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ALAN: Hi, everyone. You're listening to the Talks at Google podcast. Where great minds meet. I'm Alan, and I'm back to bring you this week's episode. Talks at Google brings the world's most influential thinkers, creators, makers, and doers all to one place. Every episode of this podcast is taken from a video that can be seen at youtube.com/talksatgoogle. DeRay McKesson is a civil rights activist, community organizer, and the host of Crooked Media's podcast Pod Save the People. He started his career as an educator and came to prominence for his role in documenting the Ferguson protests and the movement they birthed, and for publicly advocating for justice, and accountability for the victims of the police violence, in addition to the end of mass incarceration. DeRay is also the cofounder of Campaign Zero, a policy platform to end police violence, and OurStates.org. This event is moderated by Bonita Stewart, VP, Global Partnerships and William Floyd, Public Policy and Government Relations Senior Manager.

00:01:04
Here is DeRay McKesson. Get educated. Get engaged. Converting empathy into action.

[applause]

BONITA STEWART: Well, thank you, William, for just the introduction to this very special talk that we have this afternoon. I'm personally excited to sit next to DeRay, because he's just had such an impact, in one way or another, in all of our lives. So DeRay, let's just start. You've had an incredible personal journey. You follow things that you're most passionate about. So I saw where you actually were in the public school system.

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Human resources official there, but tell us about your personal journey. And you talked about, you know, being born in Baltimore, spending time in Minnesota, but how did you follow all of these passions? How did you set out on this path?

DERAY MCKESSON: So I'll start by saying it's an honor to be here. It's great to be here. It's always a joy to talk about this work. I do wish though that we didn't have to spend so much time fighting systems infrastructures that were killing us, and we could go do the cool things that, like, make us sort of joyous about the world, so I'm mindful of that. I think about this. You know, I was in student government, like, my whole childhood, and that was really important to me. Both of my parents were addicted to drugs. My mother left when I was 3, and she came back when I was 30. I just turned 33. This is my Jesus year, which is like--

WILLIAM FLOYD: Hey, man.

DERAY MCKESSON: My mother left, yeah, so she just came back a couple of years ago. Three years ago, and my father, like, got clean when I was around 3-4, and I think about that, because in so many ways, I grew up in, like, a community of recovery.

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Like, I grew up seeing people put their lives back together in ways that they didn't always think was possible and, like, that was childhood for me. Like, I remember coming down from my bedroom one day, and I see this guy sitting on the couch. And I'm like, "He looks really familiar," and it was one of my sister's friends. And I'm like, "Why is he in our house? Like, why is he on the couch?" And he was recovering, and my father was, like, counseling him through recovery, and, like, that was--I have so many memories of that. And I think about that all the time, because, like, I know what it's like to see communities, like, sort of break and come back together. And I think about sort of this work in resistance is like seeing things break and believing that they can come back together. But I taught, and teaching was probably like the single coolest, most important, like, magical thing I've

ever done. I taught sixth grade math here, in East New York, Brooklyn. And sixth grade is beautiful. Seventh grade is puberty and deodorant, but sixth grade is, like, [laughter] still a lot of magic. And if you never have been in a group of kids who don't know they need deodorant, that is seventh grade. Sixth grade is, like, a lot of joy. And I'll never forget.

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One day, I was like--you know, I taught 69 to 120-minute classes which is, like, a long time for 11-year-old to do anything, let alone math. And they were like, "Can we go to gym early?" And I'm like, "Absolutely. You can go to gym early. I'm tired of you. You're tired of me. Like, we've been together for a long time. First, second, third, fifth, and seventh period, this one class, so I let them go, and they come back really quickly. And they're, like, back in my classroom. I'm like, "Why are you back so quick?" And I realize that they're in love with the idea of gym more than the work of gym. And I say that, because in moments like this, I think people are more in love with the idea of resistance than the work of resistance. And the question for me now, like, four years after we were in the streets initially, in Ferguson, it's like, "What does the work look like?" Like, how do we use spaces like this, if we ever are gonna just keep talking about it, to actually, like, force people to engage in the work and not just the conversation of these things? So I got into it because my friend got killed. I was on my couch, and I was like, "This is crazy." So I'm gonna go, and the least I can do is just, like, go for the weekend.

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I was like, "I'm gonna go for Saturday and Sunday," and I went. And the second, like, I was in St. Louis was the first thing I got tear-gassed, and I was like, "This is wild. I'll do whatever I can to make sure that nobody else has to experience this." So I quit and did all these other things. I didn't hide and say, "Now I'm like that was sort of like--what was I doing?" But I did it, and so many other people did it. And I'm proud that I was not the only person. There were so many incredible in St. Louis who, like, did whatever they could to make a difference and, like, continue to do that work.

WILLIAM FLOYD: As the father of a 12-year-old, I can attest yes. Deodorant is a big deal.

DERAY MCKESSON: It's real.

WILLIAM FLOYD: It's real. It's a real thing.

DERAY MCKESSON: Like, you don't want to hurt their feelings, so you're like, "Hey, that smell." You're like, "This is freakish for class." You're like--

WILLIAM FLOYD: Exactly. I have to stand over 'em in the bathroom like, "Put it on there right now." But you mentioned a little earlier about your personal experience with communities breaking and re-knitting them together. How does technology play a role in that, from your point of view?

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DERAY MCKESSON: So two things. One is, like, sort of that the platforms. The second is, like, the people, like you all who make these things real. When I think about, you know, Twitter, if not for Twitter, Missouri would have tried to convince you that we didn't exist. Like literally, if we had not been able to tell our own stories in realtime, like they would have been like, "Those people aren't really out there." And you're like, "Are you kidding?" You know, people forget that, in 2014, in August, September, and October of 2014, it was illegal to stand still in St. Louis. So if you saw us marching, it wasn't that marching was, like, a really cool thing to do. It was the five second rule. So if you sit still for more than five seconds, you're arrested. And like, we remember that, because that was crazy to us, and that was real. And we sort of just adjusted, and we sued them, and it got deemed unconstitutional. But like, if not for--I remember my tweet about the five-second rule was the first public, recorded instance of the rule. So when we sued them, like, I had to testify. And

literally the judge is like, "What is Twitter?" And I'm like--he's like, "What is a tweet?" And like, we're literally recounting, like, my tweet thread about the five-second rule. And like, if not for social media, we just wouldn't have been able to do that.

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Jack, the CEO of Twitter, is a friend, and I remember getting a call from him being like, "DeRay, we're gonna buy this company that, like, is called Periscope, because we don't have any"--like, I remember that call, but, like, that was late. You know what I mean? Like, we'd already been in the--all we could use is Vine, you know. So in the beginning, we literally were like--we'd record a video on our iPhones. Then we'd go run off to the side, upload it in Vine and, like, scroll through trying to find the best six seconds, and then post it online. Like, that was, like, our strategy to do, because that was--there was no Twitter video. There was no Facebook Live. There was no YouTube streaming. Like, those things didn't exist back then.

WILLIAM FLOYD: Uh-uh.

DERAY MCKESSON: And there are critics of us who will say things like, "You chased the cameras." And we're like, "We were the cameras." You know what I mean? Like, we were it. You know, we were the people telling the truth. The second part if this though is, like, the people in places like this, and you know, I'm always mindful that, like, people made these things. Like, these things don't just, like, emerge out of thin air right? And what I found, over four years, is that when we think about leaders, we often get leaders, whether they're leaders in the country--not this guy, but, like, other people or leaders of companies.

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And they do things, like, where everybody's CEO right? Like, we don't just lead the black people or the black and brown people. Like, they use sort of that language, as if that's supposed to be some inclusive statement. But the reality would be, if you were everybody's CEO you would be, like, marshalling and marching white people to a vision of equity and justice, because, like, that would be what leadership looks like right.

WILLIAM FLOYD: Right.

DERAY MCKESSON: And, like, what you find in places that--I'm definitely seeing tech companies, like, hide behind this vision of inclusivity that is actually, like, not about equity. It's not about justice, but it's this idea that tech is sort of neutral. And you're like, "None of this stuff is neutral," right? So I worry about what that looks like in companies, like, across the tech community. And the second is, like, what is people's proximity to these issues? So you see a lot of companies who are like, "We care." Da-da-da. And it's like there are a lot of people who think that the country got bad with the Muslim ban, right, and, like, the country's been bad way before them. The Muslim ban is bad. That is not the beginning of the bad though right?

WILLIAM FLOYD: Yep.

DERAY MCKESSON: Or it takes, like, a tragedy hitting one set of employees for people to be like, "Oh, my God. The country."

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And you're like, "How close are you to these issues that you say you care about every day?" And that we actually could be using tech to do something really interesting and cool about, and, like, I worry about what that looks like. We know, you know, as somebody who's not in tech, I know what the issues are. I want to believe that if people who knew how to, like, do something in a tech space just knew the issues better, they'd be able to help us brainstorm. You know, so you think about

what does it mean, in California, that 1 in 11 homicides is committed by an officer? Or 1/3 of other people killed by a stranger in this country is actually killed by a police officer. Like, those are sort of wild things, you know? And want to believe that, like, we can figure out how to capture data better, or, like, we can figure out how to visualize this stuff better. That if you get killed in this country, and a newspaper doesn't write about you, you literally are not in the data set. Like, you don't exist. So any number you've ever heard about police violence comes from the aggregate of newspaper reports. There are two years in Florida recently that they reported no killings by police. You're like, "Well, we know that's not true." You know what I mean? Like, that's just a lie, so it's like how do we help people like you get close enough to the issues, so you can help us brainstorm, like, real systemic things to do something about it?

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BONITA STEWART: So it's interesting when you think about the role of technology. My husband always jokes. He said, "Who would have thought Steve Jobs--if he only knew that he was the original, you know, purveyor of justice?" Because with the invention of the mobile--the iPhone was a real start. And then aggregating all of the apps, such as Twitter, and Instagram, and YouTube, and you know, all of this, in terms of technology, and putting it in the hands of people. You talk a little bit about the truth, and there's different sides of it. One, in terms of now everyone is carrying the device. You know, the device that can either speak to truth or, in some cases, one of the areas that we're focused on, which we announced with the Google News initiative, is around media literacy, so that people understand what is the truth? You know, being a big supporter of quality journalism.

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So how are you thinking about technology and driving the truth, and what role could, quite frankly, could we play, as a technology company, because now there's things that are popping up, because people have the devices. And we could probably turn on the news tonight, and there will be some story about someone that has been recorded, and they're trying to explain the truth. And I do think, particularly with underrepresented minorities, quite frankly, that becomes, for us, a source of truth. And so how are you thinking about the literacy, the truth, and then the technology, all combined?

DERAY MCKESSON: Yeah, so we never want to confuse, like, awareness for action right. That like, understanding the problem is, like, a part of the work, and, like, seeing that the world is screwed up, like, has to be the first step. There are some people who think that that is, like, the whole equation though, right, and like, we just know that that is not true.

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Especially four years later that, like, and you see another video of the police killing somebody. If you're shocked now, it's sort of like, "Where were you?" Right? Like, that is not necessarily a special thing, in this moment. What we'd also say though is that there are people who have yet to understand that this is not a system of chances. This is not a system of constants. That this is a system of choices. The best thing that we can do is help people, like, see what those choices were that have been made before, to set us up to make a different set of choices. Like, that is what we think is really important, so when you think about the police, as an example, four years ago I would have been like, "It's a screwed-up system with bad people making bad decisions." Now I'm like, "The game is just rigged," right? So you look at California. California has a law that says any investigation of an officer that lasts more than a year can never result in discipline, regardless of the outcome. That just, like, doesn't make--that's just, like, a different set of rules. In Cleveland, disciplinary records are destroyed after 60 days. After one year. A different set of rules where, like, we're just not actually playing the same game. And what we've started to do is, like, help people figure out like, "Here is a game that's being played."

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I think that's one of the things that the right does very well. They are very quiet about it, but they just change, like, the playing field. We have been seduced to believe that, like, the best argument wins, and when you make, like, the best case, and da-da. And like, the best argument doesn't win. The argument that's, like, beat into people's head over and over--that is what wins. I think that we've forgotten how to do that sometimes, so when I think about, like, the role of tech I think there's some huge data things that, like, people could be working on. So like, you probably heard people talk about bail reform and, like, all this stuff with bail.

WILLIAM FLOYD: Yep.

DERAY MCKESSON: There's actually, like, very little data about bail. It just, like, doesn't exist. So we know that when people go before the bail judge, or the bond hearing, whatever, that, like, there's a stenographer taking down everything, but that's the only place that, like, the bail amounts are recorded. So like, you've never seen a study on, like, bail by judge. You've never seen a study on bail by any demographic indicator, 'cause, like, the data just doesn't--there is no data, right, so there's a ton of stuff where, like, there's just, like, not data, but we know these issues are things. If I asked you right now like, "What's a felony?" What would you say?

WILLIAM FLOYD: What's the technical definition of a...

DERAY MCKESSON: Like give me...

WILLIAM FLOYD: Felony?

DERAY MCKESSON: An example of a felony.

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WILLIAM FLOYD: Breaking in and entering.

DERAY MCKESSON: Breaking and entering.

WILLIAM FLOYD: Stealing a car.

DERAY MCKESSON: Give me--stealing a car. So like that, to a certain extent. What about you?

BONITA STEWART: If you were--

DERAY MCKESSON: Any felony.

BONITA STEWART: Robbing a bank.

DERAY MCKESSON: Robbing a bank right. Robbing a bank. When you ask most people, "What's a felony?" They say these, like, big things right. They're like, "Blowing up a building. Killing ten people. Robbing a bank." In Virginia, up until this year, theft over $200 was a felony. In Florida, to this day, theft over $300 is a felony. In both of those states, when you become a felon you permanently lose the right to vote.

BONITA STEWART: Yeah.

DERAY MCKESSON: That is wild. Do you know what I mean?

WILLIAM FLOYD: Mm-hmm.

DERAY MCKESSON: So when people, like--we've been conditioned to think about felons as people who have, like, killed ten people, smiled, and taken a picture right? Like, that is like how you--that's, like, what you think about. And you're like--a felon is stealing, like, a Chromebook. An iPod. Like, that is how people are being disenfranchised, like, at scale. Do you know what I mean? But that's actually not the story that you hear the most.

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In Oklahoma, up until 2001, theft over $50 was a felony, so the way that we've been conditioned to think about these problems is, like, a real issue. So what we would say is that, like, people in tech, people who know how to look at aggregate data, like, the more that we can uncover and unearth these things and visualize them in a way that helps people realize that the only radical thing is the fact that we are talking about it right? Like, the fact that we're fighting the system is not the radical piece. The fact that we have to fight the system is, like, the crazy, radical thing, in the first place. But there are all these, like, minor things that people just don't know. The last thing I'll say is how many people are on a jury? This is not a trick question.

WILLIAM FLOYD: I have been.

DERAY MCKESSON: How many people?

WILLIAM FLOYD: Oh, how many?

DERAY MCKESSON: 12.

WILLIAM FLOYD: 12.

DERAY MCKESSON: He's like, "I was like"--yes.

BONITA STEWART: It's like "12 Angry Men".

DERAY MCKESSON: Yes. Yeah, yeah.

WILLIAM FLOYD: Very angry.

DERAY MCKESSON: There are two states in the country where it only takes 10 of the 12 people to convict you of a felony, so in Louisiana, you can get convicted with life without the possibility of parole. A 10-2 vote which is so wild. In Louisiana, it's directly tied to integration that when black people started sitting on juries they literally held a constitutional convention so they could change the threshold, so that black people would never be able to lower the conviction rate.

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And in Oregon--it's Louisiana and Oregon--and Oregon was about Jews, 'cause Oregon is, you know, is the only state that banned black people from living in the state. So they had already discriminated against us, and juries weren't the best way to do it, but they did it for Jews. And you're like, "That is nuts." So to this day, like, in Louisiana right now--and hopefully it'll get changed in November, because it'll be up on the ballet. Like, it only takes ten people. And I only found out 'cause I did a six-hour tour of Angola, which is the biggest prison complex in the country. And I was asking, like, one of the inmates like, "What don't I know?" And he was like, "You probably don't know that it only takes ten people to send us here." You're like, "That is nuts," you know? Like, there are these structural things that don't make the public conversation, but actually are bringing more people into the net, and we don't talk about those. And like, we try and spend more time on those things now than the stuff that you see every day in the newspaper.

WILLIAM FLOYD: Your comment about awareness and action--I mean our forum today is actually to tie those two together, because you're right.

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Education and awareness--like, we're beyond that, and I speak personally and--I think for many Googlers in the room. They're looking for ways to connect and to drive their awareness and, you know, their outrage into something that's very constructive. Case in point. You raised the thing about technology and data. I think one of the organizations that's here today that's tabling outside, after our talks, is the Vera Institute of Justice.

DERAY MCKESSON: Yeah. We love Vera.

WILLIAM FLOYD: Yeah. I sit on the board of the Vera Institute of Justice, and Google is partnering with Vera to do a project to illuminate and bring out how mass incarceration actually is being driven by smaller, regional, smaller jurisdictions around the country, not the big cities. Actually, big cities are doing a lot, either because they got woke, or they realized they don't have the money to do it, to de-emphasize incarceration.

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It's actually the smaller jurisdictions around the country, mostly in red states and rural areas, that in the aggregate is driving up mass incarceration. And our thought is like, "Let's get the data out there." Let's go out and educate politicians and those folks who live in those communities on how they're actually contributing to this overall, you know, emphasis on incarceration. Just wanted to make that plug, but I did want to ask you a question though about stories and surfacing stories. What you do in your podcast, to Bonita's point about the media literacy. I think it's--there's a role there, of surfacing new stories that are actually kind of getting suppressed, because of, you know, the deluge of what we're reading in the newspapers that are important.

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Can you tell us a little bit about that? Like some stories that you've recently come across.

DERAY MCKESSON: Yeah, so the podcast is called Pod Save the People. Shoutout to Sam. Sam's on the podcast too. Sam's here. Love Sam.

WILLIAM FLOYD: Hey, Sam.

DERAY MCKESSON: So when I started the podcast a year ago one of the first had to be about, like, all the news you don't know that's really important. You're gonna hear about Trump whether you want to or not, so we didn't feel like we needed to spend a whole lot of time on him, 'cause you know, you're gonna hear him anyway. So we do--and, like, there are some pieces of news--the way it works, the four of us--everybody picks their piece of news every week. They put it in the group chat, and we don't hear your argument about the news, until we record. So it's sort of like we're learning when you say it, and there are some things--like, there was a study that says that it's, like, pushing back on the idea that people get more conservative as they get older. And what the study is saying is that, like, poor people and people of color actually just never get older. So it's not that people are getting more conservative. It's that, like, some people just never have the luxury of getting old, and you're like, "I hadn't thought about that," right? Like, that's really interesting.

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Or on the news tomorrow, you probably heard about the straw ban in Seattle as, like, people talk about it as, like, a really important thing for the environment. The disability community is really frustrated, because they're like, "There are people with disabilities who need straws," right. And like, when you have now made straws illegal, like, what happens for people who can't use their

hands, for people who need disposable straws? Like, a permanent straw is not actually the most hygienic for a set of people, so I try to look at, like, these issues that people take for granted and look at them from a different angle. The straw story is really interesting, too, because it's all predicated on this study that says that we use 500 million straws a day. When you ask about the study, the study comes from a nine-year-old who did a phone survey. And I'm like that literally is, like, the source of the study. So like, Snopes and everybody has, like, tried to figure out, like, what's the source of the study? And the guy's like, "I did it when I was nine." And he's, like, 16 now. People are like--but, like, every major news organization has like cited the study as, like, 500 million straws a day. And you're like, "Eh, like, was it?" Like, it was a science fair project.

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You know, like, "What? Where'd the straw study come from?" So we try and look at these issues from, like, a different angle. Hopefully setting listeners up with, like, a different set of skills, to be able to, like, ask questions and think about things in a way they might not have otherwise. And then we give interviews, so tomorrow is Ocasio-Cortez, who is a big deal here, in New York, and across the country. And she was, like, even more impressive in person. And we're gonna have to edit some of the interview, 'cause it was an hour, and the whole podcast is an hour. But I asked her this question about her mom. I'm like, "Was your mom there, on election day?" She's like, "Yeah. My mom was there," and there wasn't really a story about election night. She was like, "My mom stayed the next day," and she was like, "I was doing all this media, and, like, it is more media than I've ever done, so I wasn't at the house." And she's like, "My mom calls, and it's like, 'hey, like, "The New York Post" just came by.'" And she's like, "Okay, how was it?" She was like, "Oh, chill interview. Not a big deal, da-da-da." And she's like, okay, next day front page of the "Post" it's like, "Ocasio-Cortez running for President." And she's like, "Mom, what did you say to them?"

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And she's like, "I told them my baby could be president one day." She's like, "Never, ever talk to the press. You're, like, banned, and people--just tell them I'm not home," and you're like--she was actually--really she had other things to say about, like, politics, but that was, like, such a great--she was, like, so great with it. But it was this conversation, when I started the podcast, about how do we, like, invite people into conversations that they might not be a part of before? So Ocasio-Cortez. We had Snowden on, like, really early. He was, like, the third interview I did, to talk about the intersection of, like, security and race, right, 'cause Snowden doesn't really talk about race. But wanted to create a space where we could talk about, like, what race looks like in the security conversation and those sort of things. I want it to be a home in a place, like, led by activists where, like, we can just sort of say what we want that we believe is true.

BONITA STEWART: We're gonna--you have questions. This is an opportunity to start lining up, and then we have a few more questions for DeRay. I want to just circle back on the law enforcement. We talked about podcasts, and audio, and the importance of audio.

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But now, technology is coming to police enforcement. How do you think, from an audio perspective and technology, the fact that this is now being captured with video, there's audio--what is your view of the technology in the law enforcement and how you think it will be used or not used or the consequences we were talking earlier about? Are there consequences, you know, based on now having actual proof?

DERAY MCKESSON: Yeah, so I think technology has, like, been in policing, for better or for worse, for a long time right. I think body cameras are, like, the newest iteration that most people have public language about. When the Obama administration was still in play, we had been talking to their team. They were partnering with the university, to figure out if they could use the audio specifically to measure aggression in an officer's voice.

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So not just looking at the video, but, like, could we see spikes in temper and things like that, just by the audio? Which is sort of an interesting way to think about using body cameras that don't just rely on the footage, so that's an interesting thing. Like, we should follow up and see where they are. There is new technology, too, that allows for--that allows to trigger the body cameras, like, when a police door opens. Things like that that don't require the officer to press a button anymore, but just, like, automatically turn on the dash cam or things like that. Like, you know, we're in a minority in the movement conversation about cameras, because a lot of people rightly are nervous about body cameras as being, like, another tool of surveillance right. That if community policing really is your code for, like, putting police in black neighborhoods, 'cause they're not gonna be on the Upper West Side in the same way you're putting them in other places, and if community policing becomes this idea that, like, the police didn't need to know my kid's name not to kill them right. Like, you don't need to play football with my child not to kill him, right, like, but that is sort of how people, like, use this idea of community policing.

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If that is the case, you put cameras on people, and now you just, like, are surveilling the whole neighborhood, so that is not a good thing. What's interesting about the video thing is that in the, like, 1% of police officers who are ever charged with anything, like, videos are actually really important right. So that's where we get stuck is that, like, it is the likelihood of you getting charged without a video is sort of--it's probably not happening right. The video is, like, our only sort of slight pathway to there being some sort of accountability, which is why we veer to video rather than not video, which is sort of the complicated piece about it. With all the technology used in policing we believe that there should be, like, public oversight, right, so what you find in a lot of cities is that the body camera footage is actually, like, under the purview of the police department. Only the police department. Nobody has access to it, and, like, that--we don't believe that that is, like, a just way to think about any of this stuff, and that is really hard. So I think that we're in this new space where, like, people now have the language to talk about, like, the technology, but the police would advocate for, like, all types of stuff.

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They want, like, facial recognition. It's like y'all aren't solving any crimes any better. Like, none of that's gonna, like, build the trust that you broke, and you broke the trust, right, and, like, I'm not convinced that technology's gonna be the salve for, like, how you rebuild that trust in communities, even if police, like, want that to be, like, the magic bullet.

WILLIAM FLOYD: Why don't we go to some Q&A...

BONITA STEWART: Yeah.

WILLIAM FLOYD: Before we come to a close? Jonathan, why don't you start us?

JONATHAN: First of all, just want to say thank you, DeRay, not only for being here today and sharing all your wisdom with us, but for the sacrifices that you've put yourself in front of and the sacrifices that you've made in this movement, because you've put your body, your health, and your time on the line, time and time again, so personally just want to thank you for that, 'cause that is something that often goes overlooked when we talk about this work. Two quick questions for you. First question being when we think about the work of making change scalable, something that Google--we always talk about how can we solve problems at scale? And so, oftentimes, people grab onto one thing.

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Well, if we get body cameras, that will solve the issue, or if we make sure that we have community policing, that will solve the issue, but these issues are much deeper than just one solution. So how, when you have these conversations and try to get people involved--how do you keep a level of depth to the conversation, but still make it attainable for people to feel like, "I feel I can get involved. This isn't too big enough for me to get involved." And the second question I have is you have a popular saying on the podcast that we each owe a debt that we can never pay back, so it's our job to pay it forward and to pay it to the next generation. How do you live that, and how do you pay it forward?

DERAY MCKESSON: Yeah, so one of the things I didn't say about the technology thing that I just thought of is that what we learned recently is that the company--the biggest producer of body cameras in the country actually intentionally makes the quality of the body cameras really awful to, like, not be better than the human eye, because they want it to be so that officers can say that they were confused about the toy gun or the real gun right? But we actually know the technology exists today that can make the body camera footage, like, crystal clear, but you've never seen a crystal clear body camera, like, not because cameras are bad in 2018, but because they're intentionally made to be bad.

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So what would it look like, if we believe that body cameras are part of the solution for another company to make them with just, like, clear footage, right? Like, that would actually--so that you can't confuse the toy gun with the real gun, because on the footage we would see that it is not. And so we learned recently that they, like, actually want the quality to be grainy so that, like, there can be confusion, which is sort of like a wild thing. Your first question about, like, what do we do? We believe that, like--ten years ago, we didn't know how we got her, per se, but we knew we were here right. We knew there was, like, all these black people getting locked up. We knew it was all these wild disparities, but we didn't know sort of, like, how. Now, we're at a place--and this is one of the things that Sam, and I, and Britney are trying to figure out. It's like what would it be like to map all the things that got us here right? So from mapping all the felony death amounts, across the country, to, like, how much prison phone calls cost, to, like, all the contracts for ICE.

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Like, what if we create a space that is like, "Here is how mass incarceration is upheld in, like, your city and town," and like, it's just there for people. So activists, and organizers, and citizens no longer have to spend ten years trying to, like, find that random law or, like, uncover that thing. They actually know what it is already, so they spend their energy fighting it, as opposed to finding it right? And so much of the work right now is people--you spend all day trying to find it. You're like, "I think this thing is bad. I don't know how it got here. I don't know," but we actually believe that, in this day and age, we can actually do that work right? Like, a set of us can figure out how to build that thing, so you can know the felony theft amount in, like, your town. You can know how many people were killed by the police. You can know--there are places--I don't know if you remember when Alton Sterling got killed. There was a press conference by the police chief, and the police chief--one of the things he says is like, "You should pick up the phone and file a complaint." In Baton Rouge, you actually can't file a complaint over the phone, so, like, I don't--that was a weird thing that he said. And there are a lot of places in the country where you can't file anonymous complaints against the police.

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Like, every complaint has to be signed, and you have to, like, swear an oath that, like, it is true. Mind you, I can call in ten anonymous complaints about any of y'all right now to the New York City police department, and they would take it as fact right. So how do we, like, set it up so that you already know what the good and bad is, and, like, you can fight about that? And we spend a lot of time on that, and we believe that that is, like, a good on ramp for people, so you don't have to

figure--you don't have to, like, spend all day trying to figure out, like, what is bad and what is not. Somebody can tell you those things. The second thing is that, like, the more you know the better you'll do. And there are people who, like, sort of believe in immigration stuff and don't know anything about immigration. You're like, "Well, that's not really helpful," right? So the closer--the more approximate you are to an issue you find people--especially people with, like, skills in this way. They start to ask more questions, and they're like, "Let me build the thing," or, "Let me test this thing out," or, "Let me partner." Like, those things are actually, like, really, really powerful. The idea of paying it forward is, like, what I try to do is, like, how do we create space for other people right? So one of the cool things about the pod is that, because it's mine, I can, like, get anybody on I want to, you know? So like, I was telling them backstage I had Stacey Abrams on, like, four months before it was even like a--it was even a thing in Georgia right.

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But she was like, "I need to be on early." I'm like, "Got you," right. Or like, there's a black guy running for the governor of Wisconsin. I didn't even know he--I didn't know there were a lot of black people in--and, you know, like, I didn't know right? So we had him on. He was great. He used to be a firefighter. Like, we had this whole great conversation about firefighting. I asked him. I was like, "Is being a firefighter on TV anything like it is in real life?" And he's like, "No," obviously, and he was like, "If you ever see firefighters on TV shows talk in a burning building, that's, like, the craziest thing ever." He was like, "You can't talk." He's like, "The building's burning." You're like there's no--he's like, "There's no conversations happening in burning buildings." I was like, "Ah." He also said--he was like, "Occupational cancer is the biggest cause of death in firefighters," and I was like, "Is that the smoke?" And he was like, "Yeah. It's not just smoke though. It's like what happens when furniture burns." And I was like, "You know, if I wasn't doing all this justice stuff, I would do a whole project on furniture burning." I, like, hadn't even thought about, like, how the smoke changes when a refrigerator burns, you know, like what that means.

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And he was like, "After 20 years, it just will seep into your skin. It just will," right, so the podcast is an interesting space where we get to, like, put people on in a way that, like, otherwise wouldn't. And the other thing is that we spend a lot of time, like, connecting people behind the scenes with this idea that, like, all the bad people know each other, even if they don't like each other, inside the Republican Party right now. The good people don't all know each other, so, like, when we meet, like, a dope artist or a dope whatever it's like, "Do you know this person? Let me connect you with this person," so that we can create a network of people who, like, all are a part of the same fight.

JONATHAN: Thank you.

ANDREW LEIBOWITZ: Hey. My name is Andrew Leibowitz, and I'm a new person to Google. I just want to say, first of all, thank you, DeRay, for doing the pod, and I love Crooked Media. Definitely listen to it a lot. Long drive in the car. Definitely makes it easier. I wanted to run something by you and get your opinion on something. It's from a book labeled "Anti-Semite and Jew" from 1944. Published after France was liberated, but while the Holocaust was reaching a crescendo. It's by the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre.

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"Never believe that anti-Semites are completely unaware of the absurdity of their replies. They know that their remarks are frivolous--open to challenge, but they are amusing themselves, for it is their adversary who is obliged to use words responsibly, since he believes in words. The anti-Semites have the right to play. They even like to play with discourse, for by giving ridiculous reasons, they discredit the seriousness of their interlocutors. They delight in acting in bad faith, since they seek not to persuade by sound argument, but to intimidate and disconcert. If you press

them too closely, they will abruptly fall silent, loftily indicating by some phrase that the time for argument is past."

DERAY MCKESSON: I think that one of the ways that whiteness works, right, is that whiteness always sets a set of rules that it never has to play by. Like, that is, like, one of the fundamental things, so, like, when you think about Trump, it's, like, incredible that Trump gets to be this person who believes in the importance of law enforcement while literally dismantling the FBI right. Like, if I came up--the FBI's already visited my house, but if I came out and said this stuff--like, if I said half the stuff that he says about the FBI, I'd get another visit.

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But he, like, is just firing people left and right, but still, like, believes in law enforcement. Or like, anything about women and family values. You're like--it's sort of a fascinating thing...

WILLIAM FLOYD: Right.

DERAY MCKESSON: That happens. My only sort of reflection on that is that, like, we--and Ocasio-Cortez said this. She was like, "We should be swinging for the fences," right. That like--what is it? When we they go low we go high. It's like we might go high into oblivion, sooner or later, right. That, like, our high should be because we're swinging and fighting everything below us, right, like, not because we are, like, taking the high ground in this, like, moral space. Especially when we're fighting people who have a loose sense of morals, at all. What I'm also reminded is that, like, change can come really quickly. If they can rewrite the tax code on scrap paper then, like, we can do all this stuff really quickly. And part of the way that, like, the power imbalance works is that we think that we have to make this, like, 20-year case, and da-da-da, and, like, we don't actually--if they literally rewrote the tax code--like, I'm not being dramatic on the back of scrap paper. It literally was on the back of scrap paper, and, like, the Congress people hadn't even read it.

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Like, if they can do that, we can undo all this stuff pretty quickly, but half the battle is, like, convincing people that that's even possible, and like, we gotta figure that out. I think, you know, on the pod tomorrow that comes out we talk about the Trump administration has declared--literally. I'm not being dramatic. They have declared the war on poverty over. That, like, there is no more poverty in America. That is, like, a new report that they just put out. And the UN is like, "There are 18.5 million people in poverty," and literally Nikki Haley's team was like, "There are only 250,000 people in poverty in the country." And you're like, "What is going on?" But it is this thing that they get that the original power is in definition right? Like, being able to define the terms is a huge sense of power, and, like, we can't concede that. And I think that we have, in so many ways. You think about even abolish ICE. ICE should be abolished ICE is bad. The end of ICE is not the presence of a pathway to citizenship right, and, like, we have confused the two. So we can, like, get ICE out of here and still have not won anything about the immigration battle that we're actually fighting. And part of that is that we've ceded some ground on, like, what the immigration battle is.

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The immigration battle is not a battle about ICE. The immigration battle is about a pathway to citizenship, and what we would say is that the pathway to citizenship does not require the detention and deportation of people. That is where ICE fits in, but, like, the macro argument is, like, always the big fight we should be having. And we, like, lose that battle so many times.

ANDREW LEIBOWITZ: What do we do to keep it, in your opinion?

DERAY MCKESSON: I think that we, like, fight it even when it feels like we shouldn't. So like, the ICE thing is, like, we should be all--everybody who believes in, like, a pathway to citizenship--that

should be, like, our talking point. Every day should be like--and I should be a part of it, but, like, the macro argument is about a pathway to citizenship. It's not fighting about this little thing, because if we get the end of ICE that actually still doesn't get us a pathway to--you know what I mean? We can get this small thing and still not win the battle.

ANDREW LEIBOWITZ: Right.

DERAY MCKESSON: The right is really good about, like, always--we know their vision. Kick everybody out. Like, can't come here. White people only. Like, their affirmative is, like, pretty clear to us. And you know, it was projected that the country's gonna be a majority minority by 2043-ish. It's now projected that the net effect of these immigration acts is gonna delay that by another ten years right.

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So like, they are playing a game, like, with a set of outcomes that they get, and we get so invested in, like, the emotional piece, 'cause, like, you shouldn't put kids in cages. That is, like, a true thing. And sometimes, we forget the, like, macro argument that is actually the battle.

ANDREW LEIBOWITZ: That's [inaudible].

ALEX: Hi. Thank you so much for being here. I'm a huge fan. Been following you since Ferguson, 'cause I was in law school watching the videos coming straight from people on the streets, and yeah. Just appreciate all the work that you do. My name's Alex. I work at the Bronx Freedom Fund, a revolving community bail fund in the Bronx and Queens, so I really appreciate you mentioning bail and then this farce that the war on poverty is over, because there are currently 3,000 men and women, predominantly of color, on Riker's Island right now who are only there because they can't afford to pay their bail. So I--

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And also, a lot of them are children. 16 and 17-year-olds are still on Riker's Island right now, so I like that you highlighted the fact that there is currently a scarcity of bail data. So plug for us. We're actually spearheading a court-watching program, so if you're interested on collecting bail data or analyzing it, come and see me outside. But how do--what is the role of community bail funds in turning awareness into action?

DERAY MCKESSON: Yeah, so a couple things about bail is that, one, I want to believe--and I know nothing about tech. I just--these are my dreams you guys are gonna hear is that, like, I want to believe that somebody can build, like, a scraping something that can scrape all the stenographer's, like, notes and, like, make the bail data, so we don't have to only do--court watching is the only way that we have any data. And like, Chicago has a great data set from court watching. I'm excited that you're gonna do it and, like, we should do that, 'cause, like, that's the best we can do right now.

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But because we know somebody's in the courtroom writing down, like, the approved bail amount, like, it is on somebody's--it's on a paper somewhere. Like, if that's scanned, like, I want to believe some smart person can, like, figure out how to put that somewhere, so that's my plug for it. If that is what any of you do, like, please make it.

ALEX: I've looked into it, so it actually--you can get the court transcripts from arraignments, but they cost money, so it's really just a money issue, and it is possible.

DERAY MCKESSON: Yeah, yeah, and, like, we've been trying to figure out is there a way--we should talk after this.

ALEX: Yes.

DERAY MCKESSON: Even, like, something that's a couple years--because I'm like we know there has to be a way to do this. And the bail thing that I think is--the only missed opportunity in the bail conversation is that people still--people are, like, emotionally like, "People shouldn't be in jail because of money things." Like, that's what they'll say in a room like this, and then we talk to them privately. They're like, "But they killed somebody," right. Like, that's sort of, like, their sort of go-to, because everybody has killed somebody. That's, like, the--if you have been in jail, like, you killed somebody. That's, like, people's idea of it which is not true. You know, we arrest more people for weed than all violent crimes combined in this country, so, like, that is also wild.

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But I think that what we've not done a good job of is helping people understand what the end of bail actually looks like right. That when bail goes away it's replaced by three things. Either you're just released on your own recognizance, you're released with some sort of community supervision, like a check-in, anklet, something like that, or you're detained in what's called preventative detention, because, like, you actually did kill ten people, or, like, something was a real problem, so you probably shouldn't be out in society. And everybody can be an expert on, like, explaining those three. Thinking about those three, and the places we've seen this happen. Like, DC got rid of money bail in, like, 1990. Like, one, right, the world didn't end. This is actually not a radical thing anymore. We've actually already done it, and there are a lot of benefits to being out on bail. Like, people who are out on bail--like, they do better on their court cases. Why? 'Cause they have time to prepare that's not in a jail cell right. Like, there are all these things that are like a part of the bail conversation I think that we've sort of just left out a little bit, because we have people hooked on the emotional part about money. But what I've found is that privately people are actually, like, less hooked on that.

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They, like, are--they waver a little bit on that thing, 'cause they're like, "They killed somebody." And you're like, "They didn't kill somebody though," right. Or if they're accused of killing somebody, they should have a real defense. And I think that that is, like, what I want to see us do better than bail. And like, help people understand that the bail funds are the stopgap until we end bail right. Some people think the bail fund is, like, the answer, and you're like, "No, no, no. It's the answer today, 'cause we haven't figured out how to, like, end bail." But the end of bail is, like, not even radical anymore. Like, we did it 20 years ago.

ALEX: Thank you.

PERSON: Thank you so much for being here and for all that you do. Two-part question. Obviously, there's so much and has been, for so many years, that makes you feel like you're losing hope. When you think forward to 2018 and leading into 2020, are there candidates out there that really bring you hope and you feel are inspiring that need for change that we're all looking for? And then the second piece is, since you ask this of all your guests on the pod, what is a piece of advice that has really stuck with you?

DERAY MCKESSON: That is a question I ask on the pod.

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Ocasio-Cortez was even, again, more--I already loved her, and then I met her and was like, "I might quit my job and come work for," like literally me and Sam--she doesn't have a policy person,

and Sam does all the policy. And we both had this moment like, "Sam, you should go do her policy." Like, "Sam, you can't go, 'cause we need you." But Ocasio-Cortez needs you too, so Stacey Abrams, like, I'm really hopeful about. Mahlon Mitchell, who's running to be the governor of Wisconsin. Ben Jealous, who's running to be the governor of Maryland. Like, I'm excited about those sort of people. It's hard. There are so many candidates who want to be on the pod and, like, I would just have a pod of candidates, 'cause there are so many incredible people running, so I just don't get to all of them. But I'm hopeful about, like, what we can do. I'm interested in, like, after '18, like, how we actually build our base in for 2020. Like, how do we do that in a way that's really thoughtful? I think that, like, getting out the vote and all that stuff for '18 is really important. I'm hopeful that we'll be successful in, like, taking one part of Congress back. But the game, in 2020--he could win again, you know, and I remember I supported him--"I supported him." That is not true. [laughter] My phone got hacked, and I did tweet out support for Trump, but that was because somebody hacked my phone.

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But I supported Hillary in the "Washington Post" and people really slammed me for, like, "Why are you doing this? She's such a hypocrite," da-da. And it's like, "'Cause he could win. This is real," right? Like, I believe him, and I remember talking to a senior member of Hillary's team not too long ago, and she was like, "DeRay, there are people in the Muslim community calling us now. There are people in all these racial minorities calling us being like, 'What can we do?'" And she's like, "I tried to tell y'all," right, so I believe that again about 2020 is that, like, you know, I remember people saying, "DeRay, he doesn't have a ground game." Like, he's not doing door-knocking. The Trump campaign did none of the traditional stuff, probably because the Russians helped them, but also because they knew that, like, racism was enough of a ground game right. Like, that was actually an effective strategy, and, like, they will be able to mobilize that again, in 2020, unless we figure out how to build a different electorate and, like, tell a different story about the power of people's votes. And I think that we are close to that. I don't think that we're there yet, and I was on the transition team for the DNC, so, like, you know, I believe on being on the inside, da-da-da. I don't think they got the answer either, so I'm more committed to, like, how do we build an infrastructure outside of the system for 2020, and, like, I think that's important.

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The advice that I've gotten that's stuck with me is this idea of, like, Cleo Wade, who's a friend and a poet, she has a saying that's not every ground is a battleground. And like, I really like that. That sometimes, when all we've done is fight, like, that's all we know how to do. And the fight has to be a part of the work, but, like, there are some people who every relationship is a battle, right, 'cause they have had to fight the world for so long. And I try and remind myself that blackness is not only--like, that we are more than our pain right? That, like, we can be something beautiful, too, and I never glorify--you know, people talk about this wave of activism and, like, all of da-da-da, and da-da-da, and, like, yeah it's a lot of activism and stuff. But I never want to glorify the trauma that, like, made us be so active, in the first place. So I'm active because I feel like I gotta be, and I'm fighting for the kids I taught. I'm fighting for all these people and da-da-da, but, like, I should be able to go back, and be a teacher, and, like, not have to worry about the world falling apart right. That, like, I don't glorify the pain that got us here, and, like, this idea of, like, not every ground is a battleground stays with me.

PERSON: Thank you.

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PERSON: Hi. I wanted to--a caveat onto that question is you talked about the data and then also bringing the people together, to kind of, like, create/co-design, so to speak, what it is that this actionable empathy can look like. And any ideas on who those organizations are, 'cause you say

you basically are a dot connector. So I'm wondering, like, could you give us some insight into who those organizations are and who are the people that we should be working with?

DERAY MCKESSON: Here's sort of the hard thing, and Sam will be around afterwards, too, so we can, like, talk about this online. Sam, raise your hand. We love Sam. Sam's great. I met Sam on Twitter actually, like, in 2015. Sam literally tweeted like, "I want to help out," or whatever, and I DM-ed him my phone number. We had a great call, and I was like, "We should work together," and we've been together for a long time. But the hard part is that there are two types of organizers right. There's one set that really wants to be the gatekeeper, so they want you to do as much work as you do, as long as you keep coming back to them right. There's another set of organizers that say like, "We want to give you the tools for you to go do sort of the thing." T

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Here are way more of the former than the latter, so some of the biggest organizations, doing good work in the space, don't actually want you to do anything that is not, like, the stuff that they tell you to do. And that's sort of one of the hardest pieces is that, like, there aren't good models of organizations at scale right now that can take 2,000 volunteers or 3,000 volunteers, or are frankly interested in, like, you doing something that is not, like, at their direction.

PERSON: Sure.

DERAY MCKESSON: And that's sort of the challenge. What we would say is that, like, we think that we can build something that, like, allows more people to plug in and then go do your own thing. Like, I don't care. You know, like, if you want to--like, for example, there's one company essentially that when people get released from prison the money they have on commissary gets put on a debit card. Something like a debit card, but it's like a high--it's a debit card that, every time you use it, it has, like, a crazy transaction fee. It's a scam is what it is right.

PERSON: It's like a RushCard.

DERAY MCKESSON: Yeah it's like--oh, you. You know, we each--trying to get us in trouble talking about it. It's something like what you said.

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But it's such a scam, you know, and like, what I believe is that, like, if we made that public, showed you every place where that is, then if that was your thing, you just go do it, you know? Like, you go dismantle it and, like, I don't need--like, if you need help, cool. We'll be there, but, like, you don't need me to right? And like, we did the first ever public database of police union contracts and use of force policies in the country, 'cause nobody had ever put them together, so we did all this stuff, and it's still--because there are some places where we go, and, like, they need our technical assistance. They need us to come in and help, 'cause, like, we just know the landscape. There are some places that use the data, and they're just fine on their own, and we're like, "Cool," right? As long as the outcome gets--like, we don't care.

PERSON: Yeah.

DERAY MCKESSON: So what we do know is we know the big buckets of how all the--of where the problems are, but we're trying to figure out--it's like how do we help--how do we get people to help us find them? So we coded the 100 largest--the 100 contracts in the--the 100 police union contracts in 100 large cities. We have, like, all these volunteers and Slack groups across the country, like, filling in Google docs right. We're about to code 800 more, so we have, like, more volunteers helping us, like, sift through these contracts.

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And we can do it in, like, two weeks what would take us, like, two years to do. Do you know what I mean?

PERSON: Mm-hmm.

DERAY MCKESSON: Like, that's sort of the interesting scalable thing, so there aren't great models of it right now, and what you find is a lot of even the best organizations just don't--they don't know what they do with the dials and--like, they just don't know right now, so we're trying to help people, like, envision organizing and being an activist and a citizen differently. Does that make sense?

PERSON: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'ma talk to Sam afterwards too. Thank you.

DERAY MCKESSON: Sam is in.

WILLIAM FLOYD: We have time for one last question.

PERSON: Ooh, a lot of pressure. All right. [laughter]

WILLIAM FLOYD: Make it good.

PERSON: So I've really enjoyed everything that all of you have been speaking about, and thank you for coming. Obviously, this has been really, really helpful. My question is around allyship, so a lot of the things that you're speaking around--a lot of times, they come off as, like, minority problems, or black problems, or problems that are focused on one specific community.

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But when I think back to, like, the Civil Rights movement, like, a lot of the people that were in the crowd during the Freedom March, like, they were actually people that were white. So when you think about allyship I would be curious to hear, like, what you think about that and, like, who are people that you think are doing that well? And what's that call to action look like for people that want to be allies?

DERAY MCKESSON: Yeah, so I think about sort of this big bucket is that when you think about allies and accomplices, right, like, people's first introduction to the work is almost always being an ally. And that is, like, sort of standing in solidarity. When you think about accomplices it's people who see themselves implicated in the work, too, who, like, are not just people standing sort of near you, but standing side-by-side right? Like, allies sort of love you from a distance. Accomplices love you up close. You know, like, that is sort of like a difference in proximity is the difference here. You know, I was talking to somebody the other day who asked a similar question, and we were just one-on-one, and he was like, "I sort of get intersectionality." He's like, "I get the idea," but he's like, "I often need to think about it in the frame of my identity, and I'm sort of struggling."

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He was like, "I'm not being the best ally that I could be, so can we talk about it?" Right. What I said to him is that people misunderstand intersectionality as about being intersecting identities, and intersectionality is not about intersecting identities. Intersectionality is about intersecting sets of oppression, right, so being, like, a black, gay man is about, like, how my gayness and being black intersect. It's not just about, like, how, like, my identities just sort of, like, all come together. It is rooted in the idea that these systems of oppression intersect, and that's really important. And what I ask people now is like, "When was the last time you didn't feel safe?" And what's interesting is that when you ask--when I've asked white men, like, when was the last time they didn't feel safe they say things like, "When I didn't have money." And I'm like, "That is fascinating." Like, if that's the last

time you didn't feel safe that is, like, really interesting. And I asked a straight black man the other day, like, when he didn't feel safe, and he was like, "The last time I didn't feel safe in my body was around the police," right. And it's like that's also interesting that, like, the only--that's, like, the last time you didn't feel safe in your body is, like, around a--you ask a woman when the last time they didn't feel safe it don't have nothing to do with the police right.

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Like, it might be about the police, but, like, women have all these stories about not feeling safe in their body, like, just in society right. But like, you ask queer people/trans people, like, "When's a time you didn't feel safe?" And you actually understand, like--you understand what you don't see every day, because, like, you're just not proximate to it, and, like, that has actually been--I've found that question to be really helpful for people who are struggling with this ally thing. Like, how close are you to the issue and what, like, don't you see? Especially in the workplace. You think about--you know, in the classrooms, we sit in the back of the classroom, and we can literally tally, like, who gets called on. You know, if you sit in classrooms, and you tally positive to negative comments, you can actually learn a lot about a teacher, because when you see, like, the ratios are so off, you're like, "Of course the kids are bad today, 'cause you're mean." Right? Like, that's why they're bad, 'cause you're, like, not a nice person. But in the workplace, you can also tally, like, who gets called on first right. Like, in a lot of workplaces that call themselves, like, progressive it's, like, always straight men who, like, are the first people to talk, or, like, what does that look like?

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I think, too, about workplaces that look like this. It's like what does it mean when workplaces that look like this say things like, "We have the best workforce," and it's, like, no black people and no brown people? Like, that is actually signaling something, right, that if you can say today you employ--like, you have the best workforce when it's, like, less than 3% people of color, that is a value statement right. And like, if you don't see it like that, that is, like, a privilege and a luxury not to be able to see the way that that is being received by people. Not that you're, like, working towards having the best workplace, but if you would say that the best workplace is one that does not mimic a society we live in like this, like, that is a real challenge. So I've seen people show up with the language of allyship and not the practice of allyship, like, a lot, and especially in workplaces. And what I've also seen--I did this talk in another really big company, and I had gone to, like, the airport with the vice president of whatever he does at the big place, and he was, like, the executive sponsor for the black people right.

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So I'm, like, talking to the black people later, and all they had is complaints. And I'm sitting up here, and I go to the executive guy. I'm like, "You're not sponsoring real well, if all that--like, if the people got all these complaints," right. Like, you are sponsoring from a distance, and, like, that's just not cool, right, so you need to figure that out. And I think about, in workplaces like this, is what you often find is that there's a lot of really good systemic work happening, until one white person feels uncomfortable, and people are like, "No." And you're like the one--it can be, like, 30 black people being like, "I think this is, like, an issue." And like, the one white person who has, like, a fragile moment can shut everything down and, like, when a structure allows that to happen, like, that is a--like, we need to talk about that right. And I think about that with the allyship piece is I've seen people in positions of power. Like, again, they will come to something like this talk with me and talk about the fact that they were here for the next three months and not change any practice that they've ever done right. And like, I get that, and that's not cool. Like, that has to be--so we need to figure out how do we make spaces where, like, we can challenge, like, systems internally, so that, like, they don't reproduce the same sort of things that cause us to have these talks, in the first place.

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And like, I'm, like, more nervous about that four years after the protests began than I was at the beginning, and, like, we've been to a million talks. A million all this--like, you've been to it. I've been to it, and, like, some people actually haven't changed, and I do think that, like, the confrontation and the challenging of those people, like, has to be, like, front and center in this work. Were you about to say something?

WILLIAM FLOYD: No.

DERAY MCKESSON: Okay, and the last thing I'll say is, like, this thing that we call, like, caretaking is that--caretaking and, like, splitting are two different things. That what you find with some white people--and black people do it--is that, like, a white person has a moment of--they're like, "Oh, my God. I get white privilege and, like, I get it. This is bad," and they split from the other white people, and they, like, go near people of color right. They're like, "You white people are crazy. We're gonna hang out with the black people," and, like, that sort of feels like the right thing to do, in those moments, but the danger of splitting is that, like, white people--you need to go--you need to be with the white people right.

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Like, you need to be teaching the white people, like--they gotta get their stuff together. And white people have to, like, start leading white people, so it's not that you shouldn't be proximate to people of color. You should be, but you shouldn't, like, split wholly, and, like, use your proximity to black people as a sense of credentialing, because, like, that actually, like, doesn't push us forward in the work. And the second thing that happens that we call sort of distance of caretaking is that you'll be in a room--and people of color, you've definitely experienced this. You'll be in a room. You'll say something. People will say nothing. They'll be like, "Okay." A white person says the same thing, and people like, "Great idea," and you're like, "What just happened?" Right. And what you find is that people will coddle the white--they'll be like, "Oh, my God. That was such an insight. That's like--that thing about race that you said was so great," and you're like, "I literally just said that, and that's my life all day." And like, we need to be mindful that, like, white people's discomfort is because they are just sort of realizing what's happening in the world, and that we shouldn't coddle people through that. We should, like, be around them and support people, but that is not, like, coddling, and a lot of what we do now is coddle people, and that, like, white privilege is really important only insofar as people link that back to, like, a systemic factor.

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So if your unintended white privilege is limited to like, "Oh, the world is sort of crazy and whatever," and you've not yet done the work to realize, like, a system allowed that to happen for you, then, like, you actually haven't sort of done the work yet. And like, that is a long answer to this question of, like, what allyship looks like. [laughter]

BONITA STEWART: But a great--

PERSON: Thank you.

WILLIAM FLOYD: It might have been a great answer.

BONITA STEWART: And a great answer.

DERAY MCKESSON: Cool. It's good to be here. My book comes out in September. It's called "On the Other Side of Freedom". [applause] I'm excited about that, and please listen to the pod. And I'd love to--you know, Sam will be here too. I'd love to talk to whoever's around, but we are trying to figure out, like, how do we create just more space, so people can have, like, less gatekeepers in the work? That you should be able to do good work and not have to be a member of anything. Not

have to join, like, a network. Like, you should be able to do good work because work is good to do, not because, like, you want to join something for your whole life.

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And like, how do we use tech to, like, allow people to do that is a question that we have every day.

BONITA STEWART: Right.

WILLIAM FLOYD: We'd like to help you answer it.

BONITA STEWART: I know. Thank you. Thank you.

WILLIAM FLOYD: DeRay, thank you for the time.

DERAY MCKESSON: Thank you.

[applause]

[outro music]

ALAN: Thanks for listening. If you have any feedback about this or any other episode, we'd love to hear from you. You can visit g.go/talksatgoogle/podcastfeedback to leave your comments. And to discover more amazing content, you can always find us at youtube.com/talksatgoogle or through our twitter handle: @googletalks. Thanks for listening. Talk soon.