



Sam Sinyangwe

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INTRODUCTION

Yvette Moy

Director of the Office of Public Lectures staff

Good evening. Hi. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Yvette Moy and I'm the Director of Public Lectures here at the University of Washington. Our office is housed in the Graduate School. And I want to welcome you to the Graduate School's second lecture of this academic year, so we're really excited to see you, thank you for coming out tonight. That's right, give yourselves some applause, we love it. So I have a couple of housekeeping items to go through but before I go, my first one is, is there a Paula Elizabeth Valo Smith in the audience because I have your wallet and your driver's license, which you might need, so if you want to grab it, I'll be off stage in just a few minutes. If you haven't done so already, please take a moment to silence your cell phones or just turn them off, like, that's kind of awesome. There's to be no video or audio recording of this evening's lecture. KUOW, our NPR affiliate, is here recording tonight's lecture and they will rebroadcast it on speaker's forum at a date to be determined. And then finally, I'm going to ask a kind of a strange one, which is please refrain from taking photographs while our lecturer is on stage. Emile Pitre, who's here in the front is taking photographs, and he will do so for the first five minutes or so of the lecture and there'll be no more photos. It's just really distracting for our speaker. I also want to thank our volunteers who helped out this evening. We had first-time volunteer Ann Wakowski. Thank you so much. She was retiring from the university. We were so grateful to have you join us. We also had our Villa Middle School volunteers who are in sixth, seventh and eighth grade, you probably saw them out front. And that was Papi, Esla and Lily. So they're earning some community service hours helping us out. That's right. That's right. And then finally, we want to thank Emile Pitre. He is a University of Washington alum. That's right and founding member of the University of Washington's Black Student Union. He was a chemistry professor and he closed out his career here at University as the Associate Vice President for Minority Affairs. He still comes to campus daily in a beautiful suit. And we are all so very grateful to everyone. Thank you so much.

I want to share a little information about tonight's endowment that allowed us to host Sam Sinyangwe. It's the Mary Ann and John D. Mangels Endowed Lecture Series and it was established in 1990 to honor the retirement of John D. Mangels, who was the former chairman and CEO at Security Pacific Bank of Washington, which is now known as Bank of America. Administered by the Graduate Opportunity and Minority Achievement Program, or GO-MAP, the Mangels lectureship in cooperation with academic departments and programs brings to the University of Washington campus minority scholars or individuals whose work focuses on issues of diversity from a variety of fields for the benefit of minority students, the campus community, and the general public. I also want to point out that GO-MAP was the very first organization in the nation to support underrepresented graduate students. It's pretty awesome. And they're celebrating their 50th anniversary this year. It's pretty amazing, right? So the gift of this endowment has allowed the University of Washington to host close to 50 speakers in the past 20 years. And I also want to recognize the GO-MAP staff member joining us tonight, Willa Kurland. Are you here, Willa, where are you? She works for GO-MAP and she's joining us tonight. I don't know where she is. She's probably — there she is. Hi. Willa. Thank you so much for all you do. Our speaker tonight will be introduced by Information School Assistant Professor Anna Lauren Hoffmann. Please welcome Professor Hoffman.

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Anna Hoffman

Assistant Professor at information School

Thank you. Thank you.

Hi, everyone. I'm Anna Lauren Hoffman and my work in the Information School centers on issues and information, data and ethics. And in particular, I pay attention to the ways discourses, design, and use of information technology can promote or hinder the pursuit of important human values like respect and justice. On that note, and before I introduce tonight's speaker, I'd like to, I'd like to thank the Graduate School's Molly Mandeltort, whose patience and support made this week's activities possible. She was a lifeline for me and many others and so thank you so much, Molly. And I'd also like to recognize

the following people from the iSchool who helped make this possible: Galen Guffy, Austin Williams, Cynthia del Rosario, and our Dean, Anind Dey, as well as our friends, Anissa Tanweer at eSciences and Emma Spiro at the DataLab. I'm sure there are many more people to thank, but I am incredibly appreciative of everyone's contribution. Now on to tonight's speaker, Sam Sinyangwe is a policy analyst and data scientist who works with communities of color to fight systemic racism through cutting edge policies and strategies. Sam has supported movement activists across the country to collect and use data as a tool for fighting police violence, through mapping police violence and to advanced solutions to police violence through Campaign Zero. Previously, Sam worked at PolicyLink to support a national network of 61 promise neighborhoods, neighborhood communities to build cradle-to-career systems of support for low-income families. He also worked with city leaders, youth activists, and community organizations to develop comprehensive agendas to achieve quality education, health, and justice for young black men. In 2017, he was named one of the Forbes 30 under 30 and one of the 100 most influential African Americans by The Root newsletter. Sam grew up in Orlando, Florida, and has been involved in organizing and advocacy since he was in high school. He graduated from Stanford University in 2012, where he studied how race and racism impact the U.S. political system. And tonight he joins us here at the University of Washington. Please join me in welcoming Sam Sinyangwe.

FEATURED SPEAKER (6:14)

Sam Sinyangwe

Policy analyst, data scientist, and co-founder of We The Protesters

Thank you. So, I want to talk today about data. And in particular how to use data to achieve racial justice with a focus on police violence, ending police violence, in the United States. My journey up to this point was something that I could not have predicted. I graduated high school in Orlando, Florida, where I grew up feeling and experiencing many of the forces and inequities that characterize our country. At the same time, I

didn't quite understand what the history was behind them, what the data showed in terms of how widespread they were, and more importantly, what types of policies, practices, and systemic changes it would take to address those issues. And so I went off to study political science at Stanford. I learned how to conduct original research, I learned how, I learned a little bit about the scholarship in the field of race and politics. And then after that, started working at a research institute, where my job was to support 61 federally funded communities as part of one of President Obama's signature anti-poverty programs, in building out data systems that could hold schools and organizations, and a range of different youth-serving organizations and institutions accountable to delivering results for kids and families and communities of concentrated poverty.

And that work changed for me on August 9, 2014. That was the day that Mike Brown was shot and killed in Ferguson, Missouri, by Darren Wilson, a police officer. His death sparked a nationwide protest movement, which has had impacts that reverberated to this day in changing the national conversation, changing policies, changing practices, changing how we talk about race, but back then, much of the national conversation was limited. And it was limited in particular, because there was an absence of data as one of many reasons that the conversation hadn't been advanced. And so, you know, in understanding the power that data has had, and holding institutions accountable to measurable results, in holding policymakers accountable to taking action, wanted to understand, wanted to apply many of those learnings to the issue of police violence. And so I connected with organizers on the ground in Ferguson and together we did what the federal government refused to do. And that is, collecting comprehensive data on people killed by the police. The federal government could tell you how much rainfall there was in rural Missouri going back 100 years. They cannot tell you how many people the police killed last year or the year before. A part of this is an issue of methodology. The federal government relies on 18,000 different police departments across the country, each with their own leadership and policies and practices and outcomes and ways of reporting and collecting the data, relies on each of those agencies to report that data to the federal government every single year in a timely, consistent, and reliable way with no enforcement mechanism. So, unsurprisingly, the majority of police departments simply did not report to the program. And so when you look at the federal database, it shows that not a single person has been killed by police in Florida going back several decades. Now, a simple

Google search will show that that is not true. But the federal data, the federal data did not actually express the full scale of police violence in this country and without the data, we saw as community organizers and protesters took to the streets demanding justice, reflecting a lived experience of police files that went back generations, they were simply dismissed or ignored as somehow not being, not telling the truth because they didn't have the data. Somehow, the data was privileged over lived experience as an objective truth that policymakers respected somehow more than the experiences of community members which reflects broader issues of white supremacy and how it operates in our society. But we weren't going to stop there. We knew that we could, we can, and we should collect the data, we can use the data to advance change, and so that's what we did. We built the most comprehensive database of people killed by police in the United States called Mapping Police Violence and merged with this map. So this is a map of people killed by the police in the year 2014. That year, nearly 1,200 people were killed by the police. That is not unique to 2014. We now have data spanning from 2013 to through 2018. And in fact, every single year between 1,100 and 1,300 people are killed by the police. The way that we were able to compile this data was not depending on police agencies to report the data that they hadn't reported federally, but by combining information obtained through public records request with information from local media reports, from obituaries, information on social media, information in criminal records databases, merging all of that together with with existing crowdsourced databases that had collected partial information, but did not include important categories like the race of the person killed by the police, whether they were unarmed at the time that they were killed, and merged all that together into this database called Mapping Police Violence.

And so we launched with this map for a reason. This was launched in April of 2015. And if you remember back to April 2015, this was right before Freddie Gray was murdered by the police in Baltimore, right before the Baltimore uprising, in the very beginning stages of this national conversation on police violence and racism. And, at that time, a lot of people, particularly white people, thought that police violence was a series of isolated incidents or a problem that might have been systemic in places like Baltimore, or in St. Louis, but not something that was a nationwide issue that demanded a systemic, nationwide approach. And with this map, we're able to show quite clearly that this, in fact, was happening at a scale that a lot of people weren't thinking was happening. This was

happening all across the country, in rural communities, in suburban communities, in urban communities, that this was happening in states that many folks, you may not have thought it was happening, and that the scale of police violence was such that three to four people were killed by the police every single day in this country.

So the first lesson is don't wait for permission. A lot of people in 2014 and 2015, were focused on one of two things. One was pushing for the federal government to collect better data on this issue, spending a lot of time lobbying Congress, lobbying the Obama administration, to push them to collect better data on people killed by the police. And in fact, after we launched this database, the Washington Post launched a database, The Guardian launched a database, we're able to demonstrate that this information could actually be collected, despite the fact the federal government wasn't collecting it. And in response, in 2016, the FBI announced that they were actually going to pilot a use of force data collection program modeled after this methodology called the Use of Force Data Collection Program. They announced that in 2016, they have still not published any data on the program. So if we had waited on the federal government, we would still be waiting today. The second part of this is there were a lot of people at the time that were pushing, particularly in positions of power and privilege and academia, in well-funded, sort of legacy institutions, pushing for a focus on everything except for police violence, a focus on poverty, a focus on residential segregation, a focus on broader issues of systemic racism, things that are no doubt important, no doubt urgent, no doubt need focus and resources and investment, but frankly, weren't the number one focus of people who took to the streets, the focus, and the number one demand at that time was stop killing us, was to address the fundamental crisis of police violence, and in doing so, opened up a broader conversation about systemic racism, white supremacy, and the ways in which it manifests in so many other domains of life. But that fundamental demand needed to be honored. And so we focus squarely on police violence and managed to collect that data that hadn't been collected before. So, don't wait for permission. The work can and should get done regardless of whether the federal government is doing it, regardless of whether it is honored or funded, or supported by foundations or by academic institutions or by your advisor or your research advisor, a professor, know what work is important, what work will impact your community and use your skills and the networks and tools available to you to make a difference on that issue by any means necessary.

The second lesson in this work over the past five years has been the importance of making your research accessible and actionable. So the work that we did was more than building a database. It was more than building a spreadsheet that exists online. It was telling the story behind the data. It was unpacking the data in formats that could be accessible broadly beyond researchers, beyond data scientists, but something that could be understandable and actionable for everyday people, people who had not had it previous experience with data, people, who many of whom were in high school, had not gone to college, but nevertheless could use the data in their communities to make change. And so I'm going to go over a couple of examples of how we're able to break down the data visually, to communicate what some of the findings were behind it.

First of all, we wanted to understand beyond sort of the nationwide impact scale of this issue, how different communities were being impacted by police violence. And so we broke down the data by race. And what we found was that black people were three times more likely to be killed by the police than white people. Indigenous communities were also substantially more likely to be killed by the police, depending on the year, either, the group most likely to be killed by the police or second most likely to be killed by the police. Latinos were about 1.5 times more likely to be killed by the police than white people. So your race impacts your likelihood of experiencing this violence. We also learned that black and brown people were more likely to be unarmed when killed by the police than white people. And again, these are under-estimates because they rely so heavily on what is reported about the incident by the police or by the media, and as we've seen, as video evidence has recently become available, a lot of that reporting initially is exposed as actually being untrue. We also wanted to understand to what extent are officers held accountable for police violence in this country. When an officer kills somebody, what's the likelihood that they're ever charged with a crime or convicted, and what we found was that it is a very low likelihood that in 97% of all cases in 2015, where a police officer killed somebody, 97% of those cases, they were never charged with the crime, 99% of all those cases, they were never convicted of a crime. And in that 1% of cases, it's actually slightly less than 1%, it's about 0.5% where an officer is convicted of a crime for killing somebody, they get a lesser sentence than a civilian convicted of the same crime. You may be familiar with Amber Guyger in Dallas, who shot Botham

Shem Jean, she got a 10-year sentence for a murder and that is not unique. There's actually a in Georgia, where a police officer killed an unarmed black man, and he was sentenced for the first time and that state's history, the judge handed down a partial prison sentence, a part-time prison sentence, where the police officer was ordered only to go to prison on the weekends because they were a police officer.

So that, so effectively the criminal justice system has almost entirely decriminalized the act of homicide by a police officer. The odds of being charged with a crime or being prosecuted at all in these cases is extremely low. What's also interesting about this is that the places where police are prosecuted, repeatedly, there are a set of characteristics in those places that are fascinating. They tend to have black prosecutors, especially black women prosecutors, and I don't think that's a coincidence, but it illustrates that actually, in many of these cases, if the prosecutor cared about accountability, they could actually secure charges. But in most jurisdictions, they simply refuse to prosecute police officers in these cases.

Okay, making the research accessible. So a big part about policing in this country is that it is predominantly a local issue, that there are 18,000 different police departments across the country. They all have their own leadership policies, practices, organizational culture. And so change often happens at the local level. And that means that we needed to break down the data at the local level to give people in every city the access to the data on police violence in their jurisdiction, how that impacted different communities, and what they could do about it. And so, this is an illustration we visualized killings by police. This is from 2013 through '17, this data, by city for the hundred largest jurisdictions in the country. The chart on your left represents those who were, rates of police violence per population over that time period. What you see is that there's variation in fact this is the scrollable chart at Mappingpoliceviolence.org, you can actually scroll down to the bottom where it ends in the only city of those 100 cities where police did not kill anybody. During the time frame, which is Irvine, California, that there are cities that have substantially higher rates of police violence than the national average, like St. Louis, where a black man is twice as likely to be killed by a police officer, as the average American is to be killed by anyone, civilian or police. So twice as high as the US murder rate, places like Oklahoma City, which were one in six

homicides are committed by police, Orlando, Florida, where I'm originally from, second highest rate of police violence in the country. But also at the lower end of the chart, there were cities where police didn't kill people or places that had substantially lower rates of police violence than the national average. And so the question once we had this data was understanding what were the factors that explain this variation? Why were some cities having such lower rates of police violence than in other cities, and what was happening in terms of policy, in terms of practice, in terms of the organizational culture, in terms of the leadership of those departments, or of those cities, in terms of the organizing infrastructure in those places, that could help explain why they had different outcomes than the norm. The chart on your right is a chart specifically of unarmed people killed by the police, color coded by race. The red squares are unarmed black people killed by the police. The orange squares are Latinos and the gray squares are unarmed white people. What this chart shows quite clearly is that the vast majority of unarmed people killed by the police and major American cities are people of color, the majority of whom are black. So that's who's impacted by this violence in cities.

So, making the research accessible, goes beyond the visualizations. It goes beyond how those are communicated. Just to go into a little bit about the communication, so much of how this research has been shared has been through Twitter, has been taking and unpacking the data in real time to add context, to a national, an unfolding conversation about police violence. And so, for example, when the two police officers who murdered Tamir Rice, were not indicted, we were able immediately in the hours after that decision to share data showing that in fact, there was a pattern in practice of police violence in Cleveland, that Tamir Rice was the 10th person killed by the police since 2015, through 2014, and when Tamir Rice was killed, and that seven of those 10 people were unarmed, and all 10 of those people were black. And there was a systemic issue there that went beyond the individual incident, that meant that accountability would require an approach that went beyond holding just those two officers accountable. It meant holding the system accountable to prevent incidents from happening in the future. The second piece is really understanding how to make your data accessible by publishing the raw data online. It's kind of a straightforward thing, but all of the data, all of the spreadsheets that inform the analyses that, that I've shown you, and then I will go over over the course of this presentation, all the data is public, and it's public

for two reasons. First and foremost, we care about accountability, we care about accuracy. So you know, any of the claims that I'm going to make in this presentation can be checked against the data, and we want to make sure that this is as open possible. So if I reference a given policy, you can go to the website and click on you know that city and see the exact language of that policy in the link to the policy manual so that you can do a deeper dive into the analysis as well. And also, because, we recognize that there are researchers across the country who have questions that we haven't thought about, that they can use the data to unpack other aspects of police violence. So, for example, once we published the Mapping Police Violence database, we had researchers at Berkeley who were able to show using that data that in the states where people were killed by the police, that it not only impacted those individuals or their family members, it impacted the entire black population in those states for a sustained period of time, in terms of mental health, that after a police killing in a particular state, the black population as a whole reported worse mental health for a sustained period of time. And that, that, that effect was limited to the black population, it was not shown in other groups. Similarly, we were able to show, researchers were able to show using the data in Boston that police shootings were happening at higher rates in cities that had higher levels of residential segregation, that structural and systemic racism was playing a role in influencing rates of police violence as a factor.

Lesson number three: challenge the assumptions of your field. So in any given field, there are a set of assumptions that are often not based in any sort of data whatsoever. In some fields that are fairly well researched, you think about education or psychology, there are assumptions that are based on these foundational studies, that many of which have not really stood the test of time. So you think about the Stanford prison study. Most recently, it has been called into question, the findings of the Stanford prison study, which is one of these foundational psychological studies. You know, Philip Zimbardo, you hear about this in you know, high school psychology classes is like the first study you go over. Well, it turns out that they actually coached some of the participants as to what they would be going through over the course of the study, so it wasn't a natural experiment. This came out very recently and it has called into question the fundamental nature of this foundational study. Similarly, you may have heard of the 30 million word gap for education, where students that or kids that are in families that are lower income, the study found that

by the time that, over the years, they actually receive 30 million fewer words or were exposed to 30 million fewer words, than students from higher income context. Well, it turns out that that study was based on a very small number of kids and families, and that there were huge questions about how they were actually measuring exposure to words. So if you were in a household that had, that didn't have your biological parents but may have had relatives raising you, they weren't counting those words in the context of the 30 million word gap, which as we know, for families, particularly in communities of color, um, you may be raised by your grandmother, by an aunt or uncle. And so many of the findings there were called into question as well. So challenge the assumptions of your field and in policing, this was one of the fields, it turns out where things were almost never based in solid data. So many of the predominant assumptions in the field of policing and in criminal justice writ large, are often based on assumptions that go back generations that are fundamentally rooted in racial bias. So, by show of hands, how many people here have heard some version of this narrative that police are using deadly force at such high rates in the United States, particularly in communities of color, because they are in dangerous environments, in violent communities, and encountering violent criminals, and needing to use deadly force to defend themselves or others from harm, that that explains police violence. By show of hands, how many people have heard some version of this? It's ubiquitous, now? They hadn't really tested that narrative, that's an assumption, right, that's not a data point. They hadn't tested that assumption, in part because they didn't have the data to test the assumption because the federal government doesn't collect it until we had to collect it. So we tested the assumption with the data. These are the 50 largest cities in the country. The red squares are the rates of police violence, and the blue x's are violent crime rates. So what you see here is, there's not a very strong relationship at all that there are cities with much higher rates of violent crime that have relatively low rates of police violence, Detroit is one of those examples, Newark is one of those examples. There are also cities with relatively lower rates of violent crime that have much higher rates of police violence. The community that has the second highest rate of police violence is Orlando, Florida, where I'm from, and that is not, you know, the community with the highest rate of violent crime in the country. So something else is explaining what's going on here and it's not about crime. These are the cities with the 10, the 10 cities that have the highest rates of violent crime in the country. These are the rates of police violence. So a lot of variation, similar context for the police, but substantially different outcomes in terms of how they're responding to those

contexts. Some cities where police are using deadly force at extremely high rates, other cities where it's lower than the national average. So the question became, what are the factors that explain police violence? Because it certainly wasn't the things that we had been told.

So, that brings me to lesson number four, identify and advance evidenced-based solutions. It's one thing to understand the problem. It's another thing to unpack some of the narratives that got us here, that seek to justify the outcomes that we see are problematic. But we have to also use the data to identify and advance effective evidenced-based solutions to this problem. We have to be as rigorous with this issue as we can because literally lives depend on it. And so, looking at the data, the outcomes data on police violence, spanning now we have six years of data, comparing that to policy and practice information, what were the inputs that go into this, we were able to look at use-of-force policies of police departments, looking at community oversight structures and the relative strength of those independent investigations from community oversight structures. We were able to look at practices like broken windows policing, the over-aggressive policing of low-level offenses, looking at police training, looking at different body cameras and filming the police systems that were in place, many of which contributed to the problem rather than solved it. Issues of police militarization, community representation, police union contracts, which are sort of an obscure issue, but actually plays a huge role in this that I'll go into in a second, and mash those up against the data to understand the role that these various solutions that have been proposed play in addressing the issue of police violence. I'm going to give you a breakdown of how we did this analysis.

So, use of force. This is focused on the use of force policies of police departments. So each police department has a policy that determines how and when police can use force and how much force they can use in particular situations. These policies vary and there is not one uniform standard for use of force across the country. So we obtained the use of force policies with the 100 largest police departments in the country and read through them along with legal experts, organizers, researchers, volunteers, students from across the country, and were able to track the ways in which they differed. So I'm going to give you an example here with San Jose. This is San Jose, California, there's like a million people who live in San Jose. This

is their use of force policy. I'm just going to read it word for word. "Officers need not retreat or desist in the reasonable use of force. There's no requirement that officers use a lesser intrusive force option before progressing to a more intrusive force option." Contrast that with Philadelphia. "It is important for the first responding officers to use caution, evaluate the situation, attempt to de-escalate the situation through communication, request a crisis intervention team trained officer, if not personally trained, wait for backup, and await the arrival of a patrol supervisor before taking any action, barring a threat to life. Retreating or repositioning is not a sign of weakness or cowardice by an officer. It is often a tactically superior police procedure rather than the immediate use of force. Only the minimal amount of force necessary to protect life or effect an arrest should be used by an officer. Then finally, the deadly force policy, the application of deadly force is a measure to be employed only in the most extreme circumstances, after all lesser means have failed or could not reasonably be employed. This is the opposite policy. So, San Jose, the officers, you know, don't need to retreat, don't need to desist, don't need to use a lesser force option before progressing to a more intrusive force option, up to, and including deadly force. Philadelphia, they have that requirement on policy. Now the question is, do the policies actually matter? These are words on a piece of paper, there's a whole school of thought that police really don't care about the policies, they're going to do what they're going to do and so this is just words on a piece of paper, we shouldn't focus on this at all. Now, as a data scientist, this is a research question that deserves to be tested. So we mapped out the ways in which the policy restricts use of force. We found eight different ways in which the use of force policies of departments varied and restricted how and when police could use force. So, requiring police to use de-escalation, having a use of force continuum, which is a matrix that says for a certain situation, police can only use this level of force with these types of, you know, tactics. So you can't tase somebody who's sitting down and refusing to get up, for example, banning chokeholds and strangleholds, requiring officers to give a verbal warning before shooting somebody, restricting shooting at moving vehicles, which is a practice that even the Department of Justice says should be banned across the country, but yet the majority of police departments do not ban that. Requires officers to exhaust all other means before shooting all less lethal, non-lethal tactics before shooting, requiring officers to intervene if they witness another officer using excessive force and then finally, requiring officers to report every time they use force, including pointing a firearm at a civilian. So, mapping these out,

the blue squares are , it means the city has the policy in place and the red squares mean they do not. And we map this out for the hundred largest cities in the country at useofforceproject.org. This is an interactive visualization, you can click on one of the rectangles and see you know what the policy language is specifically and why or why we didn't categorize it a certain way. Well, it turns out when you match it up against the rates of police violence, the police departments that had these policies in place were substantially less likely to kill people than the police departments that did not, so much so that, for example, department that required de-escalation were 15% less likely to kill people. Department that required officers to exhaust all other means before shooting somebody were 25% less likely to kill people. And the combination of those policies, when we did a statistical analysis, controlling for other factors like arrest rates, demographics, and a host of other factors, we're able to show that going from zero to all eight of these policies being implemented was associated with the 72% reduction in killings by the police. This is a huge impact for use of force policies.

And in keeping with a commitment to always challenge those narratives that seek to obstruct progress, we want to directly confront some of the narratives that have sought to obstruct progress on changing use of force policies. So, in many cities across the country, when police departments have begun the process of revising their use of force policies, oftentimes in direct response to sustained advocacy and organizing from local organizers, what you hear from police unions, and from conservatives and sometimes from police chiefs, is this idea that any effort to restrict how and when police use force will quote, unquote, handcuff officers and prevent them from defending themselves or others from harm. This is true in Seattle, the police union here is actually, has used these words almost directly to oppose the court mandated changes required under the consent decree from the Department of Justice. You'll notice they never cite a single research study. They never cite any data to support that conclusion. It does not exist. We've looked into it. In fact, when testing this assumption, it's dead wrong. So it turns out that officers are safer in police departments that have a more restrictive use of force policies that not only are there fewer killings by the police or communities safer, but officers are safer as well. And so officers are less likely to be assaulted in the line of duty, less likely to be killed in the line of duty. And also those jurisdictions have the same crime rates as jurisdictions that do not have restrictive use of force policy. So, the narratives that have been used to

obstruct this repeatedly almost as talking points do not hold water when evaluated with the data. So this is akin to the good guy with the gun narrative. Police violence is gun violence, and just like in gun violence, how there are these narratives about the good guy with the gun that are not supported by the facts, but yet have this ubiquitous power to obstruct progress, in police violence, it's no different.

So armed with the data, armed with the research, identifying the types of policies that can reduce police violence in terms of use of force, we were able to advocate at every level of government, meeting with the mayor of Baton Rouge and getting them to change their use of force policy, to adopt five of the eight recommendations I showed you. The research directly informed AB 392 in California, changing their police deadly force standard. And now, the Peace Act has been introduced in Congress, which directly incorporates the language from this analysis, which, if adopted would require every police department that receives federal funding to change its use of force policy to be in line with these recommendations.

But we can go further. So since we started, you started with data on deadly force, because it was data that we were able to collect at a nationwide scale, in part because if somebody is killed by the police, it is a homicide. It is often reported in local media. According to best research estimates about 98% of the time that somebody is killed by the police it is reported in local media. And so we were able to obtain a copy and build a comprehensive database by leveraging the availability of that information. But we've actually been able to go further than that. Now, a number of organizations, including us, have begun to obtain data on all use of force, both deadly force and force that doesn't result in death, data on civilian complaints, data on misconduct lawsuits. And it turns out, when you have enough data, you can begin to apply more sophisticated strategies to actually predict police misconduct. So you may have heard of predictive policing and the, all of the problems and issues with that, in part because the data that they use to actually inform those algorithms is bias data, bias against communities of color and reinforces those issues. Well, it turns out that we can flip that on the police. We can use many of the tools and algorithms that they've developed to actually predict police misconduct and we can do it in much more accurate ways than they can predict anything else. So this is a study by the Invisible

Institute. They got access to 17 years of data on every civilian complaint 23,000 complaints, every use of force report and every misconduct lawsuit for the Chicago Police Department going, spanning this whole time frame, naming 30,000 officers in those complaints. And what they were able to show was that police misconduct spreads through a department like a disease. In fact, they were able to apply a model that's often used in public health to show the spread of misconduct. What you see in terms of the red circles here are officers that have more than one complaint against them, oftentimes multiple complaints against them. And over time, what you see is as new officers, often new recruits, officers that did not have a track record of misconduct, as those officers are on the same patrols, are under the supervision of, are named as witness officers in complaints against officers that already have a track record of misconduct, those officers over time begin exhibiting the same behavior as the officers that have the highest rates of use of force and the highest rates of misconduct. And so within this broader universe of 30,000 officers, there were 1,300 officers that had substantially higher rates of use of force, substantially higher misconduct rates, substantially higher risk of being named in a lawsuit. But that grows over time as more officers are exposed to those small to that smaller number of officers. So much so that being exposed to an officer with a track record of misconduct was associated with having a nine times higher rate of being reported for police misconduct over this time frame, a five times higher rate of shooting somebody and a four times higher rate of using nonlethal force against somebody. So using these algorithms, we can actually predict who those officers are. And we can design interventions that are tailored on addressing this problem in the beginning before it spreads throughout a department and makes the situation exponentially worse. Now, the reason that this spreads is not because it's not solely because there are a small group of a smaller group of officers that have higher rates of misconduct, it is because the system as a whole refuses to hold any of those officers accountable so that they can continue to spread that misconduct through the department.

Which leads me to a conversation about accountability. So, police use of force policies are really important as a prevention strategy putting in place higher standards that officers can be held accountable to if the right accountability structures are put in place to enforce those standards. And what we found when we interrogated the accountability structure was that there were a set of policies and in particular police union contracts, that played a major role in making it very difficult to hold the

police accountable. So I'm going to talk about police union contracts in particular, because I think this is an issue that oftentimes does not get talked about enough. It's sort of in the weeds, you know, but it is something that plays a substantial role in this issue. So we looked at the police union contracts for the 100 largest cities in the country, and read through them, worked with professors really focused on this, there's like a handful of people across the country that like this is what they do, to review those contracts and figure out all the ways in which they made it harder to hold police accountable. And we identified six ways, six categories in which those police union contracts made it harder to hold police accountable. So for example, some contracts disqualified complaints of misconduct if they were submitted after a certain amount of time after the incident. So in Columbus, Ohio, if you are beaten up by the police, and you wait longer than 56 days to submit your complaint bill, it will throw out the complaint, it won't result in any discipline or accountability. In Seattle, if you report police misconduct and the investigation takes longer than 180 days, the investigation takes longer than 180 days, not you not submitting on time or anything like that. They didn't do their work and it takes longer than 180 days, well, no discipline can result for the misconduct regardless of whether the video shows it happening, regardless of how much evidence there is of it happening, no discipline can result because the city has negotiated with the police union to include that language in its contract. There were a range of other ways in which police union contracts obstruct accountability as well. And a lot of that has to do with the interrogation process. So when police shoot somebody or commitments or other misconduct, oftentimes they are interrogated after the fact. They're not interrogated on the scene, they're not questioned on the scene, they get what's called a cooling off period. Oftentimes, it's 48 hours or longer to essentially get their facts right before they tell the investigators what happened. And that process is actually based in, the reason that that 48 hour rule is in so many contracts is because of a research study that was produced by the For Science Institute. So the For Science Institute is this guy who was a former police officer who goes around the country testifying in police shootings cases as a use of force expert. And he basically says that the police are justified every time, that's like his role he gets up there, says that he's also the person who created the 21 foot rule, which means that if somebody is 21 feet away, essentially that they can run to you and attack you quick enough that you wouldn't be able to defend yourself in time. So if you shoot that person, it's totally justified under those circumstances. That was him. So he created a, this 48 hour rule based on a series of studies,

none of which actually were focused on police, none of which specifically said that police should get these protections and not anyone else. But he took findings that he had from studies that he did not do, said that there should be a 48 hour cooling off period for police because police are uniquely in stressful situations that nobody else in society experiences. And so they need to have two sleep cycles in order for the adrenaline to drain from their bodies so that they can give an accurate recollection of events. So if you're arrested for murder, like you don't get a 48 hour rule, right like if you are if you are a victim in a domestic violence incident, you don't get a 48 hour rule. It is solely for police that they get these protections, enshrined in these contracts, where they don't have to answer questions for 48 hours and in some places it's even longer. So in Louisiana, it's 30 days, 30 days, they get a month, a month after committing misconduct before they can be questioned about it. So, you know, when Alton Sterling was murdered, murdered by the police in Baton Rouge. A lot of people were like, you know, why aren't we getting any information out in the early days? Why was there no statement? Why are they not questioning the officers? Well, it turns out that state law, based on aggressive lobbying from police unions, said that they get 30 days, so there was nothing that the department could do, because the city had already signed away their rights to interrogating the officers for 30 days.

So that's restrictions and delays and interrogations. I'm just going to go into this one in particular because it's particularly egregious. This is erasing records of misconduct. So the majority, 53% of the cities that we looked at, again, we looked at the hundred largest cities in the country, 53% of the cities that have contracts required or allowed police officers to expunge or erase or destroy records of their misconduct after a certain amount of time, that they're, the time period ranges, the types of misconduct that can be expunged range. But in some cases, it is, like wild. So this is Baton Rouge. And it says that if a company — this is their contract — if a complaint against an officer after investigation is found to be not sustained, then all references to the same will be purged after 18 months, providing that the officer has no other complaints during that 18 month period. So not sustained. This sounds like, you know, the officers were exonerated, there was no misconduct, you know, why not, you know, destroy the records? Well, it turns out that only one in every 13 complaints nationwide is sustained. And that's not because 12 out of 13 people who report police misconduct are somehow lying on sworn affidavits that they can be prosecuted for. It's because

the police often investigate themselves and determine that no misconduct occurred. So under this, those 12 out of 13 complaints will be purged after 18 months. Moreover, if any complaint results in suspension, so these are the ones that do get sustained, meaning they're upheld by the investigation, then all records will be destroyed after five years, unless there are similar complaints with that within that time period, records in demotion, if the complaint results in demotion, that all records will be destroyed after five years, unless there's similar complaints. If the complaint involves sexual misconduct, then all records will be destroyed after five years unless there are similar complaints within that time period. Now, it goes on, the contract goes on to talk specifically about domestic violence destroyed after five years, to talk about sexual assault, specifically, destroyed after five years. So they're just destroying the evidence of misconduct so that predictive model I showed you only works if you have the data on past misconduct. In many cities, they have actually actively destroyed that data, erasing the evidence that would allow us to predict future misconduct within the department. And what's also interesting about this, you'll notice it says unless there are similar complaints within that time period as sort of a, a way of getting around this. Well, it turns out that what's classified as similar is evaluated inconsistently across departments. So in St. Louis, for example, we got access to all of their civilian complaints data. There were records in there, there were reports of misconduct, that were very clearly acts of battery, acts of assault, acts of domestic violence by the police, that were classified as discourtesy. So that wouldn't be considered a similar complaint. So, there are many ways in which they are able to manipulate the system to actually destroy records. And in some places like Cleveland, there's just not even a caveat. It's just regardless of whether the similar complaints after two to three years, the records are destroyed.

Seattle. So, I noted that there were six categories of issues with police union contracts that we flagged. There were only a handful of cities that had issues within all six of those categories. Seattle was one of those cities. Seattle has one of the worst police union contracts in the country. That contract by the way, is up for renegotiation next year. So that's the opportunity to actually change the contract because city council has to vote on these contracts and approve them. And so if you hold them accountable to rejecting any contract that includes language like this, they might just do so. So this is Seattle's contract. It says that if the city has reason to discipline an officer, the discipline shall be administered in a manner not

intended to embarrass the officer before other officers or the public. Sounds kind of interesting. There's no definition section here. So like what embarrassment means is not defined. But nobody else gets this in their job, right? Like this is not something that you get. And there are only two contracts that we saw in our analysis that had this language, this one and Portland, Portland [laughter], yes, Portland's contract, that embarrassment clause has actually been used recently. So there was a case in Portland where a police sergeant, whose name was Mark Kruger, he was caught erecting a statue or a what they called a shrine to Nazi soldiers in a public park in Portland, the police sergeant. And like literally, like Nazi soldiers, SS soldiers, and he was caught. They held him accountable. They sought to fire him. They actually did fire him. But then he was able to get his job back. And one of the ways in which was able to get his job back was saying that he was able to point to text messages that were sent between the supervisors, and the other administrative staff and the department calling him a Nazi. And saying that that was meant to embarrass him. And so, because he was embarrassed, it violates the contract and if it violates the contract, you get your job back. So this is actually a huge issue. Also Seattle and related to this. The decision of the arbitrator shall be final, conclusive, and binding upon the city, the Guild, which is the police union, and union employees. Now arbitration. Each contract articulates an appeal process. So if a department, if a officer feels like they've been unjustifiably fired or disciplined, there's a process that they can appeal that decision. Now, in some contracts, that process means that they're able to take the decision to arbitration. That means that the police union and the city have to both mutually agree on a lawyer that hears the case and has full power to decide to reinstate that officer plus back pay. Not the city, not the oversight agency, not anyone who's accountable to the public. A random lawyer that is picked with the consent of the police union has full power to reinstate any officer fired in the city of Seattle. Fun fact. And it turns out that they use this provision quite often. So, just here in Seattle, because they added this, they kept the arbitration provision in the contract most recently, last year when they approved the last version of the contract. The federal judge overseeing the consent decree here has now ruled that Seattle was no longer in compliance with that consent decree, because their contract is so messed up, specifically because it has this arbitration clause and that arbitration clause is utilized quite often in cities across the country. So, in San Antonio, 70% of all officers who are fired are reinstated, plus back pay, because of that one section of their contract, that one line. Philadelphia 62%, Honolulu 58%, DC 45%, Oklahoma City 40%, Seattle's 21%

but still, we're talking about officers in pretty egregious situations. So, for example, there was just recently a case where an officer's reinstated after punching a Black woman in the face who was handcuffed in the backseat of a police car. Her name was Miyekko and the city fired him and he got reinstated through arbitration. So again, this happens more often than you think it does. The single provision in the contract is often responsible for a substantial number of officers who end up throughout this entire process getting fired, which is rare enough, a substantial number of those officers just get rehired right after that because of the contract.

So, by the way, it doesn't have to be this way. Like there are cities that do things differently. So for example, in Delano, California, the contract says the city council has the authority to overrule the arbitrator within 30 days of a decision. In some places, no discipline at all, a subject to arbitration. In other places, discipline for serious misconduct is not subject to arbitration. So Seattle can make a different choice about who should be the final decision maker for police discipline that's not a random lawyer who's most often a white man from the arbitration association that is identified with the consent of the police union.

So, since we launched that, that study on police union contracts, we have seen researchers take that information and actually investigate other aspects of how police union contracts impact the accountability process, helping us draw connections between the policy information and the outcomes in terms of police violence and misconduct. So for example, a recent study that just came out in August of this year was able to show that cities that recently entered collective bargaining agreements for the first time, particularly for sheriff's departments, were, had a substantial increase in police misconduct reports after entering those agreements, that this would, they were able to do this, because in Florida, only since 2003, have sheriff's departments been allowed to enter into these agreements, whereas the police departments have been allowed to do that even in Florida going back several decades.

And so, what they were able to show was that upon joining these agreements compared to the control group, which was the police departments, the sheriffs that entered these agreements actually had substantial increases in incidences of

violent misconduct, and overall complaints filed. They also were less likely to sustain a complaint, less likely to uphold the complaint. Similarly, researchers at, a researcher at Oxford was able to show that by taking the data set on police union contracts, that those cities that had more issues in the contract that was associated with a substantial and significantly higher rate of police violence, particularly against unarmed people. So Seattle, which has all six of those issues, is flagged as one of those departments that has a substantially higher rate of police violence. And this is part of the reason.

Lesson number five: it will take all of us to win. So, having the data is one thing, using it to identify solutions is another thing. But, the organizing challenges, how do we actually make impact in a context where there are 18,000 different departments across the country? And change requires us to be pushing for change in every single one of those jurisdictions, in every state, because it'll require both local, state, and federal legislation to address this issue. So how do we impact an issue that's just so massive, that is so decentralized in ways that are strategic in ways that are aligned to what the data is showing are the most prevalent issues, in ways that are evidence based. And that requires us to think fundamentally different about the purpose of this research, the purpose of this data. And that is, the purpose is to make it as accessible and actionable and available as possible to empower people all across the country, within their own communities, to be a part of that change. We can't be in every room, nor should we be in every room. We don't know the local dynamics in every community. We have met with local state and federal elected officials, presidential candidates informed and use the research to inform those platforms. But we're a very small team, we don't have a lot of funding at all. And that means that we cannot, nor should we be in every community pushing for change. But what we can do is make information available and accessible enough that people can take it and run with it in substantive ways. So there are a couple ways that we have been able to do this. One is by leveraging technology to involve as many people as possible in the process of producing the research, producing the data, understanding how to collect the data, how to evaluate police policies, how to advocate for those policies in the context of a city council meeting, or state legislative meeting. And that really started with this survey. So, this was launched on Twitter, I believe in 2015. And it identified a couple of areas where people can get involved to do work. So did you want to help collect data? Did you want to help evaluate your city's policies? Did you want to participate in direct actions? Track legislation?

We had 18,000 people sign up for this over the course of several weeks since launching this on Twitter. Like side note, that was, it's a good problem to have, but it is, on the back end, that means I got a massive CSV file of 18,000 rows with like, I don't know maybe like 20 columns with in-depth information, like everybody, like put in real information, suggestions of what should happen in the world. And it was like literally just my job to go through all of that and like figure out what to do with people. And if I didn't do it in a timely way, like there might be people in this room who are like you never responded to me, what happened? That's why. But, we were able to get thousands of people involved in the work directly based on that survey. So we added people to slack groups that had channels for every state, channels for particular projects, channels for types of work, like data work, elections work, policy work, design and development work. And those are the people who produce the research that I showed you, the people who collect the data, the people who helped review policies of their own police departments, people who designed and developed the data visualizations and the websites. And that has been what's been so powerful about this is that in the end, we're able not only to produce research that has changed policy, but also to produce individuals who could be part of that change directly, who had built their capacity and expertise to engage in change at the local level in substantive ways, that they might not have had exposure to otherwise. So part of this is figuring out how to democratize the process of advocacy. So it's not limited to a small number of organizations or institutions with all kinds of barriers to entry. But how do we break down those barriers and realize and leverage the scale of a movement to address some of these fundamental issues. Another way has been democratizing and making easier the process of engaging your elected officials. And they're taking this work on means change at every level of government, engaging local officials, city council member, your mayor, your police chief, engaging your state legislators, and Governor, it means engaging your members of Congress. Not really the president this point, but hopefully at some point we'll have somebody we can work with. And part of how we're able to facilitate that at scale was to create this tool. So this tool allows you to put in your location, you click "Find a Representative." It shows you your local, state, and federal representatives. It shows you what votes they've taken on passed bills that address police violence. And it shows you and allows you to contact them. The whole process takes three quick clicks or less. And by making this process easy, right, so we had to do this. It was a lot of volunteers collecting a lot of data on tracking legislation in every single state across the country, tracking who voted for

what, on those bills, tracking who you're compiling contact information for all of these legislators particular at the local level where very little of this information existed, building it all and designing and developing it into a tool like this, and then operationalizing it. And through this tool, we've had over 100,000 people contact their representatives to demand change.

And we've seen some changes. So since 2014, when the movement began, we've seen a number of states have actually signed legislation to address police violence to some degree. In fact, 40 states have signed some legislation since 2014. Before that, before 2014, 2013, 2012, every single year you would see one or two states sign a bill to address some aspects of police accountability and police violence. Now we're seeing this happen all across the country, even in places that we didn't, we wouldn't think of it happening. So Montana, deep red state, Montana has the strongest policy on police demilitarization in the country that was signed in 2015. It goes further than what the Obama administration signed in terms of executive order. It prevents not only the transfer of police weapons and military weapons to police departments from the federal government, which includes not only and this is a sort of an in the weeds thing, but the Obama administration's directive when he signed an executive order banning some aspects of police militarization, it didn't include tanks with wheels, it only included tanks with the tracked wheels. So those like MRAP armored personnel carriers, those you could still get as a police department. You just couldn't get like the tank with the tracked wheels. That was the only difference was the tracks in the wheels. So under the Obama administration, they took some steps to curtail this issue, but they really didn't go far enough. And, by the way, the cities that receive more of these military weapons, research shows they're more likely to kill people. But Montana signed legislation that bans both types of tanks, bans drones, military aircraft, a range of other militarized equipment. And it prevents cities from using federal funds to purchase the equipment even outside of that department of defense 1033 program. So the 1033 program is a program where you can get access to any of these military weapons. All you have to do is pay shipping and handling. You don't pay for the actual weapons, you don't pay for the tank, you just pay for the shipment costs. And under the Trump administration, he repealed that executive order. So now they can get the tanks with the tracks. So we've seen some progress in states even those that you wouldn't expect and in some places, now, overall, this might look good it is, it still reflects an environment

where so much more needs to be done, we've only scratched the surface of what needs to be done because in some places we may have signed one bill. But that bill is not including all the types of things that need to happen to address police violence. So for example, you know, in places like Illinois, they've signed legislation where it establishes a police misconduct database. So if an officer is fired for misconduct that goes to a statewide database that other departments are required to check before they rehire that officer, it doesn't ban them from rehiring the officer though, so doesn't go far enough. They've banned chokeholds in Illinois as well through recent legislation, but they haven't banned strangleholds which are really quite similar when you think about it. So again, this, they've started to take action, but there's a lot more that they can do. There are some places that have gone further though, than most. So Connecticut is one of those states where they've signed a range of different bills since 2014 that have addressed this more comprehensively. So now in Connecticut, not only if you are fired from misconduct, or resign under investigation from misconduct as a police officer, not only are they tracking that at the state level, but you are banned from being rehired. Not only that, but all killings by the police and other police shootings, whether or not they caused deaths, are required to be independently investigated and prosecuted. They have begun to change the police deadly force standard. They have a law that actually requires police departments with a certain number of folks of color in the community, requires those police department to set clear targets and goals for changing the composition, racial composition of the force. So they've done a range of different things. Obviously, they could go further, but we're starting to see some movement in particular states, which is interesting.

And we're seeing impact. So it's one thing to think about policy. But does this actually matter, do the policies impact the outcomes in the end? And so we track the outcomes. And what we're seeing is that they have been impacting the outcomes in the jurisdictions that have adopted some of these changes. We're seeing substantial decreases in people who are shot by the police. So this is Oakland, for example. Oakland was investigated and under consent decree by the Department of Justice in, I believe 2011, 2012. And they've been under that court, under that federal monitoring during that entire time period still under it today. And they were mandated to adopt many of the types of changes that I've described and to change the use of force policy, to create an early warning system, they had to change their oversight and accountability structure,

through a citizen led ballot initiative process that local organizers fought hard and invested in in putting on the ballot. Oakland now has one of the strongest police oversight structures in the country, the power to discipline police officers and that's making a difference. So Oakland went from about 7, 7.4, 7.5 police shootings a year just five years, just six or seven years ago. And now they are at zero so far this year. Last year they had one police shooting, the year before they had one, the year before that they had zero, but that's a substantial difference. They've brought this down to one and zero. And they've done that through policy change, through changing the systems and structures of policing, through making, through local organizing, which pushed for those changes to happen, through federal intervention. So it was a combination of, a variety of factors that have proven that this actually can be done not only in Oakland but in cities across the country. Similarly, Stockton changed their use of force policy in response to local organizing and the leadership of Mayor Michael Tubbs. It changed their policy in early 2017. They've seen a dramatic decrease in, 80% decrease in, police shootings, since changing their policy. We've seen in Chicago police shootings have dropped by about 70%. In Baltimore, they've dropped similarly, New York City they've dropped substantially, LA last year had the lowest rate of police shootings, the second lowest rate of police shootings in their history. So we're seeing some progress, particularly in larger cities, and particularly in cities that have had sustained, supported organizing infrastructure that has pushed for those changes. And those changes have met fundamental differences in terms of lives saved, in terms of communities being safer, and in terms of any police violence, so this can be done. It can be done in Seattle, it can be done all across the country, but it will take resourcing and supporting and equipping people all across the country to be a part of that change. I mean, every single one of the 18,000 jurisdictions across the country.

And so, I'll end with this. There are 104 million Americans, according to Pew Research surveys, that support the Black Lives Matter movement, 104 million Americans who support the Black Lives Matter movement. At best, a tiny fraction of that many people are actively involved in the work. A tiny fraction. What if we got everybody involved in the work? Like how do we leverage the potential of a mass movement? How do we reach 104 million people across the country? How do we equip them with the skills, the data, the capacity, the organizing infrastructure and resources to engage in advocacy in every single one of those 18,000 jurisdictions across the country and

in every level of government? What are the technologies that will be required to do that at scale? What are the organizing approaches radically inclusive approaches to organizing that will facilitate this onboarding for this many people? What are the resources that we'll need as a movement and collectively, in order to support that many people in this work? Those are the fundamental questions that will determine whether we get to transformational change not only on police violence, but for so many of the issues that we care about. If we want to, if we want to deal with climate change, there are billions of people across the world that care about this issue deeply. How are we actively engaging them in the work? If you want to deal with gun violence, same thing. If you want to deal with reproductive justice, same thing. For many of these fundamental social issues, we usually have more people on our side than we have against us. 104 million people is a lot more than the 60 million people who voted for Donald Trump. But did we turn out 104 million people? No, right, so how do we actually leverage the potential of a mass movement and direct it strategically and coordinate in a way where it can reach transformational change, in ways that are informed by the data, driven by the data, but ultimately reflect the experiences, the skill sets and the capacity of people all across this country. So that's the work that needs to get done and I'm hopeful that you all can be a part of that work as well, because it'll take each and every one of you engaged in this work in your own way in order to get to the change that we need to get to. So those are my comments and I'll be happy to take questions.

Q&A SESSION (1:07:40)

Anna Lauren Hoffman: So if you want, if you have a question, please step to the microphone on either side. We'll alternate back and forth. And so go ahead and take a second to do that. And then I'll let you start fielding questions.

(1:08:50) **Participant 1:** Hi. So how do you envision the democratization of data science so that, you know, the next generation of folks, of data scientists, can be much larger and have a lot more impact and social justice and a lot of the other world's problems using data science?

Sam Sinyangwe: Yeah, so I think a big part of this is making the work accessible, in making the data accessible to people, right? So we don't use like extremely inaccessible, you know, language in order to describe what we're seeing. We do produce, so for example, the use of force project, there's an academic study, an academic paper that I wrote that goes along with it. But that's not even the main thing. It probably has maybe 100 to 1,000, as many views or reads as the site. And part of this thinking is how do we unpack the data in ways that people can see how it's relevant to their lives, specifically, how it's relevant to their city or state, how it's relevant to their community. So we're disaggregating the data by race or by gender, so all of those are some of the types of things that we need to be thinking about in terms of how we produce, how we share and visualize the data to make it relevant to people where they are. I think the second piece is we have to be active in communicating about the data and what it means. It's not enough to sort of write, to do this, you know, incredibly dense study and produce this academic paper that, you know, maybe your professors will read and understand, but few other people will. We have to think differently about what the, what a finished product looks like in, in research in general, in academia. And in data science, right, we need to be thinking about, the finished product might actually look like a tweet or a thread. And that's okay. Right? It might actually look like a thread that links to your paper, but you recognize that maybe not everybody will read the paper, but they're going to get the key points from that thread that you made on Twitter. And so part of this is thinking about what are the, where are people at and how do we reach them? So I think that has been what has animated a lot of the ways in which we've approached the work. But another piece of this is also thinking about how we're being responsive to each individual and their skill set, their, the amount of time they have, what their interests are, and reaching them where they are in ways that are aligned with their user profile. Right. I think that this is also a fundamental issue as well, where I think currently the model for getting involved in organizing work or activism is something like this: you see something online that you know, you are really frustrated about, you really care about, that impacts you or resonates with you. And you reach out to an organization to get involved, usually by email. Maybe like in somebody's mentions, which, either way, and maybe you get an email back, maybe not. If you do get an email back, it might be two weeks after the fact. By that point, you may have already lost interest, you may no longer have as much time to commit, you may have already

tried to sign up for another cause or another issue. So essentially, we've lost 99% of the people who originally were interested in it by creating processes that had so many barriers to entry. So I think a data challenge is, can we collect the data on the front end to immediately connect people to the issues and actions they can take right away to onboard them to the work without needing an intermediary? I think that's a huge challenge as well, that would allow us to scale this work much further. Because otherwise, it's me looking through this massive CSV file of 18,000 people. And I don't think that that's a scalable model. So I think that like there's a fundamental data challenge around how do we organize people around the advocacy work that needs to get done once you produce the data? And then there's the challenge of how do we produce the data in ways that allow its findings to be heard, to be understood, and to be communicated?

(1:12:35) **Participant 2:** Thank you. We brought a bunch of public health students here tonight and you really inspired them to study their Biostatistics and Epidemiology. So thank you.

I wonder if you have ever seen cities where the county or state labor council called in the police guild as not acting as a union, acting more like a gang?

Sam Sinyangwe: So places where the police were called, were said to be acting like a gang?

Participant 2: So other labor unions noticing that this isn't really a union.

Sam Sinyangwe: Great question. This is really contentious, particular on the left. I think, you know, I support union rights, I support collective bargaining rights. I think there is something different about police unions, right. I think we should just call it out. And it's tough because police unions get bipartisan support. They get bipartisan support, because on the left, Democrats don't want to go after unions, which is fair. On the right, Republicans want to dismantle every union that isn't a police union. So you look at Wisconsin, Scott Walker, like the number one person dismantling unions, in his legislation that he signed dismantling unions in Wisconsin, it exempted police

and firefighters union. So they, the Republicans are okay with unionizing as long as it's the police. So I think that that is, that is one of the big political challenges here. We have seen, I think in some communities, there are unlikely allies that have come in, come into the work, particularly addressing police union contracts that we weren't expecting. So in Austin, where the Austin Justice Coalition, organized a massive campaign to oppose the police union contract getting reauthorized, that campaign was successful. It was one of the only examples where organizers have successfully changed the police union contract. And one of the strategies that they had was actually they partnered with folks who were organizers for domestic violence, fighting domestic violence, and one of the ways they were able to do that was show, well, they're destroying all this evidence of police misconduct. It turns out research shows that about 10% of families in the U.S. report some form of domestic violence, 40% of law enforcement families do, so 40% is huge, it's like half almost half of police families, is domestic violence. And that could be a whole nother body of work, but in particular, destroying that evidence as well. Because when you report those, when you report domestic violence, the police union contract obstructs that in two ways, one, many of these contracts require that whenever you submit a complaint about the police, it cannot be anonymous and instead, your name and or your address is given to the police officer before they interrogate the police officer. So you can imagine that a lot of people are not going to be willing to come forward if they cannot remain anonymous and if the only thing that's going to happen most likely at the end is not any sort of accountability. It's only one in 13 complaints ever results in accountability. And instead, the other thing that will happen is you're giving the police your name and address and saying that you complained about them. So, so I think part of it was figuring how do we build a broad coalition around many different groups that are impacted by this that we might not immediately think of, but that intersect with so many of the issues that police violence, that police violence intersects with so many issues in so many different communities. It's about figuring out where those intersections are, partnering in building broad coalitions around it. And, you know, it's possible that some unions could be a part of that. I think, you know, we see, we've yet to see, we've yet to see substantial support I think within, at the national level, like for example, the AFL-CIO and other groups like coming out against police unions, I haven't seen that. But I think at the local level, we're starting to see some movement.

Anna Lauren Hoffman: I just want to note, quickly, we do have a hard stop by nine. So I'm going to mix up the format just a tiny bit so we can get a few more voices. And I'm going to have this side and that side, ask their questions. And then Sam will field them kind of collectively, that's a challenge for you. So thank you, and then and then we'll do the next two. And we may have a chance to get past that. But we're going to go that way.

(1:16:50) **Participant 3:** Thank you so much for your presentation. I'm very inspired and I learned a lot. My question is what, how would you suggest having a dialogue with some community members who might be very trusted distrusting of the police force in general, and might not believe that policies to change the police force would do any good. Speaking personally from Philadelphia, a lot of the organizing efforts are around prison and police abolition. So kind of how do you see that organizing and the kind of work that you do end up marrying together?

Sam Sinyangwe: Yeah. So I think they're consistent. So, this is complicated, right? I think. First and foremost, we need to be dramatically reducing the investment in police and dramatically scaling up the investment in alternatives to the police as an interim strategy before we abolish the police entirely. I think we should, that should be the goal, that should be the vision, we should be using data to evaluate how we can get to that point. In the process, the police are still killing people. And there are policies they could be adopting right now that could save lives, and to not advocate for those policies, I think, is not honoring the value that that could actually have in people's lives. Right. So I think it's both/and: We need to be pushing for fundamentally divesting from policing strategies, fundamentally scaling up alternatives. There are some examples of that. So Eugene, Oregon, has the cahoots model, which is if you call 911, one out of five of those calls, they send a mental health provider instead of a police officer. So how do they do that? Well, they've developed a whole system where there's a set of questions that they asked you if you call, and if you are having a mental health crisis, if you need a welfare check, which by the way, most certainly would have saved Atatiana Jefferson's life in Fort Worth, if they had a similar program, they will send a mental health provider to do that instead of a police officer. That is, broadly an approach that could be scaled up to eventually phase out the use of police. Right. And I think that

that is fine. We should be doing that and iteratively based on the evidence of effectiveness, based on the capacity of alternatives to to address that demand, right and I think that that's fine. At the same time, the police are still killing people, right. And so, we have to figure out how to do both. We have to figure out how to implement proven solutions today that can save lives. At the same time as we scale up an infrastructure to respond to issues and communities differently than policing. Part of that is decriminalization of low-level offenses. Part of that is investing in alternatives to mental health issues, substance abuse, you know, welfare checks in general. And all of those things are models that have started to happen in some places that we're learning from. Right. And I think part of this as researchers is, how did they build the process? Right, so in Portland, meeting with city council members in Portland, they were very interested in replicating this model, because 58% of all use of force incidents in Portland are against folks who are houseless. 58%. So they're thinking about what could be an alternative strategy when somebody calls the police on somebody who's houseless? Can we have a different responder who's not an armed police officer? And they're having to work through like, what does that mean? Who, who is going to be the responder? Right. So now they're thinking about, for example, having folks who are mental health providers respond, but have them based in fire departments across the city, because there's already an infrastructure of fire departments around that could be deployed pretty rapidly to a given situation. They're thinking about what are the set of questions that we ask on that 911 call, recognize that people are in crisis, oftentimes you don't have time to answer like 92,000 questions when you're calling 911. But, you know, there might be, you know, is the person, you know, is this a mental health issue? Is the person armed with a gun? Like there are a set of questions that might be able to elicit a different response? That that's those are the types of things that they are considering in Portland, and the types of questions that we have to be asking all across the country when you think about scaling up alternatives to police. The last thing about this is the research supports the efficacy of community based approaches to issues of crime, far more than it supports the efficacy of policing strategies. So this is not a question of, you know, an untested model or an untested idea that somehow communities can be effective in preventing crime. This is something where you look at research, most recently from Patrick Sharkey, who looked at the crime decline that's happened since the 1980s. He found that for every 10 additional nonprofit organizations that were focused, the community-based nonprofits in a given city, it was associated

with a substantial reduction in the murder rate, in the violent crime rate, and in the property crime rate. 9% reduction in the murder rate, 6% reduction in violent crime, 4% reduction in property crime for 10 additional organizations in the city. That's not a whole lot of funding compared to how much goes to police. Police budgets are often above \$100 million in a major city, some cities it's over a billion dollars. Sustaining 10 organizations is far less investment and has far better return on investment than continuing to invest in police. So both ends and we meet with cities across the country, it is pushing both of those points simultaneously because they're both really important.

(1:22:00) **Participant 4:** Hi. So I was just wondering about how you, I'm sure it's different across different projects, but how you're operationalizing police violence, if you're counting that on-duty, off-duty, if partner violence is counted as police violence, is suicide using a service weapon is counted as police violence or not?

Sam Sinyangwe: Great question. So currently it is, for the data that shows young people who, the data on people who are being killed by the police, it's anybody who's been killed by a police officer, whether they were on-duty or off-duty and that includes domestic violence incidents, which is really important because you look at other databases, for example, The Washington Post police shootings database, they don't include off-duty and so the domestic violence incidents are not included in that data. It comprises a more limited, it's about 5% of the total are off duty and 95% are on duty so it remains substantially on duty. But that's what we wanted to include. It does not include suicides. So if somebody let's say there's a standoff and somebody shoots themselves when the jury in the context of like the hostage standoff or something like that, that's not included, there is fatal encounters, that does have a database that includes that. So I would recommend, like if you're interested in that issue, in particular, and there are a lot of things that to think about with this. So in some jurisdictions, there are a suspicious number of suicides being reported by the police. And so this is something where it is important to have a place where you can find that data to do an analysis of.

(1:23:40) **Participant 5:** Thank you, Sam, for all your work. I'm actually a friend of the pod and just in this presentation, and

just in the work you've done, a lot of things you talked about is that local politics matters, right? And so particularly for like when it comes to the role of sheriffs, of prosecutors, city council, and so my question is, has there been any studies looking at like how effective or like what role do these officials play in the reform process particularly? And also like, what the increase of people of color officials being elected, and to all the local political sphere, do they actually like, have a change in this reform process?

Sam Sinyangwe: So yes, local officials play a huge role in this because policing is predominantly funded and operated at the local level. So changing these policies requires city council, requires a mayor to take action, or the police chief can do it on their own, but oftentimes, they're not willing to do it without the city compelling them to do it. So they have to be, they're the number one focus really, I would say, in terms of policy change. They have to sign off on this for it to happen. It's just how it works. But at the same time, I think, this is something that even local policy alone can't do on particular issues. So police union contracts, they are voted on and approved at the local level. But they, the police have been really smart and essentially played a game, played the game better than us for too long, and we were just sort of catching up to what they've been doing. So, with police union contracts, the contracts have what's called a green light provision, which means that if a new contract isn't agreed to mutually by the police union and the city, then the existing contract remains in effect. That means you can't change the contract unless the police union agrees to it. Which means all of these things I told you about are very difficult to change unless you give the police something in exchange. Oftentimes, that means more funding, which we just talked about is not at all a solution. So that requires action at the state level, because states can pass legislation, for example, that prohibits police union contracts from including anything about investigations and discipline. Or like in Nebraska, again, deep red state, they signed legislation that specifically addresses some of the provisions in the state troopers contract that says that contract cannot have these types of provisions that are erase police officer misconduct, for example. So state legislators have to play a role when they can address this issue on the issues that we really need them to take action on, the contracts is one of those, changing state deadly force laws is another, creating police misconduct databases statewide so that if an officer is fired from one department, they can't be rehired from another one, that has to be done at the state level. Right. If it's not being done, federally and federally, again,

Congress, the Senate, Trump ain't going to happen until 2020.
So, so, again, like that's, that's part of the, that's part of the
thinking. You have to evaluate it sort of on a case by case basis.
What's this policy issue? Where does power lie? It tends to be
at the local level on particular issues, you might need some, you
know, you especially need some state action.