A Day-long Conversation + Stories on Money, Race, and Class

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Conveners: **John Bloom**, Director, Organizational Culture, RSF Social Finance
Pilar Gonzales, Problem-solver Thinker Friend Consulting
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Participants: **Yolanda Alindor**, **CJ Callen**, **Raquel Donoso**, **Kit Durgin**, **Gaylon Logan**, **Mateo Nube**, **Wilson Riles**, **Elizabeth Ü**

Facilitator: **Patricia St. Onge,** Seven Generations Consulting and Coaching

Recorded by: **National Radio Project**

John Bloom: On behalf of the planning group, I appreciate everybody coming and committing this whole day to what I hope will be a very deep conversation, one of the great tools of transformation. We even have a brief definition of it:

"Conversation: A language-based process through which we create community."

The motivation for this conversation is to invite the future present. We need to know how to be in conversation together around money, race, and class. Though the concept may seem simple, it is not necessarily easy to do.

Hopefully, it's a gift to ourselves, a gift to each other, and possibly a gift to the world.

Patricia St. Onge: The planning team is John, Caitlin, Pilar and me; I'm Patricia. We're going to get you up and moving first thing. I'd like you each to come and take two stones from the table here and bring them back to your seat.

Before we actually start, I wanted to introduce the folks who are taping this conversation. They are from the National Radio Project. Their director, Lisa Rudman, is here with us. The transcripts will be on the RSF website, so that other people can take advantage of the wisdom that surfaces today.

Mateo Nube: I have a question about the process of having the transcript on the RSF website. I was thinking that as part of the check-in we'll be sharing heritage stuff. Do we get to review what parts are included? Knowing this may inform what I choose to say.

John Bloom: Absolutely. You will get to review the transcript. We would not publish anything you did not want published. Everyone here will get copies of the disks. We will transcribe and edit it into readable form. Each of you will receive a copy to go over, to take out anything you

wouldn't want in there, fill in the blanks or indecipherable comments, and correct the spelling of names. After your comments come back, we'll put a final edit together, and circulate it for final approval.

As far as the copyright goes, my hope is that everybody feels that we collectively hold a copyright to it so everybody who's here has the right to use it. RSF will hold a general copyright, so there is a point of contact. It's actually owned collectively by the participants.

Pilar Gonzales: My last statement here is that our recording folks can stop the recording at any time if it's requested and needed, and/or step out of the room so we can have additional privacy. So everybody knows, we have those options.

Patricia: You have two stones. Let's go around, tell us your name, and just a couple of sentences about you. Don't worry, there'll be an opportunity with the *Conosimiento* to really do more sharing about who you are. One stone represents what you're bringing to the day; the other is what you hope to take away.

I took one small and one big stone. The small one is what I'm bringing. And, I expect to take a lot more than what I'm bringing. So I'm bringing my whole self. I just went through a year-long leadership renewal program during which we had to identify three core values. One key value for me has been authenticity; so I'm bringing my authentic self.

What I hope to take away from the day is some new relationships and friendships, and some deeper ones with those that I already know, and the collective wisdom from the conversation.

Kit Durgin: I am Kit Durgin. First, I should say I'm very nervous. I'm always nervous when I participate in conversations about things that mean a lot to me. It helps me to say that out loud. I'm here because these questions of money, class, and race mean a lot to me. It wasn't until Caitlin wrote and asked what questions we wanted answered or

thoughts about the topics of money, race, and class that would be provocative, that I focused on money, class and race. Somehow I thought it was just money.

What am I bringing? I'm bringing an openness of spirit and curiosity to know each of you and your experiences. What I hope to gain is more about myself, and about the people that I know around the table, and people that I look forward to knowing who are around the table. I don't know exactly why I took big stones. I like them because they're shiny and they have texture. I actually like the colored stone more than I like the white stone. But I don't know anything more than that.

Yolanda Alindor: I'm Yolanda Alindor. I felt guilty when I picked up this pink stone, because it was the only one with that color that I thought I would really appreciate. But, I brought it any way. Then I picked this stone because it has striations in it; it has some complexity of different colors, even though it's basically dark.

What I hope to get is—I don't know where to start. I've had some challenges in my personal life over the last year, which have gradually eaten away at my spirit. So a couple nights ago when I couldn't sleep, I sat up for a couple of hours, mostly playing solitaire on the computer, and on the side, making a list of things I should do to improve my own happiness.

One of those is very much about connections, and having deeper conversations of this type. I find it hard to do in my everyday life, to find a space and a place and a way to do it. I think that's heart work, and maybe the stone is the rosy-red heart work. That's what I hope to get.

What I hope to give are the little bits and pieces of life, the little observations and reflections so that we can see where in the puzzle they fit.

Raquel Donoso: I'm Raquel Donoso. You can also say "Raquel." I actually appreciate being able to be out of the office for a whole day. Hopefully, I can bring an energy of appreciation that I get to be here and do this.

I'm so thankful to be able to get up in the morning and do things I love to do, because my parents didn't have that luxury. So I want to bring that kind of appreciation to the table, and openness. I think, for people who know me, I'm maybe too open sometimes. Hopefully I will bring that, too.

In terms of what to take away, it's an interesting road in this world around leadership. When you're coming up, you have to do a certain professional type of thing. Recently I've been really bringing my authentic self to things, and it's very difficult. I don't talk about class a lot.

I talk about race a lot, but not necessarily class, and my own issues and background, and definitely don't talk about it in terms of money. I really want to have the opportunity to think about it and bring it into the work that I do, because it just makes us better leaders if we can really be honest with ourselves about it.

C.J. Callen: I'm C.J. Callen. Things have been swirling around a lot for me so, hopefully I'll bring some insights and presence to the group, and can be a little bit of an anchor in that regard. I've been in these conversations before, so I'm hoping to bring innocence and wonder to it as well, to really start fresh and embody that. That's really what I hope to bring in essence.

What I hope to take away, the big one, is a sense of connection to people, to people I know, as well as to new people I'm meeting. And then I think also to deepen my own wisdom by tapping into the collective wisdom. And finally, because things have been swirling, I would love to walk away just feeling rejuvenated.

John: I am John Bloom. I chose both the stones because they both seem to hold some light in them. I realize that's maybe a kind of wish that I am also bringing to the conversation, and hope that I can contribute to.

I bring a great deal of awe and respect for the wisdom that's here. I would say I really hope to walk out of here a different person.

Mateo: Good morning, my friends. I'm Mateo Nube. Aesthetically, I really like contrast. So I chose two little stones that express that. I grew up in Bolivia. I came here when I was 18.

I grew up in a context where this was talked about all the time, and even under political duress, folks had very strong belief in the capacity to utterly transform what was injustice into a very just world. So, I hope to bring some of that, the texture of what that is like somewhere else, and how these things play out and are attributed, because it's in part who I am.

I find tremendous nourishment when I meet new thoughtful, beautiful, committed people. I hope to walk out of here with new comrades who are also very committed to building a better world.

Caitlin Peerson: My name is Caitlin Peerson. I was drawn to these two stones, also because I enjoy contrast; I often find I am drawn to polar opposites. I have an interest in social issues, and hearing different experiences is so helpful to broaden my awareness. So what I'm bringing is a curiosity about other experiences. I'm hoping to take away an understanding of how to better relate to people in this world.

Elizabeth Ü: I am Elizabeth Ü. I'm feeling a bit heavy and raw. I didn't think about that when I chose this stone. I'm projecting onto it. It's got some cracks and it's big, it's heavy. So, I will probably bring tears today, just to warn you. I cry easily. I'm also bringing an arc in experience. In the last couple of months, I've really been digging into a lot of these issues in a variety of contexts. I won't go into details, but this is the

third setting where I've been exploring issues of class, money, race, privilege, justice, recently.

There are two things that I'm hoping to take away: One is that in my own personal work, I've started to realize that one of the biggest wounds or challenges that I have is that I always feel like I'm not being heard. So I'm really looking forward to the opportunity to be heard today.

The other thing I'm really hoping to bring out of this is to cultivate compassion and acceptance of certain things that can transcend what, in my experience, has really been anger over a lot of these issues. I'm hoping to get a more human connection by digging down underneath the layers to that humanity that we all share, rather than being so incensed about all that other stuff.

Pilar: I'm Pilar Gonzales. I very randomly picked these two stones. They were the closest to my hand. And, you have to know what a big deal that is for me. I didn't preplan, preselect before we all got here. That was a big deal for me to trust and just randomly grab from the pile. As odd as that sounds, it's telling on myself.

What do I bring to this group? I most definitely bring my small seven-year-old self. I'm reminded of being with my grandparents and how money, race, and class intersected in my particular life with my grandparents. So, I bring that little girl to the table. But, I also bring my big, brown self to this table as a grown-up woman, and that experience of living in these three issues.

I also bring humor. I'm like that. I bring anger and lot of other good stuff. I bring humor. What do I hope to get from the day? I'm already getting it. A place to say "thank you" for the very privilege of getting to do this, this huge privilege that we get to be together to talk about this in such a pointed and direct way, and not to speak about it incidentally or just on a BART train, in between the rest of our full lives. So what I hope to get from this day is more of that conversation.

Wilson Riles: My name is Wilson Riles. I'm very pleased to be here. I've been looking forward to this gathering for some time. I picked this stone because in some ways, it reflects the emotional place where I'm at right now. I've spent more than the last two years working on an issue in Oakland that has a lot to do with money, race, and class. I've felt like I'm at the bottom of a well, screaming up at folks around it, essentially with very little being heard around it.

I have some deep passion around the question that may be part of the reason why I'm not being heard. I need to be more out in the light. I hope that I can emerge with more insight, more clarity, more out in the light, and more understanding that there's a different larger way of being.

Gaylon Logan: Well, good morning. I'm Gaylon Logan. It's a pleasure to be here. I'm last, so I guess I can go astray. I'm always interested in dynamics. I always watch like what is. This would not have been the seat I would have taken if I had a choice, and primarily because I am sitting next to Wilson.

The whole dynamic of being the only African-American man, and not wanting to sit next to another African-American man. I kind of prefer spacing us out. Another thing is that our bios are not in the prepared material. So it's like we're not in the book. I draw attention to that for myself personally. But, as an African-American man, I find that we're very interesting people, and we're very dynamic people.

I encounter a lot because I am one. I don't always know why I take the approach I take sometimes. There's an old saying that I used to hear my grandmother say all the time, "Hurry up and wait." So when it was asked to go get a stone, my first instinct was to just wait. And I'm naturally drawn to dark and black.

What I was focusing on: would the black stone be left when it came my turn? And there was no more black left. So let me take what I see.

It was more a visual. This stone was very pretty and lovely. I was drawn to it. Then for this one, I wanted something a little bigger and with a different shape. That was my thinking around my selection.

What I bring in, what resonated with me very deeply from Raquel, was your statement about being open—people telling you that maybe you're too open sometimes. I'm the same way. That falls on deaf ears, man, when people tell me that. It's like I'm going to be me. I'm going to do me, and I'm going to be authentic the whole time. So what I bring is, you're going to get Gaylon no matter what. So I may offend you. I may make you uncomfortable. But just know that you're getting Gaylon and it's nothing personal. And, I bring it with love. What I'm giving is my life and my experiences. It's just my perspective. If it's different from yours, then you know, it's just different.

What I hope to get, kind of like Kit, I hope to see a part of myself in all of you in some kind of way, so I can continue my process of growing and developing as a human being. Today, my humanity means more to me than money and all that other kind of stuff. How can I retain my humanity? I feel the only way I can do that is by learning what it means to be human.

Patricia: I can see that we're going to have fun today, which I think is a really wonderful thing. I really appreciate the commitment to openness and authenticity to bringing ourselves fully here. I can't imagine that we won't take away the connections and the things that we're seeking. So, I want to really thank all of you for starting off with an open, full heart.

We've had a series of good and rich conversations preparing for today. The goals you'll recognize are from your invitation. And we thought it might be useful to have some definitions that John and Pilar came up with. These are posted on the wall:

Radical Honesty*—The virtue of speaking from the deepest roots of one's voice.*

Transparency*—The condition which makes it possible to fully see each other, to make oneself visible to another, a pathway to trust.*

Conversation*—A language-based process through which we create community.*

What we are going to do is to tell the origin story of these conversations, since today is the fourth one, review the agenda, and then we want to talk about the planners' commitment to you, some of which has been built over time. We wanted to tell you what we want to bring to the table. Then we're going to do an exercise. We have a table full of wonderful art things for you to use as we invite you to tell your story.

Following a break, we'll launch into the conversation. We'll stop for lunch, and then we'll continue the conversation. The last half hour will be an opportunity for closing reflections and thoughts.

This is probably the most open agenda I've ever experienced or facilitated. So I appreciate that several people said, "I'm bringing openness." That's really the energy that we want to invite and share with each other. If at any point something's not working, we can change it. This is our conversation. With as much care, tenderness, and love that we put into the planning, it's as an offering. Now it's our day collectively, and we ought to do what we need to with it. Let's start with the journey of these conversations on money, race, and class. Who was at the first conversation?

C.J., John, and Pilar are going to start to tell the story. And then at the point at which you came into the story—so if you came to the second one, then you'll pick up. Essentially we're going to tell a collective narrative. Those of us who are here for the first time, will be able to add a bit at the end.

John: The need and potential for these money, race, and class conversations became evident at some small gatherings RSF convened beginning in 2001 on the topic of transforming the way the world works with money. The first intention was to develop a new brand-free form of collaboration. Leaders from non-profits along with other philanthropic-minded individuals came together to explore how to bring about change in how we work with money since many were already involved in social change. The conversations were deep and powerful, and also painful for what was not addressed. The power of privilege, class, race, gender was palpably present, but we did not have the tools, time, or permission really to engage at that level. Imagine one exercise for which we were asked to sort ourselves out in line by our economic status at the age of twelve. We had those at one end indicating about how many servants they had in the family, while at the other end the conversation was about how many siblings were in jail. The gulf was stunning, even to the vast majority of participants in the middle. So much healing was needed, forgiveness sought. But the time was too short and there were other agendas. It was clear where the deepest transformation was needed, and the wisdom to do so would come from a true diversity of voices.

Pilar: My recollection of jumping into this and creating the conversation came out of a meeting in Michigan at the Fetzer Institute, where RSF Social Finance was co-hosting a gathering of human beings that had been invited from all over the country for many different reasons on the topic of transforming the way the world works with money. So it wasn't one specific population at all.

We came together, and were talking about the Sequoia Principles, some principles around money, race, and class. We spent three days together as a group. One of the things that surfaced for me was that I didn't want it to end. I felt like it was just scratching off at the top.

When we came back I had a follow-up conversation with John. I said, "Boy, I was just so moved by that. There was so much more I wanted

to hear, so much I wanted to know, so much more I wanted to say, so much I wanted to learn."

John said to me, "Well, it doesn't have to end there, Pilar. We could actually have the conversation continue. Would you be interested in being part of that planning group?" I said, "yes" right away, immediately. RSF started very generously to host those of us who wanted to be at the planning table to talk about how we keep the conversation open. One parameter I do remember, something that was so important to forming this conversation: its purpose was *not* to form a committee, another group, another movement.

I said, "All these human beings are going to be so busy." But, God, I would love a free space to talk. I would love the privilege of that. I'd love the privilege of having a place to talk about these things, that my words would be as important as any banker, any president, any other human being, I mean, white person.

I say that very openly, because it fits under that description of race. There's things that I come with, with my baggage, with my experience. So I want that space. And I love that even that beginning, I could even say to John as, you know, my white brother. But I could say that to you, and you didn't flinch. You went, "Okay. Let's start that conversation." That's my piece of the story.

C.J.: I'm proud to be part of this group of people who came together around the transforming money collaborative and developed those principles—just the process of that network coming together. There was just a lot of pain, too, underneath the surface, around those things that people wouldn't talk about. Right? They mostly had to do with race and class.

Having lived through that pain, I was happy to hear that there was this effort to talk about money, race, and class. Not doing it the way of some kind of training or something like that. But to really just to have a conversation, I think that was really courageous and exciting.

So I definitely wanted to be part of it, and I've developed because of it.

We had so much important work to do, and we didn't have to do it in a way that caused this kind of pain. And also, in some ways, the inability to integrate this into work was making the work less effective. I want to see change happen. Right? But without addressing these topics we will trip up over and over again. So that to me was the reason why I just jumped in and said I wanted to be part of that initial conversation.

Seeing what we learned from that can help other people, too, who are going through difficult change processes, but to be more explicit on the surrounding issues, which are critical to movement.

Patricia: So who was at the second conversation?

John: For me, it was extremely profound, because it proved to me that it was possible to launch the conversation. And it was also a scratch in the surface of the conversation. Even a whole day, still a scratch in the surface. So I definitely left that with an ever-deeper commitment to sustain it one way or another, to have the next, to deepen both the process and the content.

Pilar: We left inspired enough to want to do it again. It was so clear. So clear.

Yolanda: Well, I got a call from Pilar telling me a little bit about the first session and asking me if I'd be interested in facilitating the second one. Then she was very, very clear. She said, "But Yolanda, it's not like the usual facilitation you do." I said, "Okay, Pilar."

Part of what I remember from the planning sessions: the depth of the thinking about the difference between a conversation and a discussion, building upon, building community, and speaking from the depth of each person’s experience as opposed to, "Well, that's your

point of view, and this is why you're wrong," which is often the underlying tone of discussion.

There was a lot of learning for me from that, and the whole notion of a safe harbor. I have kept that in my heart often as I go to other meetings. So often there is a true need for a safe harbor, and we don't have one. So, I learned a lot just in the planning of that session, let alone the discussion itself. Let's let other people talk a little bit about the discussion itself, I guess.

CJ: I talked about the pain of not talking about race and class. I have to admit that it was kind of painful to talk about it. And there was just the pain of the reality of our experiences, different type of pains should be liberating if we can pull it off. There was a lot of sadness in that first one, and the second one as well. But yet, I came back. I was willing to do it again.

Patricia: Anything else on the second session? Who was at the third session?

Pilar: I wanted to say one more thing about the second session, which was something C.J. said that led us into the third session. She was telling something about her personal experience from home as a child, as I recall. You said this phrase, "I just wanted to have a decent life."

The notion about a decent life became the underpinning of the theme for our third session. I remember we had a theme for the second one, “Who, How Much, and Why?” I remember clearly, the third one was very, very clearly about food.

There was some thought about bringing in folks that had different connections to food, whether that was sustainable agriculture or food pantry, feeding hungry people, urban gardening, etc. This was a slightly different approach. We started with an introductory piece that had to do with each person’s recollections about something in their past about food.

John was one of the last people to speak. And I remember him saying how struck he was by the fact that we had so many rituals around food in our daily existence, and as families or communities.

It was really quite striking. We went from everything from, you know, your rituals in your home to sustainable agriculture, and to genetically modified crops to—I mean, it was an amazing conversation.

John: One of the discoveries during that conversation is that we all had food secrets. We actually got to speak about that. Those secrets were very tied to culture, class, and money and all of those other aspects. So who knows what will emerge today?

Patricia: Does everybody feel sufficiently caught up that you can enter this space now for today's conversation?

John: I wonder if I could just say a little bit about how the theme for today re-emerged, because for the last two we had themes. We were trying to focus the conversation, and we were struggling trying to settle on a theme for this one.

Then we said, let's go back to the beginning. Let's simply have an exploratory conversation, start fresh in a sense.

Caitlin: So, I would say start.

Patricia: I appreciate that. And I would say, as you were saying, Elizabeth, this is an element of a big conversation. On the one hand it's starting from scratch, but on the other hand, it's also bringing the wealth of everything that we have by way of experience.

This is a good time to go into “the basket”. Right now there is only one question to spark the conversation. Caitlin, do you want to talk about the tools?

Caitlin: Sure. We have this basket that's sitting in the middle of the table. In the email that I sent out I requested questions, either to send in advance or that are being held in your mind that you want to ask. For example, is there a question about the title subject, "money, race and class," that you want to address? This will be something that can propel the conversation. If you have a big question, or if you have a little question, feel free to write them down on a flashcard and put them in the basket.

Raquel: Are the ones that we asked already in the basket?

Caitlin: Yes. Questions that were previously submitted are already in there. And if you think of a question throughout the day, feel free to put it in there at the break or lunchtime. We'll review them at lunch. And after that we'll post them on papers around the wall and discuss them.

So regarding the safe harbor that Yolanda referred to: Pilar and John have offered to be safe harbors. If there are any lingering issues or anything that you want to discuss more privately, feel free to come up to them at the break, at lunch, afterwards, at any time, and they'll hold that conversation privately. So they're there for you in that respect.

Patricia: Perfect. Is there anything else that anybody needs in order to be sure that this feels like a safe space?

OK. So what we'd like you to do next is to take a flip-chart paper. There are markers and colored pencils and all kinds of interesting art supplies. I really want to encourage you to explore openly. How many of you feel like you're not good artists?

We invite you to suspend that notion today and really let your artist out, regardless of what it ends up looking like. This process is for you. So you'll share it with us, but it's really an opportunity for you to use the part of your brain that isn't word-focused. Here is what your drawing should include:

- What is your name, and then if there's a story behind your name, you could draw a picture about that story
- Please tell us where you're from, who your people are
- A childhood memory of understanding money, or your family dynamics around money, and/or early experience of economic injustice. A story that you want to tell in pictures. A story about the ways that you thought about money over time, whatever that looks like
- Then something about the way money holds meaning for you today.

You'll have about 15 minutes. And then we'll put them up, and we'll do a gallery walk. So everybody will get to just look, and then we'll each have about four minutes to tell our story as part of the "gallery walk."

[Participants work on their projects]

Patricia: Welcome back. We're actually going to move around and have each person speak for four minutes. If you're in the middle of something heart-wrenching, we'll give you an extension.

Yolanda: I ended up with the one about "I am from, my people are." So this is pretty much a history of where my people are from.

My mom comes from the foothills of the Andes in a little town that nobody even knows about that's called Contumazá. And my dad comes from a city that I think of as the San Francisco of Peru, because it's cosmopolitan and very art-oriented, very progressive, and the revolution that started a movement back in the '40s, started in Trujillo. And my dad actually grew up through a revolution in his town.

So that's my mom and my dad. This is a great immigration to the United States. And so my mom and dad, my brother who's older than

me, and myself, I grew up—I was born and raised here in California, mostly in the East Bay.

I married—my first marriage was to a man who got really high-status jobs and careers. His family came from Colorado. His dad was actually a coal miner. He came to California in, I think around the '40s. He was very smart, very ambitious, and was on boards of the Rockefeller Foundation, Pacific Bell, Union Bank, and all these kind of things.

I ended up having a corporate career, that's Pacific Bell. This is Stanford University where I did my master's degree. They're sort of all intertwined for me, the time when I was in these high-status kinds of circles, both in terms of corporations and universities. It was one era of my life.

Then I made a break with all that, and started a new life, where I was working as a facilitator for non-profits, and got married again to somebody from Mexico City. Then my husband and I adopted two kids. This is the representation of my children's birth mother, and their older sister, and our two kids, who formed our family. I got around to adding my dog. I wasn't quite able to get the proportions for our bird. But anyway, it's our family.

Part of what I took away from this is so many humble beginnings. You know. This was poverty. This was pretty much poverty. This was definitely poverty. And yet, we live a pretty privileged life. There's all kinds of stories here. I kept noticing there was blank space here. Then I decided to leave it. I think the story's so much richer. There's so much more to be told.

I like the fact that our family is this patchwork that we've pulled together. It feels very loving and harmonious.

Patricia: What we can do is respond by saying we honor you and your story. We honor you and your story.

Gaylon: Well, my name is Gaylon. And there really isn't any specific meaning, other than that I'm a junior. I got my name from my dad. I am from Africa, which I relate to very strongly. I was told that this was the part of Africa that I'm from, my roots come from, which is via Egypt and the Nile. Haven't heard any more specifics about it.

The way I understand it, my people are from royalty. And you know, this story relates to how I feel the story of my life. I spent the first eight years of my life growing up with my grandparents in Phoenix, Arizona. My grandfather was an entrepreneur to his heart. He owned and operated about six or seven pool halls.

My earliest memory is of him coming home every morning, about 7 o'clock, giving my grandmother a bag of money. She would sit at the

kitchen table, count it out, and go put it in her bank, which was the back room, the storage room. She would always sneak me and my brother a dollar here and there and say, "Shh, don't tell your grandpa."

So my earliest memory is of abundance. We never wanted for anything. My grandmother always drove Lincolns and Cadillacs. The food was always there, the cabinets always stocked with soda pop and candy, all that kind of stuff. It was important to me as a kid.

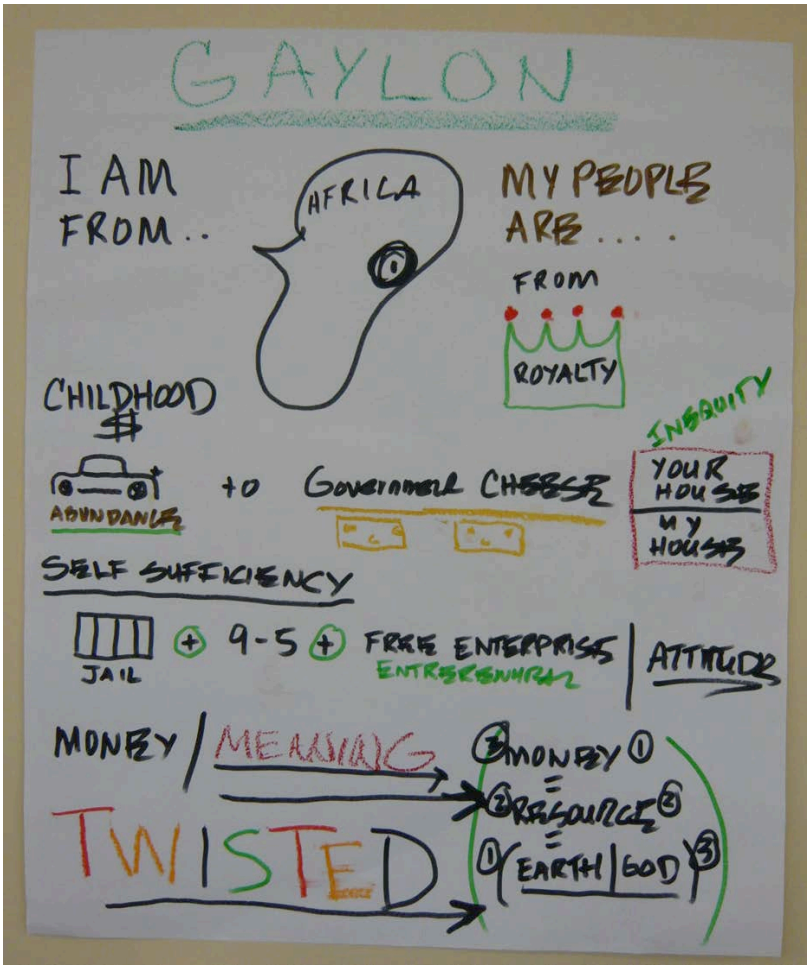
And then when I was eight, my parents moved us, my brother and sister and I, to San Francisco, to Bayview-Hunters Point, to the housing projects. So we went from abundance to poverty, because that's what we moved to—the lifestyle that, I was like, "Wow, what is this?" I skipped over an early experience of economic injustice. My parents enrolled me and my brother in an alternative school called "Rooftop" in San Francisco in the early '70s. It was a social experiment with middle-class, rich kids, and children from the projects. I was one of those kids from the projects.

One of the things that happened for me was that I didn't know that I was poor. I really didn't know it. Other than where we lived, I still felt like, you know, I had. I had a friend named Rich. Still remember him. He invited me to his house. He lived in Pacific Heights, and his house was “ginormous.”

I remember one instance where I got lost in his house. They had intercoms all over their house. I actually had to call somebody and say, "Hey, I don't know where I'm at." Then one day Rich started asking me to come to my house. I didn't know it at the time, but I had resistance. And he asked me over and over again. Finally, one day I caved in. I said, "Okay. Fine."

So we got on the bus and started on to my house. Halfway there, I got really nervous, because I was taking Rich into the projects in Bayview-Hunters Point. I had to threaten to beat Rich up to get him to get off

the bus and go home. He started crying. It was one of the most devastating things that ever happened to me growing up.



He got off the bus. I cried all the way home. From that day on, he never—he wasn't my friend. That's when I realized that something was wrong, that I didn't feel comfortable inviting him to my home because I was fearful for his safety. I thought that he would look down on me, because I didn't have a giant house like he had, and we didn't have the type of things that he had.

That stuck in my mind as something that wasn’t right. Then my father died when I graduated from sixth grade. I went into a mode of self-

sufficiency. I had this man-ness, machismo thing going on where I felt like I shouldn't ask my mother for money anymore. But, I was only 12.

I started getting on the streets. That was the environment of the Bayview-Hunters Point. I started doing some things that got me in trouble. As a result, I spent the majority of my teenage years incarcerated. But, I felt like I was being a man. I felt like I was contributing. I was bringing money to my mother, even though she never took it. She got mad at me.

My thing was, I'm going to be like my grandfather. I finally realized it's a good idea to go get a job, because I don't want to keep going to jail. I got the job, started working in corporate America as a computer operator. Then I realized that corporate America was just like jail. Once I realized that, it didn't match up with my character, my beliefs. Then, I began owning and operating small businesses. So I've kind of been an entrepreneur since.

That's my attitude today, meaning money. I often get in conflicts with people around money, because of my philosophy, because I believe things are upside down. A lot of people are money driven.

I believe that money is nothing but a manifestation of the earth, that everything money represents comes from the earth. It's the resources that come from earth, and that when we begin to take that on, we begin to take the position of God. I don't believe in that. I believe that it's actually the other way around. We look at money as a representation of earth, that it's a resource, that money comes third, the actual money. That's my philosophy.

Patricia: We honor you, and we honor your story.

Wilson: My name is Wilson and Wilson comes from the son of William the Conqueror, a British name. So I'm named for something that I'm not. My last name is Riles. That comes from being a slave of a Riles family.

Slaves took on the names of the families that owned them. It's an Irish name, and that is also what I'm not. I'm not a slave.

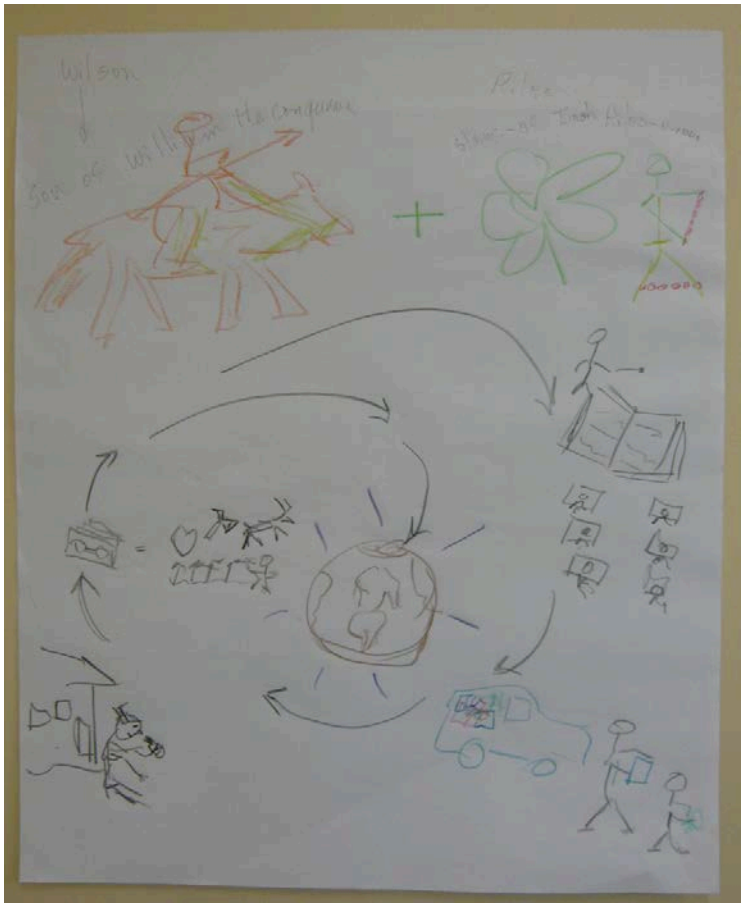
Then I tried to follow the questions as they were laid out. My immediate family, both my parents were teachers. They were really into education. Books were very important in my life. I'm from Flagstaff, Arizona. I have family in Phoenix. When I was in first grade, my mother was my teacher, and my father was the principal at the school.

I have a memory of my mother actually not wanting to favor her son in the class. She actually went overboard and blamed me for things that were not my fault. Typically, my father would then spank me in front of the second-grade class. Education, learning has always been a big thing within my life.

In Arizona, because my father was a principal, it represented status. During the Thanksgiving holidays, we would organize giving food and other kinds of things, and go around delivering it to other families in the community. I remember riding with my father in the car as we were delivering, and I think I asked him a question, "Why are you giving these things? Why don't you give these folks money instead?"

My father said that it would be a mistake, and would not help the families, the folks who are so poor particularly because of the actions generally of the fathers in those families. They would take the money and go and drink and spend it and buy a guitar, something else, rather than something to really benefit the family. That really struck me.

Rather than giving money to the families, we were giving them the food and the other things that we thought would be more beneficial to the whole family. Also, in Flagstaff, Arizona, there were train tracks that divided the community. On one side of the tracks were the affluent Caucasian folks. On the other side of the tracks were African-Americans and the Navajos.



I remember my parents telling me not to associate with the Navajos who were hanging out in front of places drinking, getting drunk, and so forth. There was a degree of racism even there within the community. That also struck me very much.

I eventually came to understand that money is a representation of folks' artistry, their hard work, their love, the things that they developed, and they want to exchange with others. We lose that meaning when we just think of it as being these coins and paper of exchange, and don't see it for what it really is. When we begin to see it for what it really is, we see that it's a representation of the whole of the earth.

Group: Thank you. And we honor your story.

Raquel: I think that mine is overt, because I feel like I've got everybody in the drawing. I'm Raquel. I put in my middle name, and I never tell people what my middle name is. So it's revealing a lot, because I was teased often as a young girl for it—it's Fanny. But, it's my grandmother's name on my dad's side.

Raquel is my great-grandmother's name on my mother's side from Mexico. My dad's family was from Ecuador. So geography, Mexico and Ecuador are the two sides of my family. It's very interesting because I got to know the story of my great-grandmother who was a nurse in the Revolution, who never married or had a kid. That's pretty profound in Mexico, even now.

It's interesting that I'm named that, because I feel like I have a lot of that wild spirit in me. My mother's family, very, very, very poor to the degree that every time I asked my mom why we don't visit very often, she said they're so poor, she doesn't want to impose on them. So we didn't visit my mother's family very often. I never met my great-grandmother.

Ecuador is where my dad's family is from, which is a completely different family. There were eight kids, two parents, had some money and status in the community. So there were definitely two different tracks. And also, culturally, when my dad brought home my Mexican mother, it was seen as horrible in his family to date a Mexican.

My mother basically said, "We want nothing to do with your family's money. You need to go out and get a job." And my dad, who didn't even finish high school, went and became a bus driver.

My first experience of social justice and economic justice: When we were little kids, he took us to the picket lines. I grew up in LA, and at RTD [Regional Transit District] they used to picket a lot back then, because there were a lot of labor issues going on. He drove buses for 23 years. We were little kids, my brother, sister and I, and he would take us to the picket line. I remember that was probably one of the happiest experiences growing up.

Another thing we did a lot, because we didn't have money growing up, was that we would ride the bus with my dad, my mom and all the kids. And we would just sit there and we would get to go to Taqueria, and we'd get hot chocolate, and we would do that for the night, like on Friday nights. And it was—yeah, it was fun. I like riding the buses to this day.

That was one of the earliest things that I remember. In my family, money was very divisive in terms of my father and mother's relationship. They're now divorced. And, it was very divisive in my relationship. And I'm now divorced. It's interesting how the dynamics

happened around money. I've always seen it as power and opportunity, because I've seen what it did in two different families, and the power and opportunity that it held for two different families having and not having it.

But I tend to see it as a tool. Because I fluctuate between two different worlds, I have an opportunity to use it as a tool to take from one and give to the other. That's how it's manifested in terms of my life.

Group: We honor you, and your story.

Elizabeth: I'm focusing on my last name, which means that mother's side of the story is not represented, and I want to acknowledge that. My last name is Ü, and it has an umlaut. It's from the Cantonese name. I don't really know how to write it. What I have here is close, but I don't think it's accurate. It actually sounds like "Yee." But that's hard for non-Cantonese people to say, and I don't speak Cantonese, so I'm probably not saying it right. So I just say "You."

It has the umlaut because it was transliterated from Chinese by someone at the German company that my great-grandfather worked at. As far as I can gather, that is where the wealth in my family comes from. My great-grandfather was the comprodore of the German company, legitimizing the business in the eyes of the Chinese. I think this means that German wealth was accumulated from Chinese labor and resources, which doesn't sit quite right with me.

So my money story—I used the Ü to track my experience with money—was very straight and narrow. We grew up with money. I always did whatever I thought I was supposed to do. I'm the first-born child – well - I'm actually not the first-born, but I'm the first living child in my family. In a traditional Chinese family, that brings a lot of expectation with it.

So I always did what everyone expected me to do until 1998. I was in college, when everything kind of shut down. I said, "Screw this." I dropped out of college, never to go back. Of course, I went back, but didn't think I was going to at the time. I ran off to Australia. For the first time in my life, I worked to pay my own way, instead of living off of my family's money.

Of course, there's a lot family privilege that went into my ability to do that at the time. But for me, it was a huge moment in my '20s, to finally be able to say, "I'm on my own steam." That was huge.

Then my path got a little more crooked. I had several different jobs, trying to find my place. At the same time, I was really trying to dig more into the family history with money, and what might be coming to me and my brother. We knew there were several different properties in my family, but my brother and I were wondering, are we going to inherit anything? We started asking questions, and probably not asking them in the most compassionate or open of ways. The answer I was getting was, "Assume there is nothing," which was absurd, because obviously there was a lot. So the answer was not honest or transparent. This led to a lot of fighting and swearing.

Fast forward through a lot of inner work and better conversations…, I actually had a really amazing conversation with my dad a couple weeks ago to help me really understand why it is he does the things he does with his money that I never approved of. I didn't understand, because I wasn't asking the right questions. I had a lot of judgment about his choices. I feel like I've learned a lot through continuing to revisit the issues.

Meanwhile, I brought a lot more people into my conversation of looking at money, class, privilege, and race in the origins of our name and the cultural experience that I've had. Instead of living a constrictive experience around money, it's gotten a lot more expansive, it's gotten a lot more community-oriented. Now I really see my role, given my background, in this larger conversation.

The money is no longer a source of shame. It's a source of collective power, so long as we are all in conversation about it. In terms of my experience with money now, I've gone from really being a hoarder and feeling like there's always scarcity, that I have to save, save, save, to more of an experiment to just see what if I just let go of my fear of spending? What would happen?

What's happened is that I've been feeling a lot more expansive, more generous. I'm feeling a lot more abundance, and I'm feeling a lot more wealthy, not necessarily financially, but in terms of community and family and conversation.

Group: We honor your story.

Patricia: I'm next. I come from a family that loves alliteration. So I have cousins who are Judy, Janet, JoAnne, and Jimmy. And Kenny, and Kevin. My mom thought she'd be different by having the last syllable rhyme, so we are Dickie, Pattie, Debbie, Nancie and Timmie, all with i-e. I was actually named after Patti Page, who was a singer. Lorraine is my middle name. It's also my mother's name.

St.Onge is actually the name of a province in France; the same province that Champlain came from in the early 1600s, and my family came on the next boat. So they've been in Quebec since 1640. They immediately engaged with the indigenous people. You know, each European country had a different strategy, like slavery or annihilation. The French were mostly trappers and priests; they were the only Europeans who didn't bring women. They were the most open to the idea that the people they encountered might have a culture; they were the “good” colonizers. My family interconnected with the people they encountered here right from the beginning, and have continued to the point where both of my parents are Haudenosaune and French-Canadian. At the turn of the 20th century, they imported poor people from Quebec to break the strikes in the textile and shoe factories in New Hampshire. My grandfather was one of them.

Growing up, we knew my father's side was Indian; my mother's side was French-Canadian. When he was dying, my mother’s Father told everybody, "By the way, I'm a Mohawk." I grew up Catholic, also very colonized. In this picture, this is a statue of Jesus who was in my parents' bedroom with his arms outstretched. This is us kneeling around the statue of Jesus doing a novena. Nine nights of prayer, kneeling. There’s a prayer card with a line where you can put your petition. And our petition was always, "Straighten out the budget."

We were always broke, always scrambling. My dad was a truck driver, and my mom would go work in a factory for as long as it took to catch up the budget, and then she'd quit. My first experience of economic

inequity was St. Peter's Home, a place for orphans where I grew up. But mostly, they weren't orphans. They were kids whose parents were too poor to take care of them.

There was a swimming pool at the orphanage, and I worked there. My dad was the scout leader. The donors who gave also had swimming pools, but for them it's like one person gets to swim in the pool, or three or whatever. There were always dozens of kids in the orphanage pool. One time, I went there with my dad, and my cousin David was living there. I was really shocked. So, pray was my first strategy for dealing with money.

Eat was my second one. I married an African American guy who was the second of seven kids, who never had any money. They would hide from bill collectors, you know, poor, poor, and poor— from inner City Washington, D.C., in the shadow. We were very poor as a family. Then we moved to Oakland. Right away and still today, Oakland is home for me. Within a year, that marriage unraveled and I ate to deal with the stress.

Then, I met Wilson. That's the love part of my relationship with money. When we first got together, he was making more money than me, a fair amount more. When we had our first conversation about how we would hold and share the responsibility for our finances, he said, "Well, I make 57 percent of the income, so I'll pay 57 percent of the bills." I said "But I have three kids with me. There are four of us, and just one of you." He helped me shift the focus from need to capacity. What I'm working toward, although I don't feel like I'm quite there yet, is experiencing money as resources, as a cornucopia of abundance. I think it's like a dance.

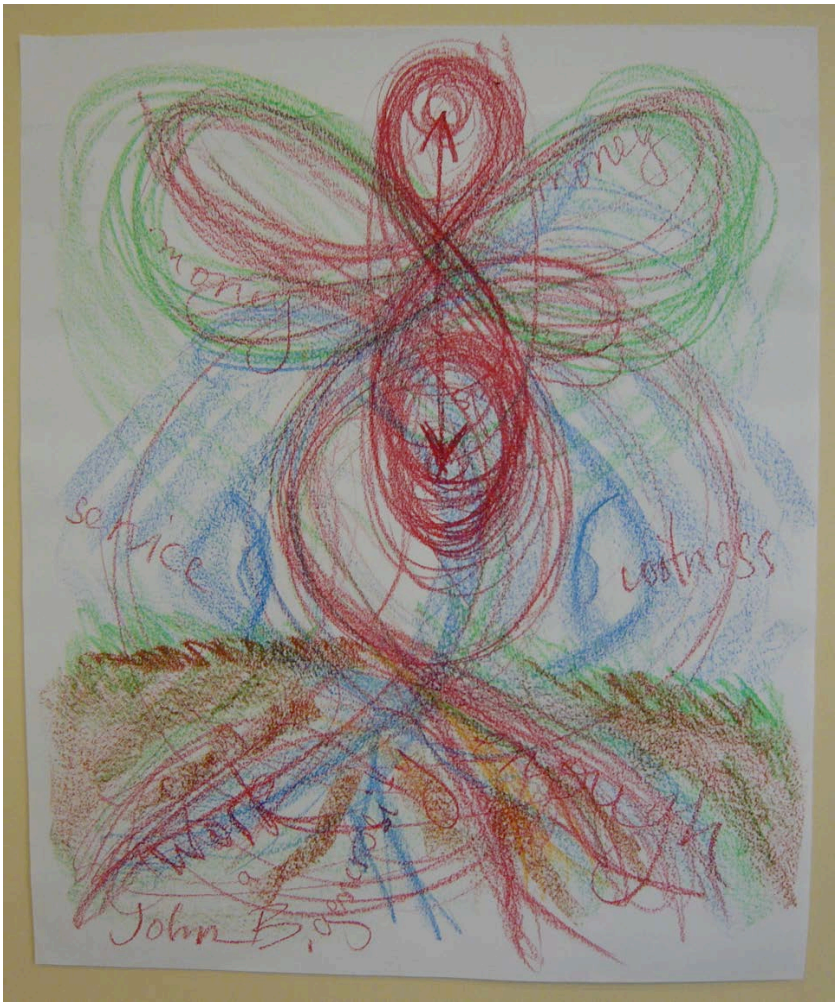
Group: Thank you. We honor your story.

John: I started this drawing as a tree, but it didn't turn out to be a tree. At least I can talk a little bit about the roots, which were primarily about generosity and work. I grew up in a home, a family of generosity, and sometimes, more than enough. But to me, it felt enough, always enough and mostly without a lot of stuff attached.

Work was always present. Everybody was always working, so whether that was creating value or volunteering. My brother and I were always working and doing projects. This relationship between work activity and generosity was really important.

My last name was actually handed to my family when they arrived in 1910 at Ellis Island. My grandmother and grandfather on my father's side didn't speak any English. The customs person was saying, "So what's your name?" And the sponsor who thought he was talking to

them said, Bloom. So that's where our name came from. I have met a number of other Blooms whose name came the same way.



The roots were in Poland on my father's side, and on my mother's side, from Germany and Czechoslovakia. Both of them left very terrible situations at very different times, to come to the land of opportunity. I just recently heard the story that my grandfather on my father's side came over first to start business, to explore opportunity, and then later sent for my grandmother.

When she arrived, she had a satchel. When he went to meet her, he took the satchel and threw it overboard. So in coming to the new land, you have to get rid of all that stuff, the family history,

photographs, things like that that she'd brought from the old country. He said, "That's all old country. It's gone."

So I hold these stories about that history, and not much of it is left. My father's pretty much the last one, at 96. So there's not a lot of time. Every time we see him, we try to extract stories from him. So other than that, the other part of the name, John, which I came to understand later, as from the gospels, John as a witness.

Witness and service have been very deep theme in my life, both to have the honor of witnessing, and also the honor of serving others. The drawing is about money and movement into life.

So this field of lines is money, and I came to understand generosity, working with others, serving others around money. In fact, money has many sides. For instance, every piece of money holds in it all of the division of labor, meaning all of the work that we do in the world to make it possible for all of us to be here resides in every piece of money.

If you hold that picture, it's a pretty profound picture of what money is. It also supposedly holds an agreement that it came from the government's right to issue it. So it also represents, aside from all the deepest of humanity or capacities to work to meet others' needs, all the rules, regulations, policies, and everything else that comes with the government.

It has a kind of double edge. In all this movement, I realized, also in being in a world, that this movement has what I would call a spiritual component. Money is not separate from us—whatever's going on in the world with money, is also going on within us, and that we're never separate from that.

So regardless of what I think about money or how people use or abuse it, I am also a part of that whole system—not separate from it.

Group: Thank you. We honor your story.

C.J.: So C.J.. There's a question mark there because I'm the only one who knows what the initials stand for. I tell people my name. But there's a story behind it: The women in my family named me when I was born. But my father came later and changed my name. Anyway, that's C.J.

There's something about the question marks. I realize I don't know that much about my family history. I know just a little bit, but not that deep. I was thinking I represent America, my blood—African-American slaves, Native Americans people, and African American immigrants. I can't be more immigrant than I am. I can't even tell my story sometimes.

In terms of my immediate family, my mom, this little patch of green, she came from South Carolina. They were farmers. She only had a first-grade education, and her land of opportunity was New York, which is this little red dot there. My dad came from West Virginia. New York was his land of opportunity as well.

New York City was a hard place to be. I grew up pretty poor. Actually, initially, we were struggling, struggling, we were trying to buy a house. But my dad blew all the money. He was drinking and partying and we lost our house. That was my experience with money. So we plunged into deep poverty, into the government cheese and I grew up in the projects pretty much.

What's interesting about this story is this little star, letter A—that's for abundance. In spite of everything, the lessons I got from my family, especially my mom, was that there was always something to give away. There was always more. People came to our door, she'd take half of what she had and give it to them. As a little kid, I said to myself , "We don't have anything? How did she do that?"

That really made a deep impression on me. Giving is a very important part of who I am and the way I have lived. This little thing is about a hard life in poverty. This is walking the street, walking a really long time to get things. My experience of economic injustice was always in the market. Where I shopped at the A&P, and they had rotten vegetables that they shipped in from the suburbs.

So I didn't have a lot of fresh vegetables growing up. Our relationship with food was very different, right, as people coming from the farm. I've changed that as an adult. But here's a rotten vegetable with worms coming out. That was a really deep experience. I didn't realize it at the time. I always asked, "Why does this place smell so funny?" Then later we'd read these news stories and you find out about this corporation was intentionally giving my community garbage, so I didn’t have fresh vegetables.

As I think about my relationship to money, where it's been—I put a big, black box here. This is going to be the enigma for me. In some ways it's been invisible, like an unseen hand that's been working in different ways in my life. I haven't acknowledged it. I think where I'm going is, I have more recognition, more awareness of what it is and what it's not, and how it's a neutral force.

I put things in the box, because it has inherited a dual nature, as a tool being used for good, or being used for bad. As I go forward, represented here as a really bright light, I see the potential of money to be used as a tool to enlighten the path, to move things forward in a way that's positive, and to be used as a tool for joy and justice and beauty in the world. So that's my story.

Group: Thank you. We honor you and your story.

Caitlin: My name is Caitlin Peerson. My name means "pure," and it's from Ireland, a Gaelic name, though I'm not Irish. I was named after a couple that skated in the 1980 Olympics. My middle name is Clemons. I have not done any family history, but there is rumor in my family that we are related to Mark Twain. Samuel Clemens was Mark Twain's real name. I would like to do some research and investigate that someday.

I took this exercise literally, and answered the questions one by one. I was born in Washington, D.C. My dad worked at a governmental program that funded low-income housing. When Reagan came into office, that program was permanently cut, and we moved to California, which is where my parents are from.

My dad is an entrepreneur, a leader. He started his own property management business. We had the American dream, the house with the picket fence and a swimming pool. There was definitely a swimming pool at many homes in our neighborhood, and some were rarely used. I didn't draw the connection between that amenity and social privilege until much later.

This is my family. I didn't put myself in there, which I'm just realizing. This is my sister, my dad, and my mom. Growing up, it was the four of us, my grandparents, and some aunts, uncles, and cousins.

I think my family equates money to security, and security can then bring happiness. To this day, my mother will focus on safety. When evaluating little things, like taking my dog for a walk in the park, she'll ask "Do you feel safe going there?" I realized recently that their focus on becoming more and more financially stable might be related to the fact that perhaps they didn't feel safe.

My first experience of economic injustice was around 12 or 13 years old. My dad owned his business, and he had one worker who consistently had to call in sick or was late, or had to leave early because of family trouble, and he was not getting the job done. My father asked me "What do you do? Do you terminate the employee,

or have compassion and work through it?" I didn't know the answer to that, and how was a 12-year-old supposed to know? Later on, I wondered how it might be different if he was the one who had to attend to such issues – being in a place of privilege, he likely would not have been out of work if he arrived late. Of course, there were grueling demands and responsibilities associated with being the owner of the business, but nevertheless it was a reflection of my family's status.

This part is college. I studied sociology and religion, and during that time it became so apparent how privileged I was growing up, and I became really motivated to become more involved in social justice initiatives to deepen my own path in life. It was not directly related to money, and although a paycheck is important in order to live, I wanted to do what was right.

This part of the picture represents what I'm hoping the future will be like. I'd like to be able to use my resources to build more community. Ultimately, I'd like to adopt or foster a child. I'm not going to make formal plans, but that's how I see the future.

Group: Thank you. We honor you and your story.

Mateo: Powerful to hear your stories. So I'm Mateo. Son of Barbara, daughter of Marianne. Two fierce women who raised their households on their own. Safe to say that Nube was my chosen last name. I chose this, my mother's name, and I'm alive because of that name.

My mother is a Holocaust survivor, German Jews on her side. Grandma was single, but she had my mom with a non-Jew, and that was his last name. She was very stubborn. She didn't want to leave Germany. So she actually lived through the Holocaust. The fact that she had false documents that our grandfather had someone forge for her, the fact that she had a non-Jewish name covering for her, and the fact that her neighbors didn't turn her in, are all an important part of how she survived and I'm alive.

The story about the name is pretty powerful. My family migrated to South America in the '40s. And in Spanish it means cloud. So my background is: single mother, white professional immigrant. She and my grandma come from a kind of socialist perspective of understanding the world and understanding wealth, and understanding solidarity. That forms who I am.

I grew up in Bolivia. This is the first image. I grew up under a military dictatorship. The narrative, as a kid, was very straight-forward, very simple. Folks worked in factories and mines, and others took the product of their work to become rich. Workers making almost nothing and workers fighting back, then the military's guns would come out.

This was the story in Bolivia. We lived under a military government that was funded, and strategically supported, by the U.S. government. So the story is very straight-forward. And Bolivia, in short form, is best known to folks here is South America as a country that identifies as indigenous. So class and race are very much the same story.

Immigrants have to make a choice very quickly. It's not like you can run away from the stuff going down. It's going on around you. Guns in the streets. So that very much forms who I am, how I rank these issues. I grew up in wealth on the edge of two ecosystems.

My dad was Anglo-American. He left when I was three. I went to a U.S. school, with American diplomats, wealthy Bolivians and some military folks. I was a scholarship kid, but I was part of the fifty percent privileged class of kids. This image depicts me, this is my friends in school, me having a lot less than them but a shitload more than pretty much everybody else in the country.

Just grasping that reality, growing up with a mom who was a fierce activist, but, you know, chose to send me to a private school. It just brought out that conviction and eventually my dad's U.S. passport allowed me to come to the U.S. and go to college. And that was—still remains a huge privilege. Going to school at U.C. Berkeley, I met a lot of other privileged folks. I met my wife, who was there because she was privileged.

It's interesting to see, even what you might think are coincidences—I married somebody who has money. Money and wealth are different things, but money is a relation to wealth. That's one of my realities, a relation to wealth. My ability to work and fight for justice, this has a relationship to money—one of my roles now in my organization is to fundraise.

I see the foundations as holders of wealthy people's money. The contradiction is that we're taking the money from folks who created

this dilemma, in order to change the world. That's part of what I sit with. And then, you know, my work as related to today, the reality that wealth in the economy is pretty much not for the peoples that inhabit the whole planet.

One day we'll accomplish justice. It might not be my generation. It might be a generation that holds the deep belief that we can transform the world. Now the clock is ticking in a slightly different frame. Mother Earth's survival mechanisms are being compromised. Survival becomes an urgent matter. We have to right this situation in my generation, especially if our economy is to survive and work for everyone.

Group: Thank you. We honor you, and we honor your story.

Kit: My name is Kit. It's actually Katherine Baldwin Durgin. I don't ever think of it that way, so Kit. In the picture, I have a heart around my name because I was loved. And my story is about learning to accept that I was loved, because I never could feel it. But on the other hand, I had a confidence that I was going to be taken care of, that everything was going to be okay.

This is a little guy, because Kit came and the story is that they were hoping for a boy. And for a long time, I wanted to be a Kathy so much, because that would be more acceptable.

Katherine Baldwin comes from my great-grandmother on my mother's side. Both my parents are from families of ministers, Quakers, and Christians. My great-grandfather upholstered seats for trains. But his three kids received college educations.

So my grandfather worked with the YMCA in Japan. He worked very hard to be in the background, to support the Japanese staff leadership. This drawing depicts a hand, because everything about my life, everything that we did seemed to be about service, to be reaching out. This is a drawing of a dining room table. There were

always people around the table who didn't have somewhere else to go, whether it was overnight or a holiday, but it was a thing we were supposed to do—it didn't ever feel like work.

I had experiences of realizing economic differences that made a great impression from a very young age. First my mom, who worked all the time in the church of which my dad was the minister, talked about how he and others would respect and appreciate her more if she were paid. Secondly, my parents were very involved in the civil rights movement and so we were regularly conversing, marching with people of different circumstances.

I think my life has been about recognizing and appreciating the privilege that I had and have. It's taken me a long time to recognize it. I had the confidence and I was late in accepting that it came from a place of privilege. I always was looking at other people, and thought "that could be me".

School is one thing. I squandered my education. I recognize now that I had the privilege of being there, and it was a missed opportunity. Obviously, I've benefited, and I wanted to get away from family and the pretense of our lives, so I moved 3,000 miles, over here.

In my family, this is a totem pole. It's my mother over here hoarding. My father is over here handing out money on the street to anybody who thought they needed it. He was very generous and didn't seem to feel responsibility for his family.

My whole life, I wanted to be independent. I wanted to have enough so that I could have choices and freedom. And, I didn't want to do any of this Christian ministry stuff. Then I climbed the corporate ladder got towards the top and realized I was the diversity.

I started volunteering for The Women's Foundation. And I was asked to raise money. My reaction: "I'll do anything but that." And then I realized that I would feel empowered if I raised money for the empowerment of women. So I learned how to ask and give. I felt valued as a volunteer and my relationship changed when I became the Executive Director.

Well, this part is about making a space for myself. Because I was frustrated in the position to which I'd risen. I thought I'd take time off and go back to a similar situation. But in this space, I realized that I

wanted to do more of what I was doing, working to empower women, and myself. I took the opportunity to head The Women's Foundation through its leadership transition from the founders.

This picture depicts The Women's Foundation. The job was very challenging for me. I was now in an environment in which we confronted each other on class and race assumptions. I'd never been in this kind of position and it was very uncomfortable, very difficult, and transforming.

This is my family, my partner, Elaine, her 87-year old mother, Billie and Charlotte, the young woman we raised. Charlotte is the biological daughter of my partner's sister, who was on drugs and alcohol. The heart is here because before my relationship with Elaine I was only seeking external validation and recognition for my accomplishments. This heart is about connection and family which has been central to my life the last 20 years. I worked hard and feel privileged to have been able to retire several years ago. I'm enjoying working in the community, taking classes and biking.

Group: Thank you. We honor you and we honor your story.

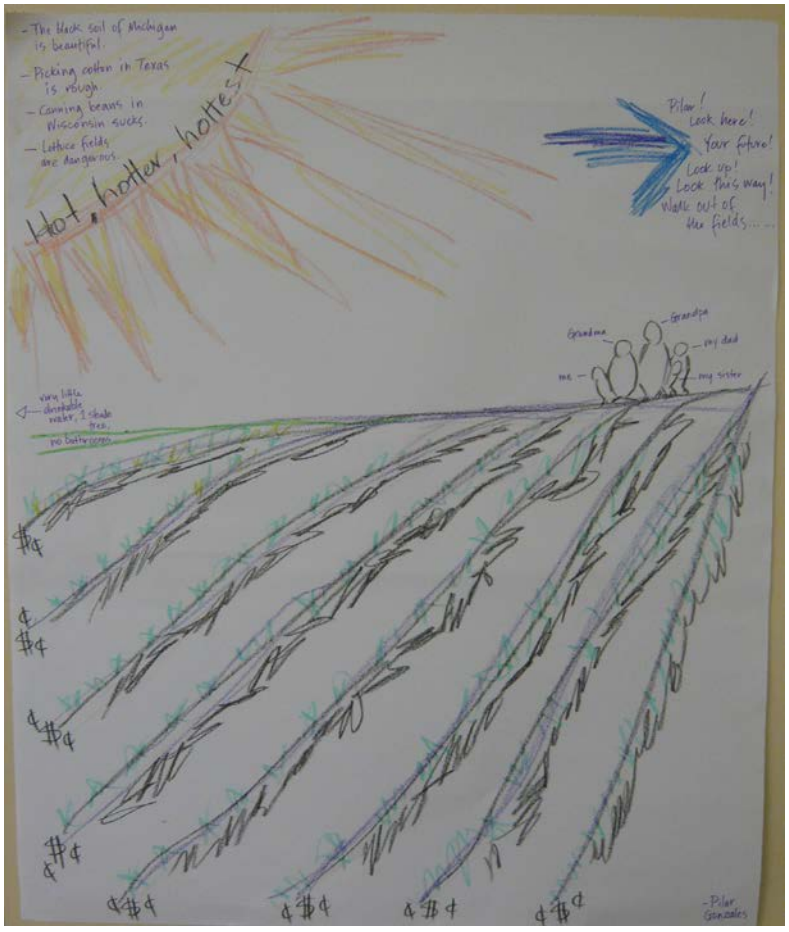
Pilar: My name is Pilar Gonzales. But my full name is Maria Manuela Gonzales. "Pilar" is my self-given name for 15 years ago, because that name had ended with my great-grandma. And I thought we should bring it back into our family. I had just been widowed at that time. I was doing a lot of self-reflecting.

I put it on like a pair of shoes, and it really felt good and comfortable, so I kept it. And my dad felt very honored. My mom was really upset by it, and felt a lot of pain, because she felt that she had helped give me the name "Maria", and here I was going by "Pilar."

I told her secretly she could always keep calling me Maria. She does. Not too much of a secret. She also calls me "Mary." That's from my

high school years. She's the only one I let do that. It's okay. My mom can call me whatever she wants.

I'm the daughter of Jose Gonzales and Teresa Diaz. I'm the granddaughter of Maria Lopez and Jose Pilar Gonzales. This is Pilar Gonzales. This is my sister. We were raised by my grandparents, because my mom and dad couldn't afford to have us with them. Everybody knows us. This is not a jolly scene. That's a pretty tough scene.



One of the things I realized from the conversations, I think it was during our first conversation, was that poor people have a lot in common with people higher up. There's this in-between. I'll tell you

what I call the in-between, it is that we all talk about money, or lack of money. Always money.

If you're really poor, you talk about not having it, how you're going to get it, who in the family has it, and who's going to work longer that workday. Are we going to pick beets today or are we doing canning? You know. Canning gets us more money. Maria can now work longer hours. Now she's 10 years old. She's not eight. She's stronger. We can have her stay in the factory longer.

So you know, I talked to friends who were of high wealth. Their families are saying, "Well, is this the year that we're going to make that extra investment, John? You know, kids want to go to Switzerland for their ski trip." And I realized a lot of my friends that I was going to school with had this enormous wealth. So they're talking about money, too.

The biggest thing is that we're both in this different spectrum of wealth. You know. Abundance or lacking of it, and always talking about money, but trying to keep secrets. I always felt that I had that in common with people with wealth. That's why I felt very compassionate, and I feel that I can do my job easily in the world of women with wealth, just what I've been doing for years. I have great compassions. I can talk about that.

I talk about the different states in the union that I was raised in, Michigan. That's where my grandparents landed and felt they would really try hard to keep me in school there. They were illiterate both in Spanish and English. They were indigenous.

They felt that to keep me in school, a white people school, would definitely be an advantage to me. One of the first relations I had with somebody other than someone who worked in the fields with my grandpa—he and I were holding hands coming back from the fields one day actually. I said, "Grandpa, I know what I want to do."

He didn't ask me. He never participated in conversation. "What do you want to do when you grow up?" He just figured I would work in the fields. So I said, "I know what I want to do." I said, "I want a job like"…(I saw my teacher carry a suitcase, which was a briefcase. But I thought it was a suitcase.) I said, "I think it's a job I want," because she didn't come to school with dirt in her fingernails or anything like that. So that's what I wanted.

My grandpa said to me, he says, "You know we're going to have to let you go to school with white people. You're going to learn from white teachers. Are you okay with it? You know that." I said, "Oh, yes, Grandpa. I know that. He was very calm about it. He just was holding my hand, and he said, "Okay. All right. You're smart enough. You can do that."

Grandpa never got to see me with the suitcase. But I promised him that I would drive a new car one day, which I got to do. I put it up here, to look up here. I was always looking for signs. In fact, in my family, I was the one that was told, "You will never make it in the fields. You're always looking elsewhere, challenging, sneaking up."

You know. We'd be going out the door to work, and I'd see the white men in the truck, doing some other job. I'd say, "Grandpa, how come we're not doing that job? Excuse me, sir, why are you getting to do that job?" He'd say, "Go back over there, little girl."

"I don't understand. Could you tell me why you get to do that job?" So I was always asking questions. So this is a representation most definitely of where I came from. It informs my life now. Even though I have this tremendous privilege to not work in the fields right now, it's not that it's shameful work. It's that it's the most degrading work.

While we always call Native American people the first environmentalists, we have truly relied on farm workers who are also included under that name. African-American people. It includes now Asian people. It includes Chinese people. Many people have had to go

through it—women, you know, poor white women, children. We were experimented on with pesticides and foods and toxic water, bad water. There's so much that migrant farm workers have suffered.

So I feel like a farm worker, the first environmentalists sent out there who brought back all sorts of news of bad health. All my background, money, all my wishes and best hopes, all my attitudes about money come from this place.

Group: Thank you. We honor your story.

Patricia: As I was listening, I had a sense of the depth of stories beyond what we could say in four minutes. It feels like we've started the conversation, that the stories we told were really part of that. So what we thought we would do is start the conversation with a question.

The launch question is: What's the connection between who we are and what our experience is of wealth, economic need, and prosperity for ourselves and for our community?

Raquel: I really have difficulty talking about it. I didn't think I would. As I mentioned, having to experience those very different class experiences, I actually did struggle but I didn't have some of the struggles that a lot of my friends do. That gives you the opportunity to look at things through a different lens.

I am always thinking there's always something on the other end of that. There's always money. There are always these kinds of opportunities. So I definitely build that into the work that I do. I can just say it's getting more difficult. But, I don't tend to see things from that scarcity point of view. I don't see things as not being there. I only see things as being there.

We had a family where when things would be tough somehow something was here to take care of it. I don't know as a kid how that

happened, but I know it happened. I remember getting kicked out of our house one night. My dad had gambled the money away. And I think my mom was saving some money to make sure . . .

So I always had that perspective of: it'll be there, which I know comes from growing up that way.

Pilar: I had an interesting thought, while telling my story this time—I hope that all of us have had other places where we could tell our stories. You know what I mean? Caitlin and I were just saying what it feels like to have that space, this little cut-out space, where we could tell it. You get to retell it in any words you want. It's your story, you know? You remember a particular piece now differently than you did before.

But, I felt very exposed, more than ever. And I'm okay with that feeling, because it told me how much I trusted you all and trusted this container we've created. But I felt more exposed. And then I realized that, when you're outside and cars are rushing by and you're out in the field doing your work that you're exposed. I mean, people see who you are. They see you bent over. You know what I mean? Not everybody's job is exposed. Sometimes you're in an office; it's contained and you have more privacy.

And I guess all I wanted to say out loud is just I felt very exposed this time around, telling the story about money. That's all.

Wilson: I would like to back up a step, because we are all individuals, and we see from an individual perspective. But we're embedded in a matrix—culture, language, systems, etc. There is a way that someone can be poor—and I think we may have even experienced this particularly as children—and we don't even know we're poor because there is a lot of honoring and caring that's around. So, you don't feel the sense of scarcity about being poor, or grasping, or necessity, or fear of what might happen.

There are communities where folks are very poor. They are very poor. Yet, they're honored for the work that they do in the community and their families feel whole and complete, despite the fact that they don't have money.

So a lot of what we fear is because we accept a definition of what is good and what is bad or what is poor and not honorable or difficult because of the matrix that we're in, rather than necessarily the specifics of how much money we have.

It's helpful to me to see myself from that larger perspective, and to know that I don't have to accept this definition for goodness and badness of myself, that I can take what's out there and redefine it in a way that works better for me.

Elizabeth: I was going to say something like what he said, because I grew up very privileged. Yet there was this sense that we can't lose it. So the culture in my family, primarily coming from my father—meant that there were always insurance policies, and guarantees, and warranties, and a fierce belief in consumer rights. You know, this thing broke and I'm going to go back and get a new one because those are my rights!

I grew up with a lot of money, but with this fear that it was going to go away, or something could go wrong, and you had to be protected at all times. It's kind of an inverse of what you were describing—wealthy in terms of dollars, but poor in terms of comfort.

It's so funny now to try to describe to my father—he's like: "Oh, you're not making enough money." And I'm thinking: “yeah, but I know my farmer!” Or, “I have body workers in my community.” It's not the health insurance plan that covers every last thing, but there are people like herbalists that I can trust or other ways of taking care of myself and taking care of my needs—you know, redefining for me what it means to be wealthy. I'm so much happier, having come into my own understanding of how to define those values for myself.

Patricia: I feel a little awkward. This is really hard for me. I don't know what to do with rich people who think that they're poor. It feels to me like skinny women who think they're fat. If you have any ideas for helping . . . I don't know. Maybe I've said enough. But it's hard to hear: "I have a lot of money and I feel poor."

Elizabeth: If that is what I conveyed, I apologize because I do not feel poor at all.

Patricia: No, not you—your family, the kind of poverty of . . . you said you had a lot of money but you were—maybe you didn't say poor, but lacking. I don't know. I guess I'm not being clear.

How do we hold both, is the question. How do we hold that poor people can feel full and rich and abundant, and rich people can feel scarcity or be fearful? I guess that's a narrowly-defined idea of wealth and poverty. It's dissonant. I feel like I'm stuck in a little tiny space about this issue. I would like to be more expansive, and find a way to hold the experience with compassion rather than judgment, which is where I tend to go.

Raquel: The other piece that I hear sometimes is "Well, they don't have money but they have family," Well, that's good. If they lived in a community where they went to better schools—it kind of dismisses doing something about it. So I think it is both, sometimes you don't have a lot of financial wealth and you do have family or you do have culture.

I hear a lot of things like, "Oh, but their culture is so rich." Well, it would be nice also for them not to have to worry about the week up ahead and food on the table and everything else. So I think we hear it on both sides sometimes.

Gaylon: I've had the privilege of being a life coach for the last nine years. One exercise that I generally do with clients is "be, do, have". I ask people to put those three words in the order of significance to them. Quite

often, people start with "do". They feel like they have to do something in order to have something. And then they will be something.

It's a very unconscious perspective that people will have. Just the looks on their faces when they realize it—because the reality is that if your whole sense of being, the foundation of that, is doing then what happens when you stop doing? You really lose touch with being who you are. So that sends people to a very traumatic place.

I associate that with your question around people feeling like they have to protect: I've got to protect my stuff, I've got to protect my money and those kinds of things, as opposed to just being who I am. I believe the gist of the question for me is really centered around the connection of who I am in my experience.

I'm always changing. I'm not stagnant. I'm an ever-changing human being. So as I change, then my perspective on economic need changes. There was a time in my life—I remember when I was in my early twenties, and I had a young family where in my mind I thought I need to make $50,000 to take care of my family. Well, two years later I began making $50,000 and I realized this is not enough. Now I need to make $100,000 in order to really take care of my family.

Once I went through a transformation, in terms of realizing that the quality of my life was based on the evolution of my whole self, then that number began to dissipate. It's like I get my basic needs met, and that's the way I live my life. Some people in my life want to argue about it, but I have just enough. I have enough to pay my rent, to take care of my basic needs, and to take care of my children and my grandchildren. And I'm told constantly: that's not enough. You need to have more. You need to plan for more.

I get approached with: you need to be afraid. You need to be fearful. And part of me is like: no, I don't. I just need to be at peace with where I'm at within myself.

I have such a different perspective on money and wealth that I often get into arguments with people about it. It's not that I don't value money—it's just that I feel like to be able, as you were saying, to be in a relationship with somebody where I can be vulnerable, where I can speak my truth, that's rich. That's value, because I need that. I feed on that, just to be myself.

Whereas in society you don't get that opportunity very often—society does not allow you to just be. Society says you've got to do something in order to be something. Do you have a degree? Do you have money? And if you don't, you're not important. You're insignificant. I think that's a bunch of bullshit, personally.

Mateo: I'm also hopefully straddling the conversation between individual experience, individual realities, and a systemic understanding of what's at play and that this is about institutions and about . . .

To me what I hope will be part of this rich conversation is that interplay. One without the other is really an incomplete conversation. I say that because when the question came up about wealth and having a lot of material wealth but there being a sense of not enough, I was thinking about when you used the word "safety" when you were telling your story of your family, which I know is very poignant. If we depart from the understanding that all human beings seek safety, it's a natural need and a very honorable need. I think the implications of what it looks like if you accumulate wealth and how trying to build your fortress impacts the world, it's very different than somebody who doesn't—meaning I'm materially poor and I'm suffering dislocation and I end up drinking or…the harm I create is to my family or to the folks around me.

If I'm incredibly wealthy and I'm still feeling unsafe, and I feel I need to keep on building my fortress, the violence I execute is exponentially magnified. I believe that the people who run Shell or Chevron may on an individual level be very dignified folk, and be good

parents, and really want to provide, and they continue accumulating because they want that safety. But as a result of their choices, there's a level of tremendous institutional violence that plays out.

I'd like to take on that dilemma because I hear that part of what we're expressing is an empathy for wanting to support any human being's capacity to have safety. But without challenging how some folks seek that safety, or the mechanisms that allow for that kind of wealth accumulation, we don't really get at the roots of institutional violence. That's an important part of the conversation that needs to be held. If not, it kind of becomes an intellectual exercise.

Wilson: I want to tack onto that, in that we also need to bring in the issues of capitalism. A central focus of capitalism is individualization. So in building that comfort through capitalism, it's about amassing the kind of capital that would give you the comfort and security that you need.

If you're talking about communalism or socialism, where you're talking about amassing the kind of relationships and sharing that will give you the comfort and security that you need, that you can depend on, it becomes a question of: am I going to do this for me alone or for just the family alone, and feel these kind of material barriers? Or, am I going to build the relationships and begin to depend on the relationships and the community rather than the materialism?

Elizabeth: Are those mutually exclusive? I'm not convinced that they are. Ultimately, I'm not planning on making all my own clothes and shoes, or grow and prepare all my own food. What is the way that we can exchange our passions and our resulting goods or services that isn't propping up that system of inequality, where many people don't have a choice about whether or not they're expressing their inspiration or doing that work which they're called to do?

Pilar: When I sit and think about those particular issues, whether it's dismantling entire institutional exploitation or coming at it from a community perspective—whatever angle I'm coming from, I'm a

woman over fifty and soon I will be a woman over sixty. I do not have a big retirement nugget. I have parents who are old who have no money, so I still support them. And I have other family members who have lost their jobs.

So what risk am I looking at? What does that risk look like? Because I can guarantee you as an older woman I'm not the only one who's taking care of extended family members at this point. What does a capitalist system hold for me? What does the future hold for me as an older woman now? The risk I take is going to look different than the risk you take, the risk that you take, or you take, or you.

As I sit and think about it, look at it in my daily work, and get myself up out of bed and go back to work again…because I'm going to have to stay in the workforce many more years than I had hoped, carrying that suitcase that I talked about, because that's what situation I have.

So what does accumulating wealth mean to me? Can I do it in a way that's appropriate, fair, and non-exploitive? Can I do it in a way that, crap, I can finally retire? I mean, those are the money questions I ask of myself almost every single day. They affect my family community and then into the rest of the community, because I'm a member of a larger community. Does anyone else ask themselves those questions?

Kit: I have so much going on in my head, I think I'd better just start talking. I was thinking about what motivated me for a long time to work in the corporate world. I don't think it had anything to do with accumulating money. I wanted to be independent and I wanted to have money to support myself. I wanted to have choices. But, really, it was the doing thing that you talked about, you know. It was me wanting external validation that I was smart, that I could accomplish whatever somebody else thought was a good thing to accomplish.

When that didn't feel gratifying anymore I asked myself if this is all there is? It's not enough. I made a choice to leave without knowing where I was going to, and I got a lot of feedback about: "Well, you

must have met a rich man, that you could make a choice like this. You don't have family. This is why you could make this choice."

You know, that didn't feel true. I didn't have family and I didn't have a rich man. But then this experience of retiring—when I first retired, which was almost five years ago, I had a lot of guilt because a lot of my friends are not in a position to be able to retire. I thought: Oh, I shouldn't retire. I should keep working because otherwise, you know, what will people think?

The truth was my partner was able to retire at the same time and our whole relationship has changed: from kind of doing our separate lives and coming together sometimes, to really spending a lot of time together and finding that the things that used to be minor that bugged us now are huge, and we have to work through that. We made the decision that the things we used to pay for, like clean our house and keep our yard, we were going to do. My partner is very resourceful. She grew up very poor and she knows how to do a lot of things. Independence meant a whole different thing to her than it meant to me. I'm still learning what that means, to say we'll do the work to keep up the house and the yard. It's a lot, and it never stops.

I started by saying, well, from 9:00 to 10:00 on Mondays I'll work on the house and the rest of the time I'll be out in the community. Well, it takes way more than from 9:00 to 10:00. And then it's also very humiliating because I don't have those skills. Well, I don't know if it's humiliating—humbling. It takes me a long time. These aren't things that I particularly care about learning how to do. They're not things that I grew up—I grew up in a parsonage, where you called the church janitor if the light bulb needed to be changed.

So this is a lot of rambling and more about myself than I need to talk about, but being in the place of not doing, not having a job, not having that title or that hat that everybody recognizes who I am—at least, in that part of my life—is a little uncomfortable, and challenging. So now I can choose. I have financial security.

Fortunately, both my partner and I believe that you take care of what you come across. That has meant raising a child, which we didn't set out to do. That means caring for her aging mother, who lives in our home. And, again, things that I wouldn't imagine doing.

I've really enjoyed making this choice to not join committees or boards and finding ways to relate to people in the community, that live in my community - helping people fill out their immigration application forms, helping them get ready for their citizenship tests, sharing information about how to make our homes energy-efficient and our lifestyles different so that we are being more protective or caring about the world we're privileged to be part of. And, you know, sometimes the people that I'm engaging with have invited me and other volunteers into their homes because they care about global warming, and that's my own motivation. But a lot of times people want to use their resources more efficiently. It's been a really wonderful way to connect with people in my community around things that we mutually care about, even though we express it differently.

Yolanda: I also want to talk about family relationships because the thing that keeps popping up in my head as people talk is youth – and, I think it's because I have small children; my kids are seven and nine. I keep wondering as we lose so many of our youth of color in terms of lack of formal education, drugs, violence, and all of these things that our youth have to deal with. There's a piece of me that believes that it's because of the violence of institutions. They don't feel loved and cared for, and valued and honored in our society, because capitalism and individualism takes precedence over community and heart. How can they have access to this kind of conversation?

It's very personal for me. I'm also okay with crying. It's very personal to me because I see it in the lives of my own children. They were born when their mother was seventeen and nineteen respectively, and she herself was a Child Protective Services child. I have met her and I try, when I talk to my children about their birth mother, to be very, very

careful about what I say about her. I don't actually know if she was born in Mexico or in the United States, but she's definitely of Mexican descent. To have had three kids by the age of nineteen, and not having finished high school, what could she possibly teach them? Even whatever level of love she could devote within her very trying circumstances wasn't enough. She wasn't able to provide the minimal level of care and attention that the state requires. So she paid the incredibly high price of losing the opportunity to raise her wonderful children.

Particularly with my son being older and having internalized more of the trauma of several foster homes before he came to my home, now he's getting the benefit of the fact that my mom was a teacher and taught me how to learn, which eventually gave me the access to attend graduate school at Stanford. So I have all of this stuff in my head and in my being that I can funnel into these two little children. It's a tremendous privilege to be able to do that.

I wonder about the hundreds and thousands of kids who don't get that benefit, that are also born to people who don't have the skills, that don't have the experience, don't have the knowledge, don't have the world view, to be able to help their own children. So how do we change the world view? How do we make it different for the next generation? I get overwhelmed by that sometimes.

I get some hope from the organizations I work with, the leaders of the organizations I work with. They're amazing. They don't ever lose hope. I don't know how they do it.

And my kids go to a public school, at least so far. The public school they go to is in West Contra Costa County, so it's not necessarily the highest-ranked school district in the country. But even within that, the school they go to, by sheer chance—and thank God this happened—happens to be the highest-ranked K-6 elementary school in the entire school district. So I'm enormously blessed.

The school has this great racial and ethnic diversity, and it has great test scores, and it's just an amazing place to be. And yet, it's still not enough, even for my children, it's still not enough. Our school has this achievement gap—black kids, brown kids, economically disadvantaged. It's that gap. So I bullied my way into becoming the chair of the school site council. I have no idea how to change that. There are these models. You've got to look at these models. I'm astounded by what the Harlem Children's Zone did—astounded, amazed, miraculous, wonderful, great work. How can we get even a little tiny percent of that at our school? That's a marvelous school. But, we still don't have any idea how to do what they did. There's something about the next generation. It's like: you've got to do it, but how do you do it?

John: I'm struggling with the deep systemic questions that come up for me. I don't know how to address the whole level of system change because the education system is not separate from the capitalist system. They're entwined. So it doesn't matter which window you look into. You get to the same place. Pilar, I'm going to quote you. It must have been a very early conversation and I think I made a statement—a very typical, innocent statement. You said, "Excuse me, but by whose rules? Whose rules are those?"

So, whose rules say what is a high-achieving school, and whose rules say you need to have enough, and whose rules say enough? And whose rules said that you're good because you have a lot of money?

I can't answer those questions but I think it's so complicated because it doesn't matter which direction you turn. You meet the same set of issues, with a different name attached to it, or a different place of action attached to it. The only way I can look at this is first of all to be really active inwardly, to work on myself—not that I'm free of it, by any means, because I live here, I'm not separate from the system.

What can I do to be part of building something new that is radiant enough? I don't know how else to frame it. I don't want to sound

arrogant or otherwise, but out of this picture what's possible? Instead of being driven by self-interest, which is at the heart of all of those systems, the new is driven by interest in the other. And what does the system look like? Whether it's working with money, or education—it doesn't matter – it is interest in others that actually allows it to radiate out. If somebody is interested in the other and that person's interested in the other, that's radiance. Right?

I just know that that's where the change has to happen. That's a little different theory of change than trying to change the system as it is. We probably have multiple theories of change sitting in the room.

Pilar: Forgive me for speaking again. Actually I remember something I learned in my first fundraising job with the Women's Foundation. I was speaking to a major donor, a woman speaking to women who have lots of money. I remember one woman said to me in a very private moment, "Can I ask you something?" And I said, yes, of course. After all, she was the center of this meeting, and I'm asking her for a lot of money. She said, "Can I ask you what it's like to live without money?" It was probably a question that set forth the next twenty years of my work and my career. Because she had such courage to ask me, I felt compassion for her to ask me. Believe it or not, I felt in a higher position to be able to answer, because her life was public. I knew all about her life. I could envy her if I wanted or dislike her. Whatever I wanted—I could be impatient…

She had the courage to ask me that, and it set forth how I wanted every relationship to be with a wealthy person. I knew then and there that people had the right to ask me that. If I'm going to tell my story, and make my story public, and your story is different than mine, you can ask me about that, because that is what I can tell you. I can tell you what it's like to live without money, and it is okay to ask me.

I don't even remember that human being's name, but I'm grateful to her. I always think of her when I'm thinking about perspective. It relates back to what you were saying—thinking about the other, not

thinking as an individual but thinking that she's a part of my community. She's a part of my community in that respect, as a woman and as a person who holds resources.

Wilson: You just sparked something. In some ways, the civil rights struggle was for the African American community, because it changed some laws around access to education, access to participating in the voting process, and so forth. But in other ways, it was very negative. It was very negative in the sense of the opportunities for African American young folks to be around people who were professionals, doctors, lawyers on a more regular basis, because segregation had forced the African American community together in ghettos. No matter what your economic status or your professional status or whatever, down the street was a doctor. If someone wanted to learn about what doctors know and what they have to go through, this was a neighbor and so there was access there.

With desegregation, those with the ability left the community, and left in the community families who were under the most distress and with the lack of social capital. So, it became more concentrated and more difficult for people to move through the system. That's not been corrected, essentially. So, yes, some of it was good. But also, how do we deal with this result?

CJ: I was really moved by what you were saying, and it gives me the courage to speak. I remember so passionately the changes and the sense of urgency around things. I have the feeling recently that we're creating, in this post-civil-rights era, a permanent underclass. How do we shift that, and it's very tied to race? You gave me the courage to speak as well because you talked about that edgy part, where you're not comfortable. That's part of what we really need to transform, and put something new out there instead of tinkering with systems.

I look at my experience. I don't romanticize that. The fact that my spirit wasn't destroyed by that—that's a good thing, but I would rather have had less struggle. At the same time, I don't want to

demonize other people's experiences. I have to be real: this is not values-neutral stuff we're talking about here. We all made choices. My family made a choice, in the midst of being very poor, to honor our connections to other people before ourselves in the sense that we didn't build a bunker. I know other people who built a bunker. They made a real, moral choice.

I don't agree with that choice, actually. I want to be able to say that, because that's the only way in which we're going to really shift things, is to be honest about that—that everything is not values-neutral, that sometimes there is judgment about what people do, because we know it's wrong, deep down. It's okay to say that and put that out there—and not demonize the person, but rather demonize the choice that the person made, which does damage to others in a way that they just need to recognize.

So when you said that, I thought, I can say something—when I heard your passion. There's urgency around it—to not just tinker, to not just be polite, but to really talk about what we need to do to shift things and to put out there a new vision for a way of connecting to ourselves that allows us to live differently and better, with more joy, justice and beauty.

Raquel: Or demonize the institution—I'm a single mom and I had my son when I was eighteen. I was in college and at one point I had to leave my parents' house and my son's father said, "Well, you should go get public assistance." In our family, even when my dad was on strike for four months, we didn't go down there. That was my mom, we are not going to do that.

CJ: That was the line. That was her line.

Raquel: That was the line. I didn't know until I went down to get public assistance the kind of judgment and humiliation that women—gender is a good addition to money, race, and class. The way that you're

treated when you ask for help in this country, the way that you're really treated around there, what does that do to you mentally…

Literally, I did that for four months. I moved out of my mother's house. I'd rather be with my mother telling me how to raise my child, for however long I had to do it, than have to go get public assistance. I wouldn't even go to the grocery store with the food stamps. I would tell my son's dad: "You go do this." It was the most humiliating thing. I actually have never told my mom and my dad that. When they asked how I did it, I said he was paying the bills when he wasn't, because you just don't do those things.

Race and class really do determine if you're going to get married or not get married and how our society values nuclear family, how two parents in the home earning—what it does to those children in the home. All of these things are so institutionalized in this country. Those are the roots of all of this stuff. What does that mean to our children? We have created classes where people mentally cannot get out from under all the oppression. And what does that really mean?

It's hard, raising my son, to tell him: "Don't listen to what people say about being raised by a single parent." I have to really counter all of that. Because even for somebody who has a Master's degree and has a good job and has owned a home—even that is still: "Oh, you're a single mom, and you're this, and that". For him not to feel bad in his mind, that he's not less than anybody else, is a constant struggle.

Gaylon: Well, CJ started a tremendous thing—thank you—to the point where it just took me to a conversation I had recently.

What are the redeemable qualities of the ghetto? What's positive about the ghetto? And quite often, if people haven't explored that question, you won't come up with anything. It will just be all negative.

Having lived in the ghetto, it requires a certain level of ingenuity, creativity, and perseverance. There are ghettos all over the world,

though they look different, sound different, and smell different. In the ghetto you will see joy, happiness, and camaraderie. At the same time, when I look at this society in America, there's this picture that's painted of what a ghetto looks like. In most cases, it's people of color, black people, when the reality is totally something else. When you look at white people, there's a large number of poor white people who get welfare and that kind of thing, but when you say welfare it's generally people of color that you think of.

I had a friend once that just said, "Thirty days—what does that mean?" She went on to say, and expound, that as an adult when you leave your household, your parents or whomever, every thirty-day cycle you have to pay somebody until the day you die—whether you're rich, poor or whatever.

No matter how you look at it or say it's unfair, you've got to pay somebody. There's nothing that's free. Money comes with a price. So my dilemma in my life has become one that says, once I get grounded in my beliefs, my principles, am I willing to negotiate those for money? That's where I get in arguments with people, because I'm not willing to pay that. The price in some cases becomes time—I have friends who don't see their children but for maybe two or three times a year because they have to travel for their jobs. I'm not willing to pay that price because my children need my time. I heard once that you can't learn to love somebody by only seeing them once every blue moon. You have to spend time with time with them. You have to listen and be present for those little nuances of somebody developing and becoming a human being, and to be able to share yourself with that person.

I believe the micro is the macro. I have friends who are in social justice, and I personally believe that you can't give somebody social justice. Social justice begins within the self and then permeates out. So, to say I'm going to attack the corporations, or I'm going to attack these institutions and make them do something different in the light of social justice to make it better for you—no because if this person

doesn't feel a sense of social justice within themselves it's not going to do them any good anyway. They're not going to necessarily be a recipient of the benefit of that because they're going to put themselves back in a place where those same institutions will come back and victimize them over and over again because they allow them to, not because it's not right.

I'll close with this. I know I need money. I need money from the standpoint of being able to take care of my basic needs. I shared with Wilson that I just recently put my grandmother, who raised me, in a retirement home. This was tremendously difficult for me to do—especially since the only way I could afford it was to have her stay in Phoenix, as opposed to having her in California to be closer to me. Every time I go to visit her, it just brings up in my mind: what's going to happen when I get this age?

I don't want to be a burden on my children. I don't want to have them have to say, "We've got to take out a loan to take care of Dad." But the reality is that it may be that way. I know right now, I'm still in my mid-forties, that there's a necessity for me to figure out a way to generate capital that doesn't compromise my humanity, so that I don't have to overly depend on my children and their children.

I know I need to do that, but it requires me to get out of the box. Following the cues of society and what society has told me I need to do, I know that's not the route to go. I live in this country. It's a free market. Money flows, and when it dries up in one lake it just moves to another one. I just really need to learn how to, like the cattle, move to that other lake—but to be able to interact with that lake in a personally sound way where I'm not compromising myself and I'm not creating violence on other human beings in my society.

Elizabeth: My brother said as a joke, "Life causes death." And I actually wonder if it is actually possible to exist without somehow causing violence. I'm really not convinced that it is possible. So it gets back to what you were saying: where do you draw the line? We have to draw the line

somewhere. But if you dig deep enough, there is something that each of us is doing that is contributing to violence somewhere. John, you said this in part of your story.

I do actually have a hard time with judgment and value judgment, because if we were not setting up these dynamics of right and wrong in ourselves, I don't think they could be manifesting out in the greater world. It's not so much what's right and what's wrong but rather: what have I not understood fully enough about that thing that I feel is wrong and how am I connected to it? Because somewhere, I am connected to the thing that I think is wrong. I might say, "Oh, my God, BP is horrible." I buy most of the gas for my car at an Arco station, which is owned by BP. And guess what? I live a lifestyle that I've chosen that involves driving an awful lot, or getting on jet planes. At a certain point I've just come to accept that my life causes violence. I might not always know where, but I do feel it is part of my responsibility to at least try to understand it, and mitigate it as best I can. But I also don't think that it is going to be possible to completely eliminate it. I'd rather focus instead on the choices I believe have a more lasting impact: what choices can I make in order to increase the amount of joy that I am bringing into my interactions with those around me?

Maybe the biggest impact that we can have is to be peaceful in our own heads and in our own families. And maybe that ripples out.

Pilar: Peace starts at home. Peace starts at home. It has to start somewhere.

Mateo: If I may, I want to challenge a part of what I think I hear you saying and connect it to something that was inspired by what Yolanda was sharing.

I think it's a slight mistake to interpret it as individual choice. I think it's about collective choice. When you talk about choosing to drive, it's a false choice. We live in a country whose cities are constructed

where, by choice, we don't have effective public transit. So you don't have a choice. I think the system brainwashes us to think about it as individual choice and then to wallow in that guilt. So I invite you to take a step back. It's a false paradigm. We've been set up, and it's really about collective choice.

Elizabeth: I totally agree with you. And, I know I'm making some choices that are causing more harm than I need to.

Mateo: I'm generalizing. I felt like Yolanda asked a critical question that really stirred me. It was how to create spaces where young folks, standing on the street corner, can be having this conversation. Maybe it speaks to my theory of change—we need political organizations. We need cultural and political spaces where community folks can self-organize to have these substantive conversations to then be able to talk about: How do we move from a "get mine" to a "share ours" society? Time after time in any country we look at, history shows that it's that kind of organization that then creates the systems of accountability that I've heard you talking about.

Of course, if institutions or people are making choices that hurt us we need to hold them accountable. It's nothing personal. It's like when there's a situation of domestic violence: from a restorative justice perspective, we need to intervene and we need to tell the perp: "It's not going to work anymore. There are going to be consequences if you keep on doing that. You need to learn another way of relating to human beings."

The same holds on an institutional level. In this country the most obvious examples—there was the Black Panther Party, there was the Brown Berets. These are examples of folks under incredible duress forming organizations to fight back. By fighting, I mean to fight these systems of oppression. I think we have the privilege to reflect about what worked and didn't work from those models. I think there's a level of self-negation that was required of activists in that age. One of the beauties of our social moment is how we've cultivated the space

of really integrating our whole selves. But in the process, I think we've moved away from understanding power correctly, and appreciating that if we're going to get true accountability we need to build collective power. In order to get that accountability, we're going to need to struggle – and the struggle has consequence.

I think about my country where I grew up, Bolivia. It was apartheid. It was very similar to South Africa. And the labor movement was busted out in the '80s in a very deliberate way to bring on what is called neo-liberalism, a version of the right-wing free-market system into Bolivia. For most of my growing up, there was no hope, meaning that we just thought that was the way it was. But there were high levels of political organizations that persisted, to the point that folks now organized to elect a man like Evo Morales President. We have a different pattern in a country that arguably has some of the most dramatically inequitable social indicators.

I want to put it in context, that we're in the wealthiest country in the world, and I think we have a responsibility to build that level of organization, to build a kind of hard-based resistance to create another world. When you talk about the hopes of folks we work with, there is no other choice. The choice is actually pretty simple. It's hard to make it happen.

Patricia: I would like to invite us to think about making this a no-apology zone. You were invited here for a reason. This really is a space for us to speak what we are experiencing. I've heard apologies already, two or three times. It's because what we're trying to say is not welcome in many of the public discourses that we're part of.

Raquel, I also went to the welfare office when my kids were little. I was struck by the intensity of that experience for me, from the very beginning, when they make you wait in a room with all these other women, with all these other brown babies, with no recognition that you've arrived. Then a case worker comes to the door and says, "Patricia Cole" and he says, "Oh, hi, Patricia. I'm Mister Smith." That

was dissonant for me, right in the moment. I wasn't prepared to be dismissed so easily.

What became clear to me, as I've done a lot of work over the years, is that there are some institutions that, in order to be successful in engaging them, you have to declare what's wrong with you. Then with other institutions, in order to be successful in them, you have to declare what's right with you. So imagine going into a job interview and having the welfare office conversation—you'd never get the job. But if you went into the welfare office and tried to have the job application conversation, what happens to you is…and it happened. I said to the guy, "Look, if you want to call me Patricia then tell me your first name. And if you expect I'm going to call you Mr. Smith, then you call me Mrs. Cole." He closed the door and left me standing there, because he didn't know how to deal with that because I was in an institution that said: "Tell me what's wrong with you." I wouldn't do that. I was ready to do that once we got inside, but it had to be with some foundation of respect. He wasn't prepared to do that.

When we talk about institutional change, when you think about social service agencies, and a lot of the work that we're trying to do to create the world that we imagine, we put people through those same paces where we ask them to tell us what's wrong with them, so that we can help them. So, I've come to this idea that the difference between charity and justice is that charity says, "I have gifts, you have needs—I will be compassionate and share my gifts with you so that we'll fix you." Justice says, "This system is broken. You are impacted by that and I'm impacted by that, in different ways."

This is all up for me because I was just asked to write a chapter for a book on cultural competency for the University of North Carolina School of Social Work. And they wrote back and said, "Give us an example of . . ." Because I wrote: "Everybody is impacted by injustice, those privileged and those not." And they said, "Give us an example."

What came to mind was the internment during World War II, where Japanese families had just hours to dispose of everything that they owned because they had no idea where they were going, or when they would be coming back. There's a story about a family that had a grocery store, and they had a white neighbor who said, "Here, I'll give you $5,000 for your store." And that's what they could take because they wanted to have money in case . . .

A year later the white family sells the store for $50,000. When we think about what the impact of internment is, it's very easy to see the impact on a Japanese family. But we don't factor in the impact on that white family. Who knows? Their kids maybe got to go to college. Who knows what the impact of that $45,000 was?

When we're doing this work we often fall into—it's my observation, anyway—some of those same dynamics. In our attempt to turn them around, we're actually replicating them rather than doing something different. I so appreciate tying together the individual and systemic change, and really looking closely at both of them. Let’s not just assume that because we're nice people the institutions we create are going to be nice institutions. In fact, they have tremendous capacity to do damage too.

CJ: I remember the welfare office as well, and my mom who only had a first-grade education went through. I was just thinking about how, later on in life, that was when it solidified for me that I was no good. I was obviously a failed human being, right? And, my mother was one as well.

When I had that experience of meeting someone who was more middle class, I didn't want her to come to my house, because I had had that experience. The message got drilled into me through the institution. Then I internalized it and realized that I was not good enough. It took me a long time to shift it and think about it in a broader more justice-based frame that wasn't just about me. But, I have to say there are still times when I feel that. The damage that

institution did to me is really incredibly deep. I'm a well-educated, savvy person who knows this stuff, and even I can't break out of it.

So I think we do have to be a little more accountable on all levels about what the damage that we do, intentional or unintentional.

Wilson: There's another aspect of justice organizing in terms of the pedagogy. As justice workers we see the injustice and we then approach the community as if the reason it's not been addressed is because there's something wrong with the community, that the community doesn't have the understanding, the expertise, etc. So we come as experts to simply tell the community how to organize in order to overcome the injustice. The result of that is often that you may win a fight, but because the community hasn't empowered itself and understood its own strengths, and they essentially fall into another form of injustice—which results because the community is left disempowered.

You should come with the recognition that those folks who are in the community are smart. They have some understanding about what's going on. From the basis of what they know that's presented before them, they're doing the best they can to make the decisions about how to put together their own empowerment to overcome injustice. Then they're able to carry on with that from their own sense of strength and capability. This is a very important understanding that those of us as justice workers need to adopt.

Raquel: Do we give this kind of frame that people who have money are responsible with it and people who don't have money are not responsible? I saw plenty of people in my dad's family with money not be responsible with it, including my own father, and my mother's who weren't very responsible with it. This frame we've allowed to happen around who is worthy of getting public benefits, and if you're getting them you should have a say in what you do with your money or your food stamps—all of that kind of stuff is not based in reality.

I mean, look at what happened with the banks. Somehow, they're not the ones held accountable for it. If rich people had more tax cuts then that would somehow create jobs. I haven't seen that happen, but apparently that's what we're being told. I wish they would do that on the other end. We haven't seen the impact yet in the community, but let's keep giving you money! Instead it's the opposite. Show us the millions of people you're fixing with $5,000, but we'll give you five million dollars for one job. I mean, that frame is just...The question is then: What do you do about it? How do we collectively do something about that?

Gaylon: I've heard race trickle into the conversation, and it's not always a pretty topic. For me what comes up when I heard your comment was the frequency of the story. When you have a lion's share of the media messaging that comes from a very small minority of people, they control the frequency of the story. And the more the story gets told, whether it's a lie or not, it becomes real.

For me, as a black male—and I spoke on it before—it angers me. I have to control my anger when I'm constantly being told that the reason I'm poor, the reason I'm illiterate, is because I'm lazy—when the reality is that the wealth in this country was built on my ancestors' backs.

The movie *Rosewood* has just always touched me in such a strong way. It's about a town in Florida where blacks live next to whites. The blacks were very prosperous and they built up stores and the whole nine yards. There was a false accusation of rape one day; a woman said that she was raped by a black guy. So the white townspeople took it as an opportunity to come in to dismantle, demolish, and kill the blacks in the town, and run them out so that they could take control of their land.

There's another example, Black Wall Street. It's a similar kind of situation in Texas, where there was a very prosperous black

community. They bombed the area from planes, and just demolished the whole town and killed a whole lot of the townspeople.

I like to read about African history, and that's part of the reason why I associate myself with it—I don't say I'm from Phoenix, Arizona. I'm not from Phoenix. I'm from Africa. Because to sit in a room with folks from diverse backgrounds and for somebody to say, "I'm from Europe, I'm from Spain, I'm from Japan" and for me to say I'm from Phoenix? No. I have an association with my roots that goes far beyond that.

My theory of change is really centered around the reconstruction of people's personal stories. I'm an avid believer: kill your TV. Don't allow your children to be in the room with the TV by themselves. Most importantly, monitor the types of conversations your children are having with their friends and family. Whenever there's an inconsistent story that's being told within those conversations, you have to check it very fast so that it doesn't seep into that person's belief, or your child or whomever.

We are under the gun, because we don't control the media. We don't control those messages that constantly keep bombarding us. It's very difficult for us to fight it without telling people to control and protect their consciousness.

As a black man, I'm not as angry as I used to be. I used to be extremely angry, where I would make you very uncomfortable if you were not black or not a person of color, because you would feel it from me. No matter what I said, you would feel it. I realize today, it's not personal. I don't have a problem with you personally. I just have a problem with you telling me that something is wrong with me when I know that I've been screwed. I know that I've gotten a raw deal, but yet I'm told in society that I'm not supposed to talk about it. "You don't want to talk about it—it's not popular. We don't want to hear that. You're playing the victim." Over and over: "You're playing the victim when you bring it up. Why don't you just get over it and pull

yourself up by the bootstraps"—well, I didn't have a bootstrap—"and move on?" I just think it's a crock. I mean, for you to say that and for you to impose that in my psyche . . .

I've worked with youth for almost twenty-five years now. I've gotten into arguments, and people disagree with me when I say the way that we promote education in this country is a crime. It's criminal, because every person or every child of color is not going to go to college. But when you paint a picture, and say that the only way you're going to make it and be successful is if you go to college—bullshit. Education is important, but you can teach yourself. The bottom line is that the institutions of education are just as dangerous as Chevron or BP.

Patricia: I just want to say I'm struck by the quality of what we're creating. I observe it even in the side conversations and our collective conversations. So thank you.

John: I want to touch on a number of threads from the conversation. My lens into this is particularly in the financial and money world. I am wondering if it is also true for race and class.

The observation is that we seem to have given up our capacity to author our experience around money. It was part of my story. The government issues money, then we get to use it. The idea of founding and issuing our own currency is a way to author our own economic exchange experience—that's a scary place for people to go.

I am connecting this to the notion of saying that somebody else tells you what your experience is. That's somebody else in a sense trying to author your experience for you. That's an attack on freedom, right? That's the violence against the individual, to my mind, when somebody tells me what my experience is.

I pay a lot of attention to this issue in the education sector as well – the relationship to authority. Then in the public sector, how much of

education is devoted to teaching compliance through standardization. That approach is exactly the opposite of what I am talking about.

How do we cultivate the capacity to author our experiences, whether it is race, class, or whatever? I know there's this matrix in the system. If there's to be change, it starts with taking back the authorship. Then hopefully, we don't make the same mistakes again. This is critical for young people because they haven't been so disconnected from that capacity yet. If they're given that opportunity, it's amazing the wisdom that comes pouring forth.

How do we cultivate the capacity to author experience and define oneself? What's hindering that? And I know there are huge obstacles. I'm not suggesting it's an easy question. But I feel like if our humanity is to be rescued, it will be in how we give each other the freedom and support for that experience, in that process.

Elizabeth: The experience I'm having in this conversation has to do with the intersection of race and class, and my identity, and what I feel safe saying and bringing to the table. Often, because of my class privilege, I don't feel comfortable talking about injustice, also particularly in the way that Chinese in this society are often viewed as being the money savvy ones or the rich ones—you name it. Because of the stereotype of Asian people in this community, and because of my privilege, which upholds some of that stereotype, I often find it very, very difficult to speak up.

To be totally honest, I find it a little bit difficult to bring my full self into this space, too, particularly because after one of the first things I said in the conversation, there was an immediate response that made me react, "Okay. So I can't go there because that's unsafe." Even though I know that's not the dynamic that occurred, it is so easy to project that and then go back into my hole.

So often in cross-class, cross-race conversations, it is totally okay to talk about the oppression of blacks in the building of this country, and how so much of this country was built on the backs of black people. I think yes, *and* a lot of the West especially was built on the backs of Chinese. Not by my Chinese ancestors, because mine were quite privileged, doing other things and building their own castles in China. But I feel the work of the Chinese here as the West was being built as somehow part of my identity. I feel some responsibility for bringing it to the table. And yet because it's not my personal history, it seems inappropriate to bring it to the table. That's one piece of it.

But the other piece is the structure and system that allows accumulation of wealth by American or other multinational corporations right now. I see the Chinese part, and it's also happening in India. There's a whole lot of oppression and near slavery happening to Chinese people right now in the name of building American companies. That does not sit right with me at all.

I find myself silencing myself in many cross-race, cross-class conversations. I don't think slavery is ever good. Slavery then was not good. Slavery now is not good. How we are treating farm workers right now, and undocumented immigrants, domestic workers, and any number of other people that we oppress in other ways—that's not okay with me.

The thing that I find so difficult is to sit in the middle of a conversation like this when all these issues come up in my head, and wonder to myself: What is it okay to talk about? In the last hour, it seems like it has been easier to talk about the shared experience of going to the welfare offices. While others may understand that, I don't necessarily. I'm the only Asian person in the room. I feel like the minority right now, even though, based on my class privilege, I feel very, very privileged.

What do I bring? What is it okay to have solidarity around? I don't want sympathy. Yet, I do feel like part of my responsibility, because of

my multiple identities, is to shine the light on injustice that is not often revealed or part of the conversation.

Much of it has to do with who's in the room. If there were other Asian folks in the room, I'm sure we'd be hearing a different story. And, not all Asian people are the same. So that's a bit of a mush, but I wanted to put it out there.

Patricia: I appreciate your stepping forward in the face of my having dampened your first discussion. I wasn't as clear as I might've been. That's really my own stuff. I have a similar struggle because indigenous people are invisible in most conversations. So I feel like I'm always having to put that forward.

I want to be really clear that this tension that I feel around privilege is partly because I struggle with holding my own privilege. I'm really grateful that you didn't let that silence you, because your voice is really important to be in this space with all of who you are, and not just the elements you think we might have solidarity with, or not, or feel comfortable with, or not. You are all of who you are, and I'm really appreciative.

Elizabeth: I know that. In classic power dynamic situations, there are times when I feel like I have a responsibility to stand up and say something as a representative of a certain minority class—class isn't the right word, but minority delineation and then as a person of privilege who tends to have my own stuff around needing to speak up and to be heard all the time. I know that I have to step back a lot. That tension comes from so many different places.

Pilar: I was wanting to bring up the money, what's being earned and accumulated at the very top. I've heard us talk a lot about corporate exploitation. To me, it's up at the top. The money I see that's *not* being earned at the real basic level, in our fields, by the people that pick our food, is our modern-day slavery.

Slavery's not gone in this country. It never has been, never has been. There are just so many forms of slavery. But, slavery of the migrant farm worker, in all colors, all genders, every way that a migrant farm worker comes to us to bring our food to us, is one of the hugest atrocities and embarrassments and shame, shame, shameful things that we have to bear in this country.

I have argued with environmentalists and slow food movement folks, and I get pretty fired up. I get real tired of farm workers being left out of that picture because there's no way to talk about agriculture without talking about migrant farm workers. But, we sure have been able to do it for a whole lot of years. I don't get how we can talk about the plight of the farmers. I don't get it. We can talk about food in grocery stores, and we still leave farm worker families out. It is still the biggest violation of child labor in this country, it beats out sweatshops. We still are able to turn our backs on the slavery of minimum wage, and expect families in this Bay Area to live on that.

Do you know 70 percent of the people collecting food at our food pantries in the Bay Area are two-parent families who are working with minimum wage jobs. Seventy percent, it has surpassed homeless people. Those are the ones that are standing in that line with their children, embarrassed, full of shame, having to ask for food or shop in the pantries. I think that's absolutely appalling.

As some of you know, I pass out gloves to day laborers every few weeks. I pass out food, tangerines, hot coffee, whatever. I go to corners they're standing on. I have conversations with them about their labors. I've been doing this for years and years.

I was just there, on Thanksgiving morning. Within about 20 minutes, within blocks, I passed out 100 pairs of gloves. That means I shook the hands of 100 workers. And that's within 20 minutes. I could've passed out hundreds more on Thanksgiving morning—people standing on the street wanting to eat and wanting to work.

I shake their hand and say, "How's it going?" They're like, "Well, señora, thank you so much. But, God, you know, can you tell your friends we need work? Do you know white people?" And I said, "Yes." And they go, "Could you tell them we need jobs? We're not here to do them harm. Could you tell them?" I say, "Well, I'll tell the white people I know." But I don't know them all! But I'll tell the ones I know. They literally say that to me.

They put on their gloves. If I am so fortunate that I have a little bit of money left over, I will sometimes tuck a $5 bill into their gloves. I swear to you I've had every one of those gentlemen come up, "Señora, you left some money in the glove." I go, "That's for you." You know, I said, "Every man and woman should have $5 in their pocket," because I know at the end of the day, if they get paid 10 bucks, that's fantastic. To happen to have five bucks in your pocket, so you can either take the bus back or do whatever you need to do, that's a big deal. And I'll keep doing that.

And they asked, "Why do you do this?" I said, "Well, I think it's—I refuse to criminalize people's desire to want to work." I absolutely refuse to criminalize people's desire to work.

I just want to say that because I'm pretty fed up with some of the things that our kids are exposed to. Ten years of fighting for shade, and extra shade, and water for farm workers. And the California state government thinks it's done us a giant favor because it signed a mandate that says they'll give outdoor farm workers extra feet of shade and a few gallons more water. We finally won that just this past summer. And they wanted to be patted on the back for that. Shame on us for thinking that that's okay. An environmental movement that does not pay attention to migrant farm workers is not an environmental movement. That's how I see it.

CJ: Thanks for speaking the truth. I was just thinking about expressing gratitude and doing it early for being in this space, just because it's a place where you can say something like that. And people will listen

and listen deeply, beyond the surface level, and then don't get into arguments about who's the most oppressed person in the room.

I think this is a place that can allow alternatives to emerge. I've really struggled with the concept and the construct of identity, and how it's changing for folks, especially for younger people, and how to use technology to do that. Playing with identity a little bit more creatively might be one part of creating something new.

There's this potential power of the internet that people can use in a positive way to redesign and think differently about how they relate to other people that can build a sense of identity that's tied to others with their fates being interlocked. We used to have this built into our health system. A young person kind of underwrote a person who was older and more likely to be sick. There was a tradeoff. We do this less and less, and instead leave people on their own.

Here's my fear. As we go onto places like on the internet, and there's so much anonymity and stuff like that, it tends not to bring out the best in people, as they say. So you find, especially around race issues, people are accused, acting like victims. I thought that's interesting.

It's becoming a way for people to say it's okay for me to be racist because it's them that are acting like victims, and they need to get over it. Also, I don't have to take responsibility for my attitudes. So that's a place people can go, and will go, right?

Then there seems like there's also this really bright spot and potential for people to be a lot more creative. How do you encourage that and create space, when you have this medium out there that people are using so actively everyday? I'm struggling with this. But I really feel like identity in the 21st and 22nd century is going to be very different, and might be a point and lever towards creating change.

Raquel: I really was struggling with that in having raised my son. He is half Latino, half black. I used to tell people, "Well, the construct of identity

is changing. And we should be…", you know. But two things happened to him recently. And, I don't know if our construct of identity is really changing. I am questioning that, how much is it really changing?

When he plays lacrosse, which is typically an upper-class white sport, he's always the only dark kid on the team. His best friend's Native American and wears his hair long in a braid. They're very proud of that because it's a Native American sport. The two of them are these little ambassadors for this sport in our communities. It's very funny. But, my son was called the N word on the field a couple years ago.

One reason why I thought identity was changing was that when we talked recently about affirmative action, my son thought we don't need it. He goes to Berkeley High, and he said, "We don't need this and we don't need that."

Now, we've been going to colleges and looking. We were in Denver, and on the plane ride home, he said, "Mom, now I get affirmative action." So, I used to think identity was changing. Now, I don't know.

As he gets his experiences as a brown kid in the real world, and not in the bubble of the Bay Area, he is not just shocked. I think it's getting to him, when we go to college campuses, that there's no other kids that look like him, and what that really means in terms of his identity. For me it's hard because on the one hand I like it, and on the other hand, I'm so proud of my working class background.

I want him to be proud of everything that he has, from different cultures and his family and stuff. I do empathize with him—God, this is a hard struggle. It's a hard struggle because he's a brown man in this world. He's been driving for less than a year, and he gets pulled over often for stupid crap, you know. I'm struggling with it, too, because I think there's huge opportunity around it. And, I also feel like racism is still so mired in everything we do. Can we really get beyond it?

Patricia: My kids call that the Boston look. We moved from Boston to here. Then a few months later, we went out to the Russian River. My little ones said, "People are looking at us funny." The older ones said, "That's the Boston look."

John: CJ, you raise a very complicated question around identity, particularly with technology and the media, because there's basically a commercial agenda driving it. The whole culture around “free” – well, it's not really for free because we know behind it is the data gathering market. The media’s real agenda is to claim the identity of a human being. That's what they are in competition for. I see identity, of the individual and of culture, as the last commercial frontier. It's related to the authority question.

The degree to which the media can actually author your experience is the degree to which they’re defining your identity, which makes it easier to sell the products they want to sell to you.

I have a certain inner hesitation about the media and using this new technology—it makes me really nervous and not that it's a bad thing or otherwise. The concept of a digital identity, and the issue of privacy makes me nervous. I know that there's a huge generational question buried in that as well. I grew up at the same time as television showed up. I'm really dating myself, right?

Then computers showed up. Then the internet. In each case, there was a frame of reference for the next development. If you've grown up in a place where that was already present, whether it was TV or the internet, there's no distance from it, no objectivity. So the media makes possible an incredible capacity. But, there is an intention within that, which is around almost colonizing individuality. It's the same intention—command and control—that has driven commerce and empire.

The capacity to tell our stories and form community, to sit here at a table and hear each other, look at each other—to me, that's not replaceable.

CJ: No, it's not replaceable. At the same time, what you just said reminded me just how important it is to develop some critical thinking skills because otherwise we have everyone compliant, as we talked about before. In the media environment, where people have a commercial intention, the only thing that's going to save them in addition to having spaces like this, where there's a real community and connection face to face, is critical thinking skills and being able to assess and to judge and to deal with the stuff they're being bombarded with. Compliance reinforces the ability of people to just kind of puppeteer them. So yeah, scary times.

Kit: I keep coming back to the question Mateo raised about how we create something different than what we know institutionally. I was thinking about when I left Levi Strauss & Co. and thought, phew, no more capitalism. Then I became the Executive Director of the Women's Foundation. And what I felt so deeply was: I'm just on the underbelly of capitalism. Now, I was begging Levi Strauss & Co, and others, to share their profits so that we could do the real work and be their conscience.

That was a really horrible feeling. I thought I was angry when I left. I got more angry. As the executive director of a foundation, we were asking people to make application to us so that we could judge whether we would share the resources that we'd worked very hard to raise with them so they could do their work.

We were committed to doing this in an empowering way, and not to make a lot of work for them because they were already doing a lot of work. We wanted to make sure they were diverse enough, we had papers that they had to fill out, and we had workshops to help them fill it out right. I think we made a lot of progress. We learned a lot about listening and supporting their work in the way that they

conceived it. We accepted that we didn't necessarily understand or "get" what they were conceiving. But, we wanted to learn from them and with them. And, we wanted to give them some resources. We put them through a lot for $2,500. There were people who just chose not to participate. It was too difficult and time consuming.

I'm thinking about how easy it was to try to impose accountability on people, just to make us feel comfortable. It's our definition of accountability, which is disempowering. The rich part of the work was actually having the conversations about what change they wanted to bring about in their community, and having a little bit of money to give them to support them in their work.

To have a conversation takes time, focus, energy. That's not always convenient because I have this long to-do list. I have goals that I want to achieve. So I think it's a shift that I hear the people in this room wanting to make. There is such a pull, whether it's technological or other, that makes us not want to take the time, or pay the attention to care, to be with ourselves and with other people.

Wilson: I'm reminded of a community that's come together and supported itself for many, many years, where there is a more collective form and connection—Mondragon, in the Basque region of Spain. They've worked up a whole economic system that includes education, and work, food and everything, where it's all run through community controlled and owned for-profit and non-profit institutions that themselves collectively work together based on a founding set of values.

In the face of the crisis of the 1930s and other world economic problems since then, Mondragon has continued to be successful and to move forward. I think part of what allowed them to do this is the homogeneity of the Basque people and the values of the Mondragon community.

But then when you bring in the diversity of people and different kinds of cultures, there's a breakdown in trust, and in sharing communications and understanding that keeps that kind of collective working together from actually happening.

I think that our question then comes down to: how do you cross those language and cultural lines because I think the basic element of family sharing, community sharing, village sharing is somehow inherent in us basically as human beings. But when it is The Other, when it's the other village, when it's the other culture, or the other people, then the inside-outside thing enters in.

John: One thing about Mondragon is they actually have a religious-spiritual foundation, not that it's a practicing religion by any means. But it was founded by a Catholic priest, Jose Arizmendiarrieta, based on a set of social-spiritual values that everybody signs on to. In the practice of the cooperative work, those values are used as terms of accountability, not just practice.

They have a very healing economic approach that they've developed through their own banking system. The way the bank works is that if you have a startup business, because they love to encourage enterprise as part of sustainability, you get charged a very low interest rate. And once the business becomes successful, you get charged a higher interest rate.

So, they flip the whole high-risk-high-return assumption upside down by saying a young business startup shouldn't be forced into making bad decisions because of the interest rate that they're getting charged. When they get more successful and capable, then they can pay higher interest because that then allows the new enterprises to get started.

We could have a whole day conversation just on the question of interest itself. I can just feel the kind of energy going on in the room around interest rates and the justice and injustice around them. But I

just wanted to say there's an example of practicing your values all the way down through the economic monetary system. It isn't about greed, ok. It's about the power of enterprise. So they flip the whole value structure.

Patricia: This reminds me of the idea of shared values as a core principle—I think that really resonates. Around the turn of the last century in Boston, they had this kind of state-of-the-art cutting edge service program for deaf people. Then on Martha's Vineyard, because it was a pretty closed island community with lots of intermarriage, there was a significantly higher deaf population than in other communities. In a study which looked at marriage rates, income rates, education, wealth, all of that—they found that the disparities in Boston between the deaf and the hearing were lower than in other communities. On the island, there was no difference, none whatsoever. And on the island, there were no services for the deaf. But everybody on the island signed and spoke.

We think about social services in terms of separation. You know, like you are the client and we are the provider. Instead, when we say no, we're all just neighbors and we do what it takes to create access, equal access, then those disparities disappear. So access I think is a key element to justice.

Mateo: This conversation's about living solutions; what you're talking about makes me think of another one that I find inspiring. And you know, we'll give an example emulated into Marxist context. This one comes out of Brazil, which I think in some ways shares some of the heterogeneous realities that we're facing in the U.S. It's in the city of Porto Alegre, and I think there are other cities, too; there's what's called the participatory budget process. It's been used actually for 20 years. Literally thousands of city residents deliberate together to decide what the priorities of the city's spending will be.

One of the interesting lessons is just in the process alone since it's not directed by elected politicians. It's all of us in the city deliberating

together. Obviously, one of the things that came up rather clearly is having a much more progressive tax system and a progressive system of distributing accumulated or shared wealth. Before it started, folks in the wealthier parts of the city—I think it's 2 or 3 million people, so you know, a high level of complexity—wealthy folks were like this is not cool.

But five years into it, when there was now a lived experience, there's a level of social harmony that was borne out of the process and understanding, a willingness to pay a fair share. We see the fruits of that process and I think there's something very whole in it.

The second lesson—to connect it back to some of what we're talking about before and some of what I was sharing before as well—is it becomes a reality in a place like Brazil because you have movements like the Landless Workers' Movement, which is hundreds of thousands of peasants, leading very militant land takeovers and creating full alternative modes of being along the lines of Mondragon and being very clear that another world is possible. The limitations of what's politically viable that’s blah, blah, blah as the political system says. We're not concerned with those limitations. We're going to build our living experience of resistance and hope right here, right now.

I think our challenge as activists, as organizers, is to name what is materially and culturally necessary to have a harmonious way of life. And the kind of folks who are invested in equity continually name their false solutions as to how the world should be. In the middle is what's politically viable? For the most part, it's the false solutions that occupy that space. I think our challenge is to move what is culturally and materially necessary into the politically viable space. We only do that if we're unabashed. We're going to dream big. And we're just going to execute it. And we're going to execute it on the ground right now, mindful that we need to change institutions.

I think that's how something like the Porto Alegre budgeting process becomes reality because they're thinking of it as part of the political process. It became normalized. We need to normalize that stuff. It goes back to building social movements that just flex the muscle. We're going to take this space. I think about food and agriculture in the city and this age of ecological transition. I believe we need to be teaching everyone. We need to start feeding ourselves in the flatlands in Oakland. We need to invite the city of Oakland to pass policy that takes what we built to scale.

If they are not willing to pass that policy yet, we need to seize that land and do it and then, you know, continue the conversation. I appreciate that you brought into this space what is living now that just manifests alternatives. We need to blossom local solutions and become—what the Zapatistas say—a world where many worlds fit.

Gaylon: So how do you educate people about this? What do you bring to people without perpetuating what the institutions perpetuate from the standpoint of taking your power away from you? They want to tell you that you don't know anything. And I'm going to tell you what you need to know.

How do you create a movement that is going to be sustainable? How do you light that fire within people to go take land back and for everybody to understand how significant this is and what kind of impact that'll have, not only for me, but for my children, my children's children. If it's all about getting a job, you can talk about civil rights, but the only thing we got was a job. I don't want a job. I want a future for me and my children and my children's children. And that's not always going to look like going along to get along or going along with the program.

Pilar: I had a thought, somewhat related to what Kit was saying around classism. It's a very short, short story. I had the opportunity to do some translating for a women's group that was from Central America—a very humble, bare bones organization. There were also

three very large foundations coming to speak at this press conference. They had just released a report.

So the press comes. I'm there with three of the women from group, political refugees, all extremely humble, quiet women. These women leaders are up there and they're talking about their fantastic foundations in this report and what it means and the releasing of it. The buttons are just busting off those jackets, they're so proud.

And now they go, "Are there any questions from the audience?" The women, who are indigenous, they're about this big, made me look like a giant. One stands up. She doesn't wait to be called on. She stands up, and she's wearing her *huipil*. I stand up with her, and say I'm her translator. Mind you I've been translating the presentation for them the whole time. She says, "Señora, please ask them—everything that they're doing, how will this put food on my table and help my children go to school?" So I proudly went up. And I said she would like to know how it will put food on her table and help her feed and educate her kids. You could have heard a pin drop.

Then there was a big old honking intellectual answer given, right? So I translated. Then she says to me, "You can tell everyone that it sounds like she doesn't know." I did tell them. She thanked me and sat down. I swear to you that's exactly what she said. They just stood their ground. And one of the speakers responded, "Well, thank you for that question. Are there any other questions?" I mean, it just shook this gulf of class. And they crossed it. You know, they just flew over it. They did—with one question.

Patricia: Before we look at the questions in the basket, I want to check in to see if there are any loose ends that feel like they need to be rewoven into the conversation from the topics that came up.

Caitlin: I'm aware that I haven't spoken yet, and that it's been noticed. But the reason is that I don't feel like my voice offers the wisdom, experience, or perspective that compares with the depth of

conversation that is at the table right now. I just wanted to put that out there, because that's why I've stayed outside the conversation so far. I know that on some level, my voice is relevant, but I feel that given the position that I have been born into, that I just don't have experience. Your comment earlier about what is positive about the ghetto, well I just don't relate to any of that because I haven't been there. I've been very privileged, so class is not something that I can fall back to and say that was a hardship.

I think that everyone around this table is amazing. You are leaders in your field. You're thought pioneers. You're leading organizations, movements, and philosophies. I feel like so many people that I come into contact with that are doing amazing things have this rich experience because it came from working through hardship, or from experiences that maybe they would have preferred not to have had growing up. I admire people who have 'thick skin', who have the courage and the level of thought and passion that everyone around this table brings to the conversation and to our communities. I hope that I can bring that. I know on some level it's growing, and that's why I'm honored to be here. I feel like a sponge absorbing different experiences, different ways to be, and different perspectives.

I did have a thought that related to my family. My family is financially secure, which I might have mentioned. They're really good people, but they have more than they need – they have five cars, which in my mind, I've always been so critical about. I just think there's no reason for you to need five cars. Money should be spent somewhere else. I have placed myself in a position where my ideas and my beliefs, especially around money and privilege, are not the same as theirs. I have found that the only successful way to have a relationship with people of wealth is to be fully accepting of different views and decisions around money. I also try to educate and share my ideas as peacefully as possible, when I can and when the other party is open to hearing it. But that's the hardest thing to do – share peacefully – because I tend to be very stubborn about my beliefs, and that doesn't create openness with people.

Patricia, you referenced the skinny woman who thinks she's fat. I think that's a great analogy. The learning from my situation is that if you're looking at the skinny woman who thinks she's fat, the only way to help her is to hold that with compassion and to try and get to see her as how beautiful she is. Or, to help people of wealth truly see how safe and blessed they are. If they're wealthy, but there is a feeling of scarcity, then there's never enough. So really, there is a basic fear of not being able to meet their own needs that prompts wealth accumulation. That's an ongoing issue in my life that I work with—how to relate compassionately – given that I have fundamentally different beliefs about money and class.

Gaylon: Well, Caitlin, just so you know, there's people who live in the projects who have five cars.

Pilar: Caitlin, you're welcome in this movement. You're so welcome.

Yolanda: You know, you described yourself as a sponge. One thing about sponges is that after they take in, they can give.

I think also it's easier to show only certain parts of ourselves partially because even in a full day, we don't have all the time. In my story, for example, I chose to emphasize something about my parents. It's very true that my dad was abandoned by both his parents. Growing up in Peru, he was short, dark, poor, and illegitimate. You can't get much lower in the class system than all of those things.

It's also true that his father, when the father finally did recognize him, was a captain in the army. Three of his uncles were generals in the army. You can't get much higher in the class system than that. We all bring multiple pieces. We all have multiple identities. And so they're okay. They're okay because they have to be okay because that's how reality is.

Gaylon: I want to try to piggyback on Caitlin's comment. First of all, thank you. It helps me to understand the dilemma that folks in your position face because I don't hear that all the time. To be able to state it, explain it, and then to express how you feel about it, thank you.

Mateo: I really appreciate your courage that you brought forth sharing. I see this as an expression of building community. And your community strengthens us. I think one of the tragedies of class inequality for rich folks is the severe loneliness I think they feel. I mean, you build a fortress. And then you have to protect your stuff. Wow, that's profound. I've experienced that with my wife's parents. Her mother's tremendously cruel on the surface. And it's taken me a long time to appreciate what is going on there.

As a woman who was born in the '40s or '50s in Ireland, there are tremendous challenges about gender there. But I realize she's lonely. Stuff is supposed to take care of her constant migraines. And it doesn't, so she just lashes out.

To name it, to want to break through it is, I think, a bold move for somebody with class privilege. I say that as somebody with class privilege myself. So I want to appreciate your bringing that voice forth. It sets an example. Just as we have a responsibility to build an anti-racist consciousness among white people, I think the same thing goes for folks with class privilege. The more we do what you're doing, the more it emboldens folks to realize, yeah, this is lonely. And maybe to realize it's in my self-interest to build community, rather than to build a fortress.

Pilar: Well, since we're confessing our brushes with wealth, I once married a very rich white man. It was our issues on wealth and poverty. We thought we could bridge them, that love took care of it all. No, it didn't. It came between us. So now I'm a divorcee of someone who held so much wealth in this country. I wanted to be near the human being and not the wealth. But I just wanted to share that with you, you know, a lot of pain around that.

Raquel: We do a lot of injustice among ourselves with that, you know. I grew up in a middle-class household in a suburban community. But when I went to schools, I would lie about where I lived because I was not accepted if I didn't come from the same background as other people. And my parents are immigrants.

Even spiritually I think, get out of that mentality! It's hard to do that. We all have some form of experience, thinking you're not culturally—you're not really this unless you're that, like how can you be Latino if you're doing work in East LA. I think there is a lot of that that happens in our race because of class. Then you start to forget the doctors and lawyers and business people in our communities, because we don't see it all the time.

Patricia: Shall I read one of the questions? What responsibilities do you feel related to either your class background or your racial identity?

Raquel: I have to say I feel tremendous responsibility, tremendous. I think I opened up with being able to do things. I get to decide what my job is going to be, what my career is going to be, what my life is going to look like. And you know, I don't think that my mom got to do that. So there's a tremendous responsibility to be, to grow 10 times more.

It's hard because I tell my son that, too. He argues he has to work twice as hard, but I said you have to work 10 times as hard. I take pride in that. I take pride in being able to work harder and do more. So, I have a tremendous sense of responsibility around that because I know how many millions of people didn't get to do what I got to do. There is a lot of responsibility in that, which is hard because sometimes you just can't have fun. Sometimes I wonder if my life would be happier if I didn't have a consciousness around this stuff.

Wilson: As far as race is concerned, I feel I have a responsibility to understand the history and the dynamics of race, and to correct the record. But I also feel that in doing so I don't necessarily have to take on a

responsibility for representing my race, because we end up in a lot of problematic situations when we do that. For example, I cannot forgive Barack Obama for some of the things that he's done, even though he's the first black President of the United States. I don't feel like I have to hold my criticism of him in order to protect him as a black person, because my understanding of race is that he's the President. In that, he's just as much white as he is black.

If I try to protect him and speak up for him and advocate for him because he's black, in a sense, I'm facilitating that same kind of bad racial analysis that goes on within our society—that we can look at other people as individuals, but for black folks, they represent the black people as a whole. So you know, let's do something different with them rather than seeing them as individuals.

So I feel that my responsibility is to understand and to articulate what's going on in the system. But I'm a human being. And I'm an individual. I have responsibilities for my family, for my community to do those things in order to improve it. But you can't lay the whole black race on me, or lay the black druggie on the corner on me. It's not because he's black. It's the whole economic class and other kinds of things that end up having the results that they do regardless of color.

If you treated him as an individual, the druggie on the corner, and had he had the options and the choices that other folks had, things would be different with him.

Gaylon: I'm going to go next because I have kind of a different position, not to take away yours.

Wilson: No problem.

Gaylon: I think outside of race and class, I feel like just breathing this air, I have a responsibility. I have an obligation just to have this life that I'm given.

And then to couple that with the consciousness that I have, I don't believe that I got it for free. I believe that there was a purpose from a divine place that said, you know, you're going to get infused with this stuff. Then you have something to do as a result of it, not to just go out and benefit yourself with these gifts that have been given to you.

I was on a fast track to prison at a young age. And, I tell you one of the pivotal things that changed my life is my mother coming and visiting me one day and bringing me a book called *Manchild in the Promised Land* by Claude Brown. I think I was about 15 at the time. After reading that book, it just changed my whole trajectory. I still stayed in that life and that lifestyle. But, it planted a seed that eventually had me make a different decision when my son was born.

I like to say when it relates to my race I've done my own exhaustive study. It's not complete in any way in regards to Africa and the history of Africa and the history of my—what I say is my lineage, my ancestors. One of the things that happened for me is that at a young age when I began to uncover my story and I began to realize that I'd been lied to about my story, or rather, it was that it wasn't told to me.

That made me suspect of the system from the very beginning. From that point forward, it transformed the way I looked at this country, the system, and people who promote telling the child go get that education, even though they're only telling you about somebody else as being great. They're not telling you anything about you being great.

I'm a spoken word artist. I have a piece that often gets requested called “Strapped Tight”. It speaks to the whole dilemma of identity, how you play yourself out in this world. But just to close up, if I were a bass fish, I have a connection with bass fish. I can't deny it. If bass fish are dying in large numbers, I can't ignore that. I have a sense of responsibility when I see bass fish dying.

To say that people who come from the same background shouldn't look out for each other to me is saying don't love yourself. I won't get into all the statistics because most of you already know. In Oakland alone, 50 percent of children are not graduating from school. Well, what doesn't get said is that 70 percent if not more of those children are African-American males. So what does that mean in terms of the future family of African Americans? It doesn't look good. So I often get emotional. I get passionate when I talk about this subject, because how can I stand by and not be upset? We need those kids. You know, those are our kids. My male machismo conditioning is really strong.

Do I have a responsibility? Yes, I do. Is that responsibility large? Yes, it is. And it is a personal reason. It's because I was out there. I was one of those kids who you spoke about earlier. I didn't have any hope. I just didn't care about my life. And that has allowed me to be successful in working with children because they know when you know. They know when you understand.

Yolanda: And they know when you don't know.

Gaylon: Exactly. The mere fact that you can sit and listen is a safe haven for them, to know that they know that they're talking to somebody who understands and not somebody who is going to start reading off their credentials. I think class is just a placeholder that society puts on people because I've seen people with money act low class. I've seen people who are low class that really act with extreme dignity. So my responsibility is to be the best human being I could possibly be.

John: You know, when the question came up, I had a hard time thinking through it from the race and class, even from the money perspective. My first response was I have a responsibility to all the choices that I've made, even the wrong ones. My first place of responsibility is to be mindful of those choices. I chose to be born into a family that was fairly wealthy, privileged. Wealth is a whole other order of definition, but privileged for sure.

How can I be responsible for that choice? I mean, there's a whole set of assumptions built into how you get born into a certain family. Why was I was born into a family that somehow I'm in an argument with, or that I'm not in argument with, or that enables certain things to happen. It's hard for me to take responsibility for something that I don't have authority over. I guess that's where I'm struggling.

Mateo: I'm not sure I understand what you mean by that.

John: I have been to the place where I feel like I'm responsible for everything. It can be such a burden that it gets to a place of inaction and inability to do anything. So then I have to figure where are the boundaries of that? And the boundary comes as I take responsibility over that which I have some authority for, certainly my own experience.

Do I have authority to be in relation with another human being? Of course I do, but not without their engagement. It becomes co-authorship at that point. Co-authorship is still authorship. If you build out from there, where's the boundary of the authority that's created from that? For that, I'm willing to take full responsibility. Outside of that, I have all sorts of feelings around it, but I don't know how deeply I can be responsible for it. This is a kind of personal responsibility to my relational ecosystem. But, this is different than my responsibility as a voter, for example. Does that help?

Yolanda: Well, I think I was raised to feel responsible for everything.

John: That's a hard place to be.

Yolanda: Yeah, I think it's pretty common for Latina girls. You're responsible for your kids. You're responsible for your parents. You're responsible for your community. You're responsible for making people feel good. So it's refreshing to think that there may be parameters somewhere.

And then when somehow or other you move from just the knowledge of responsibility for the people who you're closest to, to having an understanding of social justice, social injustice, and so forth, it has been an ongoing dilemma in my life how to make those boundaries or where those boundaries should be.

Kit: I never felt responsible as long as I was somebody else. I was affected by other people. So the process of getting sober for me was a process of claiming my own responsibility for my choices and my non-choices and my victim feelings, which is very powerful.

During the process of becoming the first woman Vice President in a large corporation, I felt a lot of responsibility for other women in the organization, particularly the women who sewed the pants, and speaking what I saw as the truth.

I felt frustrated that I couldn't communicate with women in the factory without another person because I didn't speak their language, Spanish. I did make the effort to speak through another person to learn their stories. As a member of the management team, I thought that's why I was there, to have another perspective. It was a very hard lesson to learn that isn't why they wanted me there. I was "window dressing."

Why am I going into all of this? I guess that sense of responsibility forced me to ask myself what I needed to do differently in my life, because it felt like hitting my head against a wall that didn't want to change. Then going to the Women's Foundation, I was asked by men colleagues if it was because I hated men. Wow!

As a responsibility for myself, to take care of myself, and not expect somebody else to take care of me, and then there was the responsibility as a woman to be conscious, to be vocal because I'm an introvert. It's hard for me to speak up. I've had a lot of guilt for being white. I went through that phase. I don't think I'm still there. But I do still feel reticence about speaking my truth around my own

experience. Class and race come into it. What I look for now are opportunities to engage in the community where people might not have had good experiences with white people, to find human ways to do it, other than “helping” ways to do it.

I mean, if I can help, too, fine. But that's not my motive. My motive is for me to grow, to have the relationship, and hopefully in that process to have somebody who may not have had positive experiences with white people.

Elizabeth: Well, I’m pretty sure that was my question. But when I was posing it, what I had in my mind was a responsibility that I feel related to my class privilege and based on my analysis, what's going on. I think I am more capable of taking risk than perhaps some of my colleagues. I was really, really fascinated in what you were saying earlier about the Landless Worker's Movement. “We should just take over the land in Oakland.” And I'm thinking, but who could? Who is willing to risk the consequences? And who should risk the consequences, you know?

I have a lot of questions around that. I think I have also tried to take on a little bit too much because I'm trying to be everyone's ally and everyone's advocate, and not doing enough taking care of my own self and all of that. I have many questions around the concepts of advocacy and allyship, and what it means to have privilege, and therefore what risks you can quite literally afford to take.

Patricia: I think a great illustration is the BART police shooting of Oscar Grant, when Officer Johannes Mehserle was sent first verdict and then the sentencing. The people in Oakland who organized around that wanted a peaceful, thoughtful process. Then largely privileged white kids came in and said, "We're anarchists." They tore things up. Then soon after young kids of color also got involved. Three days later, all the white kids had made bail and were out. All the kids of color were still in jail.

So the risk was very different for the kids who had parents who could bail them out – I call them luxury arrests. When you go out to Livermore and you put your hands out and you get arrested, you're perceived very differently than when you're a kid on the streets of Oakland. So, I think that's a really critical element about what is the risk and how do we take responsibility differently.

Mateo: Thankfully, there's also the opposite side. I think you saw it in Tuscon, Arizona when folks were protesting Sherriff Joe Arpaio after the Representative Gabrielle Giffords shooting. There, many of them were anti-racist allies organized in concert with folks who organized on the ground and were willing to be the front line of arrests, knowing that those cops could go crazy and start bashing heads. They were willing to be the ones to take the biggest hits if that came. So there's the irresponsible and unaccountable side, and there's also the beautiful manifestation to be an ally such that I can take the risks. There's a history of that practice, too.

Gaylon: There's also importance in making the distinction between responsible to and responsible for in this conversation, because it looks entirely different when I say I'm going to be responsible for you versus I'm going to be responsible to you. Personally, that has been a big conversation with my children. A couple years ago, I was responsible for you. And now I'm not responsible for you. I'm responsible to you. And what responsible to you looks like to me is me being the best person I can and be available to you. It's the same thing in the movement. I'm responsible to the movement, not responsible for the movement.

Pilar: I definitely feel responsibility. My grandparents were extremely upfront with me, since I was really little, that I would always have the responsibility in the world, and to expect that until I leave this earth, because I was the member in the family who spoke English. I was the oldest. And I was female. All three good reasons. My grandma, as she was wrapping me up for those Michigan winters and getting me ready to get on the school bus, would say actually say, "I'm sorry, Mija. I'm

really sorry." And I'd just sit there and stare at her because she's saying this big speech to me in the mornings. She goes, "That's just how it is. You speak English. You're going to get this education. So there's a lot of responsibility between you and the rest of the world. You need to take care of your community, take care of all of these things because your knowledge is going to be so big from going to school and knowing English. And you're going to cross over and be with a lot of white people. And so okay. Bye."

Season after season, I carried that with me. What I did in school propelled me into confidence. I'd answer questions as I knew the entire world back here was waiting for me. It was a really interesting feeling. I really felt jettisoned into the future that day.

As an adult, I had the responsibility to several communities, the Jewish community, the lesbian community, the migrant farmer community, and the women's community because all four of those embraced me and gave me jobs and gave me a reputation so that others would look up to me. They gave me a place to show my leadership when the rest of the world couldn't give a crap what I was.

These four communities said stand up. You're going to speak here. I owe them everything. So I have responsibility. When you know, you own.

Patricia: We have a closing that we'll do together. But I'm going to suggest that we pass the basket around, take one question, and read it aloud. It doesn't matter who wrote the question at this point. That way all the questions will go into the transcript, and be part of the legacy of this conversation.

John: With no guarantee that you'll get the answers on the way home.

Patricia: Depends who you're riding with.

Yolanda: How do I unlearn my stuff around money and class?

Elizabeth: What are your beliefs about money, class, or race?

Raquel: Do you find it easier to speak about one compared to the other?

CJ: Are there other identities that inspire a stronger feeling of advocacy or responsibility?

John: Do you feel that your racial and class identities are related? What experience has led to this realization?

Mateo: I used to think wealth had nothing to do with race. But I'm not sure anymore. How do I unpack that issue?

Caitlin: When do you choose to call attention to your class identity?

Kit: Is there a world view of money, race, and class that I don't see?

Pilar: Can we live without money? Can I?

Wilson: I am mostly angry about poverty. Is anyone else angry about the lack of outrage? And how do you deal with it?

Gaylon: When do you choose to call attention to your racial identity?

Patricia: Particularly if it's invisible, right, because if you look a certain way, you have the privilege of ignoring racism. But does that include class?

Yolanda: How do your activities and money use reflect your beliefs?

Elizabeth: Why are we blind to the teachings of our traditions and ancestors about money?

Raquel: I feel guilty about having such good fortune in my life and don't know how long I can keep this secret. Any suggestions?

CJ: Is it classist to want to be wealthy?

John: Money, race, and class are with us forever. How do I make the best of it?

Mateo: What experiences influenced your attitudes about money, race, and class?

Caitlin: The economy excludes my family and my community. How do I not give up?

Patricia: Thank you. As a closing, I'd like you to write yourself a letter. Think ahead four or five months from now. What is a reminder that you would like to have to yourself of this day? And write that down for yourself. This day will have all kinds of meaning for you. But is there something that you want to remind yourself of about this day or just something that you're thinking now as you reflect on the day that you want to be reminded of in four or five months from now? Then in four or five months, we'll mail them back to you so that you'll actually get your own letter.

As the second part of closing, let's return to the stones. I'd like you to take a minute to think of three things: what you take away from the day, and that stone you'll take with you. Then a wish or a blessing for the group and the continuing of the conversation, and that stone will go in the basket, which John and Caitlin will take back to the RSF Office so that that will be kind of a holder.

Then we're going to stand around this table as a closing reflection, say something that you hope for the world, that the energy from this conversation goes out to the world in some way. I will take those stones and put them in the Bay, and then they'll go off to the world.

Anybody want to start?

Patricia: One of the things that I'm taking away is a deep appreciation for strangers. When I saw the list of attendees, I didn't know who all of you were. I had this kind of interesting feeling of, hmm, I wonder what it will be like. I just really have appreciated the connections that I have felt with those of you I didn't know before today. I certainly expected to feel connected to those that I already knew. But I feel a really wonderful and warm connection with those of you that I don't know as well, or at all. And so I really appreciate that.

And my wish for the group is that each of us continues to speak our truth, to raise our voices in the movement for change in new and radical ways that really move us to do that bold thing that we might be cautious about.

Elizabeth: The thing that I'm taking away is a reminder that if I'm open to asking enough questions, the situation will become a lot more clear. That is a very big part of what it takes to cultivate compassion.
For the group, I'd like to remind us of the distinction between a discussion and a conversation. I think that was really quite powerful. If we can continue to bring that out in our conversations, it can really shift the whole container that we're in at that moment.

Kit: I'm taking away the reminder of the power of participating. I really appreciate the generosity that I experienced today and the safety. And as a group, for the group, I hope that we will find ways to nurture ourselves so that we can sustain our strength and our resolve and our commitment to participate in the same generous, safe way as we have today in all the areas of our lives.

John: I am taking away an ever deepening commitment to and appreciation of the value of acceptance and vulnerability. My wish for the group is that whatever seeds we planted here were watered and nourished, and will continue to find expression wherever we go.

Gaylon: I'm taking away love and acceptance that I've received today. And I'm also taking away a new perspective from those of you who have

shared your perspectives. What I realize is that I grew again today from being a part of the universe by participating with the universe. I had no idea what to expect when I came here. I just knew that the universe had a gift for me. And so I feel like I've taken that gift with me.

What I wish for the group is a new-found or a continued quest for each and every one of you to continue to grow and evolve as the human being that you are, whatever shape or form that takes, that you continue pursuing what it means to evolve as a human being, because I believe that each of us is a part of this planet and that whatever we want to see happen in the world, it has to happen within us first. That's just my own personal philosophy. If it fits, wear it. If it don't, that's okay. But I thank each and every one of you for being in my life today.

CJ: I'm taking away more clarity about my core values and a deeper understanding of how they might relate to my race and class background, and also being okay with that. Coupled with that I guess is a sense that I might be wired to be a certain way, but that it doesn't relieve me of responsibility for my own agency.

Yolanda: I'm taking away a reminder about the power of people's personal stories. It's so easy for me as I go about my workload and responsibilities and duties and tasks to just slap people with whatever demographic characteristic I happen to latch onto as I see them.

What I've been reminded of today, many times over, is that it's easy, it's simple to sit down and ask somebody their story. It just takes time and attention. That's all, you know, just time and attention.

There are safety issues you need to work around because people rightfully so have their defenses up. And they have reasons they put up those defenses. But stick with it. You can get people's stories. And then it's a whole new world.

I'm grateful for that reminder. And what I wish for the group is peace. When I make my peace with whatever I'm seeing or feeling, it gives me strength. It gives me power. It gives me the ability to move forward. So I need to have that peace. Peace is a form of my centeredness, then I can give. So I wish you peace.

CJ: Is it okay if I say another wish for the group? What I wish for the group is a belief in the impossible. When I told people I'd be having a conversation about money, race, and class, they go, "Yeah, good luck with that," right? So you can have it. But I also feel like there are other things that we need to imagine and think big about. And then we need to put them in action as if, you know, there's nothing standing in our way other than a lack of imagination—to see those big possibilities and be fearless and fierce.

Raquel: I am taking away strength. I have to say that when I walked into the room, I thought, "Am I going to be the youngest person here?" I walk into many rooms and I feel that way. I get a lot of strength from the mentors in my life and the people I've come across. And I definitely have felt that here.

My wish for the group is there has been a lot of radiation, a lot of light that has come from the group. I was thinking about these, and hoping we can carry that light on because it is hard. And you think what can I really do. And so they're good things to think. Little steps go long ways. So that's my wish, to carry forward light in each of our lives.

Mateo: I walk away feeling tremendously nourished. Just hearing each of your stories made each of your beauty come alive. So yearning for connection is realized. And I'm going to walk away just feeling very fueled by that connection, especially in a world where we're so encouraged to fill the void with dope and TV and all that other stuff.

What I wish for the group is—I'm sitting on a question. We've been kind of sitting here in the world of ideas. Now we'll walk out. And, we

act in the world and dance between ideas and action, which I think is our playground to build the beautiful world. So I invite us to grapple with what is our role.

Caitlin: Thank you for your stories and wisdom. I'm really grateful to have heard them, and I'm taking away so much. I'm taking away an interest in following my family history. I would like to know more about that because it relates to much of what we're talking about. I'm also taking away the idea that my voice is important. That's something I struggle with, and it's great to be in a group of people that make me recognize that. So that's what I am walking away with.

I also hold gratitude for my employer because I wouldn't be here without RSF. I really am so grateful to be part of an organization that that convenes something like this. This is not a culture that exists just anywhere, and I am really grateful for that.

And for the group, I wish abundance in all the forms that it takes. You can think about that in terms of money and financial resources. And I definitely wish that for everyone. But also, love and acceptance is as much a part of abundance. And I wish that for everyone as well.

John: Can I break process for a second? I just wanted to appreciate Caitlin because she got the whole day organized and the food and all.

Patricia: Thank you.

Caitlin: You're welcome.

Wilson: I'm taking away an increased clarity of emotional intelligence. I've gained tremendously in terms of my own sense of where I am emotionally within these issues, because I have seen so much reflection, insight from others here that's added. I take that away, and am strengthened by it, and am very appreciative of that.

For the group, I am developing an appreciation for the power of the network concept that nature works through the process of networks, where a butterfly flapping its wings somewhere can be the instigator of huge changes, emotions, of things. And we've been in a human network struggling with these issues. So I wish the group to continue to carry what's happened here out into your other network connections. I'm confident that it will make a huge difference.

Pilar: What I take away from the day is just tremendous gratitude, tremendous gratitude. Where else can I go where my grandparents will be appreciated and honored? They're nameless. You don't know what they look like. But I could feel all of you appreciate them. So thank you for that. It's huge, huge.

And, I take away such a continued respect for John and at RSF, who asked me the question: Pilar, would you like this conversation to continue? Can we do this? Will you do this with me? Thank you, John, so again more gratitude. Pat, thank you for facilitating. Thanks for saying yes, just huge gratitude I take away from this day. I just do not get tired of talking about money.

I wish for the group to take this and have a continued conversation, whether it's at your workplace or friends or neighbors or on the BART train or wherever, just turn and say what do you think about money, race, and class. I'm telling you it'll be shocking and wonderfully surprising and sad and great and all those things. I wish that for the group to have more conversations.

I want to thank my friend and colleague Lisa Rudman and her team from the National Radio Project for honoring and caring about our words. There's so much love and affection.

Patricia: What we've witnessed today is tremendous capacity for storytelling. I'm going to ask us each to say one word that you wish for the world:

From the group: Healing; Sustainability; Forgiveness; Love; Understanding; Compassion; Curiosity; Harmony; Presence; Acceptance; Courage; Redemption.

*** END ***