

SOLIDARITY, RESISTANCE, RESILIENCE

TWIN CITIES MOVEMENT ELDERS
REFLECT ON THE 2026 ICE OCCUPATION



Transcript of a panel event hosted by The Alliance, featuring
Ricardo Levins Morales, Sandra Richardson,
Susan Raffo, and D.A. Bullock



Transcription, zine design by Jaime Hokanson. Artwork by Ricardo Levins Morales.
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Special thanks to Owen, D.A., Sandra, and Susan.

FOREWORD

This zine, made possible by the willingness of social movement elders **Sandra Richardson, Susan Raffo, Ricardo Levins Morales** and moderator **D.A. Bullock** to share their experience, is a twofold offering. First, it seeks to add to the truth-telling about the events of the Minneapolis winter of 2026, events which—like those of the George Floyd Uprising only six years ago—large institutions are already attempting to intentionally misremember. Second, it seeks to promote thoughtful reflection in order to better prepare us all for the struggles against white supremacy, ethnic cleansing, and fascism both continuing and yet to come.

What follows is a transcription of a panel discussion on April 17, 2026 at North Regional Library in Minneapolis. The event was hosted by The Alliance, a Twin Cities coalition of community-based organizations and advocacy groups around a range of issues, as part of their “Actualizing Equity” event series. Find a short bio of each of the participants inside the back page.

The discussion took place in the long wake of “Operation Metro Surge,” the occupation and assault upon the Twin Cities area by over 3,000 immigration officers from ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and the Department of Homeland Security, at the direction of the Trump administration. Beginning in early December 2025 and peaking in January, the operation spurred mass resistance in the forms of mutual aid, rapid response, protest, direct action and cultural work, all of which undoubtedly prevented an untold number of arrests and deportations. Nonetheless, over 3,000 immigrant neighbors were stolen from our communities and families, a number which keeps growing.

On December 9th, 2025, Ricardo wrote the following in his newsletter:

“The paramilitary invasions ... are now underway, following a by-now familiar pattern. Early morning alerts, snatch and grab operations, and raids on businesses by so-called “law enforcement” are now our daily reality. ICE, Customs and Border Protection, FBI, etc. have broadened

their net to sweep up documented immigrants, refugees, and US citizens to fill unrealistic arrest quotas. Following their boss' orders they are making a special point of terrorizing Minnesota's large Somali community. The practices they employ – face coverings, unprovoked violence, smashing car windows, gassing bystanders – are intentional tactics and are consistent with those of a national secret police force.

"Federal invasions have been met with fierce opposition in city after city. What began as spontaneous protest against raids has pivoted into organizing with the spread of community defense networks encompassing mass trainings, mutual aid support, and evolving tactics. The government's storm troopers have been impeded, harassed, and challenged at every turn. The targeting of vulnerable populations has revived the organizing principle that "an injury to one is an injury to all," sparking solidarity, not submission."

As the outrageous actions of ICE intensified—supported by federal, state and local law enforcement—so too did the movement. Flashpoints included the killings of white/citizen rapid responders Renee Good and Alex Pretti in south Minneapolis, and the non-fatal shooting of Venezuelan immigrant Julio Sosa-Celis on the Northside.

Subsequently, facing a tipping point in early February, the Trump admin sought to put a softer face on the occupation, removing the bombastic commander Greg Bovino and appointing bureaucrat Tom Homan to lead the operation. Under Homan, ICE agents and other personnel gradually withdrew over the coming weeks and months. While this withdrawal represented some measure of success for the local resistance, Homan and DHS also saw success in demobilizing the breadth of the opposition. While corporate media headlines touted "the end of Metro Surge" and many liberal groups withdrew from the streets, in fact, kidnappings and raids continued with a heavier focus on the suburbs and rural Minnesota. By late summer, rapid response networks were still in place and active, albeit with many fewer participants than when the eyes of the world rested on the Twin Cities earlier in the year.

On February 3, Ricardo followed up:

"The regime is making a show of softening its approach, but it's just 'optics.' Those optics have to do with 'US citizens' (read: white folks) getting executed in public. That's triggering push-back from even the regime's allies. National media keeps mis-presenting the struggle here as a reaction to those killings. That's a false and dangerous narrative. It redirects attention from the reason Renee Good and Alex Pretti were in the streets to begin with – and the strength of that movement. It was, and is, about defending immigrant neighbors from a campaign of ethnic cleansing.

"The reason so few uplift the names of Luis Gustavo Núñez Cáceres, Keith Porter Jr., Geraldo Lunas Campos, or the other lives cut short by ICE, is racism. The reason they haven't heard of them (and repeatedly heard about them) is media racism. When 50,000 people braved -10 degree temperatures on January 23, the chants were all about defending immigrants, calling out racism, and demanding ICE Out.

"Unity in the streets produced division in the suites. The refusal of the resistance to crumble is amplifying stresses within the regime."

Reflecting on these events, Sandra, Susan, Ricardo and D.A. sought to address questions including: "For those of us involved in resistance efforts, from seasoned organizers to people taking action for the first time, what has this moment taught us? How do we build from here? What lessons can we learn from past movements in this geography and from elsewhere in the world that can help us navigate this moment?"

Their discussion reprinted here pays particular attention to the dynamics of racism and white supremacy, as any local resistance movement must (the Twin Cities metro area is over 70% white).

Thank you to D.A., Sandra, Susan and Ricardo for allowing their words to be reprinted here. Any errors in the transcription are mine alone.

—Jaime Hokanson



D.A. BULLOCK: Welcome to the Northside. And you're welcome back time and time again. I am D.A. Bullock. I'm a local filmmaker. Like truly local, I live within walking distance of here. I'm an adopted Northsider, but originally from Chicago. I'm a filmmaker. Somebody called me a story-based organizer. I was like, "Oh, that's cool. I'm stealing that." So I stole that. So I use that from time to time.

And my purpose here is to give way to all this brilliance we have on this panel and spark some questions, and definitely get into some back and forth conversation because I know everybody up here loves—they don't love lecturing, they love back and forth and community give and take. So, I will let everyone on the panel introduce themselves and we'll start [*gestures to Susan*] ...

SUSAN RAFFO: ... with me. Hello room of people. My name is Susan Raffo. I go by either Susan or Raffo. And I tell you that because there's people in this room who know me as one name or as the other. And they're both real. She/her pronouns. My heart is pounding because I'm very aware there's people in this room I've learned so much from, including definitely at the front of this room. It's also deeply humbling to be invited to reflect on something we've all been through, where there's so much wisdom in this room.

So the sort of quick and dirty—D.A. and I were talking about how funny it is to introduce yourself because I always end up in this place where it doesn't matter what I'm going to tell you. I much more trust what you experience. And you know all these kinds of words, etc., they don't really tell you a lot, but your instinct tells you more.

I'm a writer, I'm an organizer, and for the purposes of this work for our conversation today, there's two things I'll say. One is, about 20 years ago, I started sitting with that question of "how are the histories that we carry in our body impacting our capacity to transform the world we're a part of?" And so, I don't have an answer to that, but I've been in deep practice with that for 20 years. And then the other piece is that I am honored to be a part of a project called Relationships Evolving Possibilities, REP. We emerged in 2020 during the uprising right after George Floyd was murdered. We are Black-led and Black-centered, and we are a multi-racial leadership team which means we are continually in conversation about the clarity of a multi-racial leadership team that is Black-led and Black-centered. And our work is to listen to and be in practice about exactly what we've been living through. How are we safer when we can turn to our neighbors for care and safety rather than an impersonal State? And so we are in practice with that in a lot of different ways. We've learned a lot. We've also learned just how hard it is to be in practice with that when times are not in high crisis and high intensity. And for now, that's what I'll say and happily hand off.

SANDRA RICHARDSON: Good afternoon. My name is Sandra Richardson. I am a daughter and I am a Sister and I am a Sister friend, and I am—oh, I got to go back. I am an excellent daughter. *[Crowd cheers]* An excellent daughter. Okay. I am the best auntie on the planet because I had the best auntie on the planet. I am an anti-racist community organizer. I started organizing around housing when people were homeless and dying outside. I did not know there was going to be a whole industry that came up around that because I was young and I didn't understand how things worked. But I came into contact with an organization called the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, and I'm still involved with them and it changed my life. And I'm the trainer and the Twin Cities coordinator for People's Institute North.

The other role that I'm really happy in right now is working with an organization called Brownbody, which is an African American cultural organization, and they combine dance and original music, movement, African diasporic movement, and they do that on ice with African American elite ice skaters. And I am their undoing racism, healing, and organizational consultant. And it's a place where I get to bring kind of all of my skill sets, the spirit ones. Yeah. And so I'll say more about life, but I'll turn it to you *[gestures to Ricardo]*.

RICARDO LEVINS MORALES: I'm Ricardo Levins Morales, and actually before I answer the question I just want to make a comment. One of the things that I always am attuned to in life and in movements is what I call the emotional chemistry of the moment. And one of the measures of that in gatherings is the quality of the background chatter, which you listen to as a musical experience, not to discern what people are saying. And so I was listening to the background chatter in this group before we got started and I have to say that that was not the soundtrack of a people who have been defeated, or of a people who have been broken. *[Crowd reacts and applauds]* Yeah! And especially in the period that we're entering into after the most intense part of the collective experience, it's important to monitor how that emotional rhythm develops.

So, I am from Puerto Rico, a land without either skis or ice skates, and landed in Chicago as a youngster where my first political home of my own was the Chicago Black Panther Defense Committee, and was also connected to the Young Lords. So as someone outside their neighborhood, the Puerto Rican group. I'm saying this because I was exposed to the way that organizing really played out. Not the romanticism, right. I'm not mentioning that for street cred, but for realism. And one of the things I learned from the way that organizing happened is that when you're dealing with profound divisions in society, it's not about meeting halfway. It's about making a better offer. You don't come up with a narrative, a compromise that's half racist and half anti-racist, half fascist and half anti-fascist... despite what some liberal consultants might recommend. *[Crowd laughs]*

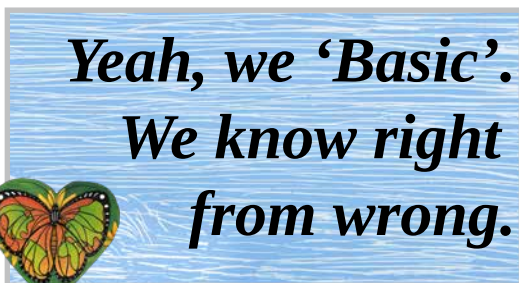
I am also an artist by the way. Yeah. After Chicago, I was in Boston where as a janitor in a hospital, I got involved in my first union drive and that brought me into the labor movement. And I've kind of unwittingly been sort of like a little pollinator flitting in through, you know, factories and hospitals and different movements, rural and urban, which has kind of allowed me to collect nutrients from all these places. And so I'm really fascinated by what they have in common. What do you hear when you put your ear to the ground? What rhythms do you notice? If there are people into music, you know that any song you sing, even if it's some new and innovative genre, it's still based on a legacy of past ones, and it still contains within it the legacies of invasions and migrations and mergers and all the different ways in which traditions influence each other. And that's the way I listen to movements because

every moment is a combination, profoundly made out of the past with new twists from the present that we carry into the future. So that's what I got.

D.A.: Nicely done. All right, that's it, we're done! *[Crowd laughs]*

No, no, that's beautiful. It is actually a setup for the first question. What Ricardo just described is like taking all the history, all of the moments, and particularly there's some magnetism that has happened here in the Twin Cities around world-changing events.

So I'm curious for folks on the panel, what were you noticing that was inspiring, challenging, powerful during this moment, this occupation moment, but really is resonating throughout all of those moments that we've lived through and we've experienced?



SANDRA: *[After a pause]* Now, that's a question.

D.A.: I mean, it's real because... there is a reason why this keeps happening to us in this room, right? There is something about us that is special, something about us that is resilient, something about us that is magnetized, resonant, etc., and sometimes it's hard for us to view ourselves from very close. That's why I love you all's wisdom because you've seen many iterations of this. So, it could even be down to something like a moment or an individual connection that happened recently during this occupation.

SANDRA: I think I'll just start with, I have a cousin and her husband always calls folk from Minnesota "basic". Okay. "Basic." *[Crowd giggles]* And so when Metro Surge jumped off and people responded, I called him and I said, "Yeah, we basic. We know right from wrong." And so I think one of the things that resonated for me is, my parents were very active in the civil rights movement. And so as a child, I learned that, you know, when something's wrong, people take to the streets, you go with them. I learned that, you know, you go to meetings, you stuff envelopes, you organize, and you don't wait for somebody to tell you

to do it. You don't wait to be invited. And I think, one of the things that was powerful about this moment was the number of people who didn't wait to be told what to do.

And I think that in similar ways, if you look back at movements, it's the people, the ordinary everyday people who just decide, you know, enough is enough, or "I'm going to do this," and they believe that they can make something change. And so I saw that in my parents and my elders who are now passing—that belief that they could make something change. And a lot of them were like my parents. They came out of the segregated South and wanted to raise their children in a better place. They came to Minnesota. Who knows why *[Crowd laughs]* but they did. Because there was a whole other thing going on up here that they were not aware of.

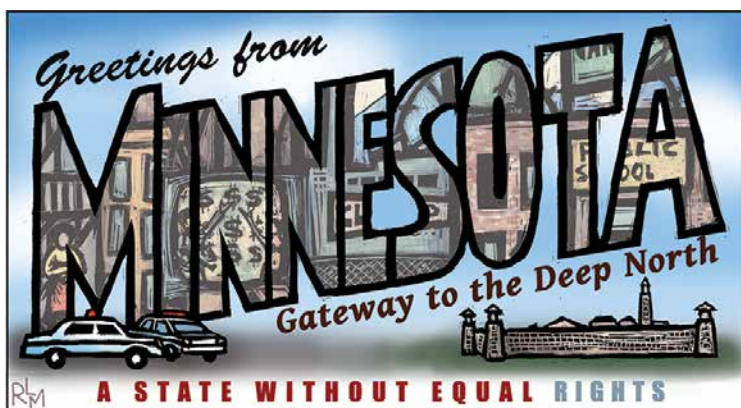
But I think that the same thing that's really inspiring or motivating in this moment is how to sustain it and how to keep people awake now. I mean, one of the things that I've always thought funny is that people say, "Oh, you woke" like it's some kind, you know, like a slur. And it's kind of like, "Who the fuck wants to be asleep all the time?" But it's challenging to stay awake in a system that wants you not to be awake.

SUSAN: Ricardo, do you want to go or do you want me to?

RICARDO: *[Smiling]* I want you to go.

SUSAN: I love this question because I feel like on the most small level, and then like national articles, people have been sitting in this question. And I love that I don't fucking know. Like I love that it doesn't feel like—for everything I read that says "here's a reflection of why," I'm like "and here's what that doesn't include, and this, and this." And so the reason I like that is that, you know, the bodyworker parts of me feel safer because it's like I really do believe that the deepest change emerges, and that we strategize for all kinds of change, but we're not in control of when it is time. And that actually makes me strangely feel safe.

I've lived in the Twin Cities, in Mni Sota Makoce since 1989. I'm from the east side of Cleveland. *[Pumps fists]* Cleveland, Ohio! It's such a bum rap. *[Crowd laughs]* And it matters that I moved to a land where I met people within the first years of living here who had grandparents who were



part of the Dakota War, who grew up with those stories, both Dakota and white folks. It matters the way that the shape of anti-Black racism here, and the way in which the sort of liberalism that, in relationship to sort of a northern European liberalism, the way those two interacted when I first moved here was very different from how anti-Black racism shows up in Cleveland. So there was a lot of learning. And then again, it's a very recent history. A recent history of this geography that we're on being more than so homogeneously white, native, with small communities of color and small immigrant communities. It's very recent that we've become the city that we are, right? So I feel like there's a lot that is just different here within that.

And that still doesn't answer the question to me, like the fact that there have always been native folks who live here who are native to this land and who we are in, you know, those of you in this room who might be native, First Nations, we are in relationship with you, we are learning from you, like, that matters. That is not true across the U.S. part of Turtle Island. And I go through all of the big picture stuff, and then it was somebody who said something to me somewhere in January and they were like, "Oh I know what the reason is, is that when it snows real hard, you just push out whoever's car is stuck." And they were like, "that's what this is. We just have the time, the habit of, and the experience of sometimes helping somebody no matter who they are." And that doesn't mean that violence and aggression doesn't happen during snow times. Let me just say that really clearly. And, I do hear that there's a lot of times where helping also happens, the habit of it, and I think that matters.

I'll talk about a time in this where I'm still moved by it. Like, it brings me to tears thinking about it. But I want to say that what has often been the hardest for me is to watch either us locally or folks from outside super-exceptionalize us. *[Crowd affirms]* You know, the number of times I'm hearing people do this whole like, "we have to follow Minnesota" and I want to say yes, and now stop. Please don't turn us into

The hardest for me is to watch either us locally, or folks from outside, super-exceptionalize us.



something like yet another object that people either put up on a pedestal, or trash on the ground. Don't do that to us. Particularly when we've been flyover for so goddamn long. There are things here that we're still trying to understand ourselves. And there is no singular "we" to

begin with anyhow. We didn't all experience it the same way. We're not experiencing it the same way now. Some of us have never been safe and these couple of months were just another shape of unsafe. Others had choice about whether they engaged. So those are all just still true. And so I think it matters so much that we're trying to sort this out and that we don't get lost in the hype about what's happened here.

And there was this moment, I don't know how many of you went to it, but there was a grief ritual in Powderhorn Park in February that was created in relationship with Becca Good and with Renee's family. And this was planned before Alex was murdered.¹ And it was planned with the awareness that many other people have been murdered who are not Renee and Alex. And it was co-created by folks from NDN Collective, other Dakota and Ojibwe spiritual leaders from here and then community members who are not native, mostly who were settlers. And there was this period when we were pulling it together, and in the gift of being invited into traditional ceremony in a public way, all so much of it was a gift. But as we were pulling it together, the first half of the ceremony was Dakota/Lakota held and the second half

¹ Renee Good, survived by her wife Becca and three children, was shot and killed by ICE agent Jonathan Ross on January 7, 2026. Alex Pretti, an ICU nurse, was similarly murdered on January 24. Both had been responding to ICE activity in south Minneapolis. In both cases, bystander video immediately revealed the government's hyperbolic excuses for the near point-blank shootings to be completely false.

was community held, which means multi-racial but not specifically native. And people were talking about the ending of this ceremony, you know, and there was a kind of movement energy in it, like we're going to end with *[pumps fists]* "we can do it, we can defeat ICE", right? Very movementy, very like "let's get ourselves up and energized and know we can just do it." And so that's the conversation that was happening, the "we can do it, we can do it."

And one of the elders, Gabby Strong, she sort of paused us. She paused us and just said, "why are you ending this differently than the way that it is? Why are you ending this differently than the way that we started?" It's like, we end the way we begin, which is the way we are surviving right now, which is the reason we are here is to take care of each other. And if there is something in the way of our capacity to care for each other, whether it is historical, systemic or present moment, then we need to contend with that because the only reason we are here is to care for each other and the land that makes our lives possible. And you know for all of us in this space who are not native, who are settlers, it just sort of shifted the tone and took that energy—which sometimes is such a necessary energy to have—but rooted it in something other than just this "we're going to do it!" in a way that sometimes unfortunately, has meant that we've actually left behind the people who are right next to us. And that was the gift of it.

And for me, the last piece I'll say is actually a grief that I feel. That as a white woman in multi-racial movements, there's always been the question in particular, how do white folks, particularly middle-class folks, particularly middle-class folks of Christian lineage—people who don't have to get involved, right? Because the systems are designed to protect us—When the hell do my people get involved in a large way?

And so that happened in a way here in a specific way which I feel grief about, like, Yay, and also caution, like there's more to it. Like when you say how does this continue forward, that's for me looking at my own people in this moment, that's some of the question that I have, and I hold that with the place of having a lot of time talking to folks about being really careful about, you know, we didn't rise up this way in 2020 in these amounts. We definitely did not. And so I feel some of my work with my people is, who are we determining, who are the victims who get our attention, or who are the ones who are innocent in this moment, who get, et cetera, and who is not. I feel like there's still so

much work to do, and this just sort of showed it in a way that I feel also really proud of. That's what comes to mind.

RICARDO: *[After a pause]* I want to sit out there and listen. *[Everyone laughs]*

So I have 50 years under my belt of being engaged in movement work, right? And one thing that felt different to me this time is that I'd never before been in a situation that felt like I was part of an occupied community in resistance, an occupied population in resistance. And that has to do with critical mass. And that's not inevitable. And it wasn't inevitable here. It could have tipped another way. There's a variety of factors that fed into this being the way it turned out. And clearly the fascists in Washington thought it would turn out a different way, that when you cracked the flint, it would break off in a different way, a different percentage, right?

And part of the reason it broke that way is because of 2020, and because of the moments before that. And people who sat on the fence in 2020 but were very disturbed, came into the streets this time. There are people who are sitting on the fence now, who will come in the next time. There are people who are now going to retreat back into the comfortable mythology that we're the shining city on the hill. But it won't sit very well because that fence is very rotten at the base *[crowd affirms]* and it's not a stable place to return to. So we will see them again.

And I'm saying this as part of the inevitability. Every wave of struggle, when the wave recedes, leaves something on the beach, and some things get swept away. And one of the things I like people to think about, especially those newer to struggle, but something for all of us to deal with is to ask yourself, "what is my policy on disappointment?" Because for these big waves of movements, for many people, they are transformative in ways they couldn't imagine because it's the first time they felt an experience of collective love on that scale, or this idea that we have all this power. And the thing that always you hear on people's lips is, "this changes everything."

Well, it doesn't. And that realization can feel devastating, right? So, is disappointment a motivator or a paralytic? And that's a choice that we make because if we understand, if we inoculate ourselves against the

fact that “oh, this is the way these cycles go,” then we can ride those waves. Still sucks, but we can ride them, right? We’re not pulled under by them.

Another thing that struck me. You know, I would get calls, like a lot of people have, from media organizations in other places. For whatever reason I’m on somebody’s radar and somebody from the New York Times or

here or there will call and say, “I want to ask you some questions,” and “can you point us to some of the people in leadership who have done this or that,” and I’m like “... Who?” I never know. I don’t know who to refer people to because there has been no central leadership node. There’s been real leadership coming from a variety of locations, but there’s something very encouraging about the fact that you can’t just say, “Okay, now this is the number you call to talk to the folks in charge.” *[Crowd laughs heartily]*



***What is my
policy on
disappointment?***

And there’s another thing I want to pause on, and that’s one of the things that we look at. Assessing any moment is about looking back and looking forward, and looking back to see: what is our legacy? What have we inherited that’s here? And that includes what’s valuable, and what is harmful. And given the pattern of those things that have appeared in the present, what do we need to compensate for going forward? And what do we need to nurture and hold on to? And part of that is seizing, and holding on to, and defining for ourselves the narrative of what just happened, because that gets taken away from us. You know, after the beating of Rodney King, the fact that that uprising was a Black-led multi-racial event got erased into being, “oh, it was a Black riot, right?”²

2 Following the videotaped police assault on Black motorist Rodney King in April 1992 in Los Angeles, a city-wide multiracial uprising against police lasted six days. The National Guard and U.S. military troops were used to quell the rebellion. In the aftermath through today, popular discourse tends to characterize the events as senseless rioting and destruction, ignoring the racial justice, anti-poverty, and anti-policing aims of many of the participants.

Right now, the way in which racism and patriarchy land on a community and on a people defines how we are visible to each other. So, for example, a lot of the people chasing ICE and showing up in the homes of Ecuadorian and other families with food, have been white folks. And a lot of these immigrants are saying, "We never imagined that all these people would actually have our back. Even when some of them got shot, they still had our back." But what's not as visible are Black-led protests, indigenous safety patrols and ceremonial events, and challenges to the Whipple Building³. You had people from immigrant communities who have always thought themselves exceptional, talking about how for the first time we realized we're actually in it with you. And so that's one of the narratives that I think I'm paying attention to now, especially within the Latina community, is how do we make visible the reality of the moment in a way that undermines anti-Black racism in the immigrant communities. Right? That's about storytelling and visibility.

Okay, D.A., take it.

D.A.: You all have given me a lot to think about in terms of these questions, because we are asking sort of granular questions about, well, "tell us what we should know going out of the room." But I do like the idea that Susan brought up about being enough in the moment to understand what emerges from the moment, and not trying to formulize things, and just understanding that alchemy exists. Like, the magic of it exists. And, how do we really take that forward in a way that is beyond the neighborly sensibility and more into the policy sensibility?

Because that's where I land a lot. I do documentary filmmaking. And what I'm always trying to understand is, how does a story of something that happened in a community really inform our public policy? And I think that's part of what we have trouble with here in the Twin Cities. We are very much about our hero story and we love showing up together and loving on one another. But then when it's time to do

3 The Henry Whipple building was the base of operations for Operation Metro Surge, and where detainees were held by the Department of Homeland Security. Located near the MSP airport on the sacred Dakota land now referred to as Fort Snelling, for months it was a focal point of protests and direct action, as well as a site for monitoring ICE tactics and supporting released detainees.

that vote about extending eviction notices⁴, you know, people are like, “Well, what does that have to do with me?” So there’s some disconnect there that I’m fascinated by. I would love to hear, how do you all think about that in this moment and just generally? And that speaks to a lot of what Ricardo was talking about, the disappointment part of it. That hit me in my heart, you know, thinking about, like, how do I respond to disappointment too?

SUSAN: Do you want—you had said you were holding it back earlier, Sandra. Did you want to talk?

SANDRA: I think the reality is that we’re not that much different than we were four months ago. We’re not. And I think that if we are not honest about that, if we’re not honest about the anti-Blackness, if we’re not honest about the racism, if we’re not honest about the different levels of humanity that are granted to you based on a variety of things, but right now very heavily based on race, always based on race—we will fail. As we always have.

*The reality is that
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I mean, I think the thing is, that I see what happened with George Floyd and where I located myself, and what happened with Metro Surge and where I located myself—very different places. And I saw George Floyd, okay, his humanity was never

centered. *[Crowd voices agreement]* No. It was about social justice... but his humanity was never centered. But I see with Metro Surge, people’s humanity, I’m not going to say it was centered, but it moved toward the center. And that located me in a really different place. And I don’t think that we can be successful unless we’re able to have those hard and painful conversations about those kind of realities. Because racism

⁴ As many immigrants sheltered indoors, unable to work and with rent debts piling up, advocates lobbied for a moratorium on evictions at both the local and state level. They faced both conservative and liberal opposition. In March, Minneapolis mayor Jacob Frey vetoed a measure to extend the pre-eviction period from 30 to 60 days. Saint Paul did enact such a measure by unanimous council vote. Governor Tim Walz did not take statewide action, while the state legislature took until May to pass a bill allocating additional funds to rental assistance programs.



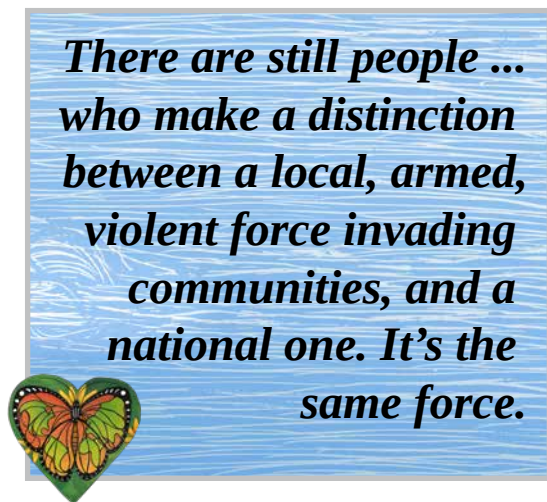
hasn't changed. Internalized inferiority and superiority hasn't changed. People are still scared. That hasn't changed. White people still want comfort. That hasn't changed. And the only difference that I really see is that white people in Minneapolis now know you can be a citizen, with a job, and be a parent, and have a home, and you can be shot down in the street like a dog.

And I have seen, for white people—this is personal. Yes. In a way that my interactions with white people around George Floyd never were. And I just think that if we are going to make something of—there's always moments. Okay. But do we have the courage to face the moment? What Ricardo was saying a few minutes ago about, “organizing is not glamorous”—and as much you would say “you’re not going to get no grand theft money” [*crowd laughs*—it is necessary. And I think that just like people came out of their houses, and there were people who made food and took food, there are people who knew that if you buy diapers you got to buy wipes, too. People stood and moved forward. But now it’s time for something harder. [*Crowd affirms*] And so, are we willing to do the harder? Are we willing to to sit in where we are disconnected? And how much energy are you willing to put into somebody who doesn’t look like you?

D.A.: And if I could add something, Sandra, you spark something in my mind. There are still people who have been active in this resistance who make a distinction between a local, armed, violent force invading communities, and a national, armed, violent force. It’s the same force.

[Crowd heartily agrees] It's the same invasion. It's a continuation of the same. People that make a distinction, I would encourage them to read the MPD150 report⁵ and then make a distinction between ICE and MPD. There's really no distinction, but we have these sort of limitations in our brain. Sorry, I didn't—

SANDRA: —No, no, that's fine because what I was going to say is that in addition to those hard conversations that we need, there's another one about, so what's the difference between what happened to George Floyd and Metro Surge, and how is it part of the same whole? Because it is part of the same whole. But we, a lot of times, want to be overly simplistic about how. Racism is complicated and simple at the same time, but it has many layers and it does many things to keep the current racial hierarchy in place.



And so, are we going to do the work? 'Cause they're not doing "what are we going to do in six months." They're not doing "what are we going to do in a year." They're doing 15, 20 years out. You've read Project 2025. They're on it. And I don't want to take it away from that, but just that it's the same power. We're just in different locations, but we tend to compartmentalize it, and not do the work to wrestle with that whole.

RICARDO: This resistance to the occupation brought in, I think, two streams of people. Those who were responding to what was happening as an extension of the empire, of what we've always gone through

⁵ MPD150 was a community-based police-abolitionist initiative, active from 2017-2022, formed ahead of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Minneapolis Police Department. They researched, released and distributed the "Enough is Enough" report, a comprehensive history and performance review of MPD, and created additional publications, artwork, curriculum, and events for political education around police abolition. The report can still be found online at MPD150.com.

from the origins of fascism, which were in slavery in the United States, all the way through as a clear through-line. And there were those for whom this is such a shock because it violates everything this country has ever stood for. The shining city on the hill, the beacon of democracy, *[crowd laughs]* a champion of human rights. This is real! This is the indoctrination that is so deeply held, right? And that's another difference between 2020 and 2025 and 2026 is that the people spearheading the uprising after George Floyd were people who were responding to the fact that this is the shit that always happens. And so many of the people responding to this moment are, "oh my god this is so unacceptable and extraordinary."

This is what we refer to as a teachable moment. The proper response, is "Welcome. We've been waiting for you, and here's a few things you need to know." *[Crowd laughs]*

I was back in Puerto Rico a few weeks ago and having a conversation with my friend Maria. And she pointed out that for decades we've been telling white folks to stand up. Don't wait. Just do something. And now they did it. And so we need to notice that. And there's next steps to take. And also, solidarity is always inadequate, and always necessary. The people in Europe who smuggled Jews to safety and kept them safe, many of them carried anti-Semitic attitudes. There were white people supporting the Underground Railroad who harbored racist ideas.

Frederick Douglas talked about that when we're talking about moments of solidarity, moments of mass movement, no matter what the impressions we get from looking back at history, they're always messy, always inadequate, and never quite what they hoped it would be. And so that's simply what we would call the material we have to work with, right? And then how do we move that forward? And again, the fact that the empire is in decline, and that's why you have fascism emerging, is when the mythologies of the empire are no longer sufficient to support the machinery and keep everyone on board, the co-optive power of the liberal establishment just isn't there the way it used to be.

You know, the people who voted for Kamala Harris in the last election, there was none of that illusion that happened when they voted for Barack Obama. It was like, "Oh, fuck, this is shit." *[Pause]* If you put that on PBS, you know...

D.A.: ... that's the title of the series! [*Raucous laughter*]

RICARDO: It was seen as a defensive choice and a strategic choice, and that's really good. The problem is when you don't have good options on the menu, people always go for the best option there is, right? So, our task is always to create a credible alternative option to put on the menu, whatever the momentary defensive choices we have to make.

Another thing that I've had to push back against these national media people who come in, and international actually—this sort of riffs off but expands what you (Sandra) were talking about.

They want to frame the movement in Minnesota as something that burst on the scene because two white people were killed. And I have to ask them, why were those two white people in the street? That already I was talking to friends and family in other parts of the

country and saying this is something that is different from the way I've seen movements emerge before. This was not a response to these white people being killed. Rather, it was the other way around. Now, one thing that changed was that it was followed by these mass public demonstrations. So, something did change, and that brought in people who hadn't been part of these networks, but that is what was going on.

SANDRA: Yeah. If you resist, doesn't matter who you are. If you threaten...

RICARDO: ... But was it Audre Lorde who said— No, no. It was Bernice Johnson Reagon who said, when you stand up and you fight the empire and you do all this stuff, sometimes you don't get killed. Right? Of all the people who are involved in these movements, yes we think about the martyrs, but actually that doesn't happen to most of us. We



got to deal with the fear, we got to deal with the dangers, it could have been any of us, but...

SANDRA: ... they can't kill us all. They can't kill us all.

SUSAN: I feel so aware right now and I feel positioned as a care worker because the whole time folks are talking I keep thinking about, I keep seeing, this image of a river. And the way the top of the river will sometimes move very, very quickly, but the closer you get to the bottom, the slower the water moves, and sometimes the water barely moves at all. And in the midst of Metro Surge I kept remembering how in the 19th century, white abolitionists who took responsibility and credit for the legal ending of enslavement—not the full ending of enslavement, but the legal ending of it—then left and said, “We were so successful. We did this amazing thing. What are we going to do now?” And sort of basically were like, “Well, native people are really struggling. We should go fix that, too.” And what emerged was boarding schools. What emerged was forced assimilation.

And so I just keep thinking, you know, most of my early work was specifically movement as in campaign work, as around doing a lot of work around the relationship between anti-imperialism and anti-racism, how colonization and racism are the same globally and US-wise. And at one point I was like, this is still so necessary, but I keep feeling like I'm in conversations about what we do and not as often about what we are, when the two are there at the same time. And I certainly know again for my people in movement, we can get so caught up in what we're doing, which half of the time is really just esteem. We just want to feel better, so we get involved so that we feel better, not actually so we're changing systems. And then sometimes because it's coming from a really deep place, all of it is there, but it's still so often about doing.

And so there we are in Operation Metro Surge and I'm looking at, who is ICE? I'm looking at what has shifted and changed. I'm like, this is absolutely the same conversation it has been for 500+ years. And it's a reframe, and something different we're in the middle of. Again, not different with a capital D, but sort of how Christian nationalism and how Project 2025 is telling its story and who it's inviting in. I can't even put meaning on it yet, but I know it's still different.

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While I was on the ground, I was looking for what the things are that feel like—not that they are the guarantee that the 500+ years are now different, our descendants will tell us if it's different, right? But I was looking for what are the moments that feel different in my own lifetime, that are the ones that I'm trusting. And, I'm going to slow down and think of how to say this, because I am both a very trusting person. It's like if I meet somebody, I'm like, "Hi, I can feel you're a good person." There's that trust. But in terms of things lasting beyond this moment, I feel a lot of caution.

I remember not that long ago, not far from here, when Jamar Clark was murdered, may he be held, right? And at the occupation of the fourth precinct⁶, I remember there were a group of us who dragged an ice house in front of the police station, and we were giving body work to Jamar Clark's family and to kin and to people who are frontlining, and at that point I remember a lot of the conversations we were having were about, like, almost still building a case for why care as a part of movement matters. And I remember having this conversation with somebody in front of the fourth precinct and I said, "you know, in my brain I don't use the word oppression that much anymore. More and more I use the concept that I think about as relationship

6 In November 2015, Minneapolis police shot and killed unarmed Black man Jamal Clark while responding to a 911 call. In response, hundreds of community members occupied Plymouth Avenue outside the MPD's northside 4th precinct station for 18 days, close to the site of the killing.

betrayal.” Because it feels so intimate in a way that sometimes the word “oppression” can let me go into my brain and almost sort of stand up here and look down, as opposed to the intimacy of “in this room, our people have shat upon our people for fucking generations.”

The fact that we trust each other at all sometimes is extraordinary. And I’m talking race, gender, a range of things in here obviously. And so at the fourth precinct that was sort of the conversation that kept rising for me. I’m so grateful for the conversations I had, and as much as I wish they had not needed to happen at the time in which they did—what does it mean to turn to each other from recognizing that there is relationship betrayal here, and that trusting is hard, and is not a guarantee.

And so I look at that across multiple things, and I know that this moment of Operation Metro Surge was also heavily impacted by so many frontline organizers who were really involved with Line 3, when we’re really learning and



***We are not
smarter than
our ancestors.***

being shaped by that learning there, in addition to the uprising in 2020, in addition to after Philando Castile was murdered, in addition to Standing Rock—there’s been so many spaces and moments here.⁷ You know and I love—Ricardo, there’s sometimes when you talk my heart just goes [*makes a fluttering sound and gesture*]—because when you say this is a moment, of like, collective, this sort of moving forward. And I hear that, and I also hear what you just said, Sandra, about, in some ways this is no different than four months ago. And I feel like both of

7 Events mentioned: Fierce resistance to the Enbridge Line 3 tar sands oil pipeline across northern Minnesota swelled in 2021. Activists faced extreme state repression in the face of Enbridge-funded police and legal attacks against almost daily protests and direct action. In 2016, Black school cafeteria worker Philando Castile was murdered by police during a traffic stop in the suburb of Falcon Heights, prompting local and national protests and occupations. Many of the participants in these struggles also participated in the massive Sacred Stone Camp on the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota in 2016-2017. Led by Dakota elders, the camp sought to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline from threatening sacred sites and the region’s water supply. This struggle also faced extreme police violence, a continuation of the United States’ ongoing legacy of genocide against the Dakota and other indigenous peoples.

those things at the exact same time, and I know we all do, holding the contradiction without confusion. And when it comes to large scale stuff, it's hard for me to trust that, except when it's emerging, but not to trust or assume it's going to happen again.

But like, what creates the conditions for it to emerge? And I know for me there is something about the intimacy of this relationship betrayal, who we are in addition to what we do. And for me that means working with a lot of white folks in various ways, although not just only, but also the humility of like, "we are not smarter than our ancestors." We are not wiser than our ancestors. This is more complex than a single answer. And I get in the way of the transformation I want to make happen all the fucking time because of my ego and my fear and my control and all the rest of it. And so do all of us. And I said this is the place where it can be dangerous because the binary will make it be, "oh therefore doing this work is all that matters, fuck system change." Bullshit. You know, it's always both/and, but it's where it brings for me like—what made me trust so much about this moment, and not therefore the period is at the end of the sentence. But that there were practices of care and respect within the context of relationship betrayal that feel to me to be it's almost like a softening, or a door. Not a guarantee, but a softening.

SANDRA: I'm struggling with this.

SUSAN: Please, please.

SANDRA: I'm struggling with the relationship betrayal—

SUSAN: Tell me.

SANDRA: —and oppression because, to me, oppression is that collective, institutionalized relationship betrayal. And so a lot of times, I get the feeling that what will happen is, what happens a lot of times now, that white people will think, well, "I'm nice to Sandra. I like her." And that can be a beautiful thing but it doesn't change the system at all under which we're living. And I'm not giving out passes to special white people that say that you're outside of this when you're not.

And so I think that I just have to struggle with that because I just don't agree. It doesn't sit right with me. It doesn't sit right in my body because I think people want it to be easy and want it to be nice, and

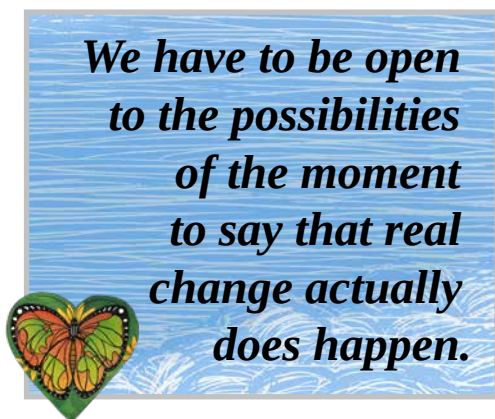
you know, think that the work that needs to be done is, "I need to have the courage to have a conversation with you." Or the work that needs to be done is that I need to go see a movie with Black people in it. You know what I'm talking about? *[Other panelists affirm]* And so the idea of relationship betrayal without there being an authentic relationship in the first place—it's like restorative justice when there was no justice to restore. *[Crowd affirms vocally]*

Language is really powerful. And so I just think that if we're going to move forward, I keep saying it, but it's like, it's going to be hard work and people are going to have to step up.

RICARDO: So, in the early 20th century, the Industrial Workers of the World, the IWW, was the radical anarcho-syndicalist movement of the time. And a lot of their language was around, "we are the people who work hard, and we're being ripped off by the parasitic people *[the bosses]* who are lazy." And that was kind of the class analysis which enabled a strong movement, and in many cases a multi-racial movement. Now over a period of time, you had the 1930s, you had the war, you had McCarthyism, and that same sensibility gets twisted and reversed, and white workers continue talking about how the lazy parasites are ripping us off, but now the lens has turned and they're talking about Black folks, they're talking about migrants, and so forth.

So in any moment the potential to go in one direction or another is always there. I mean, co-option is built into the whole shebang. And every moment that shifts emotional chemistry has the potential for that to be an opening or a shutting, right? I mean, after George Floyd was murdered, you had all-white towns in Utah marching for Black lives, right? And people who, you know, who felt an earthquake. What to do after that, they didn't know, but they felt an earthquake.

Every organism requires nuanced information about its environment in order to survive. Precision. We need a fair amount of precision to



know both where there are dangers and where there are opportunities. We humans tend to think about that on a real pendulum swing, right? That's what trauma does to us. We've been betrayed so we see everything as betrayal. We feel safe, so we feel that the world is a safe place. And how we find that sweet spot, I think, is really important even if it's never completely possible, because on the one hand we have to look at the possibilities of the moment and say, "but we know these things, so we're not going to let our guard down." And, we have to be open to the possibilities of the moment to say that real change actually does happen. That if we look back at history, movements do actually at least change the playing ground that make other things possible and make the other things possible in ways that are more mature and deeper and have learned from the lessons of the past.

So those are the two emotional challenges that I think we all have to navigate in our personal and collective lives: to both be realistic about the messiness and the potential to default back into oppression. But not shut ourselves off to protect our hearts from the possibility that there actually might be something new and generative here.

But then it comes to us to make that better offer. So that that's the part that is able to develop.

D.A.: I want to open this up because this is a wonderful conversation and I want folks in the audience to be able to ask some questions of our illustrious panelists. So yeah, let's open it up. Let's jump it off.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: What's up, y'all? Thank you so much for having this conversation. One thing that we observe on the south side has been a ton of, I would say thousands, of first responders activating to help their neighbors to do this and that. Those same first responders will be quick to call the police on Black folks. What can we do as humans who care for our neighbors to challenge this internalized ego celebration that has like, trickled away from this movement towards each other. What do we do with it? Thank you. *[Panelists give thanks for the question]*

SUSAN: You know, I think this is to some degree, and I really appreciate, Sandra, your push back. It's making me think a lot about the language I'm using in there.

I know the conversation I'm having with some of the folks who might very well be the ones you're talking about, is—I keep remembering something that Ricardo's sister actually teaches. Aurora [Levins Morales] teaches, "an enemy is someone with whom you've not yet found solidarity," which blows me away. And so a lot of conversations I've been having—because I keep being asked to go in and to speak with white folks who are doing exactly the thing that you're saying—I'm not saying I know what the exact answer is even within this, but I keep having conversations about intimacy, assumption of relationship, assumption of safety, assumption of care. Like what are all the assumptions that are behind there that, as you know, are baked into saviorism, right? Somebody's sense of who they are and why they even showed up.

You know there was a time when Ricardo, myself, and some other folks, after Michael Brown was murdered⁸, we got asked to sort of organize a bunch of white folks because there were a lot of white folks who were getting in the way of what Black Visions was trying to create at the time, right? And so much of what we were centering, was like, why the hell are you even involved? Are you involved because you like the picture you see of yourself and that's who you want to be in the world? Are you involved because you're uncomfortable with injustice, because you don't want injustice, because you don't want to be somebody who sees injustice happening but you're still not actually willing to change more deeply? Or to take in the way that you are actually participating in this before four months ago?

And so I feel like I'm responding by saying, that's my people's work. It's deep-ass work. It doesn't happen in a quick conversation. And I'm remembering how many times again that we need a 211 call for when something like that happens and you can call somebody in. That's to me kind of what I'm trying to get at when I'm saying it's about who somebody is in that moment, not what they're doing. 'Cause the doing was fucking fantastic, but this what this exactly leads to, what you're naming. The doing doesn't go deeply enough, because it's that distance that's there.

I don't feel like I answered that well other than linking arms with you and saying like, "Yeah."

8 Black teenager Michael Brown was shot and killed by Ferguson, Missouri police, with his hands raised, in August 2014. The subsequent nationwide protests were a spark for the Black Lives Matter movement.

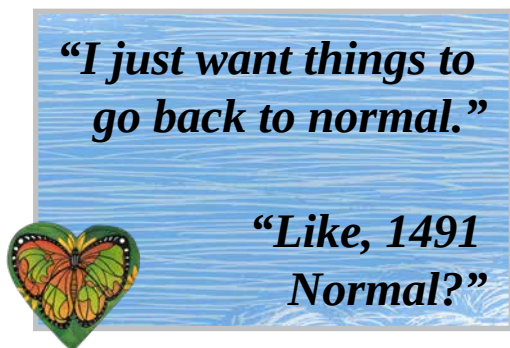
AUDIENCE QUESTION: I know. I've definitely seen that in Phillips. I lived in Philips 35 years and I see a lot of that white saviorism. And I don't want to disrespect in any way the efforts that people made in protecting their neighbors, but in many ways it was done in a very anonymous way to respect, you know, not outing somebody, not putting their name or address out on social media so that we could give rent relief or deliver groceries or pick up their laundry or provide stuff. But I definitely see that when I'm in an all-white room thinking about "what are we doing next?" And to me, I think we need to break through the anonymous relationships that we've had and really struggle, be willing to struggle and learn. And listen, because, to me that's not really organizing when you all sit in a room and figure it all out for somebody else. That's not organizing. That's kind of replicating a white supremacist system.

But in some ways I also resonate with like, Ricardo is saying in the beginning of the 20th century my people, Finnish people, socialists, communists, worked really hard against capitalism and classism and made some headway. But then there's this whole other piece, you know, of the rise of the KKK in Minnesota.⁹ And so, it's complex. It's very complex. And I'm hoping we can learn from each other how to move forward. And the learning when to step up and step back plays out in community, and yet ends up with some real outcomes. We're not just talking about it.

RICARDO: I think, just one comment of where I'm positioned as an artist, is trying to fill the cultural communal space with the stories that we need to counteract that kind of thing. Tell the true story of policing. Like MPD150, the report. There have been about five or six reports on the Minneapolis police. That was the only one that did a history. Like when you're dealing with a disease, you got to look at the history of the patient. And yet all of these reports go straight to the solution. "Well, we don't need a diagnosis. All we need is a prescription" and that is another community police relations board or better training. *[Crowd groans knowingly]* So anyway, that's just one example, but that's something that can impact: just tell the friggin truth.

9 The KKK once claimed over 100,000 members in Minnesota in the 1920s (though this number may be exaggerated). One alleged Klan member, politician and sheriff Earle Brown, has had many Twin Cities locations named after him. Some, but not all, of these places have been recently renamed, and some memorials removed.

D.A.: And I would say also, you know, like what this is speaking to is, we have to expand our imagination—stories, obviously, our imaginations of how we identify ourselves ‘cause it seems like we’re always being drawn back into a very limited imagination. “This is what a liberal thinks in Minnesota and how a liberal acts in Minnesota,” or votes, and it is what you were describing, which is like, it’s a conflict and it’s confused about what your impetus was for jumping into the fight against authoritarianism and fascism. What your impetus was when you don’t want to identify with some of these other sort of far right-wing conservative notions, but you will identify with some of these centrist capitalist notions because of a framework that’s in your mind that “oh, of course I’m not a communist”, or “I’m not a socialist”. Like, those words are scary to folks even though they might live out an ethos that responds to that.



SANDRA: I just wanted to say that one of the things that the people that you’re asking about, who have been doing some of the mutual aid that I’ve been in conversation with, say things like, “I just want things to go back to normal.” *[Crowd groans]* No, for real. And...

RICARDO: —Like 1491 normal? *[Crowd laughs]*

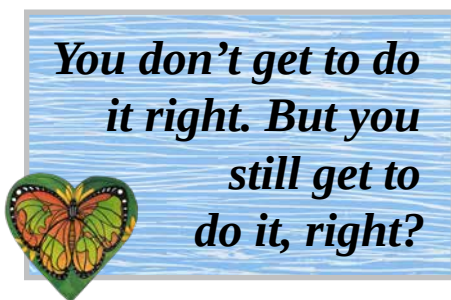
SANDRA: The raising of your consciousness is also the disruption of your comfort. And so when you say to me you want things to go back to being normal, that you want things—okay, you want to “make America great again.” It’s the same, it’s the same thing. It’s the same thing. Because authoritarianism and fascism didn’t just enter folks lives four months ago. Some of us have always been treated like that under this current system. And so when you say you want to go back to things being normal—What I say to people now is, “okay. What do you mean? Because normal was not good for me.”

I don’t know if it’s fear. A lot of time it just seems like people, you know, they’ve been doing this for four months and they’re tired. And I think that people have not necessarily been, and I don’t know how to put it, I

think people have not necessarily been told that they need to reach for their higher self. That if you're really going to do this work, and you're going to enter in, like you (Ricardo) said, now that you're here, we want you to stay, but you know, we got things to tell you. And there are things for you to do, but that really the question is, "Where do you want this to go?"

AUDIENCE QUESTION: One of the things that I've been doing through Metro Surge is, really, I had a hospital stay, so I wasn't able to do as much help as I wanted. I was watching a lot of the people I know do so much powerful shit, and people I love, and my neighbors, get hurt. Now that I'm out, a lot of what I'm feeling is urgency. And I've been really trying to sit with it and trying to interrogate where that motivation to just do something comes from. And I'm really fucking grateful for this conversation because it's really opening up my eyes like, "Oh shit, is this coming just from a desire to be helpful, a desire to be important? Is this coming from—?"

How do you learn to sit with the desire to do something and interrogate your motivation to prevent yourself from propagating further harm? Because I feel like a lot of harm has been done by people in a body like mine. White people just wanting to do something. And I don't want to continue that. Like, my ancestral sorrow has already done enough. So how do you learn to sit with that, interrogate yourself and help other people sit and interrogate their motivations?



RICARDO: Well, one thing that you might find disturbing, or you might find comforting, is that you don't get to do it right. But you still get to do it, right? There's a lot of, sort of, delicacy. You know, "I don't want to offer this person this oxygen mask that I have when they're gasping for air because I might do it in a way that's problematic," right? Oh, yeah, that loaded word. Problematic. We are problematic, right? And sometimes you just have to provide solidarity, and you're never going to get it right, and the people you're providing it to are not necessarily in a mood to give you a gold star for it. But the thing is, that means that rejection is part of solidarity because people are so used to being

betrayed. So I don't have any answers for you except just keep trying. You know, it's a good question to ask, but don't get paralyzed by it.

And I mean, trauma is too big a topic, I think, to do a deep dive into except to say that—well somewhere along the course of my life somebody did me the favor of inventing the internet. I had moved to the States in '67. So Malcolm X had already been killed, but later I was able to go back and hear his speeches and realize, wait a minute, what he's doing, at least in part in these speeches, is he's reframing a narrative to traumatized people. Reframing the narrative against all the things that white supremacy told people and saying, "No, you're beautiful, you're powerful, you can defend yourselves," etc., which is one of the stages of healing trauma.

And that was a revelation to me because that made me realize that's what I'm doing with my art. Reframing narratives in ways that reflect back at people that they have agency, not just telling the stories that bad shit happened. That's not healing trauma. That's rehearsing it. So there are all of these steps in the process of individual trauma healing, that actually does in many ways translate to collective healing. You know, the witnessing, the truth-telling, the agency (because action is the greatest protection) and healing, and just figure out ways to do that that are guided, because just acting out to restore your sense of power can be very toxic. I mean, that's what abuse is about. It's a good question, but it just takes reflection, illumination, and practice.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: I was wondering, how you are doing?

SANDRA: I'm doing... it's hard to put into words, because it's different levels. I'm doing all right. Spring is finally coming. My mother turned 95 last week and I still have her. And so I'm on a different kind of journey with her now. She's still a mother, and it requires me to be present and I require myself to be present in a way that feels sacred. And so, how I choose to locate myself in movement work is different than it would have been five years ago. But my mother is also an old warrior. So, it's also still learning, still receiving. And then there's the rageful part. And so, I try to maintain equilibrium, and pay attention to my internal self, and respond.

RICARDO: What keeps me grounded is that from an early age living in the forest I have been anchored in this sense that things come in cycles,

waves, etc. So I don't get shocked. I get surprised but not shocked when fascism, you know, bursts on the scene. My worldview isn't shattered. It's like, "Oh—what does this mean about the long and the short stages of the cycles that we're in, and what are the tasks for the moment?" So, fascism really sucks, and you know, it's hard, but it also is possible. And I feel grounded in that I'm doing what I should be doing.

SANDRA: (To Susan) How you doing?



SUSAN: It's a weird thing, and I think with getting older, sometimes okayness feels more accessible to me than it used to. This is a weird sort of thing because I'm also not. I mean, yesterday I spent time with a young person who's tried to take their own life as a result of what's happening. I'm giving care to a number of people who still can't leave their homes. And so you know, we're not okay, deeply. Sometimes I'm not okay. And then I'm also okay.

The piece about "what do we do?" I'm like, it's this, the awkwardness and the glory of people coming together and not performing in front of each other. I do trust that, you know. It has meaning. It doesn't have periods at the ends of sentences, but I trust the awkwardness, the rub, as well as the moment where there's the "aha" in the room.

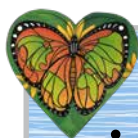
And you know, mostly what I've done these last three months is do a lot of work with people one-on-one or in small groups who are trying to figure out how to tolerate the intolerable. And what's been so interesting to me is from people who are probably absolutely the savior, some of them I wouldn't be surprised if right now are saying, "Can we get back to normal?" Some folks here, to folks who just lost a family member who was kidnapped. All sorts of experiences. And to a person, in that moment of like, right now we're witnessing what's going on here, you know, just right now, what is it that's going to support you to be able to sustain a little bit longer?

You know, that's what that work is, is to tolerate the intolerable a little bit longer, which lots of people in this room have been practicing in in lots of different ways. But in this context, to a person, like, almost everybody at one point would have a hard time remembering that this was impacting them. Even if they had a family member who had just been kidnapped and they were trying to figure out how to make sure their children were okay. Still, there'd be this moment where the most important thing I could say is, "Can we just pause? This is happening to you right now." The specific complexity, no right way of being who you are, you right now. No matter who you are. And then of course depending on who the person is, then there's like, that doesn't mean you center yourself. For other folks that's not something I have to say, but it's like but still it's happening to you.

And I feel like in movement spaces often, and I don't want to say this is true for everybody, but we are shaped to sort of notice the collective, which is glorious, huge, because this is collective. This is hugely collective, and so it's not an either/

or, ever. But as a practitioner, the number of times where it's like, no actually, you, right now. The fact that you asked the question of how are we doing to the people in the room is fascinating to me. But it is, it's like, across bodies, across experiences, that ended up being the most powerful moment again and again and again, was right now, just come into your own life for whatever it is, for whoever is there, the reality of it, and let it be witnessed. And that is sure as hell not enough to make a revolution happen, ever. But revolution is so much harder without it.

And so that, when you say we are traumatized—trauma is there. I'm like, trauma on top of generational trauma for some of us, trauma on top of this sort of piece. It's like—it's a word that I both adore and, to some degree, am starting to hate a little bit, because it's like "what the hell does that even mean?" You know, this country is the definition of trauma. Like that's how it exists. *[Crowd reacts affirmingly]*



***This country
is the definition
of trauma.***

I always think of Bernice Johnson Reagon, right, with this piece that she wrote in '83 about coalition building. And there's this piece that has just shaped my organizing where she was like, coming into coalition, into rooms like this, is not coming into a womb. This is not the place where you come to be comfortable. But, you want to have a place to go back to, please lord may you have a place to go back to, where somebody's going to look at you, know who you are, you don't feel like you have to explain yourself, but that's not what this room, this is. And what you lifted around comfort.

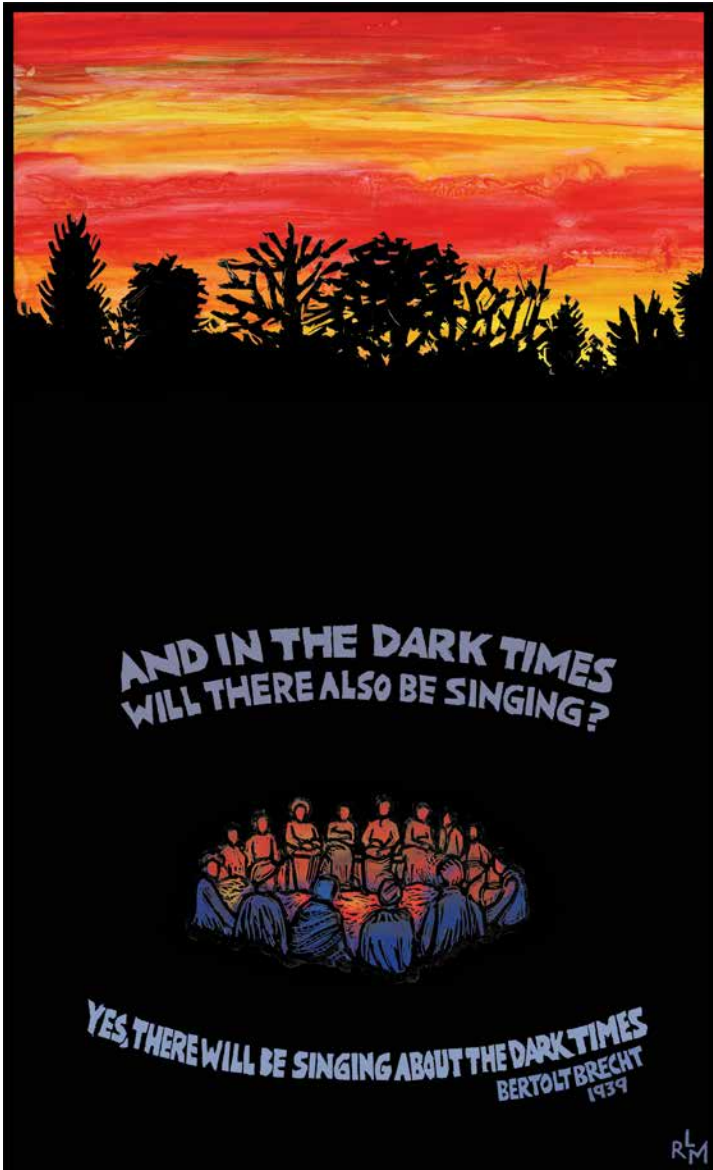
And so the last piece I'll say is that this is about you right now as well, like that is right in the middle of being able to discern what's happening in the room right now, who am I in this room right now, how am I seeing folks in this room right now.

RICARDO: Okay. You were talking—you were talking about me just now. *[Crowd giggles]* No, really. Just a quick addendum. When I was a teenager, I moved out of home at 15. I dropped out of high school. I was hitting adolescence. I was experiencing immigration. The shit was hitting the fan. And I do have a narrative of myself about how together I had my shit, right? That I was able to navigate that and engage in activism and engage in all of these things and just be so mature for my age, right? And it's true, and I actually am proud of the aspects of that that were true.

But, it's only when I have the quiet space and conversation with some of my peers from that time that I think about, oh, not having enough food, you know, scraping together, dealing with all these things, dealing with the police, etc., things that I carry that haven't been part of that narrative. The ways in which it was hard. And I realized in listening to both of you that my initial answer was performing the okayness of it, which is actually something that I am proud of how I've become a person who can navigate these things in the way I do. But it also means that there's an iceberg under the tip that also needs to be recognized that doesn't negate the power and the agency. It's a more multi-dimensional way of thinking about it.

D.A.: Well, thank you all. I know our time went by very fast. This was a blessing, and I'm doing better than I was earlier because of this experience. And I'm not just saying that just because that's a good thing to say. Ricardo peeped me earlier because I'm a filmmaker, and

I'm an introvert, so I hide out behind the camera in order to get this kind of social connection. So this is actually very nourishing for me. So I'm nourished. I feel very filled and fulfilled today because of this experience. So I thank you all. I thank you all too for coming to the Northside. Thank you all.



ABOUT THE PANELISTS

Sandra Richardson has been an activist and facilitator in Minneapolis for most of her life, and currently leads The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond's Undoing Racism workshops across the Twin Cities. Sandra is also the Undoing Racism, Healing & Organizational Consultant for Brownbody, Inc., whose mission is to liberate Black artistry through dance, theater and figure skating.

susan raffo is a bodyworker, cultural worker and writer who focuses her work through the lens of healing justice. She believes in the culture change approach to how bodies heal: supporting the slow shifting or integrating of deeply held, often generational and historical patterns that show up as pain, anxiety, stress, and disconnectedness. Locally, Raffo is part of REP, a Black-led community-based crisis response model rooted in relationships and solidarity.

Ricardo Levins Morales is a trickster artist and organizer who uses his visual art as a form of political medicine to support individual and collective healing from the injuries and ongoing reality of oppression. He was a founding member of Northland Poster Collective (1979-2009), and now offers his work via a Minneapolis storefront and at his website RLMArtStudio.com. Ricardo's work is widely used by grassroots movements, organizations and communities.

Moderator **D. A. Bullock** is an award-winning filmmaker, social practice artist, and community organizer. He uses art to supplant narratives of hopelessness with ones that promote and inspire collective understanding, in order to foster a radical reimagining of north Minneapolis that impacts how long-standing community issues are addressed. His production house is Bully Creative.

Event sponsor **The Alliance** (TheAllianceTC.org) is a coalition of community-based organizations and advocacy groups with a mission to build power across the intersections of geography, race, culture and issues in the Twin Cities to eliminate systems of oppression and advance our collective liberation.

“One thing that felt different to me this time is that I’d never before been in a situation that felt like I was part of an occupied community in resistance, an occupied population in resistance . . .

“And part of the reason it broke that way is because of [the 2020 Uprising], and because of the moments before that. And people who sat on the fence in 2020 but were very disturbed, came into the streets this time. There are people who are sitting on the fence now, who will come in the next time. There are people who are now going to retreat back into the comfortable mythology that we’re the shining city on the hill. But it won’t sit very well because that fence is very rotten at the base and it’s not a stable place to return to.”

