



A New Vision for Housing Justice: Solutions to Advance Housing as a Human Right

Monday, October 17, 2022

0:00:17.3 Natalie Williams: Hello, everyone and welcome. Thank you for joining us today for this Wellbeing Blueprint event. Please let us know that you're here via the chat by checking in with your name, your preferred pronouns, and where you're located. We are also joined by our ASL interpreters, and if you need close captioning, please hit the button at the bottom of your screen, and that will allow you to access closed captioning. Today, we're super excited 'cause we're presenting Part Two of a very successful series of discussions on housing justice. This one, it's a timed... This one is titled, It's Time For A New Vision For Housing Justice. We centered this discussion on what matters most to people... Well, to people, their well-being, and we're showcasing innovative solutions to ending homelessness. Our panel is made up of service providers, organizers, and people with lived experience who will share what is working in their communities and ideas for making housing a human right, not a privilege.

0:01:24.2 NW: My name is Natalie Williams, and I am the Director of the Wellbeing Blueprint at Full Frame Initiative, also known by many as FFI. FFI serves as the backbone organization for the Wellbeing Blueprint. At Full Frame Initiative, we are a national social change organization working to make this country where everyone has a fair shot at well-being. The blueprint itself is both a growing community of action, of the public sector leaders, community leaders, business and non-profit leaders, and a road map to drive social change that will move us towards equity, well-being, and justice and bring us closer to our North Star where as a country where everyone has a fair shot at well-being. Why is this important you ask? Because we all don't have a fair shot, because racism, sexism, homophobia, and additional otherings are baked into our systems and our country creating fast tracks to well-being for some and dramatically reducing access for others.

0:02:26.0 NW: The Wellbeing Blueprint work and community focuses on fixing systems, not people. We highlight what matters to people and not what's the matter with people. We are all hardwired for well-being, it's a drive and not a destination. Well-being is not something we do or have, it's how each of us lives our lives. We are individually and collectively healthier, more resilient, more productive when we feel

that we belong, that we can count on others and they on us, that we matter and we have purpose, that we're safe and that things are somewhat predictable, and that our material needs can be met without shame or danger. That's our biological drive for well-being. Housing that is available, safe, stable is one of the many well-being drivers, and as it meets our needs for access to relevant resources, safety and stability.

0:03:22.9 NW: Today is an interactive, innovative discussion that focuses on solutions to make housing a human right. So we're not just talking about the problem and the depth of the problem, we'll hit that, but today we're really talking about, what are some things that we can do? What are some things that are being done? And how can each of us, no matter what issue area that we are concerned about in our country, can we lean into this discussion? This conversation will continue from last week of Part One, where we talked about racial injustice and racial equity as it relates to housing. We will explore the importance today of a few principles in our Wellbeing Blueprint such as principle two, push against harms being concentrated in communities, already facing the greatest adversity. One of those ways we talked about was not holding people's criminal background against them as they seek housing or simply make access to housing meaningful without shaming or creating undue hardship.

0:04:23.0 NW: As well as principle three, build on instead of undermine social connections and social capital in communities. There is so much wealth and value in our communities. If we can look at how to build on those, how to resource those, that's a game changer in this conversation around housing as a human right. The Wellbeing Blueprint is a great place to start if you're curious about principles and recommendations to build a country where everyone has a fair shot. It's an amazing group of recommendations that will spur innovation in your thinking and your activism and in your community. If you would like more information about our Wellbeing Blueprint, please visit our website at wellbeingblueprint.org, where you can download the blueprint, but you can also see all kinds of resources and tools that we have to make your advocacy even more effective or deepen it.

0:05:17.5 NW: Before we dive into our session today, I would like to take a moment for a land acknowledgement. To formally recognize the historical and continuing connection between indigenous people and their native lands, I acknowledge that North Houston, where I live and work, is the traditional territory of the Coahuiltecan, Karankawa, Sana and Ishak (Atakapa) people. I acknowledge this legacy, as well as the ongoing struggle faced by the indigenous communities around Houston, Texas and the country, for recognition and land ownership. We all have a responsibility to consider the legacy of colonialism in our history as a nation. I recognize the privileges we enjoy today because of colonialism and strive to understand and break down the systems that perpetuate these harmful patterns by building and supporting systems that are just.

0:06:09.9 NW: I hope you also today take time to acknowledge the native lands that you stand on, wherever you are joining us from today. I am thrilled to be joined by

amazing leaders today who are working tirelessly to make housing a human right for all people. These leaders are experts in understanding housing, racial justice, racial equity, innovations in housing, policy that impact this discussion that so many of us are seeing needed to be had across the country. I would like first to introduce Star Means, Housing and Loan Specialist, Black Hills Community Loan Fund, welcome Star. Star is part of the Oglala-Lakota Nation, and is in the current housing and loan specialist in the Black Hills Community Loan Fund of the native CDFI in Rapid City, South Dakota. Star comes with us with over eight years of banking and lending experience and over 10 years of working in Native community development, and urban and reservation settings.

0:07:18.5 NW: Star's passionate about sharing her knowledge regarding credit and lending with the people she serves. She is always looking for ways to plant the seeds needed to create a system for successful regenerative native community development. She is a certified credit coach and is certified in facilitating building native communities. We're so grateful to have you here today, Star. Next, I would like to introduce Shay-La Romney, interim CEO and COO of Colorado Village Collaborative. So currently, she's not the interim COO, but she's doing both jobs and just is an amazing leader. Shay-La has worked in operations for several decades, most notably as the Executive Director of The Banneker Foundation, where she developed the foundation's strategic plan and oversaw fundraising, community outreach, marketing and development.

0:08:14.5 NW: The foundation was started Banneker Ventures, a minority-owned construction company where Shay-La was Vice President of operations for seven years. Helping the company grow from 2 to 50 employees in 11 states. Most recently, Shay-La served as the senior regional partnership director for College Track in College Access Program. She served in the Peace Corps for three years in Paraguay and the Dominican Republic, and worked for Child Fund International. Shay-La is an innovative leader that is looking at housing innovation currently in the state of Colorado. We're super excited to have you here, Shay-La.

0:09:00.0 NW: And Billy. So good to see you. So Billy Anfield, is Flip the Script Advocacy Coordinator at Central City Concern. Billy Anfield's lived experience informs his work as the advocacy coordinator for Central City Concern's re-entry program. Flip the Script, which supports recently released Black men and women through access to housing, health care, jobs and peer support. Billy coordinates Flip the Script's advocacy group, a team of program participants and alumni pushing for criminal justice reform and greater equity for people with criminal records. So welcome to all of our panelists. So I just wanna get to jump into questions because we have a lot of exciting information and learnings from these three amazing panelists. Let me start with a question for each of you. And if we could just go first... Let's start with Billy first, and then just go down the line. Please share why you are personally involved in your work around housing, justice and systems change. Where does your commitment and passion for this work come from?

0:10:21.5 Billy Anfield: My passion... Well, good morning to everyone, first of all.

0:10:26.0 NW: Good morning.

0:10:26.4 BA: To the speakers, I'm so honored to be with you all this morning for this cause which I greatly appreciate and love what I'm doing. I've been doing this for 31 years. Where does my passion come from? My passion for this work comes simply from my desire to help my fellow man. Simply put. I have lived experience being homeless or house-less, substance abuse disorder and criminal justice involved. In 1986, I went into a treatment facility, graduated in '91. I've been in recovery for over 30 years. So I wanna continue to help others that experience the same barriers I do. Thank you for letting me share.

0:11:17.9 NW: Thank you Billy. Again, just super grateful to have you here. Shay-La, you're up next.

0:11:25.0 Shay-La Romney: Good afternoon everyone, thank you for this opportunity to be here. I am actually fairly new, opposite to Billy. I'm fairly new to this housing justice space. I have always been committed to working with vulnerable populations, people of color, and people who have been disenfranchised. So I started my career working with youth with drug and alcohol misuse challenges. I also worked with youth involved in the criminal justice system. And then went on to work in international development, working with youth. Focused on youth in communities that were hit by natural and man-made disasters.

0:12:08.5 SR: So I worked with people who were displaced from the tsunami that hit, I think it was 2005. And then also just worked with people internationally with extreme loss and poverty due to things like drought and civil war and that sort of thing. So similarly, I think I have just always focused my career on working where there's need and wanting to create and support people in providing opportunities. My personal family has been hit or struggled with homelessness. There are two people in my family now who currently struggle with homelessness due to both mental health and some drug and alcohol misuse challenges. I also have a family member who died while being unsheltered on the street. So when this opportunity came up with this organization, it just felt like a natural fit based on my desire to work with and support those in need, and also they merge with my operations background.

0:13:27.7 NW: Awesome. Thank you so much. Star, you're up.

0:13:32.1 Star Means: Hi, good afternoon, everybody. I think my passion comes from... I was raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I moved home to the reservation, it'll be 10 years here, coming up. But just moving home and not having anywhere to live. So really through lived experience, I as well have family that have been homeless due to drug and alcoholism. Also like family size and apartments of affordability have been an issue. So being able to afford just a two bedroom when their household size is like a six person. So just lived experience really brought me to this work. And having lived it on the reservation and seeing really the lack of housing there has really pushed my passion to work in housing.

0:14:45.3 NW: That's awesome. So this may get our audience thinking about, "Wow, I really relate to that, or I have questions about that." Know that we will have a time for you all to present your questions, either by raising your hand or checking in via the chat with your questions. If you have a burning question as we move through this and you don't wanna lose it, please put it in the chat and we'll work, do our best to capture that, to make sure that we get it to our panelists so they can share their knowledge in that area. Right now, I would love to talk to the panelists about what they do every day. Can you share a brief overview of your agency, of your advocacy and of your work? What's the mission, the major elements that you focus on in your everyday work? And I will start with Star.

[pause]

0:15:48.0 SM: Sorry, something came up on my screen. Our mission is to create opportunities for our people through education and through lending housing opportunities or business opportunities. Our agency is a native CDFI. So the most important piece to our agency, I would say is the education that we provide, whether that's financial literacy, education on credit and lending, because a lot of times our people fall victim to predatory lending. So we have classes on that. We also teach business and entrepreneurship for our people 'cause a lot of our people are entrepreneurs and work in arts and things like that. And then we also provide lending to them as well. Typical, it's not... A lot of our people come to us not able to get a loan at say a bank. So we're kind of their stepping stone and eventually we would like them to be able to get either banked or a loan from a credit union or bank.

0:17:07.9 NW: Thank you. Star. Shay-La?

0:17:13.7 SR: Yeah, so the Colorado Village Collaborative or CVC exists to bridge the gap between the streets and stable housing. We provide temporary or transitional shelter to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. And we do this through two different programs. We have the Tiny Home Villages, we have two of them. So they are actual, physical structures homes that have electricity. They're a little over a hundred square feet and they have electricity. And they're in an enclosed community that has a community center where is a shared kitchen and full bathrooms. And then we also have our safe outdoor spaces, which grew out of COVID in Colorado, we have a lot of encampments that are just kind of popping up everywhere. And so the safe outdoor spaces are managed camps where we have enclosed space, uniform tents. And so people are still living in tents, but they're also living in a space where they're being connected to services. They have a hot meal every day. They have access to various mental health and other services that we connect them with while they're there.

0:18:46.0 SR: One thing that's unique about what we offer is that people... We're not like the traditional shelter system, so partners or couples can live in our communities. People who have pets can come with their pets. We don't have a curfew necessarily, so there's not a time that people have to be back. So people who are working later

hours are not required to be there at a certain time. And their space is their space. And so they are able to have a place where they can keep their belongings and know that they will be safe. The shelters are... The communities are... I'm sorry, are managed 24 hours a day. So there's always someone there. And we take a harm reduction approach with people that we work with and we also just meet people where they are. So some people come to us and they need help obtaining an ID or a social security card. And others need different services. And so we just kind of meet people where they are and try to provide whatever services that we can.

0:20:07.8 NW: Thank you, Shay-La. Billy?

0:20:10.8 BA: Thank you, Natalie. First, let me kind of paint a picture of Flip the Script reentry program, which is a program that provides a multitude of resources by way of case management, employment specialist, housing specialists, peer mentoring, and advocacy coordinator, which is my responsibility, just wraparound services to individuals being released from prison into Multnomah County here in Oregon. My day-to-day responsibility is to empower the enrollees of Flip the Script with a voice and elevate... To elevate their voice for the purpose of advocating. And to do that, it's my responsibility to develop relationships with our clients in order to allow them an opportunity to talk about what changes they feel, not I feel, but what changes they feel need to happen with the system. And who better to get that information from than those who have been involved with the system. So my day-to-day is having appointments throughout the day with individuals, encouraging them to talk to me about their experience in the criminal justice system, and what changes they feel are necessary to reform.

0:22:00.0 BA: And so that's usually my day-to-day. Now, in addition to being the advocacy coordinator for Flip the Script, I'm also a coordinator for Central City Concerns, the agency public policy team. So I'm a member of the public policy team, so I advocate for both and address our agency's mission, advocacy policy and missions in addition to the program advocacy mission, and that's what I do day-to-day. And then once a month, on the third Saturday of each month, I have an advocacy group meeting, and in that group meeting, we talk about our strategies, and in time we go to Salem and we advocate, we invite legislators to our meeting. We continue to advocate to change the system, and I'm pleased to say that we have changed some bills, we've got some bills passed over the last five to six years. For an example, Measure 11 for juveniles, we've got supervision fees omitted from parole and probation, and we will continue to advocate for change in the systems.

0:23:30.5 NW: Wow, and so I'm hoping that our audience is able to draw some of these connections to why this is innovative discussion, innovative work, whether we talk about people with lived experiences, being able to change policy and advocate for change because of their lived experience through their lens. We talk about opportunities for lending, home ownership, land ownership opportunities, specifically for native and indigenous communities, and we also talk about this new way of a lens of looking at housing, whether it's, "You don't have to be back by 10 o'clock at night, because you've got jobs that you're working on, we're not gonna control every step of

everything that you do, because you're houseless." And so it's just really exciting for me to see and hear all of the great work that's happening. My next question is, so that's looking at the solutions and some solutions that or have been presented. What is... And this is for all of you again, in your opinion, what is the biggest barrier to ending our country's housing crisis? And I will start with you, Billy.

0:24:46.8 BA: Wow. Well, right off the bat, I'm gonna say there's well not enough... We don't have enough housing, I was just reading, I think it was over estimated shortage of seven million housing affordable and available to the lowest income renters, and there is not enough single state or congressional district in the country, not one with enough affordable housing or homes to meet the demand. So we have this great demand, and everyone knows this, that there's just not enough places for people to live. And I attribute that to funding, I think we're... In America, where we live, this is just outrageous that enough money isn't put into developing enough housing for people that live in a free world. So I just think that's one of the biggest barriers is building housing. I mean Central City Concern has three housing buildings coming online here in the next six months. We continue to develop and implement housing in Portland, Oregon, but it's just not enough.

0:26:19.7 NW: Shay-La, what are your thoughts on that question?

0:26:23.5 SR: Yeah, I absolutely agree. I think there are a number of challenges and they're all layered, which together create barriers. And so top of my list is also just housing stock, but then once with... Of the housing that is available, there's little affordable housing for people who fit in that 30% or lower AMI. And so then it becomes the income amount... How much people are being paid... People... Income stability. So people being able to maintain regular work. And then of course, there is racism, institutional racism, that exists and continues to impact people of color, more so than other people.

0:27:22.5 BA: Thank you. Star.

0:27:28.5 SM: I was just trying to think of something that wasn't said, but I have to agree with what everyone else has said. Really livable wages within our communities. I know here in Rapid City, a lot of our jobs, our service industry jobs are rely on the summer tourism of Mount Rushmore and places like that. So I know a lot of our people here, they're not making the livable wage. The rents here are extremely high compared to the wages that are earned in our area.

0:28:13.6 NW: One question that I wanna declare up for the panel was, can you define CDFI?

0:28:20.6 SM: Sure. CDFI is the Community Development Financial Institution. So we are funded from the US Treasury. We are kinda... I always say we play in between between just starting out and going to a bank for financing or anything like that. The most important piece of CDFI is that we educate our clients first on financial literacy, lending, affordability, things like that. That you're not gonna get when you go to a

bank and apply for a loan or a credit card or things like that. Whereas that education piece at a CDFI is what we do first before they're even looked at for a loan. And then credit coaching and things like that also happen for those people.

0:29:26.2 NW: Thank you. A question that I love to ask leaders, because I think it gives our audience an idea about some of the insights into who you are as a leader and some things that you've faced is, what is the hardest thing you've had to face as a leader in the housing justice space? And I will start with you Star.

0:29:53.8 SM: I think for myself, it would be when I was on the reservation getting... 'Cause I was the former... Well, I am the former Director of Housing at Thunder Valley CDC. We built a community from the ground up, starting with 21 single family homes, and then a 12-unit apartment complex there right in the middle of Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. I think getting people like HUD and things... And other big federal agencies to understand what they've brought to our communities for the last 20, 30 years has not worked... It's not working. And for them to just get us to the table and ask us, "What do you think is gonna work for your communities?" Because I think we know our communities well enough to know what's gonna work in our communities rather than somebody coming from DC once or twice a year and then telling us what's gonna work for us.

0:31:20.3 NW: I really love that you highlighted that. Those specific words, which is, we know what is best for our communities. Not having outside people come in and tell us what's best for us. That is something at the Wellbeing Blueprint that we are always talking about and very committed to lifting others. Communities know what's best for them. It's not about outside people coming in and setting rules and regulations and telling you what to do. So thank you for sharing that with us and with our audience. I think it's always poignant for us to be able to deepen our commitment to that as advocates and activists in this work. Shay-La, for you, just would love to pick your brain on what's been the most challenging part of this work or thing you've had to face?

0:32:08.4 SR: Yeah, I think just in general, working in the space of people experiencing homelessness can be challenging because people come to us with many layered traumas. And so the work itself can be really tough and hard, and at the same time rewarding as we can see impact that we're able to have in people's lives. But even with the challenge of the space, period, I think the most challenging that I've experienced is the dehumanization of people experiencing homelessness and the NIMBYism that exists. And so having to justify to people why we exist and why we need to do this work and dealing with battles with every community that we work in and serve because nobody wants it in their neighborhood, right? Everyone wants the problems to be fixed, but they don't want it to exist in their neighborhoods, and so it's just been really... One of my biggest challenges is dealing with that bad NIMBYism.

0:33:29.2 NW: Yeah. When you speak about dehumanizing individuals that are houseless, it just gives me chills to think about that, because I think that's really... There's a lot of individuals who feel invisible in this world being in the space of

looking for housing or being in a space to get stable in that sense, and so I really appreciate you lifting that up. And I know this idea of "Not in my backyard" is prevalent in all the work that we see across the country in many different areas of advocacy and disparities, but housing is a huge one that is prevalent throughout the country. Billy, you're up next.

0:34:14.9 BA: Thank you, Natalie. I go straight to the regulations, the... And I talk talked with the housing specialist about this question of in this space where there's so much inconsistency when it comes to criteria, housing criteria as law. And so management companies use different criteria, especially for justice-involved folks. They might do a background check up to five years, and then we might refer them to another housing opportunity where they do 10 years of background checks, so it's just so much inconsistently across the board, it's just so unfair that there's no regulation on or single standard that applies to people who already have multiple barriers to housing. And what this does is puts them in a position where they don't qualify which pushed them back at risk of going back into the criminal justice system. So it's really simple, where you have all these inconsistencies, there needs to be an overall standard, there needs to be some legislation around how much liberty these management companies have and even private landlords have when they screen people for housing.

0:35:57.1 NW: Billy, last week in our Part One of this series, we really highlighted your organization and your program as a program and an organization that was seeking to really to be that organization that saw people as they are through racial justice and racial equity lens, and the depth that your organization has gone through, through the art on the walls, to the way that you engage men who are entering the program is just amazing. But one question I have is, so as things change and the world is changing and our country's changing, how is your organization changing over the... How has it changed over the years since you've been there, and what are the next steps in its evolution?

0:36:49.7 BA: Well, there's been just such a horrendous change in the growth of the agency. To our listeners, Central City Concerns began as a housing consortium in 1979, so our foundation was built on housing. And then in the '80s, we got into clinical, more clinical work providing acupuncture for substance use disorders and we... I had some numbers here for you, so today we only manage quite a few housing, a lot of housing, and we're now a federally acclaimed healthcare provider. And so we have... We're a qualified healthcare center serving almost 10,000 people in need a year. We have healthcare, conventional health, we have a pharmacy, we do it all when it comes to health, mental health services, so we've grown into this... We're one of the largest healthcare providers in the nation. We have brought back these... Our... We are acclaimed to use best practices in our growth, in our innovative ways. So, yeah, we are now a full-fledged healthcare provider with an array of healthcare services, the whole gamut.

0:39:04.0 BA: I had wrote that our integrated approach to assuring access to housing, healthcare, economic resiliency and social connectiveness. We worked with local and

state and federal governments and community partners to improve both short-term responsiveness and long-term foundational systems change to improve opportunities and health outcomes for people who experience homelessness and poverty, centering disparities felt by black, indigenous, Latinx, and other communities of color. So that's who we are today, and we continue to look for ways to best serve individuals who are experiencing homelessness.

0:39:52.7 NW: Thank you.

0:39:53.7 BA: I hope that answers your question.

0:39:55.5 NW: Yes, absolutely, I really appreciate that. Shay-La, this question is for you. Many on this call may know or may not know that Colorado is experiencing an explosion in people who are houseless or homeless, and that the city and the state is grappling with solutions to being able to mitigate this or change this, and hopefully reimagine what this looks like as a community. And so, what are current policies or barriers to people being unhoused that you see?

0:40:37.9 SR: Some of the barriers that we see are, one, just the criminalization of homelessness. And so people are not allowed to camp, and so we have our encampment sweeps that happen pretty regularly, which is really traumatizing for the folks that are living out there just to be moved abruptly and with no place to go. And so, losing their stuff and having interaction with police and being involved with just that criminal justice system, again, is just something that continues the cycle. Something else that has come up already in this conversation around HUD guidelines and the strict guidelines that they have around Section 8 housing, which of course impacts... Not of course, but it impacts people of color more so than other folks, because people of color are over-policed, right? Another example just with HUD, it's an attempt to help us with our housing vouchers. It's an attempt to help get people housed, and so they have really strict requirements around what needs to exist in potential living spaces.

0:42:11.0 SR: And the intent is to prevent slumlords, prevent people from just providing any sort of housing to vulnerable people, but what it ends up doing is also preventing us a lot of spaces that are available to our folks, maybe older buildings. And so, they may not have current code. They may not have a fan in the bathroom. And so not having a fan in the bathroom could prevent someone from being able to move into that space with the housing voucher. So a policy that is in place in an attempt to help people get housed is also creating some barriers to people being able to get housed. So yeah, those are some of the examples that we're seeing here.

0:43:05.5 NW: Thank you. Star, can you give us an idea of the biggest issues facing native and indigenous communities related to permanent housing in rural communities?

0:43:21.5 SM: When you look at our reservations, the land is probably the number one thing. The land is owned by the tribe, but in trust with the US government. So any

transactions regarding home ownership, regarding building on land or anything like that has to run through the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the tribal land office. So that can take anywhere from six months to, I've heard, two to five years depending upon. So I would say that, and then just the lack of infrastructure. Our infrastructure on reservations is non-existent, so it's totally building that out whenever you're looking to build anything on reservation lands, so of course that costs a lot of money for water, sewer, and electricity. And then right now the primary housing on indigenous communities is low-rent units through HUD.

0:44:40.5 SM: So they come in there and they cluster build certain communities. I know in Pine Ridge, our housing... We are short over 4,000 homes for our adult population. We don't have a homeless problem like on the reservation just because who we are as indigenous people, we tend to take people in. But up here in Rapid City, it's another story. Even though we are on our traditional treaty lands of the Oceti Sakowin people here, there is homeless population here, where they're living along the river and things like that, where you could... I mean, during the winter, it gets hard, you know? But there's different places that have come up with some solutions. Some of them are really supported by the city of Rapid City, and then others, not so much.

0:45:50.3 NW: I really love that you highlighted the idea that in indigenous communities you experience... That communities come together and they start working together to create housing with one another. So, you see them buddying up or coupling up in houses or family-ing up in housing in order to support one another so that nobody's sleeping outside. So that's something a takeaway for me that is really highlighted in what you just said. So, thank you for that.

0:46:26.6 SM: But then that also creates... Sorry. That also creates other issues, right? So we have all this generational housing. Families where the great-grandmother is there with great-grandchildren, and where are those children going to read books, when they're living in a three-bedroom house or things like that? I know I walked into a house where there was 19 people living in a three-bedroom house, and for me I think that's what really grew my passion to work in Indian housing, is because where are them kids going to read a book when it's time for them to go to bed? Is it quiet enough for them to be able to go to bed? And that creates other issues, they're not behaving at school, they're not reading at grade level, things like that. So it's on our reservation communities and we're Indians, man, we shouldn't be living like this. On Pine Ridge, it's like... Some of the conditions our people are living in without water and sewers still in this day and age.

0:47:47.9 BA: Yeah.

0:47:49.9 SM: And we're Indians. This is our land, why are we living like this? And that's what brought me to work in housing is the love I have for my people and really our children.

0:48:12.5 NW: Taking a moment just to be with that and what you said is super powerful. And that's why we are in this conversation around housing as a human right,

not something that just a few get to access. And so, thank you for sharing that. In the blueprint, we really look at access to meaningful resources, as determined by the people in that community and it is not meaningful. Is it true access or not? Let's be real in our advocacy about that, is demanding meaningful resources. So, thank you so much. I'm just... Every time one of you says something it just gives me chills in the work that you're doing and just seeing this and feeling this as something so important and so powerful for our country to address, and for us to reimagine what this looks like.

0:49:10.8 NW: I wanna go to one more question and then I'm gonna open up for a couple more questions, I'm gonna open up to our audience, because we do have some questions for the audience. But one of the important questions that we often ask sometimes seems as a given, but it's always powerful when we get some specifics. How are you... And this is for each of you, how are you centering people in this work? How is your organization, how's your advocacy centering community in this work? And Star, since you were the last one up I'd love to just kinda follow that thread with you.

0:49:48.4 SM: I think for us it's... Even when we look at providing housing 'cause that's what we did at Thunder Valley CDC, we literally built the community. But were our people really ready to live in healthy homes and things like that? And by that I mean, that community even though we had all these goals and things for that community, beautiful community, there were still issues of drug addiction, alcoholism, things like that. So we're really looking at our traumas and bringing in now a healing part to our work, because until we're healed at the core, these issues are still gonna exist. They're still gonna be there. So for us, it's just really looking at our trauma and talking about it and trying to really heal that core of who we are. And a part of that is bringing our people near and towards our culture again, which was stripped from us at one time. And so, I think bringing people to our culture and just having them understand who we are as indigenous people, is gonna bring us a lot more further than anything else.

0:51:37.1 NW: Billy, I'll give it to you next.

0:51:40.3 BA: Okay. Thank you, Natalie. If I read this question correctly, how do you center community and what matters to people in your work? We meet with county, city, and state government on a regular basis in our advocacy work and also individuals who are being released from prison are usually traumatized, but they have this experience of being incarcerated and they don't always know how to advocate for themselves. And so, we have a training component that helps them and enables them to talk and how to talk to legislators. And so, the training teaches them how to talk about their experience, what matters to them, and what the resolve is, and what their message is to city and state government. And so, we have this training to help them say what they wanna say to people who make decisions. And this is real important. So, yes, we meet with community leaders, we send our message to them, but also we have this training component that helps our clients get their message across, and I think that's important.

0:53:23.2 BA: And then, like I said before, we have these advocacy group meetings, the third Saturday of each month to help the collective focus in on what the message is going to be. So, I'm hoping that all of this is making sense there. In our advocacy, individuals coming home, they don't always have the ability or know how to speak to people in power. One of the things we do is we get on a bus and we go to Salem and we talk with legislators, we go up in the state capital, and we talk directly to state representatives and Senators, and we talk to them about the changes we feel are important to us. We also invite them to our advocacy group and they have come, and we do that with county and city and state government. And so this allows individuals in our program to gain the confidence they need to continue to advocate for things that they want to change.

0:54:34.7 NW: Awesome. Thank you. Shay-La?

0:54:40.4 SR: Yes. The Colorado Village Collaborative was founded in collaboration with people who are experiencing homelessness, and so just our very foundation with our values and our mission was established with people who have that experience. We also hire people with the lived experience, so the people on our front lines working directly with our community members have a shared experience which creates more empathy and understanding in what our community members are going through. We also have it at different levels in our leadership. So, we have people on our leadership team who have experienced homelessness as well as representation on our board with people who've experienced it. And so we just make it a point to make sure we have the voices of people who we're here to serve represented so that we just keep that as our focus, right? And we're not coming in kind of dictating how... I mean, we are leading the work, but we're not dictating how it needs to be carried out without hearing the voice of the people that we serve.

0:56:07.3 NW: Awesome. So lots of consistent themes around voice of the people, people with lived experience, advocacy from those with lived experience. Really good information for us. I wanna jump to some questions from our audience 'cause we have quite a few, and so I wanted to get to as many as possible. And so, if one of you feel really compelled to answer this question, please let me know. If each of you wanna give a little piece of it, that would be great as well. So one of the questions is, Department of Labor created the federal bonding program with individual... For individuals with barriers to employment. Do you think a program like this would work for housing? I don't know if there's one of you that wants to take this or if you all have a little bit of how you wanna answer it.

0:57:04.1 BA: Well, my answer would be yes. And I say yes and I'm just speaking for me. And that is, any incentive is better than none. And this sounds like an incentive for landlords to ensure landlords that whatever it is, property damage or whatever they're concerned about would be insured and bonded. So to me it feels like it's insurance to a landlord and would motivate a landlord to have considerations to rent to individuals who have barriers.

0:58:07.2 NW: I love that. Shay-La or Star, any other pieces of that you'd like to talk about?

0:58:19.0 SR: Yeah, I'm not as familiar with how the Federal Bonding program works. And so just basic [chuckle] understanding it does sound like something that could work, but I would need to learn more about it.

0:58:35.4 NW: Great. I think we posted some stuff in the chat, so thank you for posting that and let's look into that. That would be exciting. The next question is a desire to hear from each of you what your dream policy solution would be. If politics was not an obstacle, would you want housing to no longer be commodified? Would you want public housing? They'd love to hear from you, what would that look like from your point of view? Shay-La, you wanna go first?

0:59:19.7 SR: Yeah, I'm thinking about it. [chuckle] So certainly, just housing for all, [laughter] enough housing stock for everyone. Yeah, that's a big one.

0:59:43.7 NW: Billy.

0:59:45.5 BA: I don't know. I think about home ownership when you ask that question. I'm down for home ownership, generational ownership, housing and I think Star mentioned this. I'm reminded of Native Americans who I know and are friends of mine where you have traditional housing that can be handed down through generations. So I'm all for that kind of situation for individuals so that they can have their families throughout have ownership. And I just wish everyone could be in that situation. I know for black people that's something that we'd like to make our goal, is to see generational houses. Even, I think Star mentioned it, purchasing land, developing housing on that land. All that makes sense to me, and that's something I would wish.

1:01:17.2 NW: Love that you pointed out this idea of establishing or accelerating generational wealth. I think that's something really important in this conversation. Star, you're up next.

1:01:33.0 SM: I'd have to agree, creating some sort of plan for home ownership, affordable home ownership. I know here in Rapid City we have a Section 8 program, but because a lot of the renters like Amman, this other housing, we meet about housing issues with various landlords and things like that. And I was just introduced to it a month or two ago, but here in Rapid City we have a Section 8 program, but we have so many people just sitting with the vouchers because the landlords can get more money renting the property because housing is so scarce here. You have people... So those people on Section 8 are literally just sitting there waiting to find someone which there isn't gonna be any because you have all these landlords that are making double what they'd make on Section 8 and then Section 8 is kind of a risk. And then in Rapid City it's like the systemic racism here within, pretty much, every office it's a sad thing. We have a lot of work to do, but I would have to say home ownership and building generational wealth because I know my father, I'm not a first generational home buyer, but my father bought a home and I know what that stability

can do for our families.

1:03:24.2 SM: I know what having the space to be able to read a book in a corner and to be able to go upstairs and just go to bed, just myself in my room, I know what that is like. But do a lot of my people know what that's like? They don't. So I think really caring a home ownership program, creating a home ownership program somehow and it can even be for tiny homes or just simple starter homes, but making them affordable for families. And then of course incorporating the education that comes with that. The financial literacy, the how to take care of a home because lot of our families didn't learn that.

1:04:19.0 NW: Thank you for that. So I wanna shift us to this idea around Medicaid as a funding source for service delivery for people with disabilities, including behavioral health disabilities. In any of the states that you were working in, are you using or are they using Medicaid to pay for supportive housing, supportive employment services, if yes, please describe how it's being used and maybe what it pays for. And so do any of you have experience with this area around Medicaid and paying for supportive housing and housing supports or employment services?

1:05:05.0 BA: Well, currently we're advocating for Medicaid to assist us with getting healthcare services to individuals before their release from prison. So we're advocating for that right now. As far as Medicaid and housing, I don't feel I'm versed enough to answer that question specifically. I do know that Central City Concern has... There's someone that can answer that and it's not me, so I can't. But I will tell you that recently we just signed a letter and that our director... Our CEO just addressed, the President was here in Portland this past weekend just to talk about healthcare in Oregon. But one of the things that we're advocating for, again through Medicare and the, what is this? CMS, the Center for Medicaid Services, is to see if we can get individuals healthcare services before they leave prison. So that's where we are as far as prison goes.

1:06:51.6 NW: So, Billy, what would be the impact, to mean what would you see changed for those of us that may not be in that space or in that conversation for...

1:07:03.4 BA: What would happen... Sorry for cutting you off.

1:07:05.0 NW: No.

1:07:06.7 BA: What we're seeing is individuals are being released with, on average, 30 days of medicine of prescription. Prescribed medication. That's not enough time. So with 30 days, there's so much work to be done up front that they run out of medication before the stabilization. And so now they're housed in transitional housing, perhaps, and we're addressing their needs and they run out of their medicine. And we find them without their medication, there's a disconnect. And so there's a bridge that needs to be made where they receive their medicine inside and there needs to be a connection when they get out so that they have a provider to walk right into when they're released. They go into mental health provider, medication, so there's no gap

there. Right now this gap allows them to... Without their medication, they're not stable. Just face reality. And so this just spins them back into a mental health situation without any medicine.

1:09:00.1 BA: That's our experience. And so we house them like I said, and we're doing intakes and we're doing assessment. We ask them to do job search or we try to get their social security allotment and we start our process, we wrap these services around them. And we know some of us are not clinical, so Flip the Script is not a clinical program. And so as we wrap case management, housing, employment, and those resources around them, sometimes we find them lost. And when we find them, they're lost and we find out at that point that is because they don't have their medication. And then we have to refer them to a provider that does provide their medication. So there's a gap and it's real and we need to close that.

1:10:03.6 NW: Thank you for that. Do any of you ever have an opportunity or have had an opportunity to speak with people from HUD to have a conversation similar to this? Has that been something that you all have been able to do?

1:10:21.7 BA: Yeah. There was a homeless conference a year ago that I went to and I sat in and HUD was there. Also, recently there was a letter that went out in October from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing to HUD, and it talks right to safe, affordable, accessible housing being the foundation on which we build our lives, but many people with convictions and arrest records are routinely denied. And it goes on to bullet a whole array of things that HUD should take under consideration. So, yes to your question, HUD has been approached through letters and conferences, but nothing has happened yet. But these recommendations are very serious. And I just got this letter today and they include everything from conducting individualized assessments, prohibiting some things, expanding definitions of homelessness, limited denials related to illicit drug use, allowing people on parole and probation or completing the diversion programs to live in public housing, there's just three pages of things recommended to HUD to take under consideration.

1:12:19.4 NW: Shay-La, you mentioned hiring, employing people with lived experience, one of the questions from the audience is, how have you or what is an effective way to stipend people with lived experience of homelessness that does not push them off the benefit cliff. If you can't use cash in the system, what other forms of compensation have you seen or maybe experimented with?

1:12:48.4 SR: So when I read that question, I thought it was related to the people we serve, not necessarily the people that we employ, and so we were to have a decent living wage for our employees, we've over the years looked to increase that and just gave increases this year. We, through our benefits, cover 100% of premium costs for our employees, all of our employees, so we're doing what we can. We are a non-profit, but we're doing what we can internally to try to create decent living wages for everyone in terms of stipend, and we haven't worked with providing stipends or cash to employees, and we don't do that with our community members either. So we don't have that experience.

1:14:00.4 NW: Billy or Star, any of those questions that you wanna answer?

1:14:06.9 BA: Repeat that question, I was reading. Sorry about that.

1:14:10.2 NW: No, it's really about, have you come up with effective ways to stipend people with lived experience of homelessness that does not push people off of the benefit cliff?

1:14:25.2 BA: No, that's real sensitive because the last thing you wanna do is do something to affect someone's compensation or allotment through their disability, I think that's what the question is. It sounds like. I don't know, we've used gift certificates and gift cards that's pretty much yet theirs, but I don't know the answer to that one, because any income over the cap is gonna be penalized, so I don't have the answer to that one.

1:15:14.9 NW: It sounds like there's a few things that are opportunities for our community and our blueprint signers and the people on this call to investigate and to look for, and so really excited about those and great questions. Keep them coming if you have more. I'm gonna jump to a couple other questions that we have prepared and just to kinda dig into next steps.

1:15:45.2 NW: So did you see advancements during the pandemic that made a difference in getting people housed? One of the things that we know is that the pandemic offered some opportunities for people to see things differently or to engage them in different ways or to provide different opportunities for engagement for people because it seemed as if most people were in a state of crisis. Is there anything that came out from that that you would love to see continue or that you saw that really helped during that time with people that were un-housed? Star, I'll jump to you.

1:16:33.4 SM: Our community here in Rapid City, and this is before I moved up here, but they created Camp Mni Luzahan, which is a homeless camp because the police were bothering the camps along the creek area that we have here. This organization and just community members went on some purchased land right outside the city, and they would use vans to bring the homeless people, and they housed them in Teepees all winter long, which was beautiful to see. And the community just kinda came together and took care of all the unhoused relatives, and I think it came about after a death in our community, and so that camp was created, and I know the impact it had on some people, the drugs and alcohol, they would ask that you not bring it there, but a lot of the shelters here in Rapid City won't take you if you're intoxicated, they run warrant checks, things like that.

1:18:07.0 SM: So this camp was created for our un-housed relatives, and it was just a really beautiful thing as you saw our community come together, and they didn't turn anyone away, you didn't have to be indigenous or anything like that, but our community really came together and fed them every single day. The camp, they had

Teepees up in the winter, fires going. It was pretty well... Like they were warm. It was pretty well taken care of place and our organization here NDN Collective, I think kinda helped with the majority of the financing for that, but it was a beautiful sight and beautiful place for our un-housed relatives during that time.

1:19:04.3 NW: Thank you. Shay-La.

1:19:08.8 SR: The program that we run, the Safe Outdoor Spaces, is something that came out of the pandemic, and it sounds very similar to the community that Star just talked about, just in that they were created as individualized sheltering options for people who were living on the street and so it provided a space for them, like I said, to be safe, to be able to store their belongings, to be able to get a hot meal every day and to be able to get access to services. We are now looking at how we can continue this model, and one thing that we've been exploring, our Pallet Shelters, which are hard surface shelters that tried a little more dignity, they're a little more expensive, but they are also just another option for warmth and security that are provided. Another thing that we saw come out of the pandemic was motels being changed to shelters, and so people being able to stay in motels during that time. A lot of them have started to close as sheltering options, but in some areas we're still looking at how to get those options.

1:20:41.6 NW: Thank you. Billy.

1:20:44.2 BA: Yes, Natalie. We began with rent assistance, the federal government providing rent assistance to individuals and also the moratorium where landlords could not evict individuals from their housing. That was another big win. Also, the majority of our customers are on supervision, so they're on parole, and usually that requires them to come into the office where their supervisor is, but during the pandemic they were able to text or call their supervisor and report remotely, and this option is being considered as a standard now, whereby people don't have to leave their job, get on a bus, 'cause not everybody has a car, and get on a bus that takes... Sometimes they spend more time traveling to the office than they do actually in the office, so this remote checking in is being considered. And then telehealth, which allows our customers to talk over the phone with their healthcare provider is something that we have made a standard within our agency as well. So those are a few of the things that we experienced during the pandemic, and a couple of those we have made operational.

1:22:38.2 NW: That is wonderful to hear and just to really appreciate all of the innovations that did happen and the ways that we're trying to continue those innovations. So we're at that place in our event that we just really want you to tell us about... To kinda give us your idea of this call to action, and how this is framed is at the Wellbeing Blueprint, we talk about people spanning boundaries across fields, issue areas and systems to really bring about transformative change in this idea that we spoke about earlier, which is creating a country where everyone has a fair shot at well-being. If people are or not at, or they are directly working with housing justice, in the housing justice space, directly or indirectly, what is the call to action? How would

you tell them to engage, to be involved? And this is a question that I would really appreciate if each one of you could answer, so in your opinion, what does it look like for people to lean into this? Small or big, policy or not, what does this look like? And I'll start with you, Shay-La.

1:23:55.1 SR: I'm thinking about a couple of things. One is just the collaboration across different sectors. And so while not everyone has to work in housing justice space, but if you're working in mental health care, if you're working in drug and alcohol misuse area, if you're working in housing, there's just a way to figure out how the different sectors can come together. I'm also thinking about just in general, what I spoke about earlier the NIMBYism, just having compassion and understanding of people's varying experiences. That's kind of where it starts 'cause so many people... I think there's a fear of the unknown, and so a lot of people don't necessarily understand homelessness as a whole, and all the things that contribute to it and the different ways in which it shows up. I have talked a lot about unsheltered or un-housed homelessness, and that's who we focus on, but when you have someone who's living on someone else's couch, they are also experiencing homelessness, just a different form of it. And so just having some better understanding and compassion for people experiencing homelessness is just like a basic start in encouraging that among... I imagine that people on this call have that basic, but encouraging other people and understanding in other people. And then just figuring out ways how the different sectors can kind of come together.

1:25:52.0 NW: Thank you. Star. Oh, you're on mute, Star.

1:26:03.7 SM: Okay. I just have a couple of things. I think really being an advocate for our people or for our unhoused people or for, even the ones, like she said, we see homelessness in different ways on our reservations because we don't have... We don't just let people be out on the street. So being a good advocate, building partnerships with those that are involved with housing justice, hopefully becoming a good advocate to where you're able to help with policies that are really gonna create the change needed for our people. And also, getting involved in the grassroots efforts that go on, whether it's making a meal for them and bringing it down there and dropping it off. Shaking their hand, you just don't know what that's gonna do to a person, and you don't know when the last time they had a warm bowl of soup when they're out there in the cold. So just getting involved in the grassroots efforts, I think, that are going on in our communities are really, really important.

1:27:48.7 NW: Thank you, Star. Billy?

1:27:51.3 BA: So is the question how to get people to stay engaged and involved?

1:27:58.0 NW: Yeah. It's really your call to action for people on this call. What can they do to make a difference?

1:28:10.1 BA: We have to understand the problem we have here as a nation, and you have to understand your responsibility, just like I have to understand my responsibility

to the cause. You all have and we all have a responsibility. And the way I look at this is, we have to continue this kind of conversation and these forums just like this one, to talk about... 'Cause this is not just about housing, once someone is in housing, they're gonna need resources to sustain the housing. So the conversation goes on and on and on. You can't just put someone in a house that has barriers and just expect them to sustain themselves. So we need to have that conversation as well. But we do have a responsibility, and that goes without saying. And so if you feel that responsibility and you want to help, you will certainly be engaged and get engaged with this movement. And that's what I have to say.

1:29:26.4 NW: Thank you. Right on time. So we have a specific way for you to engage, Sasha, if you could just pull up the slides, here at the Wellbeing Blueprint in order to get engaged. And super excited that y'all are here at the... We ask you to join us. Join us in building a country where everyone has a fair shot at well-being, where we have conversations like this, where we're amplifying the work, where you have an opportunity to build your national network with leaders like on this panel and beyond. That you have opportunity to deepen your learning and bring about change, and to also lean in and help us understand what your advocacy is doing. And so we ask that you... Next slide, please. That you join us. We've created these QR codes. If you want to become a signer, which is an amazing opportunity to join us and get involved in multiple ways, check out this QR code and sign on to the Wellbeing Blueprint. If you'd like to connect with other leaders like who you heard today on our bi-weekly discussions, QR code that. Or if you'd like to just see what our innovations are on our Wellbeing Blueprint and action map to see other organizations that are doing great work, you can also see that here today. And so please join us.

1:30:53.5 NW: Thank you so much for this event. Thank you to our amazing panelists, each and every one of you taking time out of your busy days and your advocacies to deepen our learning and to connect us all to this idea that housing is a human right. And to help us humanize and fight the dehumanization of people that are struggling with houselessness right now. We value you more than you know, and we're excited to be part of this journey along with you and each one of your agencies. And thank you to all of our participants who signed on today, who leaned into this discussion, who asked questions, and who are now taking this work back to your communities and building. We appreciate you, and we look forward to seeing you at our next event. Have an amazing day.

1:31:47.1 BA: Thank you.

1:31:50.3 SM: Thank you.