Spark the inquiry

- We are born into a state of wholeness and yet few of us remain that way. What roles do money, race, and class play in dividing us against ourselves? Is there a way to harness money, race, and class to help return us to our state of integrity?
- What is each of us willing to change about our own practices around money that would also change our understanding and beliefs about race and class?
- How might we shift our view of the economy so that each of our gifts (capacities) is valued and honored in a meaningful way?
- In the worlds of money, race, and class, who are the bad folks and who are the good folks?

Intention

The intersection of money, race, and class exists for all of us regardless of where we stand with regard to privilege, scarcity, or the area in between. While each of these topics has a power unto itself, in connection they often divide us outwardly in how we live and inwardly in how we
perceive ourselves. Yet we believe that conversing about these challenging topics together, we can find a path toward healing and wholeness, both outer and inner.

We hope by talking about these issues openly, it’ll invite curiosity, solutions, mutual respect, healing, or simply new behavior in our ordinary lives. The invitation is to speak from personal experience, not as an expert or professional leader.

But above any of these grandiose intentions, “being visible” is our most basic wish for all around the table. By giving this conversation the privilege of time and space, we understand it is a huge gift to have the opportunity to come together to talk. We do not take it for granted what it is to be visible and heard in our society.

This is the fifth intimate gathering to focus on the broad issues of money, race, and class in our economy. But we hold no expectation of an ongoing commitment to anything beyond your interest and to the value of the conversation. There are no committees to join. No donation to make. No membership list to sign.

Structure to the Day

The leading question: Given the complexities of money, race, and class, is it possible to reconnect to the wholeness in which we were born? The group can define or change the scope and content of the day’s topic. We will also collect questions throughout the day for more exploration and reflection. It will be your interest that defines the questions.

Part of the day we will be sitting around a table in facilitated conversation. We will also make space for other kinds of activities such as small groups and some more artistic kinds of work together. With your permission, we will record the conversation. The team from National Radio Project will be recording us, as they have the previous conversations. 15 minutes into the conversation and the equipment appears to disappear! We will talk about what happens with the recording and transcript as part of the meeting, but be assured the basic assumption is full and free use by all the participants. Plenty of breaks, snacks and a hearty lunch. The best talking often happens while we share a meal.

Outcomes

We wish for a document of the gathering, and a harvest of insights for ourselves and for the benefit of others. You’ll get a copy of the recorded disks and transcript for input in the editing process. If you are seeking a transformative experience, we hope this conversation will further you on that journey, deepen relationships, widen the circle of participants, or inspire other conversations. This conversation can be a community tool or merely exist for the sake of common knowledge. It’s up to you.

We’ve also been asked if this is a focus group, and we clearly reply – no, it’s not. If later, we decide to create a collection of our group dialogues, the groups will be notified of and be involved in (to the extent desired) the process for release. Again, compliance with general practice and trusteeship of intellectual property will be respected, as in all Money, Race, & Class dialogues since their inception.
A Thread

RSF recognizes and invites the realities of race, class, gender, and religion into conversations of economic life. In 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2010, RSF hosted conversations on the subject of Money, Race, and Class. Through the conversations, some of the deeper social and cultural issues, for which money is a bellwether, were spoken about. In the interest of engaging a wider circle in this important dialogue, the transcripts of the first three conversations are posted on the web. The fourth is in preparation:

- Exploratory Conversation on Money, Race, and Class
- Who, How Much, and Why Conversation
- Leading a Decent Life

RSF Social Finance is committed to transforming the way the world works with money. Financial transactions are one avenue into understanding how people practice their values, make their choices, and engage in the physical world to meet their own and others’ needs. Money can hurt or heal, follow a path of greed or compassion. RSF values the healing approach through direct, transparent, and personal transactions, human and financial. Understanding the complexity of our economic life is useless without understanding all the social issues at work in it.

Editor’s note

Editing such a transcript is a major undertaking. The first uncut transcript was edited by Andre Khalil. Subsequent drafts were edited by John Bloom. Each of the participants had an opportunity to review and comment, and approve for publication. One participant chose not to engage in the review and approval process, and therefore does not appear in this published version. Where it was essential to the flow of the conversation, comments were summarized by the editor.

While the copyright for this transcript is held generally by RSF Social Finance as a protection for the material in the broad public, each of the participants has standing permission to use the contents as he or she sees fit provided appropriate context, credit, and citation is included. Each participant is as much an owner of the conversation as all the others. This transcript is offered in the spirit of gift in furthering a public dialogue on money, race, and class.
The Conversation

John: I want to welcome you on behalf of RSF Social Finance. This is our fifth conversation on Money, Race, and Class. The transcripts of the first four are up on the web if you want to read them. Every one of them has been quite different and I expect today will be yet very different again, because when you bring a group of people together who at least share a common intent to discover meaning together, to build conversation together, to build a shared picture together through the day, something new always emerges.

I also want to appreciate Patricia St. Onge, who's going to facilitate this, whose gift it is to help the emergent in that conversation.

These conversations started out of an experience of pain. That pain was experienced in a broader conversation around transforming money where class, and race, and gender, and religion and a number of other things simply weren't addressed. They couldn't be addressed, wouldn't be addressed.

I want to thank Pilar particularly, and CJ, and Rose, who were there in those very early days. We said there's no reason we can't have that conversation if we just launch into it. That started a seed, which has continued to evolve.

My assumption is that if we don't learn how to be in this conversation with each other around money, race, and class, we're going to be in constant conflict if not violence. The purpose is to bring meaning to these conversations in a way that is of service to others. So thank you all for coming.

Patricia: The planning team for this year has been CJ Callen, John, and Caitlin, and me. Our commitment to you is that this will be transparent, that everybody feels welcome to speak their reality and truth. If you feel like we're just not going where we need to be going, you can bring that into the room as well.
We asked each of you to bring a symbol that represents some wholeness in your life or what calls you to wholeness. We'll start by gathering here around the small table.

In my tradition, we honor the directions. We recognize those who've come before us and hold in our minds those who will come after us. We honor the South, the sisters and brothers from the South, and all living beings. We honor the West, and sisters and brothers in the West, and the North and the East, both in the presence of our ancestors, and we're mindful of our descendants who will inherit the growth that we are fashioning.

I brought this prayer fan. For me it represents wholeness because it's a collective process. We asked our family this year, "What makes you come alive?" One of our daughters, who's a veterinary technician, said, "art." She integrated the two aspects of her life by making this prayer fan for me with red-tail hawk feathers from an injured hawk that had come into the shelter. The wholeness represented in it for me is our capacity to bring all that we are into everything that we do.

Caitlin: I had some trouble trying to figure out what my object was, so I really tried to frame it with money, race and class as a lens. I am involved in a mentoring program for
foster youth, and have been working with a young woman for almost three years now. She's graduating soon. I can't believe she's going to be done with high school! For the past three years we've been hanging out every other week, and for me that represents wholeness. I am quite affected by injustice and disproportionate wealth, so working with someone that's been in foster care for so many years has been my way to feel like I'm giving back and making a contribution in someone else's life that will hopefully improve her situation.

That's what I thought of with regards to wholeness when it came to money, race, and class: reaching out to people that are in different demographics, and finding commonalities, finding things that we can all enjoy about each other. My object is a movie ticket because the girl I work with is 18 and we go to the movies all the time!

Rose: I'm Rose and I brought the image of Mary, the framed image of the woman there with her heart. That's my own tradition, a Catholic tradition, and this is an image of the immaculate heart. The idea is that deep inside of each of us, there is a place of wholeness. It’s the place where you connect to God; the in-dwelling sacred place. This image of Mary and her heart is an image that captures that, and it's very much the center of my spiritual journey.

John: The crystal is mine. I’m always in admiration of crystals because they are very pure forms; an expression of the harmonies of the universe. I’m sure the crystal is older than I am, which always makes me feel good. With the crystal, I get the feeling of having a relationship—a good relationship—with cosmic time rather than day-to-day time. I love the fact that if you were to put yourself inside of the crystal and look out, there would be a total transparency; and that you can look from the outside into its form. There’s a formidable relationship with light... There’s the wholeness of light balanced with the fact that this crystal found its way to form, formed its pure shape, over thousands of years in a moving environment of total darkness.

Yolanda: I brought the photograph of three children, which is more tangible and day-to-day than it is symbolic. The picture is of three siblings. The little girl in the middle and the boy on the left are my two children. The girl on the right is their older sister. The
photo was taken on the day we adopted our two children. Our children came from the foster care system, and a lot of the stories of their lives have to do with issues of money and race and class, and these stories will continue for the rest of their lives and for mine as well. Having my children in my life is the fount of greatest joy, and the greatest wholeness.

Pilar: I brought the little picture of my cat. Actually, it’s a picture I found that looked like my cat, but I really like it, and I love my cat. His name is Enrique Henry Gonzalez Reed. I also have a quote I want to share, because words are really important to me. "Where do you go to get permission to make a dent in the universe? If you think there’s a chance you can make a dent, go."

Kelley: I brought the picture of Jim Henson and Kermit the Frog. I can’t think of anything else that makes me as happy as the Muppets. I was trying to think of why, and thought, whenever I’m upset I listen to “The Rainbow Connection” and try to re-center myself. I also think it’s because of the community the Muppets celebrate, and because they celebrate ridiculousness and chaos, and I like all those things.

There’s a great quote about Jim Henson, that he created something that didn’t insult children but spoke to adults, and didn’t insult adults but spoke to children; and that there was anarchy there, but it was anarchy that created rather than destroyed. I really like that.

Jillian: I brought this bracelet. It’s a gift I just received a couple of weeks ago from a friend who returned from a trip, and I think she got it when she was in Zimbabwe. The reason it represents wholeness to me is because I was one of seventeen people who received a similar bracelet. While we were at a party several weeks ago, my friend had this bag and she was shuffling around the room trying to hand them out to people. It was chaotic, but it was fun. It made me recognize I have a group of seventeen girlfriends. We all call each other, and we’re all one another’s best friends. It’s a group that’s formed over the last three years; smaller groups of friends joined with other groups of friends, and friends of friends. I don’t know many people who have sixteen best friends. We do a lot of stuff together and it’s really hard to
schedule. There’s always one long email chain, and it takes the entire week to figure out what we’re going to do that weekend, but it’s a really, really wonderful, diverse, beautiful group of people and they make me feel whole.

CJ: When I think of wholeness I think of ways to bring together my head, my heart and my body in a way that is bigger and really speaks to my spirit. I found this bag of gems and thought, these are really nice. One of them is a tiger’s eye, which really reminds me of clarity of vision and the mind part of me. The other one is a carnelian, which is about courage and it actually looks a little bit like a heart. When I picked these other stones, they were what I was drawn to. There’s something about the way they feel, that tactile sensation that reminds me of body, so those three things together make me feel whole.

Wilson: I brought this bell. I’m a person who has been traveling the road from being totally in my head to moving toward my heart and my spirit. From the point of view of my head, there’s more and more of a realization that the nature of reality is rhythm, is tone—that at the most basic level we’re talking about vibrations as a nature of reality. And the bell, which also comes from a very spiritual tradition, connects that line that’s about the hearing of wholeness. So we’re all about patterns and material that moves through our patterns, and it’s a huge symphony, a symphony of wholeness.

Ludovic: I’ll admit, I forgot to bring my object. But here’s my iPhone—and many of you laugh, but this has a lot of my life in it, and it helps me be in my life. I’ve been struck by the research that shows people actually love their smartphones, like the same triggers when they’re looking at other things that they love. It even has Prince and Harry Belafonte and the Muppets on here. But I guess what really shows is that I have pictures of my great grandfather who I never met on here, and some pictures and videos of my son on here. Neither I nor my partner has family within driving distance, so this is how we talk with them, and this is how my 2 year-old son sees the rest of his blood family besides his mother and father, and that’s the way that they see him. Frankly, buying one of these is cheaper than buying them a flight. A flight is just once and this is twice a week.
Two other things about race, class, and wealth: because we've all seen all the stuff around how many people each of these kill when they're made. And we know the role that (this iPhone) plays in that we don't have industry here, which is a terrible thing, and the terrible impacts on the places that actually manufacture this iPhone. So on a macro scale it's at best a complicated thing, and on a micro scale, my son actually blows kisses at this to his abuelo (grandfather)! He knows that they're in there or something, but he's actually blowing kisses at this phone. We also are strongly monitoring the amount of time he spends on it, so those ten minutes with your dad are ok, but the video thing, no. And he doesn't see a difference.

So it is a real kind of complicated relationship with this object. Much of it woven into race, class, and wealth around where we live, who can visit, and how often do you get to see people. Those are the complicated factors. And if we were the workers making these phones, we wouldn't have one, right? Had we known somebody who made these, we would not have one, so it's almost endless. So I was just struck that this represents a lot and all about race, class, and wealth integration in life and its complications.

Andre: So this is what I brought, a toy – (four plastic birds that peck at the paddle they're attached to). The birds. I wanted to bring an egg, but I was afraid it was going to break, so at the last moment I just grabbed something and made it work. I realize how much it actually works. This was a toy of my mother's, who died when I was twenty-four. So there's a wholeness between life and death in this object. There's a wholeness there with the four birds, which are four different colors, which not coincidentally also reflect these four directions we said hello to in the beginning.

The food which they are feeding on, since these four birds also correspond to in Christian esotericism four archangels, the food is our actions, our actions are food for the spiritual. Most important for me was not knowing how I was going to get away with bringing this here and explaining its wholeness, and the wholeness that forms when you create a bridge between uncertainty and knowing and confidence.
Vini: I brought this object, which is very significant to me. This is my grandmother’s sari. I grew up in India. I’m of Jain origin and one thing about Jainism, it’s a precursor to Buddhism and the spiritual belief system is about simplicity and about ecological balance—the plants and animals are as equal to us as humans.

So one of the most important values that is deeply embedded in me and is often a struggle functioning in the US with that value, is not to consume more than you need to. So my mother takes my grandmother’s old saris, wears them until they can’t be worn anymore, and then when they can’t be worn anymore she turns them into little palettes, covers. Our entire home in India is filled with covers made out of old saris.

When I was young I was really offended by that because it was so cheesy! There’s like forty-five different prints and twenty different colors—it’s so gross. And it’s taken my whole life journey to this point to realize what an incredible blessing it is. Beyond the very simple level of reused material, there’s actually history all around us in our home and a learning to honor that.

Randall: I’m Randall Miller and I’ve lived in the Bay Area for twenty-two years, originally from the East Coast. I work for the Evelyn & Walter Haas Jr. Fund, called Haas Junior, which is one of the foundations created by the heirs of the Levis jeans fortune. I work in the area of gay and lesbian rights mostly, although I do other stuff as well. I was just thinking that I get a lot of power still from my decision twenty-two years ago to move to the Bay Area, and I clearly do think of it as my spiritual home and the place I want to continue building my life and despite its challenges about money, race, and class it really is a powerful place for me to be working and giving to the world.

Patricia: Thank you everybody for sharing. Let’s take a deep breath and just hold all of that in for a minute and then release it out into the universe.
CJ: To set the stage for our time together, the planning group wants to be transparent about some of the things that we value about these conversations. The first thing is to talk about definitions and share those with you. We're talking about money, race, and class as three humanly divided issues that intersect in our lives, and when in combination with each other they provoke opinion, bias, prejudice, and conflict. They overwhelmingly define our station in life and they can either confer or deny privilege and/or opportunity. Money is the most commonly known as a tool. Race and class are ascribed statuses. That’s our working definition to guiding these conversations, and I think it’s really important to share it so people understand where we as planners are coming from in terms of the work today.

And we have three other important definitions as well. We talk about not just honesty, but radical honesty: respecting, honoring and speaking from the deepest roots of one’s voice. That’s what we’re trying to do is create a space where that can happen. I’ll talk a little bit later about the ingredients we have to help create that space and get any ideas you’ve had about times when you really felt safe to speak and what helped to contribute to that.

Our definition of transparency: the reciprocal condition which makes it possible to fully see each other, to make oneself visible to another, a pathway to trust. That’s really important because it’s about building that baseline of trust in a quick way to compassion that allows us to kind of have these deep conversations in community.

And finally, conversation. Conversation, not discussion, not debate, but conversation: the language based process through which we create community. So those are our definitions. Does anyone have any questions or want to add anything to that?

Pilar: I was going to ask, are we allowed to challenge any of them? Not right now, but throughout the day?

CJ: Sure. This is our starting point here in terms of definitions. From experience and over time, we have developed what we call agreements that seem to work for the
most part in terms of creating a space where people feel they can express
themselves fully. So, I want you to think back on a time when you’ve been able to
really express yourself fully and the things that made that possible. Then if
something is missing that worked for you, let’s put it up here on the sheet over here.

So our **agreements**: we make our assumptions transparent, including our definitions,
right where we’re starting from. *We explore concepts through a process that builds,
not picks apart. We think, process, and share information in ways that encompass the
personal and individual, as well as the political and societal. We hold each other in
kindness throughout the day.*

Each of us is responsible for creating a generous space so that all can participate. So
I’m going to ask people to *listen at every level -- ears, eyes, heart, mind, and voice.*

This one is really important. *Step forward if you have not spoken and step back if you
have. Ask permission to repeat a speaker’s story outside the room.* So everything here
is like double confidentiality. *Do not problem solve another participant’s experience.*
We’re not here to fix people. *Hold a posture in the conversation in the way that our
individual contributions move the collective thinking forward more than simply to
relate it to our personal experience.* Again, we’re creating community and there’s
something about the synergy that happens when you come together and build on
each other’s story and the whole becomes bigger than the sum of the parts. It’s
really important and exciting, so let’s listen for those opportunities to create that.

And then finally in terms of agreement we have what we call safe harbor. It’s not
easy having conversation about money, race, and class. A **safe harbor** is a person
that is part of this group that you may speak with at a break to help process an
unresolved or uncomfortable issue, just someone you can go to anytime you feel like
you need support. Today the safe harbors are John and myself.

So again, those are a starting point for our agreements and if anyone wants to add
something else I can write it up. Anyone? So we’re good? All right, thank you!
We have a basket here, and I'm going pass these cards around. If any questions come up for you that you would like to add to the conversation, but don't feel like they're in the flow of the moment, feel free to put them in... we'll dig in the basket if there's time later in the day.

What we'd like to do now is give us a chance to get to know each other more deeply, and particularly around the question of race, class and money. So there's a very old tradition called conosimienlo, which basically means, “getting to know you.” There are big sheets here, and crayons, chalk and markers. We’d like you each to take one big sheet, and then try to use pictures rather than a lot of words. We should say very clearly this is not an art project, it's not a competition or class on artistic form, but it is an invitation to get into the side of your brain that is not so linear and analytical.

So get into the other side that is about playfulness and openness, and creativity. On your agenda there are four questions. One is what’s your name, and if there’s a story behind how you got your name or what it means or anything like that. You can tell that story. Then: “Where I am from?” or, “who my people are.” Find some way of locating yourself in a bigger context, however you interpret that. Then a picture that shows, “how I experience myself as whole,” which may be related to the piece that you brought for the altar, or it may not. Then draw how race, class, or money has influenced that picture.

The question for today is that we’re born into a state of wholeness, and yet few of us remain that way. So what roles do money, race, and class play in dividing us against ourselves, and against each other, and is there a way to harness money, race and class to help return us to our state of integrity?

The frame today is an invitation to see ourselves as whole and engage each other from that place, recognizing that money, race and class are some of the influences in our lives that shift our sense of ourselves as a whole. You’ll have about 15 minutes to draw. You can go out to that little social space out there, you can put it up on the wall in here, you can draw on the floor—whatever is comfortable for you. Then I’ll ring the bell in about fifteen minutes and call us back to this space.
Patricia: Okay, let’s finish and put them up. We’ll use the microphone again as we go around and people share their picture with us. Would somebody like to go first? Okay, Caitlin.

Caitlin: Every time I do this it reminds me I should take a class in illustration because my stick figures are so not impressive! My name is Caitlin, and in Irish Gaelic origin it means pure. The story of my name: my parents watched the 1980 Olympics, that’s the year I was born. There was an ice skater that year whose name was Caitlin and my dad liked the name.

These are my people. I grew up in L.A., and there was definitely a very Southern California vibe growing up. It was something I never really related to, I just sort of went through the motions and finished high school and I don’t really care to go back to LA for any length of time. I visit, of course, but it’s not a place that feels like home for me.

The next question was about wholeness in my life: I just thought about myself and what makes me feel good and what makes me feel whole. Nature, the mountains, hiking, snowboarding, meditation, animals and my good friends -- those are the things that make me feel whole and peaceful. I feel like harmony and peace are really necessary for me to thrive, so that’s my picture of wholeness.
How money, race and class play into that: there have been challenges in my relationships around money, so part of what wholeness looks like is just working on those relationships. It’s actually really good now, but it hasn’t been easy. I have a focus on distribution of wealth, because wealth plays a distinct part in justice and equality, so for me, wholeness would be relationships where each person is respected regardless of our decisions about money. I drew smiley faces because I want everyone to be happy, without tension or conflict despite the different views.

So down here is me and my future family that I don’t have yet. I can’t say for sure, but I would like to adopt, or be a foster parent, or in some way be involved in giving a home to a kid that might not normally have a good home. So what that looks like in the future is to be determined, but hopefully these little kids will have a good home at some point. That would illustrate how for me money, race, and class contribute to my personal feeling of wholeness.

Patricia: So in response we can say that person’s name, and then “we invite you to bring your whole self into this conversation”.

Group: Caitlin, we invite you to bring your whole self into this conversation.

Andre: Here’s my name and it’s sort of still expanding. I took “what’s the meaning of your name” to be a little more than the word origin of Andre or Khalil, though Khalil, I know, does mean “friend of God.” Andre is a little less certain to me, it’s a little murkier, but I’m still understanding myself and my name, so I just spread it out a little bit.

I’m half Syrian. My father is from Syria and I chose the most stereotypical iconography here, but actually for a reason. My mother was mostly Irish, although I’m sure there was some other stuff mixed in there. I grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania where I felt like the most stereotypical Syrian person. Just having one parent from somewhere else made you feel very different.
This is me in meditative practice. Part of the meditative practice I do is meditating on certain centers. This isn’t the standard chakra system, although it sort of looks like it, but it’s something else.

I’ll actually just tell you what these are really quickly so it’ll explain the rest. This is your spiritual self. This is your thinking, this is your heart, this is your sexuality and creativity and this is your grounding, the earth and all earthly things. When I meditate I try to connect my highest spiritual self with my heart so that my thinking is embedded with those two things, so it brings all that highest stuff down, and pulls it back up. That’s me feeling whole.

It’s funny because I feel slightly out of sorts here, because race and class have not affected my conception of wholeness so much as sex and sexuality have, although it’s mixed in there. But the identity that sex and sexuality brought to me has been so strong at certain points in my life that I couldn’t leave it out of this conversation. So maybe Pilar when you want to challenge the definitions later you can champion that part for me.

Pilar: We’ll do it together.
Andre: Okay. A lot of the seemingly contradictory aspects of my life, when they intersect with economy, make me emphasize my thinking and my sexuality and my grounding, and that’s what these emphasis lines are. Sometimes I'll act to the detriment of my compassion and my highest knowing, what I know to be true, and my connection with everybody else, which are these two. So it’s no secret that when I feel whole it’s because I’m connecting these. So, that’s all.

Group: Andre, we invite you to bring your whole self into this conversation today.

Andre: Thank you.

Patricia: My name is Patricia. I was called Patty as a kid, and my last name is St. Onge, which is a province in France. When my family came in 1640 they kept the name St. Onge so they’d remember where they were from. The tree is kind of the metaphor for me of wholeness and I come from big family. My mom was one of fourteen, my dad was one of eight, so I have like sixty-five first cousins. I grew up in New England.

This represents movement west where I’ve recreated another big family. So between us, Wilson and I have six daughters and two daughters-in-law, and four sons-in-law and eight grandkids. They represent the roots and the branches of the tree. And the water that feeds the tree is the way that I think about race, class, money, gender—all the elements of culture. The words that I peppered in the spring are like the fish in there; education, homelessness, self-determination, grace, fear,
struggle and abundance. I feel like all of those are what race and class and money have represented as I travel through my journey.

Group: Patricia, we invite you to bring your whole self into this conversation.

Pilar: I didn’t answer all the questions, then again I kind of did answer all the questions, not intending to, which is interesting. Here’s my family back here, in brown crayon, and here’s the fields that we worked in. So my upbringing and my past comes from rural life.

I see the future with a house in it, because I don’t own a house, but I see it with a house and I tried to make a mansion, but I couldn’t. I didn’t know how to draw a mansion. So I added more windows and more roof. That’s what mansions have, they have more roof than they need.

I also saw the future of my community. I saw question marks because I have lots of unanswered questions. I drew myself a little bit younger, slimmer and taller I’m sure. I see myself carrying a backpack always, and in this backpack are not my tools, but all my issues, and worries and everything I have to carry from this life, from my grandparents’ lives, I have to carry it forward. I feel the weight of it sometimes. In the backpack are words like debt, more debt, disabled, aging, healthcare, paying bills, spending and homelessness.

I like having them contained because I feel in control of them.
My name, Pilar, is a name I gave myself about fifteen years ago. My name is Maria Manuela, which comes from both grandmothers, both maternal and paternal, but nobody had taken on my great grandma’s name, which is Pilar. My grandpa had that as his middle name and my brother who died, it was his middle name. So I took it on, and put it on and it just felt like I was putting on a really nice worn in t-shirt. It just felt absolutely comfortable and right for me. I never looked back. It was actually the right thing.

But I keep the name Maria because it honors my mom, and my mom is a huge source of love to me. She’s illiterate. Most people would not think her to be interesting or smart, but my mom knows numbers and she knows what it is to be poor. She knows what it is to have money although she’s never had that, but she knows what that is. And if you’d asked her what she would do with a million dollars? She would know what to do with a million dollars. My dad is persistent, so I come from intelligence and I come from persistence and that’s my home from my family.

Group: Pilar, we invite you to bring your whole self into this conversation today.

Ludovic: This certainly triggered me because my first school memories are “you want me to draw a picture of what?” So I don’t think I got through all the parts, I’m limited by my drawing ability.

My name is Ludovic Blain. I’m the third, and they didn’t start counting until my father in order to differentiate himself from his father, said he was junior, but it goes back farther, so I’m actually the fourth. I don’t know when the first Ludovic was born, but my grandfather was
born around 1900, so it goes back more than a hundred years. My son is Ludovic IV, numerically.

Two stories about my name. First, Ludovic is from Latin: “laudable victor,” “praiseworthy winner.” Second, I was the chairperson of New York State's largest environmental group, and based on that and some stuff I've said about racial justice, when people hear of me before they meet me, they know I'm obviously an older white Jewish rich guy, Ludovic Blain.

I've been quoted in a number of different books where the quote totally fits if I'm saying it as an older, white Jewish, rich white guy who is the head of this environmental group. If I were a twenty-two year-old black guy from the Bronx saying this stuff... ehh. So I've had any number of national and international incidents where I would say, “I'm here, I'm Ludovic, I'm speaking,” and people were like oh, so when will Mr. Blain be coming? I'm like, what? I experience people's responses to the name at least once a week.

Feeling whole...this part was bound by my artistic ability, but it would be me and my partner, and my son who is only two. I'm an only child, but I always surrounded myself with good friends. So wholeness comes from music, smiling folks in the sun, the beach and happy people, which I couldn't draw that much of.

Race, class: both from growing up spending summers in Haiti, which has its own kind of race/class stuff, and being in a different race/class in Haiti and here. A lot of immigrants have that experience. I've been impacted in various ways because depending on which plane I was getting off, I've had a totally different identities, even though I didn't know it. I found out as people told me. I distinctly remember having to be reeducated when I would land in the other place.

This is New York City, Haiti and then I couldn't even figure out how to draw the Bay. But in any case, the Bay, I should've taken your trolley...where various of us are from and experiencing various of the Ludovics and our mothers and partners along the way.
Group: Ludovic Blain III, we invite you to bring your whole self into this conversation.

Wilson: My name is Wilson Camanza Riles and I used to say Jr., but I’ve dropped the Jr. About five years ago I took a blood test where they measure your mother's heritage or her mitochondrial DNA and match it to various samples that they get from all over Africa. They also use a different part of the gene, the Y chromosome to measure your father’s contribution to your DNA and match that to various tribes in Africa.

That showed me that on my mother's side the closest match is the Gha people in Ghana, and on my father’s side it's the Malaliki people in the Cameroons, so all of that contributed to who I am. My mother and father both grew up in the South, married in Arizona, then moved to Los Angeles, and eventually to the Bay area.

But one part of my name is Camanza. The story that gets passed down to me is that no one understood where that name came from, Camanza, it was something that my great grandfather carried and then passed onto my father, then it eventually got passed on to me. But we discovered there is a town in the Cameroons named Camanza, and that reinforces the DNA connection.

My name is also Wilson. The name Wilson comes from the son of the conqueror, William’s son. So there clearly is in my background some stamp of the colonialism and slavery that were there from my father’s side. On my mother's side, her father
was the son of a slave owner who denied that he had an African American son, yet he gave my grandfather authority on the plantation in order to control everyone else, so my grandfather got privilege even though he was denied parentage by the slave owner.

My family name, Riles, probably carries some connection to England, or Scotland or Irish background. The name Riles is likely a derivation of an English name or an Irish name, O'Reilly, and it’s been shortened to Riles and that gets passed down to me also.

The name Wilson could also have been given in our family because a lot of African Americans have named their children after presidents; so it could probably be a tribute to Woodrow Wilson, who unfortunately, was a racist. So my name, Wilson Riles, is most likely a stamp of racism. It’s also a stamp of the triangular slave trade, which was the first global capitalism in the world. All of that carries down to me.

On my mother’s side my great, great grandmother was Native American, probably Blackfoot, which also carries into me, so the whole historical base of the economic system we are now a part of is represented in my name.

Group: Wilson, we invite you to bring your whole self into this conversation.

Jillian: My name is Jillian. It's funny because I didn't know for a long time where my name came from. It's not the deepest story, but I find it entertaining. I have a friend who recently had her first child and I was flipping through the baby book and I looked my name up. In origin it’s Gaelic and I think it means youthful. Then a few weeks after that I asked my mom, “Why is my name Jillian?” My first name is Jillian and my middle name is Ryan. It was actually after a soap opera.
My mom’s favorite soap opera was a show called Ryan’s Hope and that was the name of the family and that was their last name, and one of the characters was Jillian Ryan, and that’s me. I’ve never seen it.

I grew up in Vacaville, CA, which is about 45 minutes northeast of San Francisco. It is a very not exciting place. It's just filled with tract homes and strip malls. I enjoyed growing up there; the simple houses represent where I grew up.

When I thought of my people I thought of both my family and the people I’ve always surrounded myself with. Growing up in Vacaville I think perhaps it has a lot to do with being in close proximity to a military base, but it's actually a really, really diverse place.

My friends are all different colors and they're from different places. My family in particular, my grandmother, my mom’s mom is white and she's English. She married a black man who was in the Air Force that she met in England and moved to the US when I think my mom was six. They ended up moved to Texas in the '60s, so it was she and her three biracial children in Texas in the '60s. That’s a whole other story.

Race for me: I grew up in a diverse area and it wasn't something I really thought about. I look different than my grandma, I knew that. I looked different from my friends, we all looked different from each other, so we just never really thought about race very much.
It’s the same with money and class. I grew up in a low to middle class area, and it just wasn’t something we talked or thought about very much. But when I left the Vacaville nest it all changed very drastically.

I think of myself very much as an introvert, so that’s why I have an enclosed circle, but because of how I've grown up, homogenous situations are something that I’m not actually that comfortable or familiar with. Being around everyone who’s the same race or those who identify with one thing have always made me feel a little bit uncomfortable.

When I left the Vacaville nest I went to Tulane in New Orleans, which was a complete and total culture shock. It’s a very affluent campus. It’s a 30% Jewish, predominantly white campus, and there were very few black people on campus and they all hung out together. So there were these opposing groups, and I had no idea where to fit in.

So that was at a point in my life where money, race and class hit me all at once, so that’s what the arrows are. It’s something I’d never considered and all the sudden it was this imposing force, and since then I’ve been trying to navigate my way through it, thinking it through, trying to figure out how it can be less imposing on me and how I can own it myself, and think about my background and reflect that back out to the world.

Group: Jillian, we invite you to bring your whole self into this conversation.

Vini: My name is Rajasvini and that's how it's written in Hindi. Although it sounds Indian, I'm the only Rajasvini. There's another little baby registered now in Kenya, that's another story, but it's not really a common Indian name. My parents made up all of our names by combining theirs. So my dad is Rajendra and my mom is Vineeta, then “as” as a joiner, so that's how I got my name.
What brings me wholeness is also who my people are and loving my people is what brings me wholeness. A lot of my people are in the south – the global south and the south of the United States, so that’s what I’ve tried to represent here. That’s me in the middle being loved on by all of my people.

Race, class, and money are obviously a big part of talking about my community, which is people in the south and the global south. So immigrant folks, including myself, this is my first year that I’ve lived as many years in the United States as in India, so it’s a very complex moment in my life just reconciling that. I’m queer and so the queer of color community is really important. And Jainism, my spiritual home and people who make conscious hip hop, and dancers and poets, are all part of what has shaped my consciousness in this country and in the world.

I was partnered with a woman from New Orleans for ten years, and my in-laws who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina, and the love and family that I made in that community have also shaped me. My current family is part black and part Chicano, so that’s also a big part of my consciousness.

I had the privilege as a young woman to be taught and mentored by June Jordan, so elders have been really important in my life. I’ve only named one place because there are so many places and so many geographies, but Kitui, Kenya is a little small town in Kenya that I lived in for three years and learned everything I know about leadership from the community leaders I got to work with. So, the farmers in Kitui,
and the misfits all over the world, and people in the diaspora, I have a soft spot for, so that's my story.

Group: Vini, we invite you to bring your whole self into this conversation.

Randall: I go by Randall or Randy, and although my friends will swear that Randall is the newer name, that's not true. Randy is the newest name, but my legal name is Randall and my last name is Miller. And Randall means burning wolf in German, so that's the flames there.

I pieced this together, I think it's mostly true: Like in lots of black families I was named by my aunt. When my mom married my dad her name was Daisy Miller and my aunt was a big fan of Henry Miller's writing. Daisy Miller's son in the book Daisy Miller is Randall Miller, and that's how I got my name.

I like that because my aunt is probably the closest person to me in my family. In the '30s, '40s, and '50s she was traveling the world. She went off to live in the Caribbean for most of her life, and had to be brought back kicking and screaming at the age of seventy-five because she didn't want to come back and hang out with family. She wanted to hang out on the edge. I really love her for that. It's interesting to see the person who you might become because I've got both of her blessings and some of her cantankerousness in me as well.
I think of where we’re from, (and what I’m presenting comes from) the last fifteen years or so that I’ve been doing my family history. A large part of my family is from the Caribbean basin and it explains a lot. There are some odd things my family would say, and odd pronunciations, which I didn’t get until I went to Jamaica. I’ve also gone back to Charleston [South Carolina] a lot, where my dad and mom are from. But those pronunciations are all in Haiti or Jamaica. I know that lots of black folks came through the Caribbean basin because that’s where a lot of the slave pens were, but my family didn’t move very far from there. I have a mysterious great grandfather who came briefly to Charleston and married my great grandmother, then just went back because they couldn’t deal with segregated society in Charleston.

Let’s see, what gives me a feeling of wholeness? Pulling the really diverse pieces of myself together. I do a spiritual practice where I imagine my energy rising up into the tree of life that is me, and hooking all those things together, because there are all of these diverse pieces. My parents had a very typical black southern story of all of a sudden being jettisoned into the middle class after college then aspiring most of their lives to go further up the ladder and becoming solidly upper middle class, which they kind of did.

But then a bunch of things derailed that. They had children who weren’t much interested in following what they did. My father divorced and married a Native American woman, so I have quite a blended family, not only in my past, but also in my present: My sisters and brothers are married to Euro Americans, to Latinos, to African Americans and to Native American folks from the Navajo Nation.

So my experience in some ways leads me to think of myself as sort of classically black. I think it’s black southern, I think. There are rules to that culture that I was raised with and that I always fight with in my head, but I still know those rules.

It’s interesting to me that for my brothers and sisters and their partners, that’s not their concept of who they are. They don’t have those rules, they’re kind of free-
flowing and easy. And race, class and color are all mixed up in that and play out in different ways. Color privilege operates in really bizarre ways in the culture.

We do love each other, so we're just trying to hang in there. That's why I call it the blob because we just know that we're family and we're trying to navigate class, race, money and all that kind of stuff, and just love each other. It's strange, but it's really good.

The only thing I missed: For a long time I knew that my family ancestral background was going to be Nigerian. I've built a whole persona around that because I've had so many Nigerian people come up and say you look so Nigerian, but that's not the case. It's actually probably mostly from Ghana. My family also had history way back that said we had Native American ancestry, which a lot of black families do. But we don't have Native American blood from way back. We have Euro American blood from way back and the story was to obscure that. So that's it.

Group: Randall, we invite you to bring your whole self into this conversation.

CJ: I'm CJ and those are initials and the only thing that means is I really don't like my real name. It sounds like a Brooklyn hillbilly name, and the hillbilly part is that my father came from West Virginia, so it's not surprising then that we would give me a hillbilly name.

This is the Big Apple. My parents were migrants from the South looking for opportunity. My mom came
from South Carolina. So I was born in New York, but I really don't think of it as home. People say where are you from? I say I was born there, but I really feel this is home, San Francisco, so this is where I'm from. That's really important to me.

Then in terms of my family and my roots: Senegal; rice-growing people from South Carolina; and Native American people; and not just European, but Irish immigrants in particular.

We had no money and that was very defining to me, but I don't want to be defined just by that. The fact that I didn't have money (means that) sometimes coming into these conversations is really hard. I feel like I have to talk about how deprived I was and stuff like that.

When I started thinking about where am I most whole, I saw myself embodying what I call compassion and holding a wounded puppy, so that's the big C there. I think I feel like myself when I touch into all my values, and when I (relate to) all living beings. My best self? That's when I feel whole and grounded, so that's me holding the wounded puppy. That's always been there, which is kind of interesting; it's always been a part of me.

I was trying to rescue and help and stuff like that. Even as a little girl, my mom thought it was really bizarre. So I think about what got me this way in terms of race and class. I don't want to romanticize being poor, but I did learn some things because I was treated differently, and harshly sometimes, because I didn't have. That's the spirit I learned from my family from being poor. So I put the big A for Abundance.

Even though we didn't have—and I've often talked with people who also grew up in a culture of scarcity and hoarding—we actually were taught the opposite. Because we didn't have, we had to share with others. So my mom would physically take half of what we had and give to another family that was suffering as well. That got really instilled in my heart, so I feel like that's really defining in terms of me having this sense of oneness.
Being black and being an outsider, being poor and being an outsider, you know, I don't see people as the other. I don't see the other. I see us as kind of one in a very interesting way that’s been critical to who I am and what I do in this world.

Group: CJ, we invite you to bring your whole self into this conversation.

Kelley: My name is Kelley and it's Gaelic for “warrior woman.” I think my mom saw my name on the side of a building, so it wasn’t really her intention (to name me Kelley), but I've always gotten a lot of power from that. I drew a sword, but then I thought that was kind of violent, so I drew a light saber because I thought that was more appropriate for me.

I’m fourth generation in the Bay-Area, so when people say where are you from, (I say) oh, Ireland and England and Germany, but really my family has been American forever. My relatives came over on the Mayflower, so I've just gone with Californian now that I'm older because I feel like I really identify with that.

I drew a coyote, but it looks like I've never seen a coyote before. It looks more like a bear cat. But I think in the Native American tradition the coyote is a prankster and troublemaker, so I think I identify with those kinds of people.
So what’s the third question? When I feel the most whole. It’s usually when I’m working, doing something, creating something, building something. So I didn’t know how to draw that, so I figured this picture represented that.

In terms of money, race, and class, I went to a school in San Diego and actually before that I was in a church that I was really involved with. They taught us a lot about community and we would go build houses in Mexico. That was the first time I became aware of class and the privilege that I had. I also noticed that the poor people were a lot happier than my family. Then I ended up going to school down there and majored in anthropology, and got really interested in fair trade and the idea of having wealth, and how I could transfer that into justice work.

Group: Kelley, we invite you to bring your whole self into this conversation.

Rose: My full name is Rosemary, and Rosemary means dew of the sea, but I also go by Rose, so I started with just drawing a rose. Then really this was meant to be a picture of Mary standing on the shore. I live in Half Moon Bay, right across the street from the ocean, so the beach is my children’s front yard, though it’s a state beach, it’s not ours. I feel like I’ve lived my way into my name in some pretty powerful ways.

In terms of the money, race, and class, I grew up in
Westchester, NY, so this blob is meant to be New York. When I came into the money conversation I identified with being a person I thought of as upper middle class from Westchester County.

That was my initial sense of identity, but then as I started to do a little more exploring of where my people came from, I found a very new identity in our family. My father grew up in the Bronx. He grew up in the Bronx as the eldest child in an immigrant family that came from the west coast of Ireland.

My mother’s family also came from the west coast of Ireland, so it’s really just two generations back that my people were farmers in western Ireland. My mother’s family landed in the Hamptons, in South Hampton. But! I say "but" there, because they’re the locals in South Hampton; they were the farmers who lived there and then the Hamptons became a wealthy playground in the summertime.

So my initial identity is of being a rich person from Westchester. Then I found out, well, that’s true only recently. Go back, and that’s not the story. The story is I come from farmers from Ireland and from Long Island. That’s the bigger flow.

Then here I am and I have somehow made my way out here to Half Moon Bay. I just came out for school, and meant that to be a temporary thing. Then I ended up getting a divorce and I have children now, so I need to stay here.

But what I appreciate, the full circle of this is that I now sit on the west coast after coming from people who sat on another west coast. I come from a people who are looking west out over the ocean. So again, I feel like I’ve lived into the fullness of my name, of being the dew of the sea.

Part of my life now in the money, race, class stuff is that I live in Half Moon Bay, which is a place that I love and I absolutely feel whole. And I journey almost every day over to Atherton where my children go to Sacred Heart Prep. Their father teaches at the Prep and they go to the grammar school. I left Westchester seeking a path of social justice and through this strange twisting of life, I now find myself once
again in a very wealthy Catholic community, raising my children there. I feel like I’m back exactly with everything I left. I’m very clear that’s where love has led me, the Divine love.

My journey is how to raise kids with an open heart—with the honoring of what that sacred heart tradition is—in a world of gated communities. (I try to stay with my own wholeness inside of the world I left, knowing that I’m exactly where I need to be. The way I do that is by going back here to the ocean every day, and keeping my vision looking west out over the sea.

Group: Rose, we invite you to bring your whole self into this conversation.

Yolanda: So my name is Yolanda Alindor. I was born as, or my mom and dad gave me the name of, Yolanda Esther Violet Portugal. My mom loved flowers and she particularly loved flowers that had scent to them, so that’s how I got the Violet part, Violeta in Spanish.

I was still a little girl when I had this project in school to look up the origins of words in the dictionary. While I was doing that I looked up Yolanda and it turned out that it mean violet in Old French, so I’m Violet Esther Violet now. My mom of course grew violets in our garden, so I looked at them and thought that’s not me at all because they’re green plants. I have four of them here that are not very large. The plants have good size leaves and the flowers are tiny and they’re hidden
below the leaves so you have to look to find them. At the time I thought of myself as much more loud and expressive, and that these violets were sort of wimpy and really not me at all. So I sat with that for many years and over time have come to realize that actually where I find my wholeness is in quiet times and in being able to spend time alone in nature. I’ve realized that actually the violet fits me quite well, so I put a bunch of them up. Also my mom is not doing well, so this is also honoring her. The beach is particularly wonderful for me. So many of my times when I’ve had my most life-changing times of decisions, I go to the beach to walk. Therefore, I have the beach, which here in California is often rocky, so I had to put at least one rock in there.

I had a rough time with my people piece today. My families of origin, both my parents, are from Peru and the iconic image of Peru of course is the Andes, and the cultural traditions of honoring the sun. But the hardest part was that in many ways, Mexican culture and Mexican tradition are actually more prominent in my life now, because of my husband’s being born in Mexico City, and because all of his family is still there. My kids’ family of origin is also from Mexico, so that’s sort of more of me, not to mention what California’s demographics are these days.

I have some faith and belief that we are born in wholeness. However, when I was thinking about the issue of wholeness and the leading questions for today and this notion of being born to wholeness, what kept recurring in my head was that although that in my experience, often times through issues of race and class, that wholeness is shattered even before a child is conscious. So I drew a vase that’s cracked.

That’s certainly been true for my children and it was also true for my father who was abandoned by both his mother and father. When a life is shattered, of course, it has ramifications for the next generation and the next generation and so forth. So the effects of shattering have been the most prevalent in my life and my family. It’s been clearer, been more in my face most of my life, but what I also have thought of is a story. I read this lovely story once about someone who was severely injured. I can’t remember if it was illness or injury, but he was severely disabled, and as part
of some art therapy he was asked to draw a picture of his injury, and drew a picture of a cracked vase. Then much later, in coming to terms with his life and in helping others and finding a way through that, he added this picture of light. You could be a shattered vase, but it was through those fissures, through that brokenness that you can find your light and let it shine forth.

So that’s what I was thinking of. Even through the trauma there are ways to let light and love in and out, and it can still be quite beautiful.

Group: Yolanda, we invite you to bring your whole self into this conversation.

John: John Bloom. My grandparents on my father’s side, Russia-Poland, and on my mother’s side Czechoslovakia and Germany – from which my name is relatively disconnected. It actually came when my father’s parents arrived in the US, one of those families that arrived at Ellis Island, speaking no English whatsoever. The customs agent said what’s your name, and the sponsor thought they were asking sponsor’s name, which was Bloom, so that’s where our family name comes from. It was instantaneously assigned and documented in about 1908.

I experience my wholeness when there’s movement and flow, and so I had to start in movement and in flow or nothing was going to happen, so I just kind of started, which is both order and chaos simultaneously.
Then I realized that it became a meditation on work and wealth. I grew up in Massachusetts with a lot of work. My father and his brothers had a family business. It generated a significant amount of wealth, but it was always connected to a lot of work and a lot of reward. It was also a lot of privilege, which I came to appreciate later when I was growing up, as that was the norm for me.

So that was a great deal of support, and made lots of things possible, like going to school and being involved with the arts. Then onto New Mexico. What happened at that point was work and wealth got separated. I’d learned how to work, but the wealth was, in a sense, being used up in the process of doing work and doing art.

It’s interesting that somewhere in here a connection with spirit showed up, and the spirit and the work connected and continued the flow. My father passed away maybe eight months ago or so, so I’m just sorting through the estate. It’s interesting what you know, and don’t know, and assume and don’t, and then suddenly it’s all quite real and quite finite.

Somewhere the separation between work and wealth happened, and brought me to California and to finding I was working with wealth rather than work and wealth. Even though (wealth) wasn’t going to accumulate to me (and my work wasn’t going to) be about personal accumulation whatsoever.

I feel like that’s really the flow and course: and going through the spirit keeps it moving. The picture-word that just kept coming to me was good fortune. I feel like I’ve been really fortunate, which is a different kind of privilege than a wealth privilege for just being where I am.

Group: John, we invite you to bring your whole self into this conversation.

Patricia: As everyone told their stories, a lot came forward...so let’s just breathe together for a minute.
Patricia: We want to launch into the conversation and it's meant to be fairly free flowing. There's lots of energy and good feeling in the room.

We're starting with the assumption that we are born in a state of wholeness. I think Yolanda's point is a really important one to hold as we continue into the conversation—that there's historical trauma that many of our communities have suffered. If you go back long enough, all of them have suffered at some time or another.

We hold those in us as well as the current of whatever the particular personal experience is. It's an opportunity to look at a complex narrative that we are whole and we come very quickly with some injury.

But again, the assumption that we brought into this as the planning team is we want to look at the question of money, race, and class through a lens of wholeness, and what functions they have in increasing wholeness, and in challenging our sense of ourselves as whole human beings.

So we'll just open it up. To what degree do our belief systems drive our views about money, race and class? What is there about our views concerning money, class, race are we willing to change so that we can increase our capacity for wholeness? That's where we want to start the conversation.

Pilar: I read those questions and I read those terms, and I feel pretty challenged talking about wholeness alongside of racism, and classism and money. I've been involved in racism, a target of it and also my imposing it on others, I'm objectifying and I've been objectified, is that the right term?

Some aspect of me is what's being judged, so I know that the wholeness thing, it just, it's not even something that—how do I put this?—It doesn't go with all that. I feel
that I’m whole regardless. I have to be strong in that way and I just have to stick to that, but somebody help here...

I’m really challenged by this I guess. What I’m trying to say is that wholeness and the words next to that: They don’t go together. It doesn’t work together.

John:  Is it a disconnect between what you’re experiencing and what’s being reflected back to you from the rest of the world?

Pilar:  For me it just, it seems like a great intellectual leap to start talking about wholeness when there’s a whole lot of other things to talk about with those other three issues [money, race, class], that’s all. I’m not offended by it, just my sensitivities, it’s not that. Just there’s a whole lot of other stuff to talk about and take in.

Vini:  What I’m hearing is that we can’t jump to becoming whole again until we un-peel the ways and reasons in which race, class and money have affected us and are affecting us and our communities.

Wilson:  I think that there are some foundational concepts that are encased in our culture and in our language that guide our ability to perceive and to understand. There are also concepts in terms of the way that we think as human beings that also can be confusing and can hide the nature of reality.

I mean I think the nature of the way that we work is that we can perceive a lot, but what comes to consciousness is only a screened part of that. That’s the nature of how we see reality. We can see everything, but what we deal with is not everything, but particular aspects of everything.

So we are extremely complicated human beings. What science says is we’re the most complicated thing in the universe in terms of our brains. Yet we function as if we’re simpler beings than that.
Psychologists will tell us that there are many different personalities within our heads and they function all the time, and react as if there's just one, but there's a lot of different things going on.

So when we talk about wholeness we have a sense of wholeness being a very simple thing, but the reality is that our wholeness as human beings is more than simplicity. It's a multitude of things.

I was struck by our presentations in that we all come from multi-faceted, complicated situations that all come together to make us who we are, but we want to perceive simplicity and so we work toward a centricity that's not real.

That's where I think the distance comes in. Rather than accepting the reality of the complicatedness of our situation or other situations, we want to narrow it down into simple concepts or simple definitions and often the ones we choose tend to be ones that diminish what is actually before us.

Randall: The way I resonate with that is I drew the picture of the tree, which I didn't say enough about. For me, there are these pieces that don't fit together very well and a lot of my life energy in terms of wholeness is trying to bring them together. I have complicated internal and external relationships with money and wealth, and how I relate to money.

I generally view race as a very positive thing. I don't view racism (as positive), but I don't have it in my mind; I guess that's complicated too. Class I think is the hardest because it has become more obvious to me. At one point I thought you know, it's virtually invisible, but it has become more obvious to me that in terms of class conditions and I believe they're getting worse. Therefore, I feel like that kind of the middle-class beachhead that my parents helped me create is inching away and away. And to be honest, some of my brothers and sisters have drifted out to sea because of a variety of things, but to me that's scary and I didn't know that that could happen. So I think you're right: When I talk of wholeness, I might talk about it
in some very simple ways, but I'm really struggling with these other complicated issues, not just intellectually, but in the ways (in which they) impact my life.

**Ludovic:** This is Ludovic. For me, having my son a couple of years ago and the months leading to that changed my lens partially, because I realized that it was a voluntary thing for me to do for myself and whatever, but then it became clear that I was making decisions for this child. So, that was a grounding, confronting reality; a smack of reality.

I'm using different terms—money is different than wealth, race is different than racism, right. So they're kind of different things and in my head. For me, money isn't that important a term. Money isn't a real meaning. But wealth has a real meaning, so money and race is a bit different than racism and class, and different from classism.

I've had to be more thoughtful about that in the real world. Partially I'm wanting to think about what world of experiences I am creating for (my son) to have. Even just the different ways that those synergize for example, here in the Bay, (as opposed to experiences) in New York.

I'd say whereas three years ago I would've thought that my most complicated analyses were in my work. But my work is nowhere near as expansive or complicated as this kid or (his) wants, etc. In a way you're kind of creating a system you're responsible for.

The last thing is: What I do appreciate about (this question) is that it does not assume a negativity around the folks who are on the less privileged side, because there's certainly a variety of both positive and negative experiences on both sides. I know a few people mentioned that on the wealthy side, families have challenges about being happy. Not that I quote Prince all the time, but a thing that he said was “wealth doesn't make you happy, but it funds the search.” So whether or not the second part is true, it was an interesting thing for him to say, being so famous. Lots
of people know him, and adoring fans, and at different times he’s had more or less wealth, but that's a different thing than what other folks say in that arena, right?

Andre: I wanted to speak to this framing question as well. When I'm listening to everybody address how much we decide to occupy an aspect of fragmentation and how much we decide to occupy this aspect of the whole, because they're all nested within each other and there's a tension between both of them. So, it's like you have to keep looking at details and keep standing back at the same time.

If you're on a sports team for example, it's great, you have camaraderie. But then you have to compete with someone else. Then when you stand back, you see that everybody has cooperated to come together to compete.

We have these nested hierarchies of these fragmented aspects. So I just wanted to address that we can feel whole or fragmented in class, in race, in economy and I see it as a balancing of those tensions. So how do we contend with that tension of what we're going to occupy, how deeply we're going to occupy it and how do we balance the big picture versus the details?

What does it look like to be in that tension all the time and not lose your mind, just jumping back and forth? (I see) the big picture, (but) I need to pay my bills. It's very difficult and so I'm really interested in the way that's framed.

When you (Randall) talked for instance, about the tree. The plant gives us a really good idea of that because it grows in two directions at once -- down into the earth and up toward the sun. So it's just such a good teacher for us in a way, but I'm not really sure what the lesson is. And it's actually in a way similar to your kid, you know, passing down knowledge and watching them grow up and become their own person outside of your knowledge. So this motion.

Pilar: I have some friends who just lost their home and just from what you were talking about, the complexity of being a human being through all these lenses.
They’re a young family, and they have two small kids. I went to see them as they were packing up to leave the United States and to give my condolences. The father had lost his job and was like, ugh, you know.

I get there and they're all laughing and having like a picnic, and packing up the boxes and I'm like what, what? I look up and I realize, they're having a garage sale, and I get it. They (say to me), “Isn't it great? We have got this monkey off our back. We finally stopped pretending that we could keep up these house payments and be living here, and we're going to go move back and be with family outside the country. We are so happy.”

It gave me a different spin on it. (I saw) that everybody's situation is different. I'm not saying, gee, everyone should lose their home to realize it. But, they didn't know how to get off the carnival ride. They did not know, and it was pulling them down, and pulling them down further, so they dealt with what was happening.

It was a real shock and they had to talk to their children, who are two little boys under the age of six, asking, “Why are we packing, what are we doing now?” Even the parents taking on the courageous view helps the children deal with this issue. It was so interesting because it helped me. My brother lost his home and his wife and children are living out of a one room motel, you know. And he doesn’t have that (perspective). He’s a different age, in a different part of the country. (There are) different things, different realities. (My friends) were trying their best because they know they have a long journey now to rebuild their lives. It brings economy home. For me it just brought it, just slammed in my face, and it's like here it is. Like okay, Pilar, here's a real close snip of it, here it is, this is what it looks like, different for different families. We are very complex. We are very complex.

Wilson: I think there are levels of the complexity, so when I hear what you're talking about I think of it as a slice, a very family-individual-oriented coming to grips with the nature of race, class, and money. But I think there are also societal slices and institutional trends that are going on in terms of race, class and money. I think that a lot of those trends, are overriding trends which have strong elements of race and
class in them in terms of how they function over many years based on the historical
evolution to (this point), of cultural memes but there's definitely a direction that has
been going on for some time.

What I think is still hanging on from that level are some of the concepts of scarcity
and what happens around scarcity. Communities in situations of scarcity become
more combative, become more willing to take from others and so forth. When there
is more perception of abundance there's less of that kind of conflict going on.

On a televised political debate that took place yesterday on the news hour on PBS,
the academic crew was talking about it and about surveys that have been done of
differences between liberals and conservative, and so forth and so on.

One of the things that they discovered is conservatives tend, in times of scarcity, to
be more willing to step up and say this is mine and sorry for you than liberals are
able to do. I think that's an interesting social psychological trend that kind of leads
into this discussion.

Yolanda: One of the thoughts that's been going through my mind as I hear people talk about
the societal level and the individual issues, or things we carry in our backpacks, is
how difficult I find it to make sense of all that, and to make my peace with it.

I think about being brought up in the '50s and '60s with more of all of the classes
benefitting more equally from this country's economic growth than we have in the
last twenty to thirty years. I grew up with an expectation of an increasingly good life,
certainly economically. For me, it feels like that's been turned on its head from the
macro level. I don't believe that I myself had much to do with changing the laws so
that unions no longer have much of a voice, or that the estate taxes changed, or that
the tax laws in general changed. Those are pieces that I don't feel like I've had much
control over.

I've also made some choices in my life-- career choices and life partner-- choices that
have had impacts in terms of making my current financial state more challenging.
It’s been hard for me to make my peace with both of those choices, in particular as they interrelate. There are the societal expectations, the effects of the squeezing of the middle class, and then the life choices that I made to discontinue with the corporate career that I had for 10 years – which, by the way I partially left because of racial reasons, so that’s another piece.

So now when I find myself saying hmm, it’s been a long time since I had one of those really fancy dinners, that’s one level. But a much deeper, more painful level is: Can I afford band camp for my child this summer? Can I do for my children--not only what they need and what I would love to give them--can I even meet what I was given is? It’s very hard to come peace with that. How much of that is my own agency and how much is not? All of the pieces get confusing and painful.

Then I come back to how privileged my life is. I work at a foundation. I live in the Bay area. I eat incredibly good food. I have many friends. It’s on and on and on, you know, the list of what I can be grateful for can go on endlessly. So it’s complicated and confusing.

Caitlin: I think I relate to what you’re saying in my own way. I’m in a time when I’m looking at making some changes in my life. I have a job that I love, and those changes might involve changing that job. So I think the vision of following my path is ultimately in hopes of finding more wholeness. There are fragments in my life that I feel are very present right now, I’m hoping to unify those or heal them in some way.

I find the question I keep dealing with is, how do you exist in the world? How do you work, how do you make a life for yourself that you believe in that is also financially supportive of you? For some of the choices I’m making, I might truly have no income, and that’s really scary. So that’s what your comment brought up for me, but I think it’s part of the path that we follow and that we choose, because we are trying to find a way back to wholeness and there’s compromises to make on the way.
I think it brings up a fear that I’m giving up an aspect of what has felt safe. How do you balance that with the decisions to really pursue the things that matter to you?

Vini: I wanted to share that I came to this country on a scholarship, the first in my family, first girl in my family to get to leave home and go away to school. So I went from being middle class in the Indian context to suddenly finding myself living day to day, wondering how would I pay for school, how would I get food, that kind of stuff.

(That context) shapes a lot and it’s such the underpinning of why so many of us in the moment of immigration make choices that have a class perspective. I’ve followed that trajectory of being extremely isolated. Coming out just isolated me more and more. And the isolation lead me to think, oh, if I just have money then I’ll be okay and I’ll at least be secure and I’ll be worth something because the world has not seen me for who I am. So that was a departure from wholeness.

I had this very successful first career in the tech and corporate sector. Then I longed for work that brought my whole being into it. I remember being absolutely joyful when I got to work with communities of color. I found in myself such a deep joy to be useful, and on a very personal level found that separating myself from what really I valued in the world for the sake of class privilege was not going to solve my problems. Then began this other journey, and at every juncture it was clear to me that as an immigrant woman in the US on my own, I really had very few other choices but to make sure to pay my bills. There was not a lot to fall back on. There was not a lot to fall back on.

I went through this moment where, long story short, I took an 80% pay cut in the middle of the recession to go do the work that I really believed in. It didn’t feel like a noble thing to do, it just felt like I didn’t know any other way to live anymore. If I didn’t do that in that moment, then I didn’t know how I could actually live with my consciousness. There was no moral high ground, it was simply the choice for me in terms of what I was put in the world to do.
Now I do work that I really believe in and I love, and I’m completely aligned in my purpose and vision for the world. There are months that I struggle to pay my bills, and the incredible power of it is that I’m in the work of mobilizing resources for grassroots organizers that are constantly having to be creative in how to squeeze money out of a stone, to pay for the things that nobody actually wants to invest in.

So where race and class and money really come up for me is anger. I feel angry that there’s so much privilege and wealth, and so much money going in the wrong hands, and yet I’ve chosen a role in the world for myself where I actually have to make an argument, I have to make a case for why the things that I believe in are worth investing in, while being broke.

So the thing I deal with at a very personal level with everyday is how do I do that strategically, clearly, persuasively, honestly with love and with courage, and not actually make it about my own oppression in the world because that’s not useful and it doesn’t move the money where it needs to be moved. It’s a choice every day, because sometimes I just want to be like, don’t you all get it? The people who actually are making changes in the world are starving. The people who are actually getting the shit done deserve your investment and stop making them have to grovel for it! That’s where I come from some days, and I have to figure out how I can make an argument for this work without being like, you privileged people, you just don’t get it!

Jillian: A lot of what I’m hearing makes me think of one thing that I am really working hard to do, and I think I’m pretty far away from it. I’m trying to find a way to live from a place of abundance, like you said, rather than scarcity. Sometimes I think that I’m hardwired to live from scarcity. As a kid I was always hoarding money and counting change, and I’ve always liked to save, and take in, take in, take in.

My husband is the exact opposite. If he has money he wants to buy something, he wants to take everyone out to dinner. For him money is something there’ll always be more of; we’ll find a way to make more, let’s just do, let’s just live our lives, enjoy ourselves.
So we have this kind of battle and we're learning from each other. I think a lot of it is just influenced by where we came from. I think my parents came from a place of scarcity even though they didn't express it when I look back on it now. My mom went back to school when I was six, so we were a sole income household. It was a struggle for my parents, they'd just bought a house. So there are a lot of things I think back on and I see where they were penny pinching. I think that's where I got this urge to hold onto something because I have to have something to fall back on.

Whereas my husband’s family has an interesting situation where they’ve had a mixture of more and less prosperous times. But when they do have money they are comfortable spending it and they enjoy themselves so much. It’s very different from how I behave but it’s a beautiful thing because they’re happy. They struggle sometimes, but when they have it they enjoy themselves so much. So it’s an internal struggle that I have because in a lot of ways I worry about things but as some of you were saying, I live in the Bay area, and you know, my apartment is small, but it’s a good apartment. I eat great food. And I just want to take a step back and think, you can’t stress out about these things, you have to find a way to move through this in a positive way. But, it’s just a struggle.

Randall: I live in East Oakland, and it’s a very ravaged community by almost any measure. I look at a black community where people are just barely surviving. I don’t think that’s what people are intended to do, and money will change that. I’m not saying oodles of money, so I think part of the complex thing is that I, and I think many other folks, when we think of money we think of the Cinderella story about the million dollars, and that’s not going to happen. But if I could, would I invest millions of dollars in that community and would it change? Absolutely. Would children get a good education?

There are just things that lock people into cycles of poverty and deprivation, and honestly, that’s what I see when I drive through East Oakland. It’s not whether they are happy and content where they are. I think folks try to do that, but isn’t the goal to thrive? I’m tired of seeing poor black kids, and that’s mostly what I see, or poor
black and Latino kids really struggling and just almost barely living on the street. I don't want that for them. I want them to thrive. I know that some of them could be doctors, some of them could be engineers, teachers, social workers, and that they're not being allowed to do that.

That's where I feel the black community is right now. It outrages me and it is about money and class, and above all, race, and I'll just put it out there. I don't feel that other communities are necessarily in the same place. Particularly in the Bay Area. There are other places where I've been where a larger groups of black folks are thriving and it's dynamic and exciting and wonderful, but I don't feel that in the Bay Area. I feel black folks are going down. I'm tired of seeing children who ought to be getting a great education and being setup to thrive in life, having something else happen to them. It's not about their intelligence. It's totally about their circumstances.

As a black person of relative privilege it's really, really hard for me to live in the Bay Area. It's really, really hard. Some days I dream of some mythical black community where everyone is solidly middle class, and this is what you see on BET all the time! We're dining in restaurants, and we're talking about the black nation, blah blah...like where is that? Because I don't know.

Anyway, sometimes it is just really soul-crushing for me. I just have to say it. Thank you for sparking that.

Andre: Yeah, I'd like to add a contour to that a little bit too, which is that since I moved here four years ago from Massachusetts, I've been living pretty much below the poverty line. I feel okay; I have lots of time to do the things that I want. I make most of my money from doing sex work—which we can talk more about later, that's a whole other money issue—and also from writing.

They're both types of work that I believe in strongly, that I think are "good ways" to make money. I also grew up in a complete understanding of abundance, and yet my parents never taught me anything about money and they were constantly going
through financial crises, losing everything they had. I have no idea how to manage money, it's just been a disaster most of my life.

So I've lived at this level and I try to do the things that I want, and I do live an enriched life according to my values, and yet: I want that money. It's not just about being happy and living in abundance; I want that money too.

I wanted to say that this aspect of the conversation brings up that want and that desire for money. And what is that inner feeling and that inner need for money? Let's say it's not greed; that it's not that I want it because I've reified money and confused it for real human value. What is that inner desire? What is that desire, and what is the right kind of current and conversation, and life, and action, and behavior that we are trying to enter into? That we long for? Just as we long for a lover, we long for money to come into our lives and we want to become new with that money. What is that?

CJ: I'm just going to say, I'm struggling a little bit with my own kind of outrage nowadays. I'm trying to figure out my relationship to this complex issue and to own my confusion and the light and paradoxes and everything that makes it sometimes hard to deal with.

It seems like I'm being challenged a lot to be my best self around all of this sometimes. Where I see that most is where there are so many people who have privilege, which is one thing, then there are people who don't even acknowledge their privilege, which is another thing, because they do a lot of damage in the world.

I live in a city and a neighborhood that's gentrifying, and I find myself saying, I have to find compassion. I really have to search hard and see. Someone was talking about the lack of love. At the same time there's that part of me that wants justice, I want the change, but I have to know the limits of my power.

I can't go there and say, and by the way, you have a lot of privilege! That's not going to change anything, right? Hardly. So how do I have an open heart and create a
space for (those who have privilege), and have that compassion? How can that compassion be part of what triggers people doing what they need to do so they can no longer just sit idly by and watch all this devastation? This is painful to look at, right? So I think a lot of people protect themselves. I want them to open up their hearts instead of protecting themselves so much. So I feel like it’s on me to open up mine, and I’m challenged by that.

Caitlin: I’ll say I feel challenged by that too, coming from a place of privilege. I don’t know the answer. The only thing that I’ve been able to do is not own it. Truly, I try not to own how others perceive the world. I did that before and it created so much pain, judgment, anger, and resentment. Like you said, the only thing that I’ve found that I’m able to do is just try and keep my heart open.

Magically, in the last year or so, I’ve been able to let it go and not own how someone else perceives the world, and it’s been so much better in my relationships. But how do you get someone to see? I still don’t know the answer to that.

Pilar: Andre, I so appreciate you bringing up the issue of desire, coupled with money, coupled with, it’s not an exchange of my values, I’m still a good person.

I actually desire money very much. I want money in my life. I make no qualms about that, no excuses, nothing. I’d know exactly what to do with a nice big sum of money and I think I deserve it. I think this country owes my family, who’ve worked in fields and picked meals, eons into the future. That was my Occupy Oakland sign, you know? I listed all the things my family has done and then had a line drawn at the bottom -- You owe me, I’m here to collect.

So, having money, you hold power. I hold myself up differently when my wallet is full. When I was getting paid six figures—not right now, but then—I loved my job. When I got to say I was a CEO of a foundation and I was being paid really well, I held myself differently. I know that. And I noticed white people listening to me differently and talking to me differently. I experience that not just daily, but hourly. It happened when I walked out this door. It didn't matter the age of the white person, I was
treated differently and people listened to me differently. If I noticed that I wasn't being listened to by a white person in the way I wanted them to I let them know and I dropped the hint -- here's my business card, here's who I am, I am responsible for money, now talk to me.

Money changes lives, it changes lives. My family saw enough tragedy to take you into, you know, infinity. I know how my mom and my grandma would've been single moms if they would've had money. They put up with a lot of abuse. I don't know if my dad would've put up with work, if he'd had money he wouldn't have had to put up with some of the abuse he put up with.

I have lots of desire for money. That's it! Thank you, thank you for giving me permission to say that. Thank you!

Andre: I'd just like to respond to what you said. It brings up a feeling in me. (There was a time when) I was getting angry at everybody around me for not pursuing their dreams or their destiny. And a really smart friend of mine said to me, well, Andre, I can see why you would think that, because you've always done the things that you've wanted to do, but you're poor. And a lot of people are doing the things that they don't want to do, but they have money. Then he said, but you want that money, right?

And I do. I noticed how not having money, but doing the things I loved, always tainted my interactions with other people by holding them to a standard of destiny, holding them to a standard of integrity that was unfair, that was unrealistic for them. So a value set, pursuing your values, can be just as corrupted for someone as that of having money.

Ludovic: Around 2003 or so, for about three years I did a study of mostly generation X-ers and some Y-ers around generational transitions and progressive nonprofit leadership. Basically it was to crystallize informal conversations that I was having when I would travel for work and have dinner with my friends who are mostly in
my generation, most of whom are working at nonprofits, and we’d talk about what was happening for folks older than us and those younger than us.

I thought, do a study, and we had nine focus groups in different parts of the country -- urban, rural, suburban, social justice types. What would happen with those generation X-ers and Y-ers is also what would happen with all the demographic changes happening in the country. So whatever happens with that generational core will determine what happens demographically in the nonprofit leadership, because the demographic changes are happening in that age core.

I’m 41, and many of us who have been doing this kind of work long enough know a variety of folks who were in the generation who thought they were going to win in that generation. Whether they were Black Panthers, Young Lords, the equivalent or nonequivalent, basically there was a generation who thought that they were going to win.

They didn’t have the time or ability to save money, but also they didn’t think they were going to have to, because actually they thought society was going to be better. Their parents told them about Social Security and a variety of stuff that substantially changed how much people had to save.

No boomer would ever say that their savings strategy was fundamentally changed by our parents telling me about Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. It is totally true—the boomers don’t say it because they can’t take credit for — but nevertheless, the thing is that what the pre-boomers were able to do with substantial social justice victories changed a lot of economic stuff, but the boomers’ victories were mostly not economic. They were identity- and constituency-based, I’m not trying to draw any better or worse, but they were not economically based.

So actually if a boomer made rational savings decisions through time it would mean that they don’t have money now because actually things are worse now than before, right.
For a variety of folks making career decisions in nonprofit work, a lot of the tension between the X-ers and the boomers was that X-ers were selling out because of our career decisions, where the X-ers did not feel in a position to say, “yes, actually I literally made this career decision to take a job to make more money because you do not have any money. I don’t mean in general, I mean specifically you—you, talking to you over the last fifteen years, convinced me that when this job came up I had to take it because I did not want to end up with my career like you.”

So this was a conversation that boomers and X-ers could not have. Well you could have it but it would be your last conversation! So there was no conversation about this, and that was a huge thing, especially amongst people of color because if the black X-er tells the black boomer, who was in the Black Panthers, I made this career decision to “sellout” because, basically, you lost. That’s why.

Within the progressive nonprofit community, it really illustrated the tensions, especially amongst the more radical parts. It could be amongst white folks with white women, or white career folks, or amongst you know, a variety of different places where people looked at their predecessors generationally and had to adjust and take ownership of career strategy based on what seemed to work and not work.

We may or may not be right as well, so we don't know yet. And obviously, the Y-ers and the next generation would be like, “I can't believe you made those decisions, they didn't work for you,” but whatever, fine. Contemporaneously, within like a 15-year period within purely the nonprofit community, you need a kind of wealth.

The other piece of it was specifically for nonprofits—they required at the very least having a spouse, by which I mean a traditional spouse. One way or another you needed somebody to be taking care of everything, including you, including the work so that you could throw yourself completely into the work and not do anything else besides that. So there was a lot of race, wealth, class and gender stuff.

The last piece of that was a bunch of X-er people of color decided not to be E.D.s for a variety of reasons: we either didn't have or didn't want to have the wealth, the
race, the gender, the class that the traditional E.D. stuff is based upon. It was to the point where sometimes, straight guys in these focus groups would say, I knew I could be an E.D., but that would require having a partner who’d be like XYZ, and I tried that and actually that doesn’t work.

I tried that and I realized that’s not the partnership I want to have because it’s not in line with my values, so I had to not be in the leadership of the organization that is aligned with my values.

In terms of wanting money, what I’m saying is that some of the contradictions are not just personal and not just society, but actually within our movement structures, so that they dig into our structures and not just the things that those groups are trying to change. They’re actually built into the groups that are trying to bring change.

Yolanda: Pat, I’m really cognizant of a few people around the table who we haven’t heard at all from. I was wondering if you could give them a minute before we break if they want to speak? Is that possible?

Patricia: For the conversation over lunch, the planning team thought we would ask you to consider: given our conversations about race, class and money, what does the Occupy/Decolonize movement have to say in this moment in history, if anything, to this conversation?

If we believe that this is a potentially significant moment and movement, are there things that the movement needs to know based on how it’s developing so far in order to avoid some of the pitfalls of race, class, gender, and the cultural elements that are getting played out in the movement, and how does that impact the larger world that we live in?
Patricia: I wanted to check in to see if anybody had something that came up in your lunch conversation that you think feeds into the larger conversation. And, I wanted to make a couple of observations about the flow of the conversation of the morning.

There are a few people who haven't spoken up and we want to make sure that you feel like you have the space. Then there's a little bit of a gender thing going on in that the men are talking more than the women. I just wanted to note that without judgment, it's just an observation. So if we can just notice that.

I'll make one other observation from my own experience. When I find myself in the place of, "gee, I probably should step back a little", one of the ways that I can facilitate that is to put on curiosity, because invariably, when I'm in a curious frame of mind somebody else in the room says what I was thinking. It gives me an opportunity to feel a resonance without having to say a lot.

I want to be clear that I'm not trying to dampen the enthusiasm from the conversation. I don't want anybody to feel censored by it. So do we want to make a little space for Rose and Kelley? I think you're the only two who didn't speak this morning.

Rose: Sure, I can jump in. Most of the conversation I was listening and fully present. I was listening for a place where I feel like I do have something to further the conversation, which is one of our agreements.

The one place where something came alive for me and my experience was after what you said, CJ.

The first thing I want to say is on the question of wholeness. My belief is that that original state of wholeness does remain. That isn't actually impacted by our life experiences on the deepest level. I feel like I'm always seeking practices that reconnect me with the wholeness within.
So when I walk out into the world and I feel a place where (I am) disconnected, for me that's often a spiritual practice place. I come at it through the lens of my spiritual practice.

So where does that happen? My background is growing up in a wealthy community as a Catholic, which meant I always went to church on Sunday. I always heard about Jesus talking about money.

I went to college at a Jesuit university in Washington DC, and every Friday I got on the bus and went across town. I worked with people who were trying to find medical care, who were pregnant women. My instinct to do that was motivated by my sight of the wholeness inside every human being. It didn’t make any sense to me that some people would have healthcare and some people wouldn’t.

So I felt like I was motivated to the work of social justice because of a recognition of the fundamental dignity of each person, that wholeness. It just didn’t make sense to me, getting on a bus going from Georgetown to 14th St. every week as part of my education that these two worlds exist. Such radically different realities didn’t make any sense based on what I knew in my heart to be true of myself as well as every other person.

When I graduated from college, having studied social justice theology, I was motivated to try to find a different way to live and to live simply.

The irony of my life is that’s when I actually inherited money and became a wealthy person with my own name. It was one thing when my parents were wealthy and that’s what I grew up in. It was quite a different thing when there was a pot of money that said Rosemary Feerick on it, especially at the moment that I’m deciding that I really want to seek another way of living.

So when I look at the question, where’s the money, race, class, where does that really get into dividing us against ourselves, I hear “ourselves” as myself, but I also hear it as our self, the human family.
I don't own my home. I gave away a lot of the money that I inherited. I have some money for my children's college educations, but as far as I can tell it's not going to be enough for their full education.

So I've made choices. I buy used cars, and all of our clothes are from a thrift store. I've made choices to live very, very differently. Now, I'm in Atherton [CA] raising my kids, and the truth is, those choices have come from my following a place of wholeness. The wealth of my life is that my children and I, tomorrow for my son’s birthday, are going to hike in the redwoods and stay overnight at the Sierra Club Hikers Hut. I mean how cool is that? We live in Half Moon Bay, we get to see the stars. That stuff doesn't cost money. Of course, it's determined by where we live, but that's the stuff that's free. We have a lovely life together in our family. Our home is small, it's simple, but it's a great home you know, so I know all this.

I drive over the hill, I find myself in Atherton. Suddenly my clothes feel shabby. My house feels shabby. I feel like, okay, our car is what it is, so boom, there's the impact right there, right? Suddenly I'm looking at people and I'm seeing them as rich people instead of this person or that person. My spirit knows better than that, but there's the impact both on how I see myself and how I see other people.

For me, for a long time, I sat in Atherton, really angry that I was there, and really judgmental of everybody else. We've probably got that transcribed in some of our earlier (money, class, and race) conversations, my process with that.

But I feel like in this moment I'm not trying to change anybody there. I'm really trying to change how I'm there. I'm not trying to change anybody else, but at the moment when Rose stops showing up, the moment when I don't bring myself to the table, that's a problem for me and that's the edge I'm working on. So when I hit that place where I have forgotten the incredible gifts of my life, that's a problem. My whole job is about walking with Christian people of wealth, that's what I do for a living. So when I show up in Atherton judging people, I mean...hello, like major professional problem!
I recognize this happens because of the culture we live in, but I feel like the fundamental reality, whether I’m working with people of wealth or whether I’m in a relationship with my partner—who is a person who struggles to pay the groceries each week—how do I see the person and see the wholeness, and see the spirit? And how do I bring my spirit? I do see that as beating the system, and those are the happy moments. All I have to do is watch my own thinking, you know. I don’t have to look at anybody else.

So why would I keep living in what I don’t think is true? My heart is open and can be offered, and to anybody I’m sitting across the table from. How can we build from there, from that reality? I feel like that’s my place that I’m working, but it’s here, it’s not in anybody else. So that’s actually what I was really working on.

Kelley: When I was driving here this morning I was thinking about money, race and class. The first thing that came to mind was gender, just because that’s not in there, but also because race and class for me haven’t felt like they’ve affected me that much, and I think that’s a huge privilege.

In college I did some identity studies and we studied whiteness and how whiteness can seem like a nothingness or a normalcy. But to me it feels empty. My family has had wealth. I was thinking about the comment about being in the ghetto, and I feel like my whole life I’ve wanted to walk away from wealth because it seems so empty and damaging. There was so much manipulation and control that was around wealth. So it’s just interesting when everyone is talking, I’m thinking about how I have been thinking a lot about wanting to have a simpler life, doing what I love, and working in what I love instead of trying to accumulate wealth, which I think for a lot of people is their goal. So I thought to share that as a perspective on being white.

Patricia: I would like to step in and take off my facilitator hat for a minute. One of the things that is striking to me, what I’m holding is a tension between the personal; how do I build my own capacity for compassion and see everybody through a lens of love, and generosity, and the system which is really messed up. Individuals participate in
those systems, so how do I have compassion for the really wealthy person and address the fact that the system is such that they will probably get wealthier and wealthier and wealthier, and it will continue to be on the backs of poor people, people of color, marginalized people, in many different ways.

So that's a challenge that I really live with. I don't have any wisdom on that necessarily, but it feels big...I experience people wanting to either address systemic change or build compassion. But is there a pathway that holds both of those things? It's just a question.

Ludovic:  I've been working on systemic change in my own local community, and in doing that the system has come more into evidence for me. I'm amazed at how blind I've been up until now to the structure of the system and its impacts.

The current currency system that we function in is based on debt, scarcity, and interest. And foundational to almost every major religious belief, interest is an evil thing. It's been recognized for that—particularly compound interest over a long, long period of time. Our whole currency system is based on debt. It's based on fractional reserve and other kinds of things which essentially are promoting this pulling the resources into and amassing it into the Federal Reserve and other places, and bonds and other things which are actually dragging the resources out of communities, creating this overall sense of scarcity.

We swim in that water often without recognizing its impact on us, so we attempt to find ways to survive within that and to maintain other kinds of ways of relating to one another. In this analysis, we begin to realize that there are other ways of fashioning currency systems, and we don’t even have to talk about socialism and capitalism. We can talk about traditional currency systems that are about caring, are about a valuing those caring institutions that our current system does not value, and are about building up the community and helping everyone in the community.

Most of us, we haven't even thought about it and thought about how we can change them. There are incredible movements going on all over the planet and every time
there’s an economic crisis the creativity in local communities to change those systems is amazing. Such creative ideas come out of it that most people have no sense of, or they get scared away from because someone calls them a particular name or...So as we attempt to find ways to deal with the system that we’re in, it’s important to see I think the larger context in which that takes place.

Vini: I feel deeply privileged that I get to experience those economic models that are different that are currently being created. The asset-building field in this country has challenged the fundamental racist notion that poor people don’t like to save. If you incentivize saving and make it easy to do, there’s no one that saves more thoughtfully than poor people. This is something that indigenous knowledge systems and so many communities in the global south have done for years.

Assets may not look like owning a home or owning a vehicle. It may look like jewelry or what I see more often than not is paying for your female child’s education as an asset, a lifelong asset. It may not be a tangible material asset, but poor people have been involved in the creation of assets in our communities for a long time.

I just want to share a quick story with you. I was leading a workshop on asset development with people from all parts of the world, including my partner who grew up poor in a single mother-run household. Her mother, at sixteen, had two kids and worked three jobs. In a conversation around savings, where people were talking about their experiences with asset programs and policy change, it was her turn to talk. She said, “I don’t know anything about this field, but what I know is when my sister and I were ten, our mother started putting money in our bank accounts to match what we would save, and that’s how we learned how to save.” And to this day she’s much better at saving than I am.

It was really interesting. There was someone in the room that said that’s amazing, how did your mother know that? Where does she do her financial literacy training? How does she know to be such a good mother, essentially. And my partner’s response was, “in the laboratory of poverty.” That’s where you learn; where saving matters.
Caitlin: Harking back to your point about whether the desire to be compassionate and to do systemic change are both compatible: I had gone through a period where I really looked at how to make change, but now I have gotten to a point where, when I look at trying to affect anything systemic, it becomes so overwhelming and so daunting that I have to stop, because I go into depression. I know that so many people in this room are working with change on a systemic level and I think that's amazing. I have realized for myself that the best way that I can affect change is in the way that I live, in the choices that I make, and in the very small day to day actions, one person at a time.

I think that the idea of systemic change is so overwhelming, so it makes me wonder if the day-to-day actions matter? It's kind of like asking whether one vote counts—maybe, maybe not, depending on the system you're working in, right?

I just wanted to throw out that I love what you said, and yet I can't do it. I can only do what I can do, and hope that it makes some dent, some impact.

Andre: In connection with that is how we communicate who we are and what our identity is to others. One of the reasons why bringing sexuality to the table is really important is that – for some of us at least – there’s a choice to tell our employers and coworkers about our sexualities or we can just pass as heterosexual based on people's assumptions.

So in some sense there's a responsibility of yes, living well, living kindly, living compassionately, but also living *openly*, expressing and communicating what you think you are in relation to others and what they are in relation to you. I'm interested in this moment of coming out, whether it's as being gay, as doing sex work, as being a spiritual person, as whatever.

I'm interested in that communication aspect of race and class as well. How do we come out, even if it's something that's visible to others? How do we communicate and how do our communications and methods of communicating intersect? I think
the ground of all of it is compassion and freedom and kindness, and that there’s also the action of communication, the intentional action of coming out. I’m interested in that in terms of race and class as well.

Pilar: I really appreciate your saying that because there’s just as much in-the-closet with wealth holders and people in poverty. We get in drag because, oh yeah, you don’t want everyone to know how poor you are if you’re in the functioning working class anyway. So you dress up a little bit, you know, you might spend more money than you think because you used your credit card to buy those shoes you really can’t afford. So people get in drag that way.

Sometimes wealthy people get in drag and dress down, it’s all drag. And we’re in the closet. Nobody wants to admit they’re poor. Not a lot of people except the high, high ups want to admit that they’re wealthy. Caitlin took a chance with us and Rose and other people at this table took a chance because we’re creating a community (in which) we’re showing compassion to each other.

But it’s hard. I’m in a business of working with the people who’ve inherited wealth, where it’s very hard for people to admit that they are part of the one percent, so instead they pick up signs and march with the ninety-nine percent, next to Pilar, and dress down in drag because there was a fear, believe me. There was a lot of conversation around that piece of it. Oh, my God, I belong to this social justice committee, but now I’ve got to come out, holy crap. Pilar, what do I do? I get a lot of calls from friends who are wealthy saying holy shit, this is the time of reckoning, I’ve got to say something, I’ve got to be real.

From where I’m at, a lot of people are closeted and there’s a lot of pain around it. And there’s the whole facet of people not feeling safe. “Pilar, what if I tell people how in debt I am and how poor I really am? I can’t have my employer learn about this because they won’t trust me at work.” I mean this is real stuff. Anyway, I just wanted to have a place to say that.
Randall: About this question of human sexuality and coming out, I think about what Pilar said earlier this morning about wholeness, and money, class and race, because I think the coming out is a part of wholeness. I think we kind of downplay how much and how important it is to seek wholeness within the puritanical culture.

There are multiple clear identities, and I, as a gay man, I am in opposition to some of the other constructions of clearness, I just have to say that. When I was younger one construction was—and I think this is more of the illusion that reality—of wealthy, gay, white, free male, and that was not who I am.

It was like a cultural stereotype that pointed to a liberating path, but was actually quite imprisoning because there are large numbers of gay men, including white gay men, who become paupers by coming out and could not possibly live up to that sort of well-heeled, gay man sitting in an expensive restaurant or box seats at the opera, and all that kind of stuff. But a lot of that was the cultural stereotype if you aspired to success as a gay person. A gay man. I think it’s quite different for lesbians.

I imbibe some of that because that’s what, before I came out, that’s all that was on TV. There wasn't any breadth. It was just a tangled mess because there's the middle class, the upper middle class, and gay whiteness was a signifier for a kind of freedom and liberation from poverty or having to be concerned about what it's like.

If you come from a fractured jar, that image of being free from the concerns of life as a part of gayness can be very difficult because, you know, I think maybe we all come from fractured jars. I know that I do come from a very complex family history where I could not move through the world as a free, unattached person as the image of what I should be.

So I want to say again clearly it does have to do with race, but transcends race in terms of its imprisonment. It seems it imprisons a lot of gay white men as well because that image really doesn’t exist in a lot of people’s lives, but you have to keep up the appearance, in some circles, that that’s who you are. That is a kind of hell, a privileged kind of hell, but a kind of hell nonetheless.
Andre: Okay, I'll just say one more thing. There's a real connection too, then, also between sex and money, and they're both things that we don't talk about in polite society. I wanted to also just bring that here, this idea of taboo, and how the taboo of both remain very troubling and damaging for us. I don't just mean sexuality, I mean sex itself, unexamined and therefore is destined to be completely distorted. So I just try to welcome examining the intersection of those two things in my life as much as I can.

Vini: I am feeling a need to talk about foreclosures because they are perfectly at the intersection of race and class and aspiration. The aspiration to what should be, what is ideal, has come up a little bit in the conversation. The foreclosure crisis, what has taught us? What has it taught us about how our aspirations are shaped and how it's taken advantage of in a systemic way?

Also, the foreclosure crisis in the US reminds me a lot of displacement in my community in India, because it reminds me of poor people and people who get displaced always get scapegoated for not having been responsible, and therefore losing their land. We have an economic analysis of the foreclosure crisis and we don't talk about the race part of it as often.

Ludovic: I worked on a project called Closing the Racial Wealth Gap, where we tracked the bad environmental stuff, and then figured out, what's more important for the placement of people? Is it the money that they have or is it their race? And you usually find it's the race and the ethnicity of the people trumps their income.

That was when it really crystallized how different wealth was, separate from income. There are two groups of people that make no money—by money I mean salary or income—so there are two groups of people that have no salary. Really poor people make no money and really wealthy people make no money. When you try to put them together it's a meaningless thing because you're actually talking about two different and not-touching groups. Then there are the people in the
middle who have salary; some of whom also have some wealth. And there are others who have only salary and no wealth.

We were using income as a proxy for wealth. But income was only semi-meaningful because okay, that’s your income, for how many people? And are you renting or owning? Are you still paying for the house or was it already paid for? Did you pay for it or did you move in and it was paid for already? And it’s not just your household, meaning who’s literally in the house. How many other people is that income paying for? And is it paying for them renting or owning? Since we don’t collect any other data so we have to use income, but if we had any other data we would never ever use income at all because it raises too many other questions.

Working on that for a year was just mind-blowing just to understand the wealth piece. Then I went on to look at the various policies that help certain people accumulate wealth and others not, and what kind of wealth. The wealth gap is one dollar for whites to 10 cents for an African American.

Most African American wealth was in houses that were not fully paid for, so it isn’t the same kind of wealth as wealth that you have in a bank that you can actually take out. And that was all before the foreclosure crisis, because the non-liquid-people-of color-wealth was all in housing. And most of it was in housing they didn’t totally own. So almost all that is now gone because it might have been foreclosed and their half equity is now zero because they don’t get that money back.

All that was both fascinating and incredibly unnerving. When we’re talking about making a dent: It’s 10 African American cents to one white dollar. A cent would be 10 percent right now. That would be amazing, and still it would be 11 cents to the dollar. So it was incredibly impactful for me to understand the race piece of it, and to understand the class and wealth pieces.

Many times in the social justice community we are able to talk about income stuff, minimum wage stuff. Then unfortunately, the other part is called asset-building, which most social justice people actually don’t even know what that means. It’s very
important, but is it even accessible? I mean, I guess I’m in support of it. Sounds good, but only for some people. So even the framing of the way it’s talked about is inaccessible to most of the folks that would be needing to plug into the way asset-building worked.

Just working in that community struck me with how much I had missed by doing all my other work, the economic-justice-related and wealth-implicating work. None of us had the analysis to understand (the complexities of) wealth, so part of the work we did wasn’t that good.

Pilar: Chris Rock said something very funny, was about rich versus wealthy. Rich is the shit you can lose in the crack game, but wealth is something, oh how did it go? You can go drop money out of planes, but wealth is something you can’t get rid of. You can’t get rid of it. Thank you, Chris Rock, that’s how it feels!

Quick comment to what you were saying, Andre. I really get the connection with sex and money because women have been a part of the sex industry called marriage for a long time, a long time: Rearranged, or prearranged, excuse me...and rearranged! Prearranged marriage, and you know, homelessness and such.

I remember a time in my life when I was homeless on the streets and I remember sleeping with somebody so I’d have a place to sleep that night. There wasn’t even sex involved, just that I slept with someone the night because it was so damn cold. So sex and money, the currency that women have had to deal with, hell yeah, that’s a real topic, yeah.

Randall: I know I’ve said enough, but Andre, I have to say it’s a little mind-boggling to me. In some ways, I often think of sex work as fraught with peril because of the things that Pilar was saying. But I think what you’ve tried to help us do is celebrate that. I don’t want to interpret for you, but it seems to me you’re saying something a little different about that. I have a feeling that your explanation would take a bit of time, but it is a fascinating part of what you’ve been saying.
So I've been puzzling through that as you've made your couple of comments. I think I get what you're saying and it's hard for me to bring it into this conversation that makes sense to me, I guess is what I wanted to say.

Andre: Thanks for being open.

Randall: And that's not a moral comment, I'm just curious about it.

[Editor]: The conversation raised the issue that philanthropy came about as a result of economic injustice.

CJ: That really resonates with me because on some level, I feel deep down that philanthropy is a kind of safety belt to keep people at peace, but at the same time it's also this tremendous opportunity if you can really get people to get to a place of transformation that I think starts more personally, but then triggers societal transformation.

So I have to believe in this crazy model of change and to say yes, I know some people use it as a safety belt, but if there's any way I can tap into its potential, do something different, I feel responsible for doing that, for being there to represent and push that.

So yeah, it's a struggle.

I want to add to the wholeness thing, because another thing I'm struggling with, where I feel my wholeness being chipped away at, is very much at the place where money, race and class come together. In ways it damages my relationships with people I care about.

I have a friend and she inherited a house. I've been close to homeless, and she's never experienced that, I know. She cares really deeply about me and we care about each other, but I think that there's some kind of missing piece there and I don't know how to fill it in. And it's really sad in some ways.
Why is this conversation of money, race and class keeping us as true human beings from having a deeper connection to each other when all the other elements are there? It’s really kind of sad.

Randall: I do resonate with what you said about philanthropy and I’ve worked in it almost eighteen years now, so I’ve put up a firewall—not to think about the “robber baron” thing, because that will drive you crazy. I can’t afford to be any more crazy than I am.

I’ve worked with the Haas Junior Fund. The Haases are old, old wealth and they have been trained very well to minimize and diminish this huge gap.

Every once in a while I feel like I’m a retainer. Ironically, it’s in the times when they are trying to be kindest. They involved us when their mom died, you know, she was a grand lady of San Francisco. They invited us all to the funeral or memorial service, and they invited all of her household staff, and it became clear that we were all sort of all like retainers together, in way that they had no consciousness of. We were kind of beloved retainers.

When I worked at Tides, which is mostly new wealth, I had people tell me I was a servant, rather than a partner, and not engaging me in the conversation. They would just make a decision to do that because they could, and because it was their money.

It was not so long ago that my family members were retainers, and so I have a lot of sensitivity around that. And it’s that world of privilege and reminder that...as a matter of fact... I don’t come from a family of wealth in the way that a few people were saying it. I come from a family of high income, but always three paychecks away from losing that high income.

It’s that contradiction in the face of wealthy of people that really gets me sometimes, and then I have to go away and repair my firewall and go back to doing the good
work. But that’s what I find over time that will probably make me not want to do what I do right now.

Just one other quick story: When I was at Tides they made you go—if you’re a philanthropic advisor or higher than that—to a training around the psychology of wealth. It would be great if there were other social justice people there, but there aren’t. They’re people from Merrill Lynch and places like that, who are professional advisors, and their stuff around wealth...they’re not the folks you want to be in the room with at the same time.

But what the training is: You’re trained in understanding the multi-generations of wealth, and the psychological issues that come with those different generations. The first generation creates it and they’re hard workers and they have kids who are not so committed to it, and then the third generation... They’re all of these really authentic, horrific things that happen to people of wealth, the psychological things that scar them...and this is what you go through in these real life case studies.

The attempt to be sympathetic and understanding of that, and the juxtaposition to my own life...I have to say after a day and a half I left, because I could not find it within me to be sympathetic. I wanted to be sympathetic, but then on the other hand I just don’t live in that world. The whole thing was a bizarre experience. I came away with an authentic understanding of real life struggles people are going through, but I couldn’t really go there in some way. It was just really difficult.

And that’s how I feel about this. In some ways, I feel really sympathetic and there’s a divide I want to cross, but it’s really difficult for me. So instead I blur. I pretend that we’re all the same.

CJ: I really want to walk toward wealth, I really do want to embrace it more. I want to feel what it’s like not because I care about the money, but because I want to perceive the freedom it buys and because I want to be able to do things without becoming homeless. There’s a part of me that is maybe naive, but I feel like if I actually walked with and embraced wealth, that the wealth wouldn't change me, I'd change the
wealth; that I’ve learned enough in my life that I could hold that and not lose my integrity and my humanity. But am I fooling myself thinking that?

I mean, maybe I am fooling myself in thinking it wouldn’t change me and I wouldn’t be CJ anymore.

Andre: I wonder in conjunction with that: I don’t pretend to know what it’s like to be someone who is very clearly not white, but in my town growing up it was very obvious that I was not like everybody else because my dad was very dark-skinned, he had a thick accent, he was from Syria, I didn’t play sports. So everybody knew my weird last name. It was not Smith or whatever, and I often wanted to just be completely white.

I’m wondering what the parallels are between wanting to be wealthy and wanting to be a different race, wanting to be white. Because one I’ve gotten over. I definitely don’t fantasize about being red-haired anymore, or being Irish in small town Pennsylvania. I’ve become very comfortable, I think because a lot of people think I look cute. I’m comfortable with the way I look. But it makes me wonder, that teases out a difference between race and class for me. So I’m just interested in that as well.

Vini: CJ, I’m just nodding because what you said resonated with me. We work with a savings group of rural women in Nepal and in India, women who make less than a dollar a day and have three million dollars in rotation in their own savings. And it’s the most profound education I’ve ever had in money and dignity.

I remember talking to one of our colleagues in India, a rural woman there who said, “you know, the first time I got to take the bus and go to the bank to put money in my bank account, I felt really proud. And it wasn’t that I had money in the bank that made me proud, it was that when I walked into the bank and they looked at me like I was somebody, that’s what really made me proud.”
So it’s like that journey toward wealth you were talking about, it’s like in a world that ascribes so much meaning to that, it is in fact a journey of becoming a person from being a non-person.

Patricia: So what would it look like to create a system where we value different things than money? What if being “somebody” was framed by I don’t know...

In some communities it's in how much you've given away, or how many kids you have. If we just set different markers, what would that look like?

John: Don't we live in reputational currency? I think that's what you're talking about. In reputational currency...credibility as a human being is a kind of reputational currency. Some people are more credible than others and it builds up credibility in the same way. So I think we're there already, but we don't see it because so much has been attached to money and all the power has been attached to money. But if there's no money, then reputational currency is huge.

Andre: In that regard we're creating an exchange value for everything about ourselves with money, right? Black people are worth less than white people, gay people are worth less than straight people, straight people are worth more than gay people, fat people are worth less than skinny people. There's always this exchange value happening with people when you try to get a job or whatever. So there are aspects of our identity that play into our reputational currency, and yet there's always this exchange value for the dollar. So I think the question between these two is how to pull those apart.

Ludovic: It's at least a question for me about whether humans should be valued differently or not first. Then the question of what other things should they be valued for? I'm not sure that I'd be able to pick a thing that wouldn't have intense collateral consequences. So that's one thing.
Then on the reputational thing I mean, I’m sure you’re talking about the one that’s untainted by reputation is basically built by what class you’re from at this point, right.

I went to an elite high school and the rich white kids were stealing all kinds of radios because their parents didn’t buy them a nice car with the nice radio option. So they would steal radios, nice radios, to put in them. None of the black and Latino kids were doing that, because we could steal the radio, but (none of us) had cars. But those (white) kids had better reputations than us because their parents, their dads could vouch for them, including when the police would come. So anyway, I’m also not certain how you can craft a reputational piece that’s only based on what that person has actually done in their lifetime.

Then the last thing I thought that’s kind of connected to that—I’m challenged when we differentiate between inherited wealth and earned wealth. Because if by earned wealth you mean people who earn that wealth. Most folks who work hard didn’t earn any wealth. The wealthy may have worked hard, but that isn’t why they earned the wealth, because most people who work hard didn’t earn wealth. There was some other reason why their hard work enabled them to earn wealth as opposed to most people who work hard and didn’t earn wealth. So the hard work was not what got them the money, because that obviously is not what gets you money.

Wilson: I don’t think that it’s an either/or thing. I think it is a both/and thing. I don’t think that we can totally get away from comparing ourselves to one another, and money gives us a way to do that, but there are other things that also give us a way to do that. So there are multiple comparisons that we make.

I think if we start from the point that every human being is unique, every human being has a talent or something that’s special about them, but on one particular measure, someone may be faster than another. Someone may be stronger than another person. Someone may be more musically talented than another person. So it’s not that we shouldn’t make those comparisons, but that in particular instances,
at particular times, we can make those comparisons as long as we continue to recognize that every human being has something special, has some talent and something to contribute.

Therefore, because you’re not the fastest person in the world, that doesn’t mean that you don’t have something significant of value to contribute. It’s about respect and recognition. There are very poor communities in the world where everybody is poor, so they don’t use wealth to compare one another. There’s tremendous happiness that’s there, and community strength, and integrity and so forth, those people are happy together. But when someone who has comparatively tremendous wealth enters into that community or becomes part of that community, that’s when conflict arises within those communities. So if there’s less of a gap, those communities are generally happier than other communities where the comparisons are made and the gap is wide.

I don’t know if we can get away with totally not making comparisons, but I think it’s important to recognize that there’s not just one predominant way of making those comparisons.

Jillian: Just to take what you said one step further, acknowledging the differences between races, and genders, and whatnot: Within each category there are differences, because for some white people, the experience of whiteness may not be bland.

Something I’ve had trouble with is the black experience. I don’t think I fit into what I think the stereotypical black experience is, and that’s a conflict that I’ve had with people before.

People would say things like, “you think you’re white,” or, “you hang out with too many white people,” or, “you don’t spend enough time doing black things.” And my understanding is that I don’t necessarily know what that means. I understand what that could mean for this person or that person, but it doesn’t mean it’s my reality or my identity. I think that’s something that people should definitely be aware of.
Randall: I feel pretty strongly that I do want to live a race-full life, and the key for me is not having an essential notion of that. I don't have a strict definition of what black is, or that if you don't fall along with it you fall off of it. Although I've had folks in San Francisco testing the boundaries, people who I perceive as white telling me they're black, but all right, culture is like a banjo and you play some chords if you want to and others you don't.

Speaking to folks of African American decent, if we could agree that we were going to be kinder and gentler with each other, and give permission for there to be multiple kinds of blackness for those who want to identify as black, we'd be better off.

I would say, in terms of the larger discussion, that if you don't know what it is that you want or value then you can't overcome a dominant system that has put in place that you're valued by money.

Since the '80s the culture of greed has been over the top in the US. Someone could write a bestselling book called *Greed* and be cheered on. The culture of greed means that if you have money and you have wealth you're very valued, and if you don't, you're ranked in that system (accordingly).

I personally think that's what we have in the United States as the dominant culture, and I want something else to replace it. So I’m struggling with what that is. I did my dissertation on King and I really do believe in him, and his thing about human potentiality, meaning that every person has something in them to reach, and it’s a lifelong journey to reach that point. King’s concept of The Beloved Community is about supporting people to reach that, to continue on that journey of potentiality. That's what I want to be about.

I don’t know what everybody's potentiality is, but I know it’s not just about money. Even though I think thriving and having a sufficient income is a worthy goal, that shouldn't be the only goal.
Rose: There’s a place where I got stopped in the conversation, so I want to acknowledge that: What you were just saying about that place of The Beloved Community is absolutely what I feel like motivates a huge part of my life.

I was really struck as I heard it, so I want to check out that I heard it right. When you (CJ) spoke (about) a friendship where there’s something that doesn’t connect that has to do with money, (and then) when you (Randall) spoke to walking out and not being able to hang in in that room, I felt like that was the place I wanted to come back to because I feel like the question that I have—to take your example – is, what would’ve enabled you to hang in in that conversation?

I don’t even mean in the way it was setup. Maybe the conversation could be setup differently, but there was something there that made it so you couldn’t stay. So what was that? And what would enable you to stay?

The partnership that I’m in right now is with somebody who’s in a very different class and financial reality day-in-day-out than I am. I feel like my whole daily walk with that person is a bet that we can cross that whole thing. So I feel like, when I hear the places where it can’t be crossed, and I’m not saying you were saying that, what are we here for? I’m in the conversation because I want to find out how we can hang in the conversation, so that no matter where we’re coming from, we can find a place to meet as human beings, and to move through psychological distress to build another kind of community.

That was a place where I got stopped. I mean, do I believe it’s possible?

Randall: I’ll just say it strikes me in this moment as a diversity conversation—people think that they’re having one conversation when they’re having another. For me, there are diversity conversations, and those are like, about chocolate ice cream, and vanilla ice cream and strawberry ice cream, and which do you like better? Then there are conversations about racism or about taking in the contextual history, and justice and culture. I’m not able and not willing personally at this limited time in my life to
have a diversity conversation with a person of wealth in that way without them acknowledging or having some inkling...

I know people in this room do that work—I couldn't do it—about how you came to be a wealthy person.

You've articulated a lot of struggle with how you've dealt with your wealth. And my observation is that the wealthy people I know just a little bit haven't done much of that work. Therefore, if there needs to be an authentic conversation where I come to a deeper appreciation of the very real psychological and other factors of being a wealthy person, there's got to be some acknowledgment of that difference. We can't assume that I'm a listener and I'm on the same level as you. We're just not. So that's one part of it.

The other part is, just developmentally, I as a religious person would say God's grace is going to do a lot more work on me because there's just a lot there to be healed. I was mostly telling the story about my inability because I am in need of healing around my issues of wealth, and income and race, and I'm in pursuit of that healing, but it has not happened fully yet.

Yolanda: When I first read the whole topic about wholeness, race, money, and class, I didn't even know where to start. Because to me, those three not in the same dictionary as wholeness.

So it's really helpful to hear the idea of other places, other forms of being and seeing the world, and forms of realities and individual wholeness. In my life experience the idea of an individual becoming whole, wasn't...isn't even a topic of conversation. It's not of interest, perhaps. I don’t know, it’s not on the radar screen for me. I’m not at all clear whether that’s good, or bad, just that it’s bringing in a thought that I don’t quite know what to do with.

I attach that to the American experience, in that our histories and our stories we tell about ourselves have been so off-the-charts individualistic. I don't know how
wholeness looks in a world view that is more communal, more collective, or whether that helps; whether that world view helps create or define wholeness in any shape, way or form.

I was also taken by the notion of bridging the gap between people, particularly around issues of class. I have the same observations that I heard around the table: the odd place you're in when working in philanthropy. Randall and I were talking over lunch about how people in philanthropy are very determined to not talk about that position. That's hard; I've tried to bring up that conversation in various different ways and it's a very difficult thing to make any sort of headway on it, which is one of the reasons why I so appreciate these conversations.

I have seen and had a bit of a taste of how my husband grew up. I could take a picture of where my husband grew up and a picture of where my cousins grew up, where I stayed for lengths of time, and you'd think they were next door to each other. They happened to be in Lima and Mexico City, but it was as if they were next door.

However, I grew up here in the US and my expectations are very much middle class American expectations. And when I try to have conversations with my husband, even with that my knowledge of his background, some of our expectations seem as far apart as Mexico City and Lima, frankly.

The only sort of hope that I hang onto is a combination of the bond of the spirit with a willingness to continue to explore. It's not just walking the down the beach by yourself, but holding somebody by the hand as you walk.

Vini: In the spirit of making our assumptions transparent, after Yolanda spoke I realized that this whole time I had been reading this wholeness question as a question about justice, that's where my mind took it. So I didn't even read it as an individual wholeness question. I read it as a how do we go back to our systems of justice. Then when you brought that up I was like oh, yeah, there's this whole other thing. So I want to say that to say that culture is always in the room too. In Hindi there's word
called *sanskriti*, which for the sake of my nephews and nieces that are growing up in the US I’m always trying to find the English word for, but I haven’t yet. It’s like “culture” in a very vague form, but it’s really like your belief system that is shaped by where you were raised. And I think that just creates a whole set of assumptions...

The other thing I want to share is about philanthropy. I think internationally, we try to grapple with power more readily because we have to. When you start dealing with international grant-making, you don’t have a darn choice but to deal with the power imbalances. So I think there’s a level of readiness.

But even there, there’s an interesting thing that happens. I find myself in spaces where people will say, “We want to bring people in different sectors of philanthropy together to have a conversation, because some people are bringing resources to bear, and others are bringing knowledge capital to bear.” And sometimes it’s a fake conversation because the truth is that the knowledge capital is such a wonderful aspiration, but the knowledge capital is never in itself sufficient. Wealth capital or financial capital always dominates the discourse. So I just want to dig a little deeper because we have a rhetoric about it, we have a rhetoric around you’re my knowledge partner and I will bring resources, and together our philanthropic partnership will create social change...and sometimes we’re lying.

Andre: But it’s funny that you say that, organizationally. It’s funny because you were thinking of justice when you thought of wholeness. It’s funny that you should say that the wealth capital, the financial stuff always dominates the knowledge capital because when it comes to *individual* wholeness, it’s the opposite way around.

Pilar: I’ve been thinking on something since we talked about foreclosures, something I had a white colleague say to me not too long ago. “Pilar, why do you think so many Mexicans just don’t even care about their homes? I mean they buy them, they don’t work and then you know what I mean...they don’t work and why do you think that happens?” This was a real question.
And I said it’s because your people keep preying on my people. And my colleague did not think that was funny. Oh, it was all I could do to keep from choking them.

It’s just really, really amazing to me because it’s 2012 and there’s a whole bunch of people that still feel that way about poverty, which really goes back to saving money and if you’re poor or something, you don’t know how to save money. My mom knew how to save money and my mom knows all that stuff, but if you don’t have money to save what the hell are you going to put in the damn bank account, you know?

So what if you save $5.00 that year? That isn’t, it doesn’t do anything for you. It’s going to take you a hundred years to save up for a car, so you don’t get a car, okay? You just don’t think about getting a car, and you don’t think about getting a house you know. You think of the most immediate things. There’s food, making sure you kids have diapers, and clothes and some shoes.

So I feel like I bridged that gap. I have a CD, and I have a savings account, I have a little retirement fund that I can worry about in the middle of this stupid market and all that shit. Then when my mom says, “How are things going honey?” I go they’re okay, mom, how are you? “Oh, we had a really good dinner. We had enough for dinner, thanks for sending the check, thanks for sending money to help us eat. The house is holding up really well, thanks for sending us money.” That’s her reality.

That's the reality I live with, and then there’s this stupid other reality that I want to be in because I want those money secrets. I want to know that. I don’t want to die not knowing what the hell the market is about. I want to get it, you know. I want to understand it, but I also understand the reality of my family. This is what it is over here and I know my mom would get it if we sat down and talked about it, she’d get it really well. I just wanted to share that, just wanted to say that.

Kelley: I have a lot of awkward conversations with my friends because I work at RSF and we talk about money all the time. We talk about wealth and changing the system, and I feel very lucky that I get to do that. But then I talk to my friends like oh, you should open up an investment account, and they go, “What’s the return? Oh, one percent?”
And they laugh! It’s just so hard to have those conversations and see people who, they can afford that, they can afford to buy organic, but they’re like “I don’t have enough money.”

I didn’t want to bring up work too much, but I work there 40 hours a week. Something that’s always is interesting to me: We have an impact investing portfolio, so all of the money, while at RSF, is invested in mission-aligned investments, and I manage the donor-advised funds. So when donors make a gift to us and they get a tax deduction. At that point it’s already a gift, and the money is being used for mission-related investments. But if we get a negative return, they get really upset about that. It’s just really…it’s just weird.

CJ: For me, everything relates to justice in some way, but it’s also about community, and community is so important on so many levels. Where I come at it is that wholeness is about pulling together parts of myself so I can be really centered, and be centered in a way that allows me to engage in community, and to define community and to build community. That reinforces to me that community is actually to protect me from some of the bad effects of the race and class things that play out.

So I have to start from myself, build my own reserves, create that community and that gives me a little bit of push through those other things that are out of my control. And I have to be realist in regard to where I can make change and where I’m just getting myself against the wall, and do what I can. But then that context of both being fortified and protected, but also not being cut off, you know, with the other people...so tricky!

Andre: That actually reminds me of something Rudolf Steiner talks about, if I may, which is how the Marxist system saw production, as something that was alienating a lot of times. Steiner looked into this and said well, actually, there’s this really interesting aspect of it...can we talk about that, which is that we’re making things for people that have nothing to do with our own lives. That actually has an altruistic impulse in it. It’s beautiful that we’re creating and producing for someone that is not ourselves. There’s a community aspect.
The real problem here is that we're working for our own living and no one is taking care of us, like it's not being fed back in. There's nothing being given back. So we work and work and work, and we put out, but then there's no structure which supports people also taking care of us. So we constantly have to “work for a living”, whatever that means. It's such a horrible term to me, and I'm trying to work for a living. It's so strange.

So the idea of community as something that allows us to actually see our work as giving and caring, instead of struggling and desperation. That’s that missing component that enlivens the work that we do.

BREAK

John: So, in order to change the world I have to change myself, right? And that energy will then change the world. That’s one theory of change. The second theory of change is we have to fix the system, so we're going to go work for good policy change and then we'll change people's lives from there. Those are two very different theories of change. In a way I'm over simplifying what was starting to unfold in the conversation between individual wholeness and systemic wholeness. How do we bridge the two or not? Do we have two theories of change that are so drastically different that there's no way to connect the two?

Andre: I'm curious about why you think they don't go together. For me they just were fine. So I just want to hear more.

Pilar: For me it's like a dominant culture white question to put the two together. It has a race sound to it for me, meaning you'd never think that a Latino asked that. I don't put them together because I think of money, race and class as presenting tragedy and difficulty and poverty, like that, yeah, I don’t know. The wholeness thing to me is selfish.
I don’t know that for me it means that, but it does mean, like for the two choices John gave us, that you said either do we address changing ourselves in order to change the world, or do we change systems. I definitely would go for changing the system because to focus on myself again feels really arrogant. That doesn’t mean I don’t want to change, but that’s why I look at changing the system.

But I don’t know if that makes sense. And it may sound offensive, and I wasn’t trying to make it sound offensive, but that’s where my thinking came from. Is the question putting wholeness together those two things, it’s just not a conversation I would imagine having in my community in that configuration.

Yolanda: There are a couple of different strands here that really resonated with me, and one of them was that word “selfish.” Searching for wholeness within yourself versus searching for some other word that’s related to community or collaboration. The more collaborative aspects would always take precedence for me and my family. In my family, it’s not even community, frankly, it’s family. It’s family. Family could be extended family, and then in my mom’s hometown, the entire extended family is the town. It’s confounded at that level. That is one piece. And, when I think of race and class and wealth in the United States they carry all those other, what I would say are basically negative, connotations of hurt and damage and oppression and all of those kinds of things. There’s not a bridge to get from there to wholeness.

Andre: I think then that my understanding of the wholeness is that, in my imagination, there’s a place where all these things do feel whole. There’s a place where economy can feel whole, where race and class can feel whole, because that’s what we strive toward, right? We strive for a sense of where race, class, and economy are not indicators of merely a fragmentation—of pain, of suffering. Because I am working very hard in my life to take that inner world very seriously, it has a reality to me. That imaginative world is very powerful in my life.

And that is a place where it is whole. Of course, we can say, “Well that’s just your imagination.” And yet that’s where all my ideas for action come from. That’s where
all inventions come from. That’s where all the things that seem real to us initially stem from.

So because there is that place where it is healed, that’s why the contradiction didn’t seem so stark to me in the beginning. That’s the realm where it’s whole, so I work toward the aspiration and the ambition of that world. So they don’t seem contradictory. It's a realizing what they really are in that sense.

When I read we are born into wholeness, which in some ways I absolutely see the disagreement with, and in some ways I feel comfortable with, I think well, at least a lot of us are born with the ability to imagine or consider a world where that is healed and whole and work toward it. So we’re working toward an imaginative reality. Does that make any sense?

So that’s why it doesn’t seem a contradiction. It only contradicts if I think that that world that is within me is somehow less important than all the stuff that's outside.

Yolanda: I hear your idea of imagination and that really resonates with me. From time to time, like when I was in college, I've been forced to read conservative writings, which I normally would stay away from. What struck me about them is their lack of imagination. For social justice you have to have this tremendous faith that things can get better; otherwise, how can you continue to work?

And that is a form of imagination. You can imagine a better world and you can work in steps towards that. So I can totally get that my personal reaction could very well be a lack of imagination.

John: One of the questions that has kept coming up for me all day long is why is it that money, if I just listen to the thread of the conversation, why is it that money is so antisocial?
Then I started to think maybe race and class as concepts are also antisocial concepts, so they're concepts that are created to identify, parse, separate all these threads.

Yolanda: And judge.

John: And judge. All the things that come along with parsing and separating, somebody is doing the parsing and separating...somebody had to create the concept that okay, that's that class, we'll draw a little line around it and create a separateness, which we then can observe, study, whatever.

So I guess I'm almost thinking that they're polar opposites. Wholeness and the concepts of money, race and class are just total polar opposites. The intention of wholeness is this picture of wholeness and unity, while the intentions of money, race, and class are about antisocial, right? The antisocial forces that divide and separate us. So the bridge looks quite different now suddenly.

Caitlin: I have a question that's been on my mind...we talk about how we value diversity, and diversity even within one culture. Kelley talked about white as being boring, and Jillian talked about her experience with the black culture, so I'm thinking about the different experiences within any given culture. And I think we came to a place where we value having every culture. The question that's been on my mind is, are we even ready for integration? Are we ready to accept a peaceful coexistence with cultures moving back and forth?

Pilar: I think it's a reasonable question, totally reasonable. We don't want to imagine that as progressive or liberals, that we might not be, you know?

John: Might not be ready.

Pilar: Might not be ready. I think it's a super reasonable question.
Ludovic: The “whole” piece for me is a question about who or how many folks, or what unit we’re trying to make whole. If you think you’re born into wholeness, that’s incredibly individualistic, because your assumption is, if it’s about the individual being whole then you’re saying the moment they’re born they’re whole. But in fact, at this point you can tell life trajectories by the wealth of people’s parents. You can already tell what’s going to happen before somebody is born, actually.

So it does seem problematic because it ignores the institutional structures that both operate on people as they live and pre-operate on people before they are born, the chances of people’s life outcomes are pretty set before they’re born. Whether they become the one that gets out or the 99 that stay? They may have some control over it, but the chances are going to stay is pretty set and not that changeable by those hundred people.

Rose: I operate with an assumption that the individual is not distinct, so I feel like any time I am working with myself or somebody else, that individual is a part of a family, is a part of a community, is part of the school or whatever, so I don’t think it’s possible to tease it out. The work that I do really does come through the doorway of the individual, but we also are very clear that when we can transform the relationship with money at the individual level, that moves into the community, that moves into the system.

As we were talking about with investments, if you can get free of whatever that need is to hold on, to keep yourself invested in the very thing that you’re trying to change, it doesn’t make any sense. I do think there are people who hold onto investments and then they get active in shareholder activism as a tool for change, that’s a totally different story. So I do feel like there is a journey of freedom. I actually think wholeness for me is very tied to freedom. But when I’m out walking either with myself or somebody else, it’s because I really see that person as a part of the community.
So my challenge is to show up and walk a different walk, so I stand inside of that community, I often think of myself as a question mark. I just stand there as a question mark. I’m not there by myself. I’m not a solo flight because I’m standing inside a community, you know what I mean. Okay, so that’s one piece.

On my own journey of trying to shift my inner psychological spiritual journey and social journey with money, I really feel like the places where I feel most whole are when I’m in a community that is whole. So for example, there are times when I’m in meditation at the monastery that I feel whole. But equally my family and I participate in the work of an organization called Be Present. What I love about that work is I feel like through it I experience what it looks like for people from such different backgrounds to come together and celebrate life. My children get to be in there and see there’s something different that they’re definitely not seeing in Atherton. I feel whole there.

I feel like this is the way it’s supposed to be, so I have a feeling of coming together. For me they’re really not separate, because you talked about that connection. But I would just say those moments where I feel like I’m going to help the community, where everybody is getting something of what they need, both materially, but also spiritually and relationship-wise, I feel happy in those places. So, for me it is definitely connected.

For the second part of the question—how do we harness money, race and class?—in a lot of my work with money, that’s exactly what I’m trying to do. Like how do we move the money to support the building of a different world? That’s where my energy is, where there really is more justice, basically. I just think they’re connected and that is a place for individual joy.

CJ: Indulge me a little bit. I’m trying to think of this individualism-collective thing and about where values are being challenged in philanthropy. My mom modeled philanthropy for me, and giving. So I got in there with a sense of philanthropy as really being about a collective, right? Where people had an equal incapacity, a lack of capacity to give, but gave anywhere, right?
Then I go into the real halls of philanthropy and it's all about the individual, making the individual feel good, make them feel like they're supporting something. And the collective kind of gets lost in that.

There were times though when I was all for the democratic model. And now there are times when I'm not sure that it's always one way. There's some inherent value in democracy, but I'm not sure that it's always the best way to get to where I want to go. If there's really an inspired individual who's an amazing human being in spirit or something like that, I want to tap into that.

Sometimes when I'm in a big group, democracy is a lowest common denominator thing that happens. That actually slams down innovation and creativity and everything like that. So it's not (always) something I would want to support.

Rose: What did you mean when you said that in the philanthropy world, I just wanted to open it up a little bit more for conversation, it's like to make the donor feel good or something? Or just what your experience has been?

CJ: I was contrasting to the experience of elevating that person as a giver, when it was about meeting the needs of the community. As opposed to when you get into organized philanthropy, where we have it built into our structure to recognize the donors, and make people feel good about their giving. It's so much more focused on that safety thing too—give people release, give capitalism a release in terms of the money going out there and placating the masses. Also it helps the wealthy deal with any guilt they might have and make them feel really good about the fact that they're giving anything away.

So that's what I meant by this kind of focus on the individual and their ability to just feel good and free in this system that's very oppressive to other people.

Ludovic: As a person of color working in philanthropy, working with individual donors, I've appreciated when my donors are pretty savvy on racial justice and other stuff, and
that's wonderful. That changes as I work with larger circles of folks who are not that or haven't had that opportunity. Also I'm trying to figure out when is my goal a long-term one, when I want to do something that's going to get you to give more and more strategically over the next thirty years versus when is there a crucial opportunity and my action is to maximize your giving now.

I'm more comfortable with myself when I try to figure out which one of those I'm doing at different times with different folks. Doesn't mean it always works. But in terms of trying to hold myself true to my values, I do try to differentiate those things because success is different in those two examples. And the expectations of the folks that I'm trying to get that money to go to are also different, and it's a conversation that I can have with them too.

It's incremental. Most of our victories actually require more money because of the victory. So organizing in advocacy, it is all long term. There are no huge victories on the horizon. You'll always need more money later and more buy-in later than now.

**BREAK**

Jillian: Something I'm coming back to is related to what Caitlin was saying earlier about the idea of systemic change and how it's overwhelming. I feel that way a lot.

I did a permaculture culture design course about two years ago, learning about permaculture and our existing systems. And I almost had a meltdown just thinking how everything is wrong, everything is falling apart. But one thing I'm realizing is these kinds of conversations or thinking about what you do and how your actions can bring that in service to the world, I can think of so many people in my life who have never even contemplated that, who have never even started to have that kind of conversation.

I think of different friends I have who are very upwardly mobile and maybe they volunteer at this nonprofit or they'll start to donate to this, and for them that's it; they've made it and they're doing it. Somehow I'm going to find a way to have these
conversations with people and I feel like that can be my first step perhaps toward some sort of systemic change. It just hit me.

Pat:   Oh, great!

Kelley:   That's going to be exciting.

Randall:  That's a thoughtful step.

Jillian:   Yeah, this is just such a foreign conversation for some people.

Wilson:  I don't know for sure, but I think some of this problem is, to some degree, unique to the United States. Maybe it is because the homogeneity of cultures in a lot of other countries, there are cultural institutions that help to forward that collectiveness and that sense of belonging. And because there are so many diverse people and cultures here in the United States that come and mix together, there are less clearly identified cultural institutions that help to bring that together.

    I mean the African American community particularly is this problem, because a lot of the unifying cultural institutions were what was destroyed and what we gained was essentially a reaction to the negativity in the larger society. There was pressure not to identify with what was the African American community in some ways. So there was a lot of destructiveness and difficulty there and very little unification for mutual benefit.

    The currency and money system heavily individualize the approach to how we interact with one another, and there are few other institutions or not enough institutions to begin to stimulate that collective sense of identity.

Patricia:   In response to that, the question that comes up for me is: Is it the United States or is it European? Because if you think about all the other communities in the United States, most of us have some recognition that there's another way to be in the world
and that the pressure to assimilate wasn’t to American culture really, it was to western white culture.

Vini: Yeah, I agree with that because the argument that the US is so heterogeneous that this is a problem that arises, doesn’t quite work when you look at India for example. It’s like we have like five hundred languages and you could go two villages away and be in a totally different cultural makeup, and yet pluralism is like in people’s DNA, that letting a thousand flowers bloom is a better way.

There is Northern dominance and all of that, but not to the degree that it is in the US. And I personally think that it has something to do with hegemony, but I think a lot of it has to do with the power of the market. It has a lot to do with how much our personal lives and our social lives are shaped by market versus culture.

Randall: Yeah, I think I agree with that. In terms of running off with individualism, the US is one of the worst places for that, worse than other places in western Europe that seem to have more of a community kind of thing going. So I think there is something else, and probably the market, that has pushed us into that. Even some forms of religious experience emphasize the individual...

Wilson: I just want to emphasize the religious experience point of view, because a lot of US western culture comes out of some Judeo-Christian view about the “chosen people,” so who’s not chosen, and also the sense of if you’re doing well it’s because you deserve to do well. You know, even despite the fact that Protestantism comes out of a criticism of that point of view within The Church. I mean, Protestantism comes out of a sense of grace that does not depend on how you act or how you behave. Grace is something that comes whether you’re doing righteous things or not. But that’s kind of lost now in terms of US Christian, Protestant Christian perspective.

Randall: I don’t want to knock on it, but particularly the kind of evangelical perspective you hear so much in the news that I think people have done a great job of unmasking (how much it’s like) Ayn Rand—you’d think people would say it’s a literal Biblical
view, but it was really kind of a philosopher that emphasized ego, ego, ego, me, me, me, me. So it's really interesting.

Patricia: I'm curious to hear what it would look like to take some of this—and I suspect that we are doing it—and play it out in your work? But you can say whatever you were going to say.

Vini: No, no, that's a good question. And when you say this, you mean the money, race, class stuff?

Patricia: Particularly the sense of being in service to the larger...

Vini: Right. So again, I've been in a blessed position to help; to both work in an organization with a twenty-five year-old history of challenging status quo, and twenty-five years of history of saying international aid doesn't serve the interest of the people at the front lines of the most important struggles. So if you really want to support innovation that comes from the grassroots we have to learn to make grants, and mobilize resources, and link grassroots leaders to each other, in a different way.

In a sense we are already starting from a theory of change that doesn't assume that philanthropy or aid is going to solve the problem in itself, and from a theory that honors the wisdom and knowledge of people that are actually in the struggle. So that's a great place to start.

But you know, I think for me, creating an organization and building an organization of people that come to this work with a critical consciousness around this stuff has been really important. Because it's very easy in international development work to attract people who are like at these two extremes..."Those people are so great! Let's help those poor people! In the US it's too late, like we can't help our black folks, so let's go help those other folks, right." So there's that.

Then you've got the other extreme, which is, "I just want to travel and see the world, and just want to go help." You know, like that. So it's really interesting and it's really
easy to attract privileged young white people to work in international development organizations. It's harder, but not impossible, to find people with an internationalist consciousness that is also rooted in racial justice work here in the US that can make those links.

The way it plays out in my work in the most fundamental way is that it's not actually about how we give our grants because we have a great model. It's not about who we partner with, because we again have a great model. The transformational piece has been to find those people to be on the team that aren't going to cop out on social justice questions right here in their backyard.

Jillian: Well, I don't know how familiar everyone is with RSF, our tagline is, “transforming the way the world works with money.” And that's just something that I'm starting to explore. I haven't been there that long. But one thing Don Shaffer, our CEO, always talks about, is how he sees using money and capital as a tool in connecting people in relationships of service. So, building relationships into financial transactions. I think it's the idea of yes, you can bring the money from Point A to Point B, but what's happening along the line? What relationship is being built? And I see that.

I find it really impressive within our lending team. We have a very small team, but the way they work with the companies that we're lending to, it's not just money, it's...

Recently we were thinking of funding a farm operation, a citrus operation. And the conversation that came out of that was yes, you're helping convert acreage to organics, but who's working in the fields? And their answers were, “Oh, we contract that out, we don't know what's happening.” And we didn't not give them money, but one of the conversations that came out of that was well, look at this (other) farm, look at their model, they're doing this differently. So that's one thing that I find really, really fascinating when it comes to working with money in a different way. It's just building a lot more contacts into the exchange. So that's something I'm really interested in exploring more.
Randall: In the early- to mid- '90s I felt like I put a lot of energy into this kind of work, and it seemed like there were a lot of people doing it then. And honestly, I thought it would change the world because it seemed like there were a lot of folks working on concerted action. And there was a lot of work on race, class and privilege stuff.

So then I think I got quieter or something. I feel like I've been quiet for a while now. One reason might be that I'm in unusual places to bring up these conversations again, like in philanthropy. I don't hear these conversations happening very well or very often in philanthropy.

There have been a couple of really shocking studies about philanthropy and racial ethic communities, just shocking: shocking about who's hired or not hired. There's been some response but not really good response to all of that. Because it would require a level of truth-telling and if you're too invested in the system you're not going to do it, because you don't get rewarded for truth-telling.

But there is a way I think to strategically begin to help that story, again, to get people to begin questioning...because I think there are folks who do question, but we don't talk about it together. So that would be my equivalent of making another start, like an initial step.

Wilson: I think there's another phenomenon that has taken place with in the United States that dampens movement toward this discussion about identifying with the collective part of the community in a sense, and that comes out of the overwhelming criticism of socialism as part of the Cold War system.

So when you begin to talk about community and collective ways of being together...

Randall: And organizing.

Wilson: Right. Being the President, right, all of a sudden he's a socialist, and he's all these other kinds of things...so you begin to talk about civic engagement.
And another powerful way of encapsulating the discussion is to talk about traditional institutions, because traditional institutions have also been about community and about collectivism without getting stuck in that capitalist-versus-socialist discussion, which is actually the discussion between one side of white European society and another side of white European society, both of which don’t recognize a lot of traditional values.

Patricia: Well, it’s been my experience that often the response to that is well, that’s okay for communities of color, that you know your traditions in a way that, like we heard a little bit today from Kelley. There isn’t a culture there, so somebody’s got to do that work of helping build it.

Vini: This is fascinating because, I trained as an organizer in the US context. White people need to work on their stuff, that’s not my work, I want to be working with my people, you know. Then you end up in this position where you have to mobilize resources. When you’re mobilizing resources, yes, we’re dealing with people in the diaspora, and dealing with young people and consciousness and wealth. And we’re also dealing with white folks who haven’t done their work.

So in the guise of donor education or donor advocacy, donor engagement, you start to do the work that you never thought was your work, you know? And it’s fascinating. My third or fourth day on the job as ED, as a young woman of color, I had this guy who gave very generously to our organization for many years, who had a very special relationship with my predecessor, who was a white man.

He called me up and he said, “I will not be supporting your organization because it no longer fits my priorities.” And I said oh, can you tell me more. And he said, “Yeah, well, I give to organizations whose leadership I know. I don’t know you and I don’t know if I’m going to have the kind of relationship with you that I used to. I don’t know if I can trust you.”
It was fascinating because it was so overtly racist you know, and yet it was entertaining almost. Wow. It’s 2010 and we’re having this conversation. I started three days ago so you may want to give me a minute, you know.

But intellectually I was like yeah, racism is well and alive, oh yeah, as a young leader of color I better get clear on where my support system is going to be. And I better call my people fast and get what I need to be able to do this. At a very emotional level it was devastating. It was devastating. And it was deeply wounding, and hurtful and all of that.

So that’s why I’ve become kind of aggressive when it comes to my role in philanthropy, because I see very much the need for us being clear about the hypocrisies inherent in philanthropy. It turns out we may not be having the 1990s discourse about race, gender, class in that way, but we are having a conversation. And that conversation is still as relevant as ever. The last thing I’ll share is that I just came back from a two day meeting of progressive public foundations, just trying to figure out: We’ve all been hit hard in the recession, what do we do next? How do we engage with the private foundations, and how do we engage with the rest of philanthropy?

And what was really interesting was—there were people with four decades of working in progressive public foundation and there was a whole bunch of us that were younger and newer. It was a really important two day dialogue. But what emerged so clearly was that people of my generation are basically saying we’ve got to change the conversation simply because of who we are and how we’re showing up, and there’s these generational differences that we need to talk about. The problems are exactly the same as they were thirty years ago. The tactics are changing because they have to, because we actually didn’t win. We didn’t win.

Randall: I wasn’t saying the conversations were great by the way. I just said I participated and put a lot of energy into them, but I think it was pretty clear that we weren’t going to win. It took me a long time to take the stuff about socialism seriously, meaning that I could hear people saying it, but I didn’t really think that anybody was
buying into it, so it just took me a long time to realize that that had meaning for some part of the American public, and it was riling people up. I just thought that it was a big joke for a long time.

So then everything that’s good is socialism, everything that’s bad and evil is capitalism. So it really, I don’t know, it was kind of a jolt for me I have to say.

Wilson: Well, I think the discussion, unfortunately, is one of symbolism, flag-waving not substance. It’s just throwing around this is this, that is that, this is good and that is bad. There’s no looking beyond that. I think the war and aftermath did not leave a place for really wrestling with what was actually going on, unfortunately.

Randall: One of the great mysteries of the universe is how partners, how it happens that you have a saver and a spender that are brought together. I really felt when you said that, I’ve heard that story so many times. It’s positive balancing...

Jillian: Do people here tend to be the savers or the spenders?

Vini: I’m the spender.

Randall: I’m the spender, too.

Jillian: I think the spenders are the fun people to be with!

Randall: That means you’re always in dialogue!

Jillian: I’m a saver.

Wilson: I guess I’m a saver too.

Vini: Let’s hear the saver perspective. How do you experience us spenders? C’mon, I want to hear this.
Jillian: You're trying to give me a heart attack. No, honestly, there's part of me that respects it and yearns to have some of that. It seems to be a more free way to exist. But I'm just always thinking about the next day, the backup plan, I'm just thinking about the backup plan.

Randall: We started a very personal conversation about savers and spenders.

Vini: I like that you brought that up. Are you a saver or spender?

Patricia: I am not a saver.

Vini: So you're with a saver!

Wilson: I think to some extent it's a question of optimism versus pessimism, savers are more pessimistic.

Randall: I have to say I feel more pessimistic, but...

Vini: You're like, let's spend it, who knows if we'll be alive tomorrow!

Randall: I've been switching to a saver because I really feel pessimistic about the economy and Congress, so. Yeah, we bought a house after the downturn because it's probably the only time in the Bay Area that we could, and it was someone who wanted to sell. Even for me that took a lot because okay, I've really got to be an optimist...you know, are things going to go right?

BREAK

Patricia: So we're at the home stretch and we wanted to give everybody a chance to do some personal reflection. We'd like to take a few minutes to think about the day, think about what's happening to you and then take some time to write a haiku. A haiku is five syllables, seven syllables, five syllables, 5-7-5. You can write it on how you're
feeling now, what you're inspired to do, anything that captures for you, where you are in this moment.

Then I'd like you to write it twice and you can use the cards that we have for one version, then you can write one on your own. Then we're going to collect them and get them back to you as a little booklet of each other's haikus, so you'll have the whole collection. So put your name on the card and then your haiku. Any questions? 5-7-5 syllables, yes. Then we'll just go around and read them once, blow out a candle and be done for today.

Put your name and your haiku on a card. If you want a copy for yourself you write it twice, okay? Oh, and one other rule about haikus is that you don't use "ing" words, like running...

Randall: That's my first word!

Patricia: Well, there are no haiku professors here, so you won't get judged. It's just a way to frame. Okay, why don't we go ahead? What we'll do is we'll each pass the mic around and say our name and read our haiku. Okay?

Patricia: Long day, deep and broad/ conversation, richly carved/ builds community.

Vini: Each month I will save/ to honor stolen wages/ wholeness as justice.

Wilson: In, out, round about/ sudden view emerged out/ I, thou, and you, too.

Ludovic: About wealth, race, class/ much is still left to be said/ Almost weekend, home.

Andre: Pain and voices rise/ water the air above us/ A flower unfolds.

Caitlin: Wisdom overwhelms/ pain and courage visible/ heard, held and healed in kind.

John: Grace goes before us/ in meeting conversation/ Currency is real.
Yolanda: To find compassion/ in all this complexity/ slowly tea and art.

Pilar: Piled high and folded neatly/ I hear it call out to me/ Pilar, save me, says money.

Rose: I am whole within/ beloved community/ can it happen now?

Kelley: Blockage leads to growth/ conversation is a gift/ complexity now!

CJ: Money mission change/ wholeness is the game of life/ do you see me now?

Jillian: Abundant value/ in others’ experience/ different perspectives.

Randall: Teach love, disrupt life/ moving beyond bought and sold/ come into wholeness.

Patricia: Let's just hold that for a minute. It's stunning that in ten minutes this is what you carved from the day.

Randall: I think it's appropriate to say thank you Patricia and you all for this day.

Patricia: I want to thank you all for your rich and deep presence, and invite you to take your item from the table and if you want to say a word, you're welcome to. All of the haikus were very powerful. Then I'll blow out the candle. The smoke is a symbol of our intentions going up into the world. Thank you.

Group: Thank you, thank you.

[END]