everybody the same. I don't realize that others hear that as having to fit into my cultural box.

And I don't even know that I'm causing that assimilation in others. Others can be frustrated because they know they have to leave part of themselves at the door. And what's even more interesting is we do that to ourselves as white men. We also fit into the cultural box, and when we do that, we leave some of our humanness behind. The second thing that most white men don't know is we don't know that others are having a different experience in the world. Most of us just naturally connect on sameness and commonality. In fact, intercultural research shows that when you engage difference, most people either deny or minimize those differences. And that pattern shows up for younger generations as well.

And yet, women, people of color, and others have different experiences. And if I'm only connecting on sameness, I'm not seeing another part of their reality. It's not that my view of the

world is wrong, more likely, it's incomplete. So for instance, I don't have to think about my own safety. If I go jogging at night, most of the time, I'm pretty comfortable even going alone. I travel on business a lot. I arrive late into airports, and I drive to the hotel. Sometimes I get lost. And I'm not too worried about that, it's just not easy but it's not unsafe for me for most of the time.

Many women would want to arrive in the hotel before dark and would want your hotel room to be off the ground floor and not near an exit. I was traveling with my business colleague bill to Kalamazoo, Michigan to work with an executive team. Well, right after I flew into O'Hare Airport, thunderstorms closed the airport. Soon, I found out there were no more flights to Kalamazoo and there were no more rental cars. Bill's rugged individualism kicked in and he propositioned a taxi to take us all the way to Kalamazoo.

We got there 2:30 in the morning, and by 8 AM that morning, we were standing in front of the executive team, crowd, and talking about how our adventure was, and we were going to get there. Failure wasn't an option in that rugged individualism. Well, there was one woman on that team. She raised her hand and she said, "I would have never gotten into that taxi and driven across rural America at night with a stranger as a taxi driver, and I would have made up an excuse so you wouldn't think I wasn't a team

player." I looked at her, and I looked at Bill, and I looked at the group, and I said, "I teach this stuff and I'm blind to it at the same time."

The word privilege is a hard word for us as white men because we don't feel privileged. We actually feel like we've worked incredibly hard for everything we have. And I would say a deeper perspective is, yes, we have worked incredibly hard and there are things that we haven't had to navigate or negotiate or think about that other groups are. For instance, more examples of how my life might be different being heterosexual. At work, I can have a picture of a loved one on my desk and not worry about what other people think about. Or not worry that it might hinder my next promotion or get me fired.

As a cisgendered person, I can go out on the spur of the moment with friends and know that I can find a bathroom that I can use without being harassed or beat up. As a white person, at work, people don't look at me and think I got my job because of affirmative action, and therefore, have me feeling like I've got to work twice as hard to prove I'm qualified. Or I can easily find mentors of my race at all levels in most organizations. Or I can buy pictures, postcards, greeting cards featuring people of my race easily. Or I don't have to have the talk with my white kids about how to literally stay alive if stopped by the police.

So for me, the layers of privilege go on and on. Being able-bodied or I might say, temporarily able-bodied, I didn't have to figure out how to negotiate my way through this facility to give this talk. Being Christian, people know my holidays and they align with time-off. So privilege is stuff that I don't have to deal with. It's not having to navigate or deal with some of those things. It's not something I chose. And what happens is others assume we, as white men, know about our privilege, and that we see it. And they assume we just don't care or want to hoard our privilege so they attribute negative intent onto that privilege.

When we start to see our privilege and own our privilege, it removes the burden from others to have to educate and prove to us their different realities are real. I can use my privilege honorably. For instance, if I'm in a meeting and a woman shares an idea and it's ignored, and a few minutes later, a man repeats that, I can use my privilege to point out to my male colleagues that, hey, that was originally her idea. If she was to do that, she might be seen as having a chip on her shoulder around men. When we acknowledge other people's experiences as valid and let our hearts be impacted by their experience, we create more trust and more openness. I saw this happen in South Africa and I've seen it happen around the world.

ZOE FLOWERS: And so we're going to stop that there. One of the other privileges that I was thinking about while he was talking for

white men in particular is being given the benefit of the doubt. So when he's talked about the mentorship and all of those things, that is really critical, particularly in the domestic and sexual violence movement. Thinking about who's in charge, who are the leaders in charge, how did they get there, it is predominantly white women, very few people of color, some men of color. Very few women of color are actually in leadership positions and so much of that has to do with mentorship. And so many women of color are not mentors.

In fact, they are often exited from domestic violence shelters, programs, coalitions, agencies for maybe doing the same behaviors that non-women of color do. And they are let go. And our white colleagues are usually trained and given mentorships on those things. Because again, it goes back to this idea of implicit bias. And yeah, folks of color not being believed, not being given the benefit of the doubt.

And so on this implicit bias, this institutional racism conversation, this racism that's woven into everything we do, it's woven into housing, it's woven into education, it's woven into the medical industry as we've seen with the case of COVID, one of the other topics-- we're just now beginning to talk about anti-blackness, anti-blackness from other folks of color in addition to white people. But there's this other idea of mysogynoir that we don't

not talk about often. At least the collective we hardly talks about it at all.

But folks who are in these movements, social justice movements are beginning to have these conversations more, folks in academia, I guess, are starting to have these conversations a bit. But mysogynoir is the very specific type of misogyny that is inflicted upon Black women in particular, Black women who have a very African phenotype strong-ish African-associated features. And mysogynoir was coined by queer Black feminist Moya Bailey in 2010 who created the term to address the misogyny directed towards Black women in American visual and pop culture. It extends way beyond that, and I'm going to talk about that.

So mysogynoir has a couple of components. And so one of the components of mysogynoir is painting us as unattractive or animalistic or angry. So we have here Serena-- the photo on the left, the caricature or the cartoon on the left was done by an artist several years back. I don't know if you all saw it. This was a portrayal of Serena Williams after one of the large tennis matches where she stood up for herself, where she spoke back to the referee as many of them do. And this was what the person painted.

Now, what you don't see in the larger image is a picture of the girl who she was playing against. It's painted almost as a blonde white woman when it was an Asian. It's an interracial, multiracial

young girl who happens to have blond hair, but the way she is depicted in the picture, she looks like a white girl. And so that in itself, there's issues with that too. But the referee is saying just let her win already. So again, playing into this angry Black woman, playing into this as if she was undeserving, as if anyone let Serena and Venus get anything just because-- as if they didn't have to work twice as hard, as if they were not dealing with racism on the court and off for most of their career, for most of their life because they've been playing tennis since they were little kids.

And so I've been using this photo for a while, photo on the left. And then last week, it dawned on me that I actually need to give equal time to how Serena really looks. How Serena is most often portrayed in other venues. So that's why I have her here as a mother, looking beautiful, on Vogue cover, elevated, elevated in her status as she should be. Because I didn't want this vile photo to be the one that has the final say. I wanted to elevate her and give her the respect that she's deserved after the work that she's done. So that is why the photo is here to respect this mother.

And so another critical component of mysogynoir is Black women's pain as entertainment and also used for profit. So Russell Simmons, and if you all have not watch the video, On The Record, about the sexual assault charges that have been lobbied against Russell Simmons, it started to come out about him.

Please watch On The Record, it's interesting-- by his accusers, his alleged accusers. I watched it last night, actually, it's on YouTube for free.

So Russell Simmons posted a parody rape video of Harriet Tubman on the same day that Ava DuVernay shared a beautiful Black love film which I think was called Far From Home, if I'm not mistaken that's what it was called. And he posted this rape video on a new platform, new online platform that he was launching in August 2013. And this video, it was her being raped by a slave master. Millions and millions and millions of people came to his online site, came to his-- hold on, I'm going to pause the video and start it again.

To his online platform. So he used this video to drive traffic to his platform, his platform that he was launching that day. Of all the things that he could have chosen, he chose to post a parody of one of our leaders, one of our heroes being raped. And after millions and millions of people went to his site, mission accomplished, he deleted the post. But the damage was done. This is a part of mysogynoir. So mysogynoir does not just come from the dominant culture, it comes from literally every direction.

And so these are things that we need to understand when we're dealing with victims of crime, when Black women don't report, these are the reasons why because we are not believed, we are not respected, and we are not protected. So when that woman

comes into a program, just thinking about domestic and sexual violence now, when she comes into your domestic violence shelter and maybe everybody else is talking, these are the reasons why she's not saying anything. So many times, women of color come into shelters and because they don't fit the norm of the good victim, they don't get the services, they don't get the attention. In fact, they get written up, she's non-compliant, she's anti-social, she's oppositional. And then she's exited. She's difficult. These are the reasons why they're not speaking. Because when they do speak, they're not believed so often.

So this thing about being animalistic. So this is a reporter-- well, he was a reporter. I don't know what he's doing now. But he used to be a reporter for Univision. And he said on TV, on live television, "you know, Michelle Obama looks like she's part of the cast of the Planet of the Apes, the film." And so this is a form of mysogynoir also. If you look at how Venus and Serena, I just go back to them because it's so obvious with them also because they're darker skinned, the way that they are portrayed so often. Comparing Black people to apes is a very old trope. It is an old stereotype. And so here's this gentleman saying that about the former first lady of the United States. Mysogynoir.

So taking it out of the realm of celebrity because people can say, all those are celebrities, they'll be fine, they're rich. How do these things-- whatever. But these things have real world effects for

everyday Black women. So because doctors perceive Black women as having higher pain threshold, they are treated differently. I talk a lot about the opioid crisis and one of the reasons why the opioid crisis has not hit Black people in the same way that it hit white people is because doctors perceive that Black people, as a whole, do not feel pain. There are studies, you can google them, there was one that was done in 2016, 2015, where they hold doctors and they said they didn't believe Black people felt pain. So we weren't given the opioids.

Black women are viewed as threatening or angry whenever they speak up for themselves. I've already talked about that. Maternal mortality rates for Black women are three times higher than for white women in the United States, which many attribute that to racial bias in the health care system. Again, not being believed. I have story after story after story of friends of mine who, including myself, who have gone to the hospital, has been treated horribly by doctors who have not been believed to have been talked to and all kinds of crazy ways. And one of the things we know is that a person who is experienced, who has had a bad experience with one service, that can tailor how they experience all other services.

So what does that mean? If a victim of a crime has had a bad experience with the medical profession in her life, if she is abused or if she is assaulted or if she's robbed, whatever has come to

now make her a victim of crime, how likely is she to go back to that same medical system, to that same hospital? Not too much. If people of color have had negative experiences with law enforcement, when they're not victims of crime, when they're just driving down the street and they get pulled over, how likely are they to believe that they're going to be treated fairly when they are victims? All of these things come into play.

And so this also has an impact in interpersonal relationships. Because of the stereotype of the strong Black women, many Black women are not allowed to show any emotion, any pain, any distress. And so I would argue that this is why we see the high numbers of homicide with Black women in particular in this country because they think they can handle it, they want to protect their partners from the criminal justice system. And so they are not reporting, they're not asking for help, they don't want to be looked at as weak, they don't want to be looked at as traitors to the community. They think they can handle it, and one of the things we know is that violence escalates.

And so by the time that the violence has escalated to the point where she's ready to leave, and she does, it's either too late or we know that the chance for homicide goes up when you leave. And again, maybe she thinks she can handle it, she can handle it, she can handle it. And then it's too late. Another for another form of mysogynoir styles that are deemed unacceptable when worn

by Black women are celebrated when worn by white women. So all across the country, we have young Black children, male and female, actually, being kicked out of school, being suspended, having their hair cut during games. Because the way our hair grows out of our heads naturally has been called unprofessional, ugly, et cetera.

One of the things we know is that poverty is one of the highest indicators of intimate partner violence. If your education is interrupted, if your education leads directly to your ability in the most part for you to be able to make money, for you to be not in poverty. So if you're suspended, all of these things going on your record, you're being tracked, all of these things are happening. How do you think that impacts the child's ability to grow up and actually earn money for themselves? Black women being fired from their jobs or being not hired because of the way their hair grows out of their head, these things are happening. What if she is the only earner in that home? So that's why you see women of color wearing-- one of the reasons why you see women of color wearing all different styles, it's changing now somewhat, but there is still a stigma particularly in education and in corporate America. The state of New York had to create a whole law banning schools from not kicking children out, to ban hair discrimination, and other states across the country are doing that as well.

But when they are worn on white women, they are celebrated i.e., Kim Kardashian, any one of the Kardashians, actually. Back in my day, it was Bo Derek, it's ghetto on a Black woman, it's exotic on everybody else. And that's our hair, that's our styles, the way we dress, all of those things. And then again, this idea of pain as entertainment.

So culture and cultural identity. Why are all of these things important? Why do we even need to talk about these things? Because as I said, culture shapes an individual's experience of violence. Culture shapes the harm-doer's response to the interventions and acceptance of responsibility. Culture shapes access to the other services that might be crucial for the victim, as I said. The categories of race, class, et cetera, do not exist in isolation from one another. That is another reason why these conversations are important. They intersect, they interconnect in different ways for different individuals.

Cultural identity can influence how others see the presence or absence of interpersonal violence. Remember the same when Michael Phelps said that as a white male, he had no idea that the experience he had-- why this thing gets open like that-- he had no idea why the experiences-- that other people were having different experiences than him as a white male walking through the world. So when I show up to a program or when I show up to a bail hearing or when I show up in front of the judge, I'm

bringing my culture with me. And the culture of that courthouse, the culture of my city, the culture of the attorneys, all of that is going to influence the outcomes for me. And it's going to influence, again, the presence or absence of interpersonal violence. Does the harm-doer even know what they're doing is wrong?

Cultural identity, a person might also identify strongly with one culture than another. They might experience several identities simultaneously or shift between identities, culture shifting. So for that reason, it's dangerous to use categories to categorize and define an Individual this creates and perpetuates more stereotypes and more misinformation. Every person, regardless of initial appearance, has a rich culture that they are driving from. So remember that culture is complex. It is fluid. It's not bound by time and space. Identities are bound by time and space.

Now, identities are also bound by time and space and are usually multifaceted. So when we're talking about cultural competency or we're talking about being more included, we need to understand that it is a challenging and continuing process because everything is always in flux. There are no simple answers. And I think I said that one, Identities are not bound by time and space. And culture is not bound by time and space. And that's what makes it

challenging. So we're going to talk a little bit about intersectionality. Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term.

KIMBERLE CRENSHAW: Intersectionality is just a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves, and they create obstacles that often are not understood within conventional ways of thinking about anti-racism or feminism or whatever social justice advocacy structures we have. Intersectionality isn't so much a grand theory. It's a prism for understanding certain kinds of problems. African-American girls are six times more likely to be suspended than white girls, that's probably a race and a gender problem. It's not just a race problem. It's not just a gender problem.

So I encourage people to think about how the convergence of race stereotypes or gender stereotypes might actually play out in the classroom, between teachers and students, between students and other students, between students and administrators, and commit themselves to understanding that as a way of intervening and providing equal educational opportunity for all students regardless of their identities. Identity is simply a self-contained unit. It is a relationship between people and history, people and communities, people and institutions. So schools do a good job when they understand that, and when they commit themselves to curricular development, to opportunities in the school for all

students to understand the histories that have brought us to this particular moment. You can't change outcomes without understanding how they come about. So independent schools can take the lead on that, to be responsive to their student populations and to the communities out of which the students come.

ZOE FLOWERS: So I love that video because even though she's talking about schools and intersectionality, the conversation actually emerged out of a conversation about housing, issues that she was seeing and talked about obviously it can be applied and is being applied to victims of crime. So I want to talk a little bit about the racial and economic equity of survivors project that I was a part of at the Women of Power Network.

And so this project sought to increase the capacity of the field to address racial and other structural and institutional biases that pose barriers to economic stability for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. So women of color network partnered with the Southwest Law Center-- Southwest Center for Law and Policy. Let me do that again, Angelina, because my words got a little--

Project was developed by the Women of Color Network, the Southwest Center for Law and Policy, Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, the Texas Council on Family Violence, Casa de Esperanza, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Camille Holmes, and Bill Kennedy. So our process was

that we had three calls with advocates of color who also identified as survivors. So I was in charge of those calls with my colleague, Sara Wee. Our attorneys on the project, they did calls with other attorneys who were also people of color and aspiring white allies. And then we had two calls that were with economic justice or policy staff from state and tribal coalitions who are people of color and/or aspiring allies.

And so the snapshot of the questions we ask were, how have you practiced both self-examination and self-care when it comes to racism and racial bias in the work? We asked, how could you foster more conversations with survivors about opportunities with the barriers that they face? We asked, what are your organization's policies, practices, and protocols to address racial disparities for survivors within their organizations and within the movement as a whole? And we asked, what would you like your organization, community, or state to look like or be doing in one year, five years or 10 years? And we asked a lot more questions than that, but that was just a snapshot.

And so one of the things we heard was, "I'm really struggling with being within a primarily white-led organization, working with sexual assault survivors and trying to contemplate how we fundamentally restructure our practice to center folks of color, queer folks of color, it's uncomfortable to me." One attorney said they were a white person and it's uncomfortable for them to talk

about racial equity because they don't feel like they really can. They see things happening, they want to fix something, and they don't know what to do. That is something that I hear a lot now. And then one person said he's gay, he's a male, and he's Hispanic. And so even though he's a part of the Hispanic community, he has white skin privilege and he has male privilege that he himself needs to work on.

And so I wanted to share this case study. This was what an advocate actually told us in the report. And I chose to pull it out for these conversations and really pick apart what's happening. So we have here, there was a survivor who was staying at the shelter, who was already accepted into the transitional housing program. She was a woman of color with one small child. But the staff at the shelter knew little to nothing about her actual circumstances and basically they were complaining about her. And so when I talked to the advocate, they said I was hearing stories about this person. We need to exit because she keeps breaking curfew.

Now, one of the things that's interesting about this, for us, we wanted to think about what could be happening. What were the staff perspectives, what the survivor's reality, and what did the advocate possibly see from where they were sitting. So what was showing up for the advocates, a woman of color with one small child was constantly being complained about because she was

always breaking curfew. That was the staff perspective. This woman was problematic because she kept breaking curfew.

What her reality was that the transitional housing program staff knew that she was breaking curfew because she was relying on a cousin to get off work at 10:00 PM at night to give her some tips each day until she got started on her job. She was waiting on school to start her job because she needed the school as child care. Shelter staff were complaining even though they never attempted to have a conversation with her.

What we were also told by advocates was that survivors of color were more likely than white survivors to receive caps on funding, being placed on payment plans, experiencing strict enforcement of shelter rules, and being exited from programs and shelters. So what happened to this woman was not uncommon to what other women were experiencing. Other women of color. What we were told is when it came to getting funding from the shelter, just like she said, women of color were given caps on how much they could get, or they were put on payment plans, but that was only done to the women of color.

And so we wanted to know what possible assumptions and beliefs were underneath this treatment. And so the staff's assumptions and unconscious biases were the over-reliance on assumptions based on stereotypes or media images, i.e., the angry Black woman stereotype, the woman being lazy, being disrespectful,

rather than actually inquiring into what was going on with her. This also showed us that there was a lack of knowledge, skills, and capacity on the survivor's part because the advocacy approach relies on service delivery rather than assessing survivor's holistic means. The staff lack resources and support to assess and address survivor's multitude of needs, this also was an issue with the program, with transitional housing program, and the shelter staff were not communicating about cases.

And then there was also the economic and social reality that because of historical and systemic discrimination, because of redlining which denotes what areas of neighborhoods that people of color can actually live in. And segregation results in less wealth being accumulated in family networks. So that is why she's relying on tips to help her get around until she could start her job. And all of those things are happening in communities of color. So the social networks and families are unable to offer much financial or material support to survivors of color. And all of these things, again, lead to the higher numbers we see of homicides for women of color. And then their existing policies, resources to provide income streams to women facing violence are not a high priority. All of these things were happening.

And so some of the suggestions we heard from the advocates of color who were also survivors, that they wanted people to create avenues for conversations with other survivors, colleagues, and

staff, acknowledging racial bias and the difficulty of navigating systems. So the advocates that we talked to who were also survivors, they wanted to have frank conversations. They wanted the white people to do their own work. They wanted them to do the inward and the outward work for equity. And they really want to see innovative programming. They want to know to what extent and who at every level of an organization is carving out space to allow that wisdom that is generated from partnerships to really infuse the organization.

So I really invite you all to explore who are you serving. And who is offered what services? And what services are survivors actually receiving? And how are you collecting data? That question of data is so, so, so important. And what program data do you collect to help examine issues like this? What partners could you partner with? Who could you partner with? In what ways are you engaging with the communities you're working in, and our staff engaged in systems change efforts.

So often, advocates get so excited to do this work, they come to a training back when we could meet in person, and they would be so engaged and so energized to do this racial equity work or any kind of systems change work and they would go back to their agencies and they're just not able to do the work that they really want to do. So I really would encourage leaders to engage staff in these systems change efforts and let them know what is going

on. I can think about the times when I was an advocate. We weren't told about lobbying. We weren't told about so many things. And it's really important to have everyone at the table when you're making programs, policies, and decisions that really are life and death services.

And so thinking back to our case study, what is your standard of protocol for this situation? What do you do when things like this happen, when you have advocates who are not talking to actual people in the program? And how are you training your staff and what are you training them on? And how do you share information across programs? How can you make sure that that happens? What does your language access policy? What are your policies for accessibility? And who's at the table developing organizational policies? And who could be? I encourage you to really ask these questions. And intersectionality is not about making sure that every oppression is named. It's about making sure every person is accounted for.

So I have a couple of reflection questions. What are some historic blocks or barriers unique to your area that would prevent people of color from coming to or obtaining services? That's a question for you to ask yourself. What can you do as an organization to become more accessible? What can you do in six months? What can you do a year from now? How would you like your organization to be different? And where do you have power?

Where is your privilege? Sometimes as advocates, we can feel powerless. But we're not. So where's your power?

And then what was challenging for you? What would you like to see in the future? What did you like? What was helpful? And so you can direct any of those questions to the resource center. These are the video links for the videos that I shared. And you should be able to reach me, yeah, here's my contact information, zflowerswocinc@gmail.com, so you can reach out to me with any comments you have. I'm happy to answer them. And I'll see you next time. Bye.