

# Far Right Alignment of Sheriffs and the Violent Policing of Immigrant Communities

*Panelists: Ethan Fauré, Felicia Arriaga, Luis A. Fernandez  
Moderated by Dr. Koki Mendis*

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**Koki Mendis:** OK, thank you, everyone, for joining Political Research Associates today for the second of four discussions in our series on Subverting State Violence. Today, we will be discussing the Far-Right Alignment of County Sheriffs and the Violent Policing of Immigrant Communities. The inhumane treatment and deportation of Haitian refugees from our southern border underscores what we already suspected: that the U.S. anti-immigration movement continues to see its agenda realized under the Biden administration. In hundreds of elected county sheriffs across the United States, this nativist movement has armed agents of the state working in concert to further support and expand systems of racialized social control and expulsion. Today, we will delve into a conversation on the history of right-wing law enforcement up to today's right-wing aligned sheriffs and the far-right movements working to organize them.

This series is part of PRA's 40th anniversary celebration, commencing in earnest next month. PRA, or Political Research Associates, is a social justice research and strategy center dedicated to blocking the advance of oppressive, anti-democratic movements into building a just and inclusive society. Over the past four decades, PRA has researched, monitored, and publicized the agenda and strategies of the U.S. and global right, revealing the powerful intersections of Christian nationalism, White nationalism, and patriarchy. PRA produces investigative reports, articles, and tools; publishes the peer-reviewed quarterly magazine *The Public Eye*; advises social justice movement organizers, and offers expert commentary for local and national media outlets. Our core issue areas span reproductive justice, LGBTQ rights, racial and immigrant justice, civil liberties, and economic justice.

For today's discussion, we are joined by three people who are not only experts and brilliant thinkers on the nature, structure, and impact of right-

wing law enforcement, but are importantly also movement organizers working to end violent policing and dismantle the carceral state. We are honored to be joined by [Felicia Arriaga](#), Visiting Research Scholar at the [Princeton School of Public and International Affairs](#), Assistant Professor of Sociology at [Appalachian State University](#), PRA Research Fellow, and Coordinator of the [North Carolina Statewide Police Accountability Network](#). PRA's very own [Ethan Fauré](#), Research Analyst focusing on movements promoting anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and White nationalist ideologies. And [Luis A. Fernandez](#), Professor and Chair of the [Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice](#) at [Northern Arizona University](#). Thank you very much to our esteemed panelists and to you, our wonderful audience, for joining us today.

Please note that this webinar will be recorded and the recording will be distributed by email and on PRA's website next week. We will also include a transcript of the webinar at that time. And audience members feel free to introduce yourself in the chat so we can see who all is with us today. We will be taking some time today for audience questions if you have any, which can be dropped into the chat at any point in the discussion.

I'm going to go ahead and get us started. Today, I want to contextualize our discussion with a brief and broad strokes history of law enforcement in the United States. In your upcoming co-authored piece, "The Movement to Defund the Police," Luis, you write "The...origins of policing...have one thing in common: each exists to help maintain the social order, often described as the maintenance of "peace." However, the so-called peace is embedded in social and economic arrangements that require inequality and human degradation. Thus, we agree with scholar Mark Neocleous and argue that the primary role of the police is one of order maintenance, regardless of the morality of that order. Therefore, it is impossible to distinguish police from an inequitable social order that arises from political-economic arrangements." As part of the parlance of the defund movement, we often hear the refrain that the police began as a slave patrol—a statement with a lot of truth to it. The counter argument is, of course, that the police are an inevitable part of large-scale social organization and the only thing standing between us and violent chaos. Luis, reflecting on the quote I read, can you help us situate law enforcement in U.S. history and the broader theory of social organization? A big question, I know.

**Luis A. Fernandez:** Sure, I'm happy to give it a shot in a minute or two. So, your question has a couple of things that I think are worth mentioning. One is that we often tend to think of what I tend to think of as proto-policing—the emergence of the police institution before it develops into a full blown institution as we know it, kind of emerging out of the slave patrols. I think we've

read about it. I think there's lots of writing about it and how that functions. So I don't want to say much about it other than to say that that particular kind of proto-policing arises very specifically out of a social arrangement around plantations in the South that requires a certain kind of social order for things to function there. I think it's equally important to understand that proto-policing also arises slightly differently in the Northern parts of the United States really, really early on, and in Europe, around the night watchmen. So this other notion that is much more embedded in urban settings and engaging in much more concentrations of people. But that social order is also arranged in a very specific way and eventually by the 1800s, it becomes a social order where these proto-policings become policings that are engaged in the suppression of strikes, and the suppression of labor issues. There's this connection where the proto-policing rising out of creating safety in the streets at night, then eventually develops into the production and the maintenance of a particular social order.

Often—I don't hear a lot of talk about this, and I've been trying to write a little bit more about and do a little bit more research, is looking at the emergence of a different kind of proto-policing strategy that arises in the Southwest, but that is much more connected to a colonial experience. So, one is connected to the labor practices around the plantation. Another one is around the labor practices around the industrial area in factories. In the Southwest, it is the movements of people off territory. So it's not the engagement of people and then bring them into a factory, or into a plantation, but rather just the elimination of people. And I think if we want to think about sheriffs, that is—if we want to think about the American version of sheriffs, that really might be where it's really embedded. It is connected to this emergence of a colonial experience of the movement of people, which then connects them to everything to do with rents, and having to move people out, and expulsions, and all those kinds of things. So that's a really broad stroke to that question. I'm happy to talk more, but we'll keep it short.

The other question that you had was the idea, if I have the analysis correctly, then policing has to be understood—or should be understood—as an institution that exists and arises in relation to the maintenance of order. So, the question is always, “What order?” Well, a plantation order, labor order in the North, and a colonial order in the Southwest. And of course, they kind of intermingle in particular ways. So we think of the institution as that way. Often we now move to the present moment, lots of things have changed and it's very, very, very different. But we tend to think that police are there to maintain the peace or to keep people safe. And I think there's a big difference between safety and security, and the relation of maintaining order. Those two things I think are actually different. Because safety is about, perhaps, keeping everybody safe.

Maintaining order is about making sure that things engage in such a way that the daily life can occur in such a way that those kinds of social arrangements can continue on a daily basis, uninterrupted. People confuse safety and chaos with social order maintenance. How about that? Is that short enough?

**Koki Mendis:** I think that's fabulous. And I really appreciated in reading your work that very clear distinction. I think it's an excellent counter to a lot of the narrative on the Right about policing being sort of an organic structure, and it's an organic structure to what? And your question, and your answer just now, really provides that insight.

Continuing in this vein, Felicia, I would like us to pivot to the sheriff's branch of law enforcement, which you know very well, and for you to expand on the historical context for sheriffs. You're writing a piece for PRA on the history of right-wing sheriffs, which we're very excited about, coming soon. Can you provide insight into this particular social formation, especially as it relates to the systemic, violent repression of Black communities, beginning with U.S. slavery?

**Felicia Arriaga:** Yeah, for sure. And I think the distinction that Professor Fernandez is making around this question of safety is a really important one, too. I also just reflect on learning so much of what I've been working on, both as an activist and as a scholar based in Durham, North Carolina, under so many great influences. One of the groups that I think about from that particular area is the [Harm Free Zone](#) and sort of the way that they think about safety. I think a lot of their abolitionist work is really encouraging community members to think about what is safety in the first place, and whose safety is being pushed for in these different pieces. I will say, too, that so much of the history that I focus on is also mostly a history based in the South. That's more what I'm familiar with, at this particular moment, but I also, at least in thinking through some of the historical pieces, I think we do have to take into account not just the role that the Right plays in the development of law enforcement, but also specifically thinking more about...although we have the creation of slave patrols as a form of social control, order maintenance, as was mentioned before, I think we also have to take a step back and think about even in that time period, how White people were also engaged in returning enslaved people. So I think that for the piece, yes, I'm focusing on sheriffs, but also thinking a bit more about how do we see that continuation of emboldened White people feeling that they can take sort of the vigilante component of maintaining a certain kind of order?

And so the piece dives a bit more into entities like the KKK and thinking about when federal intervention pulls out, to allow for what some folks in

one of the books that I'm trying to look for in some of my work now....But just thinking about the free reign that allows for sheriffs at that particular moment, particularly in the South, to do what they want, but also who are, at some point in time, have to actually kneel to the KKK. They don't have enough power, the sheriffs or law enforcement in particular areas, particularly in the South, don't have enough power to actually resist some of these vigilante groups. And I think that's so important in this moment, to also follow that line of thinking as we move forward, too. So, I think we see this in many ways, where people aren't necessarily adhering to or maybe they're not part of a named Far Right group, but they are actually taking part in this type of social control, in that particular way.

I can talk more about that, but I also think more about—that there is, exactly as Professor Fernandez was suggesting, there's different ways that law enforcement develops across the country, which I think also means that, particularly in this moment, and this is where the piece ends, is really thinking about, for movement organizers in particular, how are we actually thinking about pushing back on the carceral state and what does that look like? Part of that is because I feel like both in the academic spaces and in movement spaces, we tend to focus on a lot of the work that has happened in urban areas. I think that having these conversations about sheriffs, as well as other types of law enforcement, allows us to dive a bit deeper into the ways that we've seen those institutions, I think, emerge across the country as well.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Felicia. I think it's really helpful to also contextualize our discussion and movement goals that we have here today. I really appreciate your emphasis on vigilantism, especially with sheriffs in mind, and sheriff posses. I think that's an excellent additional dimension, and one in which we see repercussions in January 6th and the empowerment of White folks under feeling part of social order maintenance.

Ethan, we've heard from Luis and Felicia how U.S. law enforcement was developed as a means of enforcing order, and how sheriffs in particular have been long concerned with control and the marginalization of communities. I'd like to turn to you to specifically talk about a White supremacist history of county sheriffs that intersects with an organized, anti-immigrant movement, most identifiable as the sprawling and well-resourced Tanton Network, which you are very much an expert. Ethan, what is the Tanton Network and how did it manage this partial capture of county sheriffs' offices? Why have sheriffs become an organizing target of the anti-immigrant movement?

**Ethan Fauré:** Sure. Thank you. The Tanton Network is a group of organizations

founded and/or supported by the late White nationalist John Tanton over the last 40 years or so. Tanton himself came out of the population control movement of the 60s and 70s, but he eventually developed a pretty singular focus on immigration as the kind of sole source of what he maybe generally believed to be occurring...what was wrong with the world. He also looked around and saw that no one was—in his mind—sufficiently addressing that. So, he set out to create a network of organizations that would create both the policy basis and the ideological justifications for immigration restriction.

This process begins with an organization that the Tanton founded in 1979 called the [Federation for American Immigration Reform](#), or FAIR, with significant financial assistance from the Mellon Scaife family heiress Cordelia Scaife May. Tanton was able to establish FAIR's presence on Capitol Hill and then create affiliate organizations. Organizations that served as legal advocacy organizations, a think tank, and eventually, a grassroots mobilization organization that would facilitate the mass communications from across the country to Congress to flood the fax machines, or bust open the phone lines and overwhelm them.

It took a while, admittedly, but by the '90s this network of organizations had developed a pretty strong and influential presence on Capitol Hill. This culminated to a degree in 1996 with the ultimate signing of an immigration law by President Bill Clinton, which created the contemporary framework for immigration enforcement in the U.S. One of the key provisions that that law created is something called 287(g), which refers to the actual section of the law itself. And what it does is it creates a program in which local police officers across the country or police departments, sheriffs' departments can effectively be deputized and enforce federal immigration law, something that's typically only the authority of previously INS agents and now what we know as ICE. With the creation of 287(g), it ultimately took a while for the program to become pretty well adopted. It was certainly expedited after the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2003. But every 287(g) agreement effectively creates an extra stake in the ground where ICE has a presence across the country, and that the movement themselves would describe this as a force multiplier in order to have as broad of a presence across the country as possible. There are far too many ICE agents as we all, I think, agree, but effectively every single agreement that under this 287(g) program that is allowed to exist in the country creates more of those.

This is where the anti-immigrant movement recognized that, regardless of policy positions or enforcement priorities, any administration has, in terms of immigration enforcement, a vested interest in maintaining that presence through these agreements across the country, no matter what it maintains as

ICE's enforcement dragnet. So, sheriffs become a key part in the proliferation of these agreements, and the general expansion of the enforcement apparatus.

So FAIR, about a little over a decade ago, began a concerted effort to start reaching out to sheriffs, organizing them around these issues, and doing things such as organizing tours along the border, inviting sheriffs to come down to areas and meet Border Patrol agents and, see these areas for themselves. They would go on to collaborate with organizations like the National Sheriffs Association to actually develop policy to create additional avenues for effective 287(g) agreements. This outreach became most apparent, I think, or the largest example of this outreach occurred in 2019, when FAIR foot the bill to fly nearly 200 sheriffs from across the country to Washington, D.C. for multiple days. During their time in Washington, D.C, they had barbecue parties at FAIR's offices, they met with members of Congress, they wound up attending briefings where they heard presentations from officials within the Trump administration, particularly within Border Patrol, ICE, and other aspects in other agencies within the Department of Homeland Security, and they got to visit the White House. They got to get a photograph with the President.

They've made a concerted effort to organize and introduce these sheriffs to these ideas and frankly flaunts their access and leverage and relationships with the Trump administration most directly to popularize this idea that sheriffs really have a role in this. In turn, it empowers sheriffs to go back to their communities and because of their status as local elected officials, both rightly and wrongly lend additional legitimacy to this broader agenda that they have. So they've spent significant amounts of money through these outreach efforts and they continue to do so. Just last week, there were sheriffs in Washington, D.C. that I bet FAIR brought there.

But more so than just photo ops and that, we've seen significant policy ramifications from this. Over the last five years, the number of 287(g) agreements quadrupled from around 40 to now there are nearly 150. That occurred during this time when FAIR was doing these largest outreach campaigns and reaching out to sheriffs individually encouraging them and also creating new policy avenues in which they could enter into these agreements. And that's not something that will change, frankly, as the Biden administration entered. There's been a few agreements that have since been rescinded, but I believe you can only credit the Biden administration itself for two of those that have gone away. I think in total over the last year, there's been only less than 10 agreements that have been rescinded or ended. So, we're currently living with the status quo that this outreach created. At the same time, these sheriffs are now in their own communities, energized and serving as additional advocates and megaphones for these agendas, both in their own counties but also in their

local statehouses, talking to state representatives to pursue this policy. And in the media, both national and local. So, it's created a very distressing thing to have so many of these sheriffs now actively engage in these issues that we have not typically associated with...or that are broadly defined is outside of the purview of a county sheriff.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Ethan. You paint a bleak picture, but one that I think really captures where I want to take our conversation next, which is the fluctuation of this movement and its growth under the Trump administration, but really seeing it begin and the uptick with the Clinton administration. You know, moving from the Tanton Network and the social movement forces behind the anti-immigrant policing that we're seeing. I want to talk a little bit about the presidential administrations that have been participating in this activity and sort of understanding that policing is rooted in our nation's history. How has the character and quality of immigration policing and the influence of the anti-immigrant movement fluctuated across Democratic and Republican administrations over the last few decades? What did, for example, immigration look like under Barack Obama? How did it change under Donald Trump, a man who was propelled to office by the organized, anti-immigrant Right? I'd like to open up this question to our full panel, so whoever would like to take the first crack at it.

**Luis A. Fernandez:** Sure, I'll say just from direct experience here in Flagstaff, Arizona. I've been in Arizona for a long time and, as you know, we were kind of one of the beginner things that... A lot of things were tried out here. Unfortunately, you're living with them now all over the nation. So those these three—287(g) things that we dealt with pretty seriously, and managed to actually break some of them in some cases over the last decades and some of them we weren't able to.

But, sorry, I can tell you that in my experience, and I'll go back to Bush, there were in Arizona some very serious—a very, very specific strategy that seemed to be occurring that involve both sheriff and local police where they were...it was an intention to create terror within a population with the idea that actually the population would then leave Arizona. So in 2000... I don't know 2005, 6, 7, 8, 9 around there, we were fighting a particular strategy that was, you can say, a terrorist strategy in the sense that it was trying to engage fear and terror in a particular population so that they would then self-deport was the logic. And this is written. I'm not reading into this. We can find quotes where they say this is the logic that we were doing. That created an enormous amount of fear. We spent many years just having to provide basic education in relation to

what rights people have and networks so that if ICE was in town, there would be information and there was lots of hiding that was occurring during that particular time.

When Obama came in, what I saw was a shift in the strategy from the reduction of terror to a much more efficient strategy of capture. And that is that the terror was reduced. And people felt safer but I don't think they were any safer. So, that means that the management of how people were being captured changed in a much more sophisticated way. So, instead of actually engaging in going to doing raids or going to somebody's houses, that creates this particular feeling, they stop that. ICE stops that and they moved into just the regularizing of policing of immigration. All of a sudden it was like, "Can I stop you for a light? Can I stop you for something in the windshield?" And once you were there, because, by that point, SB 1070 had gone national, you can now begin to stop people and then you can say, "Hey, do you have papers?" and it's kind of unclear whether they have to answer and all that. And all of a sudden, they can enter the regular police and then end up in the in the sheriff local jail. And then that's where the 287(g) just begin to come into place, where the local police now can report him and hold him for 48 hours. All that kind of stuff. So, I saw a shift, a really serious shift, that I thought captured more people or the same amount of people, that just reduced the terror, but actually remained in terms of the deportation. That's what I saw during that particular period. But I'll turn it to others beyond that.

**Felicia Arriaga:** Yeah, I think I'll just add that I also think that as we moved into the Obama era, I think people were also in denial that this is going on. So I don't know—well, obviously the people who are being impacted weren't in denial because they obviously seriously felt it. But I also felt like trying to talk to "liberals," often, I feel was actually a losing battle, right? Because they couldn't understand how this is ongoing, the normalization that I think about it as, how that was also coinciding with the Obama era outwardly the sort of media around being better on so many things, right? So, I think whenever those conversations, especially, I think locally in North Carolina, that I was often having with people, people just, I think, were just in shock that this could still be happening, right? Especially because I think the terror was no longer there in the same way, right? We still have, at least in North Carolina, the same few folks who are doing the exact same sort of terrorizing our communities, so some of that didn't necessarily stop. But I think that there's actually... it was quite challenging, I think, to not only push back of that type of immigration enforcement that was happening in local jails across the state in North Carolina. But I think even having a conversation that actually might challenge

this Democratic president was really, I think, sometimes a barrier to having sort of more fruitful conversations, not just around immigration enforcement, but I think also on pushing back on any type of criminal justice reform measures, right? So, I think you couldn't necessarily have both of those things at the same time in places. So, I actually think it made it quite challenging to organize in certain circumstances. But I will agree with so much of the pieces that Professor Fernandez mentioned there.

And I think in the shift to Trump, I think that it actually helps in mobilizing strategy. Helps somewhat because I think that the shift then became, "Let's pressure these local elected sheriffs, anyone who was part of the conversation, let's try to push them and actually say that are you going to separate yourself from the Trump regime, right? Or are you going to be with us, right?" So, I think as far as what the strategy on the ground was, I think it shifted a little bit. But I think, still, there's... I think we're back in this moment now of making people aware that the normalization of the systems that we already were created, beginning in some of the more historical context, that we also still have to make sure people understand that regardless of who's in the White House, often we see that sort of local law enforcement is going to continue to do what they would like to do, even with some of these sort of like "changed priorities." I think that that's what we've seen most recently, is that people are really excited about sort of the shift in ICE priorities. I think having seen those priorities shift even under the Obama administration, I guess I'm not as optimistic that things are going to change in the way that people might be...I'm all for having some optimism, but I'm also very much understanding that now that the system has been created, there is a lot of investment at the local level, and at the federal level to keep some of those things in place, too.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Felicia, Ethan, go ahead.

**Ethan Fauré:** I think both Luis and Felicia are absolutely brilliant and correct in what they're saying. The one thing that I just wanted to add was that Obama was, by activists and organizers, rightly called the deporter-in-chief because of the record number of deportations, because of the environment and the conditions that Luis particularly speaking to. Only due to incredible organizing by immigrant communities and their allies ultimately got some concessions in the form of the temporary deportation relief of DACA or something like that. But we've known that those are temporary and they're not, you know, they're insufficient. They're certainly welcome to the people that benefit from it, and we obviously need to fight for them. but recognizing that the temporary nature of that means we're going to be continuing to have these fights. and

that's a reality and a dynamic that plays into the two big federal efforts that have occurred in recent history, both in 2006-2007 and 2013-2014. Both bills in Congress were described as being comprehensive immigration reform, kind of the banner of it. And it would regularize the status of many people, not all, but many people. And obviously that is what we want. But it was paired with truly horrendous provisions, allocating unseemly amounts of money towards enforcement—both on the border itself, and in communities across the country. So, that's a dynamic that I think we need to recognize is a bipartisan dynamic and it continues to be at play. Even if and as we fight for a pathway to citizenship or regularization, we need to be wary of any such policy that only exacerbates the issues and gives even more resources to a totally out of hand enforcement regime that has only grown larger every year, frankly.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Ethan. Thank you, Luis. Thank you, Felicia. I think that was a really, somehow both very encompassing and also brief encapsulation of the bipartisan nature of the anti-immigrant enforcement.

Before we move on to our next question, Felicia, you said you're a little pessimistic about what the Biden administration signals for immigration justice in this country and I would like to give us a minute to think about the last nine months and what have they signaled about this current administration—I apologize for the background noise—current administration's orientation to immigration policing and the influential anti-immigrant movement. As researchers and practitioners of immigration justice, what are your thoughts on the coming months and years under the Biden presidency? I think we're all in this period of really waiting and watching and wondering where the smoke and mirrors are in this administration. I'd be interested to hear a little more on that.

**Felicia Arriaga:** Is that for everyone or, yeah, OK. I'll just start partially, too, because...I think I struggle with this question, especially because I just tend not to... I pay attention to federal level pieces, but I often just find it, it becomes so not useful for local organizing sometimes. And so I think so much of my time is spent thinking through what can we win at the local level or what can we sort of push, where can we push at the local level. And so much of the work that I do has been, in the past, really focused on pushing on police accountability as a broader term. But so many places in North Carolina, because so much of the state is rural, has turned toward thinking about sheriffs not just as sort of immigration enforcers, but also as the folks who are in charge of jails, right? And I think for us, that's become I think... I know... I'm optimistic about the ability to actually fuse those conversations. So, to fuse immigrant rights work

and criminal justice reform on the way to abolition—I'm excited about that.

But I think at the federal level...that's a little bit different and I think that that's sort of beyond the scope sometimes, or at least we're working up to that level of sort of pushing that. But I think as far as what we've already seen, I think, and I say this too, just because it's so pressing, and also just newer but not new, especially if folks are sort of paying attention to the state of Black migration in the United States. But I think we sort of have to talk about Haiti at this moment, too. Haitian migrants. And also to say that, and I'm going to drop in the chat this some other pieces that are from about two years ago where [RAICES](#), a group based in Texas, they did some Black immigrant lives are under attack, some just informational content about that. And so that was not in this current moment, but I think it's also indicative of what's going on, right?

And we're talking about immigrant detention, how immigrants get into deportation proceedings in the first place. We also know that that discrimination—or more discrimination—looks differently for Black migrants in those situations, too. Some of this research, I think, is really just super interesting for us to make sure that we understand that Black migrants are also facing a different sort of relationship to the state than the majority of individuals who are in detention proceedings, which are Latinx folks. So, I do think that that's something that I think we're hopefully going to see sort of more pressure on thinking about that. Unfortunately, I think it took sort of this spotlighting on Haitian migrants to bring that back up as part of the conversation.

And so even in North Carolina, we're planning on doing a teach-in next week, and to also do a solidarity march. I'll shout out some of the great work that's being done by [Black Alliance for Just Immigration](#). Those folks are doing a week of action next week to bring attention to this. And so I'm more excited about what's going on on the movement side of things than I often am about what's going on at the legislative piece. So that's what I'll say.

I think we're going to continue to see people pushing on the Biden administration, right? I think we've sort of seen these, as I think Ethan was mentioning, right, some of the proposals that are being discussed at the federal level. There are folks who are saying, "Actually, this doesn't do anything for people who are criminalized." And so I think that that's something that I'm hoping will continue to grow as we hopefully continue some of the things that were started underneath the Obama administration, to at least point out that this is contradictory to what people have been, at least, talking about outwardly for so long.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Felicia. I really appreciate that the movement perspective and finding optimism. Luis, you came off mute, would you like to...

**Luis A. Fernandez:** Sure. I think, unlike Professor Arriaga, I have been focusing on the local level, particularly around abolition and police defunding. I've been paying attention to what that's happening. Of course, it comes out of movement, but then cities are having to respond in a variety of ways, and I've been trying to figure out what that is and kind of categorize it and map it in relation to what it means and what are the potentials and what are the pitfalls of what's happening there. And I find it interesting listening to all of this because it seems that there's a strategy afoot here that we might want to think about. And that is, in my mind, there's a moment where talking about police defunding and police abolition, which I and many others have been doing for a really long time in smaller chat circles or academic circles, that seems all of a sudden I found myself being able to speak about it and people are in general—in more mainstream places going, "Oh, that makes sense," and me thinking, "Really? That makes sense now to you. Fantastic! Now let's figure out what it really means in application."

But one of those strategies there in relation to policing and the criminal justice system is to try to figure out... If we think of the criminal justice system as a conveyor belt that has an entry point and exit point and then possibly a reentry point right. So it's sort it's like a circular conveyor belt. But if you think of it that way, then there's been lots of effort and important efforts in the court systems, and in the corrections system. And all of a sudden, BLM has put policing really upfront in a way that I think I had not seen it, in that way. And perhaps opens up a strategy of thinking of this particular conveyor belt as closing at the gate. Theoretically, if we could close that entirely, OK, I'm not quite sure I see those possibilities of what that is. But at the very least, in the short term, we might be able to actually get that gate if you think of it as being like this *\*shows a width with his palms\** to actually narrow it, ideally again, close it, but let's just see if we can even narrow it. And I think that that's what many of the cities are doing, and in their diversion of 911 calls, of particular types of 911 calls, the defunding of policing structures, and moving money and pieces of police outside of law enforcement. At the best case scenario that should lead to fewer contacts and fewer people entering the system, right? But theoretically, I don't know. We'll see if that occurs, but that's what is supposed to, possibly at its best.

If that's the case, there might be a strategy for immigration as well in relation to this around the sheriff, specifically. Right? Well, maybe the local police as well. And that is that looking at the way that...where the police make the most contact in relation to immigrant populations is also going to be where they make the most contact with people of color. And it's also going to be the most place where people get killed the most, and are hurt the most. So those

are the populations, the locations that we can, if we do, if we carefully we do it targettedly, we might be able to reduce that connection and say, "Stop that. Don't do that." Reduce policing in those areas that theoretically could then lead fewer people into the local jails where the 287(g)s and all those things are in place for the sheriff to connect it to the federal level, right? The strategy that we've been following, many people have been following, is a disruption of the local sheriff with the federal. And maybe the strategy now is to reduce the sheriff, reduce the police, reduce all of them as an entry point.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Luis, I love that we're getting into strategy and we're really thinking about the practical application of our understanding for how these systems work and reducing their harms.

Staying somewhat with this topic, but slightly divergent before we continue with sort of what's next in their movement and what are you all working on. Both Felicia and Luis have been talking about your thinking about or local organizing and some of the work that you've been doing. And I'm really interested in hearing from both of you as academics who occupy space as both academic and activist, particularly in a period of time where right-wing funders with deep pockets and antidemocratic agendas are moving into greater and greater influence in academia. There is the criticism leveled at critical race theory and sort of calls for objectivity demonstrated by academics. You two occupy this space of academic and activist that is, I think, under threat and also deeply important. I'd be really interested to hear how you understand them as connected and how you balance those identities, especially for those of us on our call, and in our network who are thinking about this role for themselves. I think that'd be interesting to hear.

**Felicia Arriaga:** You can go ahead, I'm sure you have much more experience. I'm still figuring it out and I don't have tenure.

**Luis A. Fernandez:** Yeah, I do, thank goodness. So, I have... Wow, this is such a difficult question. It's a long question. I have a deep history that's uncomfortable and deeply personal with this. I have developed particular kinds of strategies, but they're almost generational at this point. They're a strategy that should be taken in context of my generation, where I came from. So, that doesn't mean that it might be good for the next generation, but I have been particularly careful in this area.

I have for a long time separated my activism from my scholarship for a really, really long time. And I would publish around these things and then I would engage in these particular kinds of things. They would inform each

other, but I never tried to engage in the research in the place where I was actually doing political work. That kept me kept me relatively safe in particular ways. Until it didn't. until I actually got caught up in the weirdness of being singled out, and death threats, and all sorts of different things. But by that point, I was a little older. I already had tenure by that point and so I was a little bit more secure, so that was it was pretty good. But as I moved, I shifted, I found myself accidentally—and I mean accidentally, I didn't think, I wasn't doing this intentionally, but it occurred—that I developed these academic credentials because I kept publishing and writing. And all of a sudden, it's like, "Wait, people are listening to me because of the credential, the academic stuff that I published." Before, it was the activist pressure that would put pressure on these particular locations for things to shift.

And in this last BLM serious, serious once in a lifetime BLM movement, I actually because of my age, because I'm diabetic, because of a lot that, I was like, "I'm not going to be able to be on the streets for the very first time. Wow, that's surprising." But I'm old enough to know that I can act differently. So, it's like, I got it. I've got your flank. I'm going to flank in a totally different direction and I'm going to use, you know...you're opening these doors. I am actually going to walk through them as a scholar now and as a scholar, I'm going to show you from evidence. And that's my strategy. For this, I kind of step back from the political work on the street, but understanding it after 20 years of understanding it really well and actually went, I'm going to go through the front door this time in a way that I don't think I could, the way that they made possible, and now I'm actually going to represent in really intense thoughts that that I think you're finally receptive to. So that's kind of how I engage with that. That's the short version of a much longer story.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you for sharing with us, that's very inspiring. And I think that's a really wonderful way to think about credentialing as an asset when your work speaks to you, you know, deeply important in future thinking action. Felicia, I'd love to... I know you're at the earlier stages in your career and I'd love to hear from your perspective what this looks like for you.

**Felicia Arriaga:** Yeah, and I will say that, as I mentioned to my therapist today, I didn't think this is where I would be, right? I sort of just like went to grad school to learn more stuff and then became a professor. And so, I think I'm still struggling with like, what exactly does that mean? What expectations do I have on myself and the academy? But I also think that the driving question that always holds me grounded is, "Who am I accountable to, and what would they want me to do?" So, I think that some of the research that I'm doing now

is much more sort of community-based participatory research. And so for me, those questions, the questions that I'm trying to answer are actually questions that community members asked me to look into, right?

My book project is specifically... I was organizing with folks and doing state legislative work for in-state tuition when I was in undergrad, and as I started grad school and meeting so many of those folks, the sort of question, especially you think this is around the DACA moment, too...so many of the questions were still, "Well, what happens to my parents, right?" What happens to... I come from mixed status family? What happens to my family members, right, during this moment, too? And so that sort of drove me to dive into looking at the 287(g) programs in North Carolina, which then led me to the deeper sort of conversation of what is "accountability?" And I'll use "accountability" here because I think that—it's what I was looking at, but obviously develops more of a politic around it as I went. But I think the accountability piece just more generally of the criminal justice system is what interested me as I have continued on this journey. And so for me, I think the accountable piece... And I'm still potentially, I think that I haven't necessarily had any attacks necessarily against the research that I do, or the community work that I do at this point... But I think that that question of like accountable to, I guess I don't necessarily see myself as beholden to the academy, and I think that that's helped me find some clarity along the way, too, is that to the extent that this institution is going to allow me to do what feels useful for the movement, then that's what I'll continue to do.

And I also, right, my other time is spent in the coordination role for Statewide Police Accountability Network. Partially because we at least, we do research, right? So, I also have those avenues to be able to do research. So, one of the projects that we're working on now is with some law school students, and I'm trying to get a full understanding of police and sheriff budgets across the state of North Carolina for campaigns, for grassroots organizers to then use that in their campaign work. So, I think that that for me, I've found those outlets and I've also found that those are the people who inspire me. Unfortunately, I feel sometimes in the academic space that those that I haven't necessarily found—I found pockets of folks who inspired me, but at the end of the day, it feels like a job to me, and that's sort of how I've navigated it.

But it is quite challenging to think about which one of these things... And I'm also, I guess I'll also say that I took a leave from my normal job, right, to take this sort of research position to have a bit more flexibility to think, to do the things that I feel like when you're teaching three classes each semester, on top of all the other responsibilities, you just don't have sort of the space to do those things, too. So, I also feel very fortunate to be able to sort of take a break from

some of that other responsibilities that can sometimes, for me, be a little bit exhausting in a different way, too.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you for sharing that with us, I think it's a really helpful narrative to hear how you've thought through these roles and how your academic work and your activism intersect and don't intersect. I think that's also a really interesting consideration. It's definitely something we think about in an adjacent way at PRA as a research first and foremost, institution. How does our research inform activism? How do we conceptualize those two somewhat different roles?

And to continue this discussion, I would like to turn to you, Ethan, as somebody who does and embodies that deep research analysis. Also, filing FOIA requests, archiving information. You really embody the research side of the work, but then you've been doing this work with Cloee Cooper, [Communities for Sheriff Accountability](#), and I'd love to hear how the work you've been doing in tracking and monitoring Far Right-aligned sheriffs has or will be deployed for on the ground organizing. What does that relationship look like for you at PRA?

**Ethan Fauré:** Thank you for mentioning our brilliant colleague, Cloee, if you didn't, I certainly would have. I should quickly note that while this discussion is focused primarily on immigration, the anti-immigrant movement, there are a variety of factions of the Right that are directly seeking to influence sheriffs. Another faction of the Right would be the Patriot militia movements that are also pursuing similar work in this regard. And there is overlap in these instances. I mean, some Patriot movement leaders actually show up at these border events and trainings that FAIR holds for sheriffs, just as one example. But I just want to note that broadly, the Right is looking at sheriffs as a vehicle to advance their agenda, and this is not just related to it specifically as an immigration context.

And I would encourage you all to look at Cloee's work on these issues because it's truly excellent and that's one of the main reasons that both her and I have gotten involved with this organization—or this coalition, [Communities for Sheriff Accountability](#). They are a recently launched coalition that's built on a lot of great work that's occurred in recent years around sheriffs. But it's a coalition of directly impacted organizers, faith leaders, other allies, and advocates that are fighting for freedom of movement without fear and also an end to mass incarceration. Cloee and I do have a tremendous privilege to be able to work with this coalition, informing some of their efforts in a variety of ways, kind of contextualizing what and how particular sheriffs are being

influenced by these organizations, by these movements, where they're located. One of the things that we developed and published over the last year or so was [an interactive map](#) that actually identifies sheriffs that we have seen, or we have identified as working or collaborating directly with the Far Right. And that's just something that—every meeting that we go to, and we share that link, someone inevitably pops up and realizes that their sheriff is on that list, or their sheriff is on that map and they didn't even know. Now they realize that.

Not only does it provide additional documentation and resources to the people that are going to be in these communities waging these fights, it's also just a broader political education tool because that's another thing. I mean, it's been kind of noted here, but this trend towards focusing on sheriffs is still a relatively new development for us all. So, you know, Cloee and I both have a tremendous privilege of being able to work with these folks, provide briefings. We're in the process right now of developing some new resources on the Right and sheriffs in ways that organizers can disrupt those types of collaborations. And I would just encourage you all to go to [sheriffaccountability.org](#) and look at the great work that this coalition is building right now. They have a truly great, transformative list of demands that you all can read and you can get involved with. Looks like Olivia actually just put a link in the chat. Thank you, Olivia.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Ethan. I think it's a great example of sort of the intersection between information and resistance. Felicia, you mentioned your work with the North Carolina Statewide Police Accountability Network. Would you like to say a little bit more about it while we're sort of talking about specific projects and that's very much aligned with the work that Ethan and Cloee have been doing as well?

**Felicia Arriaga:** Yeah, for sure. So, I've been the coordinator of our Statewide Network for two years, I guess. But we started back in 2017 and we're a project of our Black leadership and organizing collectives. I'm also super fortunate to be around Black freedom fighters. So that to me is also super important in understanding the intersections with all of this work. So, most of the time, we are providing capacity building, support for grassroots organizers on the ground. We do some rapid response support for different crews in North Carolina. And we do sort of some of this research that I mentioned before. But a lot of that work, obviously, we do a lot of political education with those folks and so, although our name is Police Accountability, most of the organizations are more abolitionist focused, but for different reasons, that's the name that we have.

And so with that, I think one of the things, too, that I wanted to just briefly

talk about is some of the work that a lot of those groups, both in the immigrant rights space and some of the criminal justice accountability groups worked on. I think a lot of that for us really culminated in some of these conversations, particularly around immigration enforcement and criminal justice reform, back in 2018. So, in North Carolina, we have sheriff races every four years. And so in 2018, on top of a lot of conversations pushed back on immigration enforcement at the local level in our two biggest counties in the state, There's different coalitions, small coalitions, that were formed to actually push back and actually hold the sheriff candidates, hold their feet to the fire. So, it wasn't just a lot of those coalitions that formed were not only just asking good questions, and pushing, and encouraging the candidates to think about their immigration stances, But also, we're pushing different strategies that focus, too, on whether or not they were willing to lessen the incarceration of young people, youths, whether or not they want it, we're going to change some policies around solitary confinement. And the other question that I think at least in North Carolina, we have a lot more of these discussions when it comes to municipal police—so, police departments—but was actually trying to figure out whether or not these sheriffs who were running more on sort of “liberal” platforms, whether or not they would also be welcome... Would welcome independent investigations of the jail, Right?

And so Professor Fernandez and I have a mutual friend, Meghan McDowell, and some of the work that I first started doing in Durham was actually following the lead of folks who were called the “jail investigation team” there. And I think that that was something that, at least in Durham specifically, was one way to bridge these conversations about, obviously, there's terrible conditions within the jail, and immigration enforcement partnership is one of those policies. And so I think that when there are those conversations that are able to happen across different, what we think about issue areas, then actually this temporary reforms, which I'm hoping are always temporary reforms, in that particular case where the activists are pushing for those, that there's actually an opportunity to sort of have a conversation about those pieces, right? So in 2018, the organizers the coalitions did elect or pushed and were instrumental in electing two sheriffs across the state who were willing to get rid of their big 287(g) programs. And I think, as Ethan mentioned before, that was really important it was in North Carolina because those two places had been strongholds for ICE.

Unfortunately, as I think we've seen across the country, once local localities decide to take some of those routes, right, there's going to be a state response. And so at the state level, right after that, the next year, we saw these statewide attempts driven by FAIR connected sheriffs to actually put in place these

statewide immigration enforcement partnerships. So, putting in some more legislation that actually would require the sheriffs to participate with ICE. And so in 2019, we were able to form a coalition, it was called the Stop House Bill 370 Coalition, that pushed back on that particular statewide enforcement. It did not pass, luckily, but we saw it reintroduced this year, alongside, which I always like to remind folks of, alongside an anti-Defund The Police bill. So same legislators had a press conference at the state legislature and said, “Hey, actually, we want to propose these two bills, one that’s focused on making sure all sheriffs cooperate with ICE and we want to actually put some penalties on locations who are trying to defund the police.”

So, to your point, Professor Fernandez, about sort of where that connection is. So, it’s pretty explicit and we’re still... We expect that the legislative season will actually end this year without both of those being passed. But next year, because we have a two year cycle next year, we expect it to come up again. So, I think that both there is a long history of organizers pushing back on, particularly sheriff policies, and we’ve also seen the very sort of explicit response where ICE has been sitting down with state legislatures and proposing these pieces that are modeled after the Texas bill that passed back in 2017? 2018?. So, yeah, so I think we see sort of both of those sides of things, and that’s sort of where we’ve been focusing. A lot of our work on now is strengthening those community partnerships and creating those coalition spaces where we can have these conversations that are multi-issue as well.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Felicia, that’s fascinating to hear about, and I think also is a great example of the local organizing and local response in real time as we’ve been talking about. I also think you set us up perfectly for the next part of our discussion and you mentioned Meghan McDowell. You talk about the problem with using accountability as a framework in this work. So, Luis, I’d like to turn to your consideration of the ongoing defund movement, which you’ve written extensively about. As you mentioned in your coauthored article with Meghan McDowell, [“Disband, Disempower, and Disarm: Amplifying the Theory and Practice of Police Abolition.”](#) you argue, “that a practice of radical abolition offers the most enduring lesson and greatest promise for people organizing to eliminate policing in the present moment. This promise stands on 1) aiming directly at the police as an institution, 2) dismantling the racial capitalist order, 3) adopting uncompromising positions that resist liberal attempts at co-optation, incorporation, and/or reconciliation, and 4) creating alternative democratic spaces that directly challenge the legitimacy of the police.” And I think this quote really encapsulates a lot of the nuances of the argument that we’ve been... or the discussion we’ve been having today and

really thinking through sort of the relationship between policing and order maintenance. And so can you, Luis, articulate for us why radical abolition, not police reform, not accountability, is the way forward? What progress have you seen made in the struggle to defund police? You mentioned this historic moment that we experienced in 2020. You called it a once in a lifetime moment, I have to hope that's not the case, but could very well be. And where does this movement in 2021 stand today?

**Luis A. Fernandez:** Wow, there's lots of pieces to that question. What I meant by once-in-a-lifetime is that I've been waiting for something like BLM since I was, like, 20, and then it occurred when I was 50. So to me, it was like, wow, OK, sometimes you have to wait that long to have these kinds of things. So hopefully not once in a lifetime, hopefully I get to see a couple more. I would be happy with that. OK, so there's a lot of good work coming out—started to come out on this. I would recommend Alex Vitale's [book](#) *The End of Policing*, I think, or *Ending Policing, The End of Policing*. It's really available on PDF all over the place on the net. Check it out. It was a pretty good argument. Also, Maher... George Maher just published a [book](#) titled *A World Without Policing*, that just came out. It's pretty good, too. I highly recommend this.

So, these are not just my ideas. These are collective ideas of many different people. But the short version is this. This is my version. My version is: if you look at the last—I mean, if you look at the history of policing, you see very specific things. One, you see corruption as one of the major particular kinds of things. Police brutality is another one. The policing of communities of color, or working-class communities. This is just prevalent throughout the entire history. But also prevalent is reform. And that is that there's just reform after reform, after reform. You know, the biggest ones comes as the professionalization of the police in the 30s and 40s, and then it just continues, right? And one way to think of this is that we have tried to reform our way out of a particular kind of problem. And the problem that we're talking is the racial policing, the racial disparity, the racial inequality, the killing of young Black men, and focusing on immigrants. We're trying to reform our way. And while there's been some progress, there's not been an elimination. And that's because we're not going to reform our way out of this. We can do certain things. I'm not saying don't follow it or that it's useless or I don't know. But the notion is that if you really want to tackle those particular kinds of issues, I think the function of police is going to assert... order maintenance, status quo maintenance function is going to always require that they maintain that social order. So unless you change the entire social order in relation to the inequalities that are experiencing in that society, you're always going to have that and you're not going to reform.

So I'm fundamentally in disagreement with individuals who think that we can reform that particular institution out of these things.

Again, I'm not saying, don't follow it or don't try those things, but I just don't think that that's where the solution is. So, if that's not the solution, then the solution is going to be the elimination transfer...I don't even know...I don't even know if rethinking what the language is, but it's going to be there that possibly the imagination of a system of social control because we're always going to need one that looks entirely different, that is based on different assumptions, that hopefully gets at center parts of how our society is organized at the at the fundamental level. That's a big thing to ask for and to do. So, it's not easy. It won't happen over time, but it's something that, I think, as a demand needs to be stated and needs to be put forward.

In terms of work, I've been kind of thinking like, what's the difference between abolitionist work and reformist work. And the line that I've drawn, and again, you know, this is just my personal line, is any work that I engage in that expands the scope or aspect or powers of policing, is going to be detrimental. So that means that any reform that produces more money, that gives more training, that gives more expansion, that allows the police to engage with more people, any of that has to be in the wrong direction. So, therefore, I don't know if we want to call it an abolitionist strategy or not, but definitely, a location that... policies and engagement that are actually looking in the different direction, to moving things out of policing purview, to make sure that the scope is reduced, to make sure that the connection that they have with people actually goes to smaller, smaller, and smaller, is the direction that we're going to push. So, that's kind of what I've been up to lately.

**Koki Mendis:** That is such a useful rubric for, you know, sort of evaluating on the ground efforts. I think it's a really clear line to draw between what is sort of step-wise approaches to achieving a defund future, but being able to evaluate each individual project as they come on, I think that's a really fascinating way to think about it.

**Luis A. Fernandez:** And just to add, and the reason for this is because reform as if you look at it, has fundamentally increased the power. It has done exactly what I've said we should not be doing. In other words, if you look at the last 30 years, the last 40 years and the reforms—that come from the Left, by the way, I'm not just talking about reform from the Right—so these are well-intentioned, Liberal reforms have actually expanded everything that I just described. So, therefore, that has got to be a failed project.

Koki Mendis: Yeah, I think that's fascinating. And I think it also is in line with what Ethan was talking about earlier with immigration reform and how, on one hand, immigration reform that increases legal status for some but then creates deeper investment into ICE, on the other hand, is similarly increasing policing and access to resources for the police.

You did say yourself, this is a really difficult task to put forward, but I'm going to put it forward to the three of you in a post-policing, post-carceral world, if we're going to imagine what that looks like, what systems can be developed to help us repair, recover, and thrive in safe communities? What can safety look like beyond the ways in which safety is imagined under policing? And what systems are you all thinking about that are already in place that present a model for the future? I'd like us to conclude with sort of some visioning together. And so whoever would like to take the first stab at this, you know, seemingly, maybe impossible task. But this is, I think, a great exercise to conclude with today.

**Felicia Arriaga:** I can jump in, and I think I'll sort of add to the previous points that—and I think also there's a [new book](#) called *We Do This 'Til We Free Us* by Mariame Kaba. And so that, I think, thinks about it in different ways. Think about the sort of the question of abolition, sort of as a political vision, which, I think, is more so what part of this question is, a structural analysis of oppression and a practical organizing strategy, right? And so I think often we have to think about which one of those are we sort of thinking about today, right? Because there is the sort of, individual things we can do to not rely on, I think the carceral state, which I think is somewhat of the tactics that some, especially smaller community groups are working on, right? And so I do want to again lift up some of the work from the Harm Free Zone. I think so much of my sort of like political education came out of being in Durham, where folks were also more recently, were able to get support for the City Council for a Wellness and Safety Task Force, which was being pushed by Durham Beyond Policing, which is a different iteration than the one that I helped create back in 2015. But that's sort of like what their sort of goals were, right? And so doing some deep canvassing with community members to actually hear what exactly people were wanting instead of the carceral state, right?

So, I'm not going to necessarily answer directly your question because I think the answer actually resides in communities. And I think that the sort of... what we've seen folks actually at least put together, I think in L.A. specifically, taking money from sort of the sheriff's office to put investment into other places. What we've seen in Austin, obviously in Minneapolis, and in Durham, I think we have some good examples, right, of these sort of systems, or at least communities, that don't necessarily rely on law enforcement.

And I think the other thing I'm going to sort of drop in the chat is, specifically because of sort of the emphasis on sheriffs that I think PRA is so great at researching. I'm also going to drop our [Defund Sheriffs Toolkit](#), right, because I do think that obviously the targets are a little bit different. I think that's the one thing that I think people often sort of can conflate or just don't know enough about, right? And so I think at the county level, we do see that so much of that funding is actually being taken away from basic social services, right? Obviously, we can have a critique of whether or not social services are doing what they need to do in the first place, but I think as far as sort of thinking of alternatives, I think understanding that that pot of money is typically a lot bigger, especially in places outside of like our bigger cities like Chicago, L.A. that in other places, the county budget and the sort of county funds are going to be just bigger than sort of city. And I think that when we sort of understand that those streams of funding, we also then, I think, can have more room in our conversations to think about what alternatives exist. So a lot of the critical resistance has a bunch of this sort of information on examples of what can be done. Some of those meaning, right? What is the community response? What is the sort of transformative justice approach to interpersonal conflict, which I think is always sort of a great pathway to lead folks down and those all take additional resources, right?

And so I do sort of want to underscore, want to at least emphasize that we can do both of these things, right? So we can sort of defund, divest, whatever terms you would like to use while also sort of proposing the alternative, right? But I also think that all of that requires us to sort of be deeply in community, right? There's no sort of ways that... and this is where I do sort of very much critique the academics, right? Often is that, right, you can say whatever you think, but at the end of the day, you're not the one, or you are not potentially the one who is sort of a working-class individual who's being targeted by the carceral state, right? I know that there is some overlap. But I think often that that's where my sort of biggest critique of some academics that I know are, right? That they're sort of telling movement folks that they shouldn't use certain terms because it's not palatable. And I think that that's actually a huge mistake. And so I'm just going to move away from the question, Koki, by saying that I think that these are deeply sort of community responses that are not going to be sort of a one size fits all. But we do have examples of things that have worked, I think, in communities too.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Felicia. Ethan or Luis, would either of you like to add to this?

**Ethan Fauré:** I would just very briefly, kind of, because I absolutely agree with Felicia that this is absolutely driven in, and can only succeed within, community. And I think when in terms of systems that are already in place, I don't want to think of it as a system, necessarily per se, but I've been quite heartened and, a source of optimism for me personally, has been the proliferation, more or less, of mutual aid—both as a concept and a practice. And I think in our current moment, we understandably, that is viewed through the lens of disaster relief or anything else, but a recalibration of that premise and that concept of continuing to strengthen community by taking care of community, I think, is absolutely crucial to everyone moving forward.

**Koki Mendis:** That's a great point, Ethan. It also makes me think, you know, some—another movement that I think presents a really clear model, for me, is reproductive justice and thinking about reproductive justice as a sort of holistic approach to understanding community as a source of health care, of family thriving, of individual and child thriving, I think, is again another community-based movement and justice framework that has, I think, a lot of applicability for also the defund future. Any last comments before we close? I think this was a fabulous discussion. Luis, go ahead, please.

**Luis A. Fernandez:** Sure. Just to just address your question. You know, it's difficult to imagine a world without policing. It seems seemingly difficult to imagine, but the world of policing is relatively recent in human history. So we don't have to go very far back before. There is no such thing as policing. There is social control and there's all sorts of different things. But policing, as we understand it, is relatively new. Maybe 150 years old. Maybe that, maybe that old. Which means that it can disappear. It can disappear relatively quickly. So, just because we can't necessarily fully imagine it, doesn't necessarily mean that it can't end relatively quickly. That's something I think to remember. It didn't exist at one point. It probably doesn't have to exist into the future, at least not the way that it exists now.

There is a quote that I was trying to find that came out of the *Grapes of Wrath*, that is a really beautiful Steinbeck quote that talks about these individuals that are in the 1930s, living in camps that have moved from Arkansas to California. And one of them just saying, "Hey, can we imagine a world, you know, just a place where there's no police harassing you, and bugging you and kicking you out of places? And so that you can just stay, and live, and experience and be human, and fish and not be bothered by any of that." That's not hard to imagine. And that is actually allotted to a lot of people, and not to others. So the imagination is just, we need to expand it to everybody so that everybody can feel that. That's it.

**Koki Mendis:** I think that's a great point and a great way to close. You know, sort of the idea that—I mean, I think this is to me the benefit of thinking about history, when we think about political action now, right? It's exactly what you just said that policing has not been a part of human communities from the very beginning, but is a more recent construct. And if you do find that quote, please share it with me and I'll be happy to share it with our list so that people can see the language as you describe it.

I really appreciate the three of you, Luis, Felicia, Ethan for this conversation today. I think we did a ton of work with deep context, with political analysis, with inspiring on-the-ground movement work that you all are doing and taking time to think about your roles as individuals doing this work was really interesting for me, and I hope for our audience as well. So I just want to thank the three of you so much for joining us today. And thank you to our audience for joining us for the second webinar in our Subverting State Violence series. As I mentioned up top, we'll be distributing the recording, and transcript of today's webinar by email and on our website next week. So thank you again. It's been a true pleasure to talk with you all.

