

>> The last series of the conference. I'm proud to announce the seekers. Saras has won many awards. He's a candidate in the environmental studies. Sage Pethahtegoose is an experienced actor and assistant director and mixer and a sound editor. Charles C.

Smith is a poet, playwright who has written and edited 14 books.

Charles is the executive director of cultural --

pleuralism in the arts movement Ontario and artistic director of the wind in the leaves collection. And the moderator for this manle discussion is Malindi, a Toronto-based artist and she has an bachelor degree in music theatre performance and passion for people.

>> Thank you so much. I'm Malind Ayienga. I want to dive in because we have beautiful minds here and I don't want to waste any more time. This panel is in response to climate that's pressing. The attention is new in that I'm so grateful that we get to be responsible for how we direct this attention.

Why do we think that keeps failing. We see them put out statements and implement whatever, and then it falls apart. So what is -- apart. So what do you think? The very root, the very nature of a lot of these organizations is they were founded on white supremacy and colonialism and museums show the spoils of war and colonialism, the collecting and the founders and the donors made their money through slave trades. This is -- there's blood in all of this money in a lot of these institutions.

There's a core tenet in the very field. When we look at putting out a statement or half an hour of racism training, how does that address some of the structural components that is inherent in legacy institutions that started in 1901 as well as ones that started in the 60s and whatever. Without addressing the structural issues, it all ends up being Band-Aids. They don't address the lack of hiring of Black and in HR practices and address the lack of collecting and showing and critiquing and engaging with Black artists in museums and galleries and festivals. They don't address the ways that systemic racism and classism only targets particular people to be audience members and that it shuts out entire communities from being able to engage with the works.

So they just haven't -- none of these things actually address the roots -- root causes. We do things that make people feel they can tick off a box. They don't do anything that might tip over the applecart or redistributes power to Black and Indigenous

people. That's what we're asking for now. That's what people are calling for now. That's what people demanding.

They're going to have to get with it.

>> Yeah, I think you really hit the nail on the head there. It is about a redistribution of power, and that is like the only answer and anti-racism because it addresses the systemic nature of it. Spiritually, you think about the United States or Canada or the arts centre. It is all rooted in racism and built off of bloodshed. Of course it's going to be rotten.

It's not a surprise. We have to change what the core is. It seems like a big ask. It seems like it's a big ask.

>> Well, it is a big ask. I prefer Syru' term. It's a term that's been around for sometime.

I find and I've been doing this work for quite sometime is folks don't want to look at history.

We just listen to the way we're having this conversation. We can talk about blood. We can talk about murder. We can talk about how many bodies are in the Atlantic ocean. We can talk about the number of lynchings and the that we are on first nations territory and yet we say the land acknowledgement, but how much are we acting around land acknowledgements. How much are we allied with Indigenous people on sovereignty? I find at times that people would rather ignore the depth of pain, the depth -- so for example, when I say to people, you know, do you know how many people were murdered in the Congo belt? I say 15 million. This is 40 years before the holocaust.

How many did Cecil called in rodiseasia and now call Zimbabwe? How many bodies are in the Atlantic ocean? There were a hundred thousand people on this island called turtle island. Now there's 25 million.

So this is the problem.

People feel too much. I wasn't part of that.

But they're living off the privileges of that.

It's the stories we have experienced that they don't want to hear it. They don't want to KONT front it. This comes from our lives. We want some flowers. We some speculation about your spirituality and that kind of stuff, and you know, whatever, your intoxications.

We're trying to survive here and gain some space. This is one part. They have to

give up their parts of the pie. There's no new pie coming here.

>> Yeah. And especially, you know, that relates back to our global climate crisis. There's no other planet being given to us.

It's the only one we have.

Yeah. Sage, do you have any thoughts about organizations and their antiracist efforts failing, what that's about?

>> So I'm at home right now, and I'm also with my family, and my brother's -- my little brother is having a really tough time right now. I'm like here. So I'm also think being him, because he's a little guy. But I will say just about this is -- I think that these organizations can I have a moment? No.

>> Sure. No need to apologise.

Calling at home [Phone ringing]

>> Everything that I've done online in the last two months has had a little head pop up at one point or a foot, and she likes to insert herself into the show.

[Laughter].

>> Adorable.

>> While we're waiting for Sage to join us again, let's kind of go further and say what supports need to be in place to facilitate this actual change and this exchange of power? And perhaps we can start with supports for -- so if there is -- how do we dot power exchange? How do we make it a smooth transition for everyone?

I know that, you know, for people who hold the power, there's a lot of eke or and resistance and power and fear and scary feelings about relinquishing the power, even though you might know it's the right thing to do. How do we get them to release power?

>> So, you know, I think they have to give up a piece of the pie. And in community. Some of the work that we're doing now is how do we really create hubs within the Black communities so we can come together regularly and we can kind of consider where we're coming from, the challenges we're facing, how do we marshal our resources to create advocacy outside and create connections in our own community and so on. I think the institutions -- I love this conversation when we talk about EDI, equity, diversity, and inclusion, you know who the institutions are that are saying it. Basically they're saying we'll take you into our mainstream historical traditional organizations but then you have to give up who you are. Right in and do their practices. So yeah. They can be more representative, but are they

really? Are they truly opening up to the aesthetic practices that we have? And when some of us go in there, what are we losing from community? What are we losing here? And we are the ones who build our practices that we have and being pushed into and pulled into all these other directions, largely because it's financial, we want to survive. It's taking away there our capacity to build a foundation upon which we can accent our arts practices, connect with each other, and advocate out, build our communities. To me, that's first. I'm really getting a little tired of change the institution so that we can improve. No. It's got to be We have to have choices.

>> Yeah.

>> It makes me think about just to make an analogy, but it makes me think about abolition, when we talk about abolition. We're not just talking about tearing down the structures that don't work. We're talking about planting this beautiful garden that is going to grow in its place, and nourishing and I think supporting Black artists and Black arts administrators and Black curators to do all of this incredible work. I also think that there is a moment where, you know, that beautiful small matter of engineering artwork that Cora Springer made that free understand stAing billboard that had white people, do something.

I think that's such a powerful work.

I think that we need led leaders, arts leaders in these institutions to do something. I look at Andrew Russell who a white theatre director in Seattle and he was like theatre a whiteness problem. There's systemic whiteness. And that no one amount of specialty programming or bringing in BLM to do something for a workshop is going to cure. What he did -- he was a young director.

He was new in the field. He was new in the career. He was a tremendously successful and he said I'm immediately starting a succession plan so I can hand over my leadership to Black women and that's what he did.

He stepped aside. He said I need to step aside now. The conversation is not for me to lead now. I need to actually step aside and make that space, and I think we need more people actually doing that, performative allyship is over.

We need demonstrative change.

We need to you do something as Cora Springer's billboard implores you to do.

Right?

>> They think kind of answers my question. We need the people who have the power to trust that if they relinquish it, it's going to be handled with care and

handled responsibly and handled positively. It's not -- there really is nothing to be afraid of except for the world getting better or people feeling like they're being represented, and there will be other opportunities for you. There are always other opportunities for you. That's the point. The point is there's not as many for us because of Melanin for whatever reason, and yeah. I think that there has to be some trust in that that this is the right thing. I don't know if you saw, there was a fake article that was fake news. It wasn't real. There was a fake news article that went around that the Seattle museum was going to divert and turn its leadership over to Black communities and people were sharing it around. No, that's obviously not going to happen.

If are that split second when I saw it, I was like ah, it says it's as simple as that. The elite directors are not going to land on their feet and find other work? Not at all. Of course they're going to be fine.

Please open up the space for a better conversation.

>> It's also like -- we've never seen this before. What is there to be afraid of? We don't know what it's like to have a whole big ass museum curated by Black women. I don't think we've seen it on that scale. But we have seen what you're doing right now. I don't understand how you can create this whole anxiety story that when BIPOC artists are given space it's going to be detrimental to your experience of the arts or your experience of the world. It can only be nourishing because it's new. That's the thing that really gets me when racism happens in an art sphere. We are the people who are connected to the world so emotionally that we we have to express it so much other than the sky is so nice today.

It's more than that and how we can judge and box it in and separate and exclude, just defeats the whole purpose. And your art will be stale, and it will be boring when it's just this same thing over and over again.

>> But that is what they want.

Let's be honest. Frederick Douglas over 150 years ago said [not audible] sees nothing without a demand. Here we are demanding. And this is what they have in their thinking.

What do they have to lose? They might be able to go to another job. There's a movie I saw a while ago and it was a lone Black guy on a board of directors, some big international company, and the chair of the board dies and so they have to vote on who the new board chair will be. They have a new board election, and you know,

it's a tie. But then they realise nobody voted for putney, the only Black guy on the board.

Then they all vote again and each of them individually thinks I'll give a vote to putney so he doesn't feel so bad. So he wins unanimously. One white guy says we hope you don't change much.

The next scene is a party, all BlackBlack bodies and it's just likelike -- and that's the fear.

You can't look at these institutions and just say the person at the top. Once the person at the top comes in, other things begin to fall awayment in the museums, who are the researchers a the ROM, when they apologised for having the heart of Africa, they brought in Black curators. It wasn't going to be on the floor permanently.

We see this all the time. Oh, yeah, you can have this little bit of space because they don't want to give up control.

>> Gaslighting.

>> Part of the problem with that is they know that we have more access to data, because we're double, triple, quadruple conscious. They don't know.

And they know we are bringing what you're saying, Malindi, but it's not your interests. Sorry.

>> Yeah. I was just going to say I wrote an article for Canadian art yesterday that was called give us permanentance permanence. Because we're tired of the token art gallery or festival. This is a moment where we're saying everything needs to be reshaped and Susan Kahan wrote that book, mounting frustrations and she chronicles 40 or 50 years that show that it's only in moments of civil unrest or protest that the art museum condescends to engage with Black artists and only in the kitchen table gallery or small side shop or a poster series or something small and demonstrative. Never acquisitions into the permanent collection. Never please will you join our board of directors?

. There are very specific things and an entire book that chronicles these stories. I was talking to other people with similar experiences to that.

>> Yeah. When we talk about like, yeah, this gaslighting or tokenizing or these little brief moments of space that is then taken away, can you just tell me a little bit more about how that is damaging and what that says to you and what that message is?

>> Well, basically, that we are there for when they want to connect with us. So for

example, you know, both the organizations are organizations I work in and project grants.

The difficult of project grants is we're always on the hustle much we know about hustling because that's who we are. But depriving and we've been deprived the operating grants, significant grants, doesn't allow us to really build cohesion within the organization, build membership, build services, build political capital, build relationships and funders. So we're always going after, one after, one after one and what gets me in this day and age, oh, we all want equity. We want to address anti-Black racism. We want to get on with first nations people and so on.

As Syrus said, within their box, within their box.

They can contain it. They can make it temporary. They can buy time to making it temporary, which is one of the things I worry about now this it this moment. Are they going to try to buy time so that January, this is past? That's the dilemma. Again, we get drawn in a thousand different directs.

It's hard to keep up -- I noticed the [not audible] members don't get weary. We can't.

It's our life. We cannot get weary. But that's what they're counting on. That's what they're counting on. And I look at it, and I kind of say, you know, and Tanesha Tate of the coons theatre put out something saying it's really good to see all of these theatre companies putting out statements and anti-anti-Black racism but I'm not seeing Black folk on this stage or the administration. I might see the janitorial staff. So the hypocrisy, but people feel they're buying time. Yay, they spoke up for us. No, they didn't. I don't judge you by what you say. I judge you by what you do. I'm not seeing much happening here.

>> Just to continue calling them names, let's call Nina Simone in this. Too slow.

Mississippi Goddam. I keep saying go slow.

Go slow. But that's just the trouble. Too slow. And this is like, you know, it's been -- it's 2020. Like enough. You know, we've made enough of the small changes and incremental --

they always say changing a gallery or museum is like trying to steer a giant battleship.

While you're trying to steer that, we've built an entire armada of tiny ships around you.

We're building our own like --

too slow? We'll take this ship down.

>> Yeah. And also, so many theatre companies or arts institutions have made this quick pivot to adapt to these circumstances now of not being able to congregate because of coronavirus and COVID and social distancing so they are capable of doing a quick change to move their whole season or their whole communication with their membership online. And because we have the power of the internet, we do have access to so many more different people, so many more different partners. Hello, Sage, welcome back. We were just talking about companies gaslighting or organizations gaslighting BIPOC artists by giving us moments to come in and then they're taken away again. So yes, they can change, and we were talking about how it's going too slow and we need to make dramatic change. And I'll bring up the climate crisis again.

We don't have infinite time.

It's not only because we've been making these demands for so long that we're just let's just do it. There's a greater kind of clock ticking to be a little ominous. So when we do finally have BIPOC artists being not just included for a moment or not just included on a certain level, at all levels of the hierarchy and the arts, what do we need to do to make sure that when things go wrong, because they will, that's life. For example, I as an artist show up to the day one for costuming of a show and I'm given a pair of beige tights because someone didn't realise there's a person of colour in the cast and they need brown tights because they have brown skin. How do I make sure there's this place for me to go and say this has happened to me and I won't have to be the one to deal with fixing the problem? Because I just noticed it. I'm not the problem. I'm just clocking in. How do we make sure it's safe to bring those things up so that we can continue to work in community with one another?

>> One of the sad issues for us, sadly, and I'm saying sad twice there, because it is double, is that these folks really don't know. It's incredible. I was in a Zoom session last week, a week ago, something like that.

Someone from Nova Scotia, a white woman who knew nothing about Black presence in Nova Scotia. I'm like huh? How could you not know? But yet, I mean, so you know, the reality is they believe they don't need to know our lives, because really whether they say it or not, we're not important. Any constructive way of setting the agenda. And so they know us very thinly. They know us as we sound like them and work in the same spaces, etc. etc., and that shifts the onus to us to say, I

don't feel so good about this.

And of course, we get tired of that, because it's like over and over and over. I'm sure all of us have been on so many calls over the last week about hi, I want advice from you about -- I have a statement. What should the statement say? Where did I send it to? And I have a conflict on my board, and I have a conflict with my staff. Like oh, man, you know. And so actually to be honest with you, the last few days, I've just said I'm sorry, I can't answer your question right now. You don't realise that in asking the question, you're putting me into more emotional labour where frankly, up to here and beyond.

You know? And so that's a dilemma, because then how do they get to know?

>> Yeah.

>> When there's so willfully ignorant of what this is. And to talk about the stuff we started off in the beginning of the conversation when you get into, you know, it's not just people disappeared. They were murdered.

>> Yeah.

>> Kincaid says it.

Let's be know honest. These aren't war heroes. They're murderers. Whether it's Cecil Rhodes or the confederate generals in the United States.

These were murderers supported by their state at the time. No one wants to talk about that except for us. Because it's been our ancestors and us right now, they continue to kill.

>> Yep.

>> I think about like the needs -- for black and Indigenous people in the arts, we're constantly put in that position, just as you said, Charles of always having to be the whistleblower. At the same time, we're also trying to protect our communities from experiencing more harm, so we're doing the work in the institution to prevent them from being as racist as they are and internalizing that. We experience the racism, but we prevent it from going public and then we do it and it protects the save face and the institution gets to save face.

We intervene in the racism and the institution still gets to look good and we're this go between. It makes it really hard for a lot of Black and Indigenous and racialized folks to say in the arts, because it is so exhausting. And that's, I think, one of the biggest crisis. I think that we can think about in that way. We are losing brilliant, amazing, incredible people who are not sticking around in the arts because of the

violence that they're experiencing or because of there always having to be there.

>> I'd like to comment on that too. I heard what you were saying in your initial opening, I respect what you were saying about held those roots -- these institutions have in colonialism. And it carries to how they're run today. I think this struggle with maintaining like our people in those fields is -- there's a lot of mistrust we have in the way that they're run in general. So I feel like personally, I feel a lot of mistrust in the way that things are hierarchically run and how that translates to me as a person. It doesn't even like fit. Do you know what I'm saying? It's that argument of trying to fit the circle with the triangle. In the way that those systems are shaped, it doesn't make sense to a lot of our people. Even if like a lot of our people don't have a whole lot of knowledge on how our own people would have run things, just because we're not familiar with them. We're not around them all the time. And so how that translates to us being like in other foreign systems. It's just like -- I don't feel like how you're running this organization is right. I don't feel like it's a fit for me, but I really don't have a frame of reference about how it could be run.

Which I think in turn, a lot of our people are choosing to create their own smaller projects.

>> Yep.

>> In their communities. So working in communities is oftentimes like prioritized. We know how to treat our own people or we're working towards that too, if we don't. Right?

>> Yeah.

>> A lot of our people struggle with that too. And I'll just say, like, for example, there was a small group of people around the Georgian Bear -- bay. That's a couple hours north of Toronto. There was this young woman I knew, Kyla Judge and she's from shewany shewannaegant first nation. And creating an environment where all the community was able to come and participate. Everyone was fed. Everyone was taken care of. And I think that's also like a piece too, is you need to -- if you want the community out there and in there, you've got to make sure they're fed. They feel good about being there. They're not like burdened and don't feel out of place in the system. Like y'all were saying about how the -- who is the art for then?

Like what?

>> Yeah.

>> The canoe, there's a lot of teachings in how you build it and all of that, but then also there's a lot of importance in how is that art going to keep going? How is it going to -- I don't want to reservice but how is it going to reservice the community again.

>> On that point, I think it's really -- Sage said something really important about how people come together in community. The two organizations that I work with are ones they created. And I created them because I really got tired of bureaucracies, and I've been in many. I have seen some really good anti-racism work in some of them, but they die, because leadership changes.

People don't want it anymore.

How deep are you going. Next thing you know, I'm out the door, and they've gone back.

And I said enough of that. And what I'm finding, and this is something that really blends with my arts practice. So my group for example, we're totally collaborative. When we say choreography, it's the collective. It's the way we work. The way we get together and rehearse, we might work for 30 minutes on the floor and then we might have a conversation for the next 30 minutes about what was that and how was each person contributing to it? How were they feeling? Yes because they're led by Black bodies, we also have non-Blacks who are in the program as well. How do we educate them? How do they seek out the knowledge of this process and of the subject matter we're dealing with?

Because we're dealing with issues around Black lives and so on and the poetry is mine, and it comes out of that Black lives experience.

The music comes out of predompredominantly jazz and the way those musicians work is pretty much the same way. So we build up aesthetic practices that root us to who we are over time. So for me, I can see the practice linking back to the various parts of southern Africa and so on up through slavery, up through the Harlem renaissance and the Black arts movement through today. It's a continuum and that continuum has always relied on collaborative work.

Each person brings their spirit accident their creativity, their vision to the process, and it gets shared.

>> Yes.

>> That's not what happens in a lot of other companies. The artistic director comes in.

This is it period.

>> Uh-huh.

>> Bingo.

>> And when you have people or BIPOC artists in the space, it's their understanding or their vision of how they want you to fit into their puzzle that is being forced upon you. And that can't possibly be anything close to authentic. Yeah. Did anybody else want to speak to that?

>> Yeah. I just think that back to what you were saying about this triangle in a round hole.

>> Yep. Yeah. You can't --

like take my theatre experience, my education in a class of 48 students at a music theatre college, there were two visible people of colour, myself and one other woman. And it's just such a testament and you can see them first year how many BIPOC artists this year and how many of those people actually graduate. We can say yes, you're accepting people into the institution and hiring people, whatever, but do they stay?

Does it last? Is it the institution a place that is safe and nourishing for these people not only to survive but to flourish? My friend Sierra and I would talk about how much better would we be if we had not spent 15% of our time to facilitate a safe learning environment for ourselves and not that it's easy to do that either. It is work, and to be met with backlash and to be met with ignorancy and people who don't want to change anything for you, but they want you to be there so their school can look diverse.

When you add on the fact that I am paying \$10,000 to be here, so I think that I should probably have a say in who gets to teach me, in what I'm learning and how my inquiries and my concerns are being addressed. And I think it also comes down to like, hierarchy and ageism as well, too, having young students trying to speak up much oftentimes, they're just kind of brushed away because of the youngness and then you compound it with my racialized body and gender and experience and all that as well, and it's deeply discouraging. You're like this is not made for me. I love to sing. I love to story tell. I love to play music and meet people and interact and collaborate. And the only institutions that offer opportunities for that don't work. So where do I go? What do I do? How do I art? And that's when you have these incredible, you know, independent projects that start off, and that's -- then it starts

a bell community because it's about the people first.

It's about who is not being invited? What can we do to make them feel included and then we can figure out how we're going to teach singing and all that kind of stuff afterwards.

>> You brought such an important point in. I think this idea of arts education and who is doing the teaching, who is in these programs that are then funneling into all of these institutions and organizations. You know, it's a really crucial thing. I think about my art school experience and my goodness, I don't think I had a professor of colour.

>> No.

>> I certainly didn't have a Black professor. I do this a lot of in trainings.

Skit people, what was the first time that you had a Black teacher. And it's not in grade one. It's not in grade nine.

It's not even in their master's usually. It's not -- when was the first time hu an Indigenous professor or Indigenous teacher teachure? Just please name it for me. I do that in training and people are stunned when they actually beening it. They're like oh, that's true. So we're not in the education. We're not getting the jobs doing the teaching. We're not in the curriculum. The curriculum isn't being taught to be inclusive of the stories of Black and Indigenous lives. The arts curriculum, I was at a class. I went to UT. I was in an art history class and told that the reason why the textbook and the course didn't have a lot of art by Black and Indigenous women was because they didn't --

"they" didn't start making work with in the 60s because they were busy with colonization processes.

>> They were busy?

>> Busy.

[Laughter].

>> And they didn't start making work until the 60s and then there wasn't good documentation of it. This was taught as a fact in school. So we're not not curriculum. We're not doing the teaching and we're not showing up, and that's who --

these are the schools that are feeding into the theatre companies, into the dance companies, into the arts institutions, into the museum study fields and that -- this is part of the problem. This is part of the structural problem.

It's not just in the institutions.

It's also in the education system that is failing Black artists, Black and Indigenous artists over and over again.

>> I would say it's failing all.

Yes, certainly Black, Indigenous and shall racialized artists.

>> Yes, it's failing all of us.

>> As Syrus said, I've been teaching now for, I guess, 18 years. And every class, I always say to them. Identify the two most important institutions in your life. And invariable they come to institution and parents.

What's the conversation you have about your parents? Education.

I just give facts, no evaluation. I say let's include early childhood in your education because many would have been in early childhood.

How many years have you now been in these institutions for education? And you know, let's say if they're now doing post grad work, so they're 26 odd years, etc., etc.

And I say OK. If 26 years, biggest conversation with your parents about this. How many Indigenous authors have you read in your formal education? Very few hands if any go up. Black?

Black queer? Queer? South Asian? You can go on and on.

And then of course I say white men and all hands go up. Right?

And you know, the interesting thing is they then see -- I put a map of the world up there.

You've only heard from this small part of the world basically.

>> Yeah.

>> That's what it is. So it's about how do you expand your viewpoint to be able to engage in other things? And I also then say to them. Don't just look at the years, but how many hours do you spend in school?

Count your travel time. Count your homework time.

Who are your friends? And where did you meet them? These circles of people that you have been with throughout your life, where did they come from? Your neighbourhood and your school.

Right? So you know, this funnel of education is really about firming up conformity to a paradigm that's been violently subjected to us.

>> Yep. And if I was answering those questions, in elementary school, all of the

other kids were white. All of the other kids -- there was no one that looked like me other than my sister in the grades below. And so perhaps they could say, you know, oh, yeah, I had a Black friend, but I can't say that.

[Laughter].

>> And also, of course, my best friend is Black, does not mean that you have had a diverse experience or that you are nonracist. It's not a get-of-jail-free card get-of-jail-free card just in case you didn't know that.

>> I just want to call the brilliant work of Dr. Cooper into the room, and that beautiful poem song she made that's called I don't care if your nanny was black. And she fed you grits for breakfast every morning and you knew a Black girl in high school and she was nice and then she goes to to say all the reason, she doesn't care. If you listen to anything, kick back and listen to that.

>> The poem is called "I don't care if your nanny is black."

It talked about police brutality and talks about anti-Blackness.

It talks about so many things.

This constant refrain. And she's nice. And I had -- and she was your best friend and she was nice. I don't care. It's so beautiful.

>> I had a similar student years ago who was a white student who when challenged on the other hand these issues was saying her nanny was a south Asian woman and when she dressed her up in Sares and bindies and how close they were and she made her Curry and yada yada. I said why do you think she did that? Oh, because she loved me. I said did she love you, or you were her evaluation? Ooh. In other words.

She was there, her mother --

this is what we did today. I had so much fun. I put this thing and I had sari. And the nanny is employed. It sends shockwaves to think about it from that perspective saying you were the only way the parents in that family could tell whether or not you were being treated well by your nanny. So it's not, you know, this whole notion of friendships and I have a Black friend and Asian friend and all that kind of stuff is troubling. Particularly in this day and age where we find. When I went to school, I was the only Black in my class. I had only one Black teacher in grade 8 with math. Math was my best subject except that year much that was my best year in math.

Mr. Haze Hayes, when I walked in the door, I said you're the teacher? And he said

yes I am.

>> My first Black teacher was a Black woman taught me singing in middle school and now I'm a singer. I'm going to take a question from people who are watching. How can organizations and companies address white fragility through training as they begin to implement zero tolerance anti-racism policies?

>> That's a good one. What do you do when the white folk are feeling personally attacked and defensive and taking it personal? How do we continue to get them to engage and change?

>> I think we can turn to the work of Fractured Atlas.

Fractured Atlas is an arts-based organization that is loosely based around New York.

They do centralized and work from home offices. They do advise artists and one of the things they do is strategic HR and they have developed this team-wide strategy where they have a group and caucus structure so the white people in their organization take responsibility for their own feelings, for their own actions and only learning and own time.

They commit to doing a weekly caucus, and then there's also a group meeting for the racialized members of the team so actually the racialized members get two times a week where they're away from white people which is probably a nice gift. They do this important work together and they're committed to it. It's threaded through the fabric of the organization.

That's one example where somebody is already doing a good job at trying to do that.

Putting the responsibility back on folks who are perpetrating the harm. The tears actually don't stop the need for action.

The anxiety and the stress that you feel for being called out for racism doesn't stop your need to act and your need to respond. So you know, start a caucus. Start a group at your organization where you're going to commit to doing readings tomorrow and commit to helping each other, commit to keeping each other accountable and try to make some of the structural changes in your organization. That's your responsibility. She wishes she could have been a sculptor or a painter or a gardener, but she was forced into this world of struggle because of oppression and she was forced to be a warrior and a struggler. Fanny Hamer says as racialized people, we were born in the mess so they were caught up in. For white

people, they haven't had to get involved.

Now the ball is in your court.

This is your responsibility to do this work, to do this labour, to do this work with your people to make sure that we are addressing these things.

>> Yep.

>> There are two other tools that are often used. One is called the privilege watt. It used to be called getting on the bus. They identify privileges based on race, sexualorientation, age, etc.

etc.

That's again the process is one where people discover where they have privilege and the question is what do you do about it? The other one is called the power flower which is much more of a self-reflection. You identify the main characteristics of the dominant group. And then there are variety petals that say about race, language, immigration status, sexual orientation, etc., and you begin to decide are you in the outside on race or the inside on race?

In other words, how does your social identities approximate to those characteristics in the dominant group? So you have this basis of here I'm odd. If answers honestly. That's the one thing you have to answer honestly. That can open up doors to say as I do with my class and say there's a lot we don't know -- there's a language we don't know, and there's a way we have to get used to that language. So our ears have to open a bit more to the nuances.

So for example, take the Amy Cooper situation in New York with the birdwatching photographerphotographer Christopher -- I'm forgetting his last name. You may know the story. White woman walking her dog in a part of Central Park which is for birds, and the dog is supposed to be on leash. She doesn't have her dog on the leash. The guy who goes there regularly says hey, you know, your dog is supposed to be on a leash. And he starts recording her to get her to try to stop and so on. She threatens him and says, if you don't stop recording me, I'm going to call the police and say there's an African American man who is threatening me. So she knew exactly what she was doing.

>> Yes.

>> When I see that, I always say when a white woman cries, a Black man dies.

>> Yeah.

>> And you know, I say that because in my courses, I have sat in several dean's

offices, sitting down saying what am I supposed to teach them? You've seen the course outline. We are talking about this kind of violence. Am I supposed to be responsible because they can't hear it, because they don't want to hear it and then they go to their power base and say to the dean uh-uh, this isn't what we signed up for?

>> Wow.

>> Here I am once again, here's the course outline you signed and using every excuse imaginable. So there has to be a point where -- and it can't always be the labour, but they have tonight begin to listen to Nina Simones and the Baldwins on their own and with they have questions that they've prepared, then let's have a conversation.

>> Yep.

>> Until they face that, it gets weary, and it's a continuation of violence to be honest with you. There's no time I ever felt comfortable sitting in a dean's office because a student has complained about the subject matter. I've been there more than I care to remember in my 18 years of teaching.

>> And wow!

I would love to contrast that with a personal experience of mine being in theatre school, having the program co-ordinator in a rehearsal hall because the N-word. He's a white man, using the N-word to -- context doesn't matter. He used it multiple times. I found myself in the dean's office across from the associate dean asking for him to address this. And being told that the students who witnessed it should be the ones to address it, and that at no point was that teacher called in. So a white professor can use the N-word and not be called into the dean's office and then a Black professor can teach about racism and gets called into the dean's office. And the difference is I complained, and I am a woman of colour. And in your case, I'm sure that the students were white students whose voices are being heard and recognized. So these are the changes that need to happen. We can't do that for you. We can't be in every space making every decision for you, but you can educate yourself and allow what you learn to inform your decisions as you move forward. It's not about whether or not you are good or bad person much it's about whether or not you are living in reality and responding to it in a humane way. Anyway, we have just under five minutes left. So what is making you hopeful for the future of these institutions?

Why do you keep talking about this stuff? What makes you think that things are going to change?

>> I'm fundamentally very hopeful, because I know about the power of the people. I havenesshaveness -- have witnessed it.

I've been an activist for 25 years and an artist for 25 years and I've been organized in the streets and organizing from home. I know the power of the people. I know ultimately, we have it all. Black Indigenous people, this is Indigenous territory, and Black people shaped so much of everything that's happened here.

We literally are the content.

We are -- we started the gay liberation movement. In so many way, we have led everything on this -- to turtle island. Black and Indigenous people, with tiffany king and all the things written about our relationships.

We are it here, folks. We are infinitely more powerful than the state. We are infinitely more powerful than white supremacy. We are building these beautiful communities.

Look at work that Charles is doing. Two organizations dedicated to exactly eradicating the kind of erasure we're talking about. We're planting these new seeds and new organizations are going to grow from it. We are ultimately -- we're it. We've got it. The institutions will change or die.

But we're it.

>> Yeah.

>> We're going to remain. We're lasting.

>> Amen!

>> To add to that, the demographics are going to be incredibly powerful over the next little while combined with the argument on whites and on place. So we know the Indigenous communities are the fastest-growing communities in the country. We have to accept it's nation to nation, nottoff a question of numbers. And we know that racialized communities are now one in every four and likely to be one in every three very soon. This is what -- we see it really more starkly south of the border. When you see those photos, what they're fighting for is white privilege.

They're not fighting for democracy. They're fighting to dominate others and they know they're losing the game because of changes coming down.

Starbucks Starbucks they said no Black Lives Matter and two days later, they were make T-shirts.

Looking at the whole issues of pipeline and so on and so forth and the rallying around Indigenous space. Hey, you know, we cannot keep degradating the earth and we can't take land from people who have taken care of the land for centuries, because we need oil. We have to figure out something different.

These things are coming up more, but I think they actually come up, because some of us are playing into our roles. I really want to get out of these companies is I wanted to get out of these institutions. I still have a foot hold in some of these institutions, but I know I need to have I -- a home base that is safe. I won't subject my life -- there was a time in my life I sat in a room with four white people and when I left that room, I said that's the last time that will happen.

That's the last time. And it hasn't happened again because I'm the nogoing to let it. I'm not going to be in those circumstance where is my life has to be jeopardized because these folks don't get it and don't want to get it.

>> Uh-huh.

>> There's an urgent update with the defonty Miller case, and I know we're just wrapping up. If it's OK, I'm going to jump off and just respond. But this was the best conversation. What a way to go into Pride weekend.

What a way to go into this weekend of activism. I'm so honoured to be with all of you.

>> Thank you so much for your time.

>> We'll talk soon.

>> Sage, did you want to finish with a word of how you're staying hopeful?

>> Sure. I definitely think in what's been going on in the media lately, there's a lot of -- and then how our people are responding. There's a lot of pitting each other -- pitting Indigenous and Black people together because like whose issues are more important. I am hopeful that the education of Indigenous people and how we can support Black people and how we can be supportive of each other's issues and they go so hand in hand, and just the way that on even -- even like in conversation, we compete for the same pools of money and the attention and that's not so.

That's not how it has to be and how I see the conversations growing in like you -- youth grass roots initiatives is the desire and we see the need for each other to be working together. We need to be working together and hearing each other and

holding that space with each other. And that's what I'm hopeful for is the young people.

And then that return to Indigenous knowledge. It's important to see that the -- that knowledge can come from all different -- all different stages of life, not just old people, not just the people in positions of power, because we all hold that power, and we're all supposed to. And we're all supposed to -- really uphold each other and also hold each other accountable. I think I'm hopeful for is having more conversations with other young people about how that can happen and so right now, I'm working with Humber actually with a bunch of other Indigenous youth in the -- I want to shout them out. The Indigenous trans media fellowship. We're going to be developing a project together and hopefully that reflects what we're seeing, like how we're responding to what's going on in the media and also what we want to see in the media field and in the arts field and yeah. I want to say thank you so much for bearing with me. That conversation of youth also has to do with my little brother. I really love him. He had a really hard time today. I know he's really stressed out, because everyone in this house is having Zoom meetings. We're all like in each other's face trying to be professional and all of that. He dealing with a lot and seeing a lot and hearing what we're doing, but the future also needs to respect people like him, young people, and that includes not just people 18 to 25. It means people like ten and under.

>> Absolutely.

>> Yeah. A hundred percent.

Thanks so much. I really love what you said about holding people accountable, and I think that's going one of my takeaway, when we do hold people accountable, we're still holding them. It is still an embrace and still a community. There's no negative connotation to that.

It's empowering and a gift and both of your perspectives have been deeply empowering and gifts. Thank you for your time today.

>> Yeah. Meegwetch.

>> See you later.

>> Yeah.

>> Thank you so much for this conversation. I'm happy that despite all the interruptions and distractions, you still made it happen and it sounded very smoothly. It was really really good. So thank you so much.

Thank you, and it was our last panel for today. But we still have an artist