

Miranda Jones: Greetings. Thank you all for joining us this evening. We have a whole lot to talk about. You are now tuned into episode two of The People's Report, where we are here to talk all things reallocation and we are here to declare that the Winston Salem Police Department does not need \$78 million, the people do. But before we jump into that we have a very pressing concern that we need to address: our sheriff, Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough, issued a statement on his Facebook page, which we would categorize as a misstatement, where he said he was responding to a presser, a presser is also known as a press release, that was issued by Triad Abolition Project, our partners whom we stand in solidarity with here tonight. He said that he was responding to this press release and he issued a very strong response and we are here to respond to that as well as clarify some misinformation, and then we would like to get into what we're pushing for on behalf of the people of our city. So, the first thing I want to do is jump right in and segway to a couple of folks that we have here with us. We have Brittany Battle of Triad Abolition Project- we have Lillian and we have Richie and I think they are representing Forsyth County Bail Fund, as well as Prisoner Outreach Initiative, some of our other comrades. And so Brittany, tell us how did you become aware and help us clear up much of what Sheriff Kimbrough said, and then we'll segway to our comrades.

Brittany Battle (she/her): Just first to clarify, Triad Abolition Project did not issue a press release. We sent emails advertising an event that took place today. We have issued many press releases over the course of the efforts over the summer and the fall and our press releases have always been worded as press releases. They have been extensive statements that provide a lot of context and information supporting our actions; they are always PDF attachments to emails, as is the norm for press releases for media. So I'm not sure who was confused or misinformed, but it definitely was not a press release. However, one organization did issue a press release to which the Sheriff's Department has never responded. That's the Forsyth County Community Bail Fund and we're going to turn to them in a second to talk about what their press release actually did say. But there's a couple of things I want to address in the sheriff's statement: First, the sheriff, interestingly, in the entire statement never makes any mention of the COVID outbreak that his department is responsible for. So he issues a long statement, which includes a lovely professional photograph of him strolling in the rain, which is a very interesting thing to focus on as people are potentially getting ready to die from COVID in a facility that he is responsible for. But during that entire statement, he never addresses the outbreak, which is very telling to me- that he's very concerned with public relations and his image and not concerned with the people that he's charged with keeping safe, including his deputies, because his deputies are not exempt from falling extremely ill or even dying from COVID when they are exposed in those quarters. The second thing that's very interesting to me about the sheriff's statement is that he seems to conflate and confuse legality with morality- following the law is not necessarily moral and we've seen that in this entire history of the United States- that just because something was legal, did not make a moral, and the people that executed those laws were not necessarily moral actors, right? So in slavery, the period of slavery, the people who caught runaway slaves were acting on behalf of the law. That was not a moral action, right? During segregation, that was the law of the land, but people who enforce segregation were not moral actors, and in current times, the

law of the land is to keep people incarcerated during a pandemic, or to evict people during a pandemic, and just following those laws does not make you a moral actor.

Brittany Battle (she/her): And so, as I have said repeatedly over the summer as we were in the streets protesting: there's going to be a right side and a wrong side here, and there's going to be a lot of people who find themselves on the wrong side of history when it comes to their actions and the decisions that they have made about how they choose to live their lives. And if the sheriff and his deputies can sleep at night, locking out children from their homes during a global pandemic, at Christmas time, during the holidays when the temperatures are dropping- if they can sleep at night and believe that's a moral action, that's tough. Right? If they can sleep at night knowing that the people incarcerated in that detention center cannot call their loved ones, cannot take a shower, cannot be out of their cells. If they can sleep at night knowing that that's happening, and they call those things moral actions- that's tough. Right? So, that's what I want to say about that statement. And I really want to reiterate the point, do not let his public relations team distract you from the real issue, and the real issue is that there's a COVID outbreak in the detention center that was completely, at least something could have been done to reduce it, had the calls from activist groups, starting in March been listened to: to provide the people who are incarcerated, who are human beings, regardless of what you think about their potential actions- what they may or may not have done- they are human beings and they do not deserve to be facing potential death from COVID, right? So activist groups, Prisoner Outreach Initiative, Triad Abolition has stood in solidarity- have been calling for proper PPE since the beginning- for mass mandates for the deputies since the beginning- those deputies were never required to wear masks and in fact, the PR people from the Sheriff's Department have admitted that it was likely a deputy who brought in COVID after having some Thanksgiving holiday festivities, right, and now those deputies are walking around inside the detention center in hazmat suits while people cannot even wash themselves in the detention center. So we think those are moral things? Man, I think we all need to go to whatever higher power, whatever belief system- system of principles and values you subscribe to and really check what you believe is moral.

Miranda Jones: And so before we get into who actually issued the press release- let me address something that I commonly hear as a Black woman and a native of Winston Salem. There seems to be this idea that because Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough was the first African American sheriff- that he is above scrutiny- that he is above criticism and somehow, folks may feel that activists, particularly Black activists and Black women activists out there, I would say this is probably a very gendered conversation, seek to tear down another Black man. And for some people- it appears that representation is enough. And because you're not from here, we know that you face scrutiny in terms of, you know, how dare you not be from here. Where is your body of work? How dare you criticize a Black man. You know, I want you to respond to that and I want you to kind of talk about where you think we should go from here, because that does concern me if we cannot criticize or challenge or confront power, especially if they are Black and also Black and male. What are your thoughts there?

Brittany Battle (she/her): So I'm going to address the first part of what you were talking about with these criticisms that people love to lobby against me that say I'm not from Winston Salem

and where my body of activists work. I moved to Winston Salem in August of 2019, at the start of the pandemic. I had been here for barely six months.

Brittany Battle (she/her): When I first moved here, I was grieving the death of someone very close to me. So I was not involved in activists work when I first stepped foot into Winston Salem.

But anyone can check any of my history and see that I did not wake up in May and decide to do activist work. There are newspaper articles about a sit in that I led in my undergrad in 2008 at University of Delaware, when a noose was found on campus and the President of our university did not respond to it. I have always been highly involved in community work, dating back to when I was in high school and middle school. When I was in graduate school, highly involved in community work- work on the behalf of Black people. I have started nonprofits in my hometown that have been recognized by the New Jersey State Legislature, as well as the city council of my city where we have created scholarships for Black high school students and Black college students, where we have made donations to advocacy groups on behalf of domestic violence victims, we have created care packages and done food drives and clothing drives for homeless people in our area, as well as having annual, three times, annual Juneteenth programs that honored Black ancestors and elders in my hometown. You can go on the internet and Google and find any of that. So this is not new work. I recognize that some of y'all do not know me from Winston, and that's okay. But I live here now and I will be continuing to do work for Black liberation and for the most vulnerable in our society, whether y'all like it or not, right. So I'm going to continue to do this work. Like I said, you can check my credentials. I did not wake up in May and want to do something for a TV camera in Winston Salem. Okay, that's first. Secondly, to address your point Miranda about representation, right, about having Black folks in positions of power. That's tough because representation, while we know that it can be important in some ways, in many instances it's symbolic and the importance of the representation, sometimes gets missing with the feel good nature of it. So it can feel good for Black and Brown people to see a Black person in a position of power- but if that Black person is not doing anything to change that system, that racist system, right, that system that rests on white supremacy or patriarchy, or any of the other systems that keep us suppressed, then that representation does not matter. Right. And just because we feel good about it because we have a Black sheriff, we have a Black police chief- that doesn't change the implications for Black and Brown and poor communities that suffer under the weight of a criminal legal system that was designed, in its design, was meant to keep Black and Brown people oppressed, right, and poor people oppressed. And so it's really important that we understand that there has always been Black representation in white supremacist systems, dating back to the overseers, right, and just because that overseer was a Black person does not mean that we got something out of that right? Black people were still slaves, even when they had a Black overseer. And the last thing I'm going to say about this is white supremacist structures function no matter what the individual actors in those systems do, think, are. Right- so white supremacist structures function without any individual being explicitly or implicitly racists, because the systems are designed for white supremacy. It does not require that individual racists are keeping or upholding that system. Right. And so we have to get to the structural issues. And that's what we're attempting to do.

And so any individual who works within those systems has to be held accountable. Right. I have to be held accountable for the way that my job, my institution where I work, upholds white supremacy. Right. We all have to be accountable for those things, whether we're Black

Brittany Battle (she/her): white, Brown, whatever. Right. And so having a Black police chief, having a Black Sheriff does not mean that that person is beyond reproach or beyond needing to take about accountability for how those actions, how the system that they work in maintain white supremacy.

Miranda Jones: Thank you for that explanation. I think that it is important that people lean into that because a lot of times when Black women kind of come with that level of challenge and that level of truth- Black women are often demonized and labeled crazy and people don't want to hear that coming from us. But I think that's something that our people really have to wrestle with because it is my hope that Sheriff Kimbrough, because he's a Black man, because he's a native- that he will do more to ensure the safety, even of those that are incarcerated. And under his you know care and provision that he will take that, you know, take that as a reason to to address the issue. Now as it relates to the press release, we have folks on here from POI, Prison Outreach Initiative as well as Forsyth County Community Bail Fund. So if one of you all will jump in, either Lillian or Ricci and tell us who actually issued a press release and talk to us about your work and what's going on with these numbers of COVID and inmates. So I will let you jump right in to address that.

Richardo K. Brown: Hi- so I'm Richie, I'm from the Forsyth County Community Bail Fund and we're the ones that actually issued the press release that started like all of this. And we've been talking about bail- we've been focused on bail and the narrow issue of just holding people pre-trial without there being any trial, whatsoever at the jail level for a while now. I mean specifically, we've been talking about this issue during the time of COVID- during a time when you have a population, and like anyone can anyone can see it, and we've been talking about it and other organizations have been talking about it- but that you have a population right now at the jail that cannot social distance. There's no way that they can social distance. There's no way that they can be safe. And if you're adding more and more people to the system and just putting them in smaller and smaller places of confinement and reducing the ability of those people to be able to, you know, actually like to be safe and that system and you're creating the situation that we have here, where-

Miranda Jones: And Richie can I ask you a question? What do you say- I saw a lot of comments on Sheriff Kimbrough's page where people said, "well they deserve to be there, you do the crime, you do the time, oh well". You know, and they were praising kind of Sheriff Kimbrough's stance of law and order, you know, we hear about that, particularly with conservatives- he's a man of law and order. What do you say to that? And if you can speak to that and also what Brittany said about what is moral versus what is legal. Will you talk to us about that?

Richardo K. Brown: Yeah, so our press releases entirely, like what we were talking about, the two things that we demanded in our press release was one- just to stop doing arrests of people

that had misdemeanors or failures to appear and things like that. And then the second point that we tried to get out there is that we should try to release as many people as possible, we should try to release as many of these people that have not, again, been convicted of anything and are not a threat to society.

Richardo K. Brown: And to the point that you're bringing up right now- I guess my, my point here is that a lot of people have a distance. There's a distance between a lot of people, like the general public and the criminal justice system. A lot of times people don't ever interact with the criminal justice system. So all they see is this person giving a press release, the sheriff giving a press release, or TV shows or movies about cops and things like that. And they don't really have any interaction with the criminal justice system. And so they see and they hear that people are going to jail, that people are going to prison, and they think that they may deserve it, but what we've been seeing is a lot of people that are just arrested on very, very, very low level things- I think the lowest things level-

Miranda Jones: because I think people think that you're asking for murderers and rapists and child molesters and people who have done really like horrible things. So, give me an example of a low level arrest, so people can kind of understand this.

Richardo K. Brown: I think an FTA is probably the best example of that. FTA is a failure to appear in court. For whatever reason you have to show up in court, you may have been on probation, you may have already served your time, or it may just be like a low level traffic thing and you get an FTA because you weren't in court. A lot of people don't realize that the courts right now, they've been closed, and they've been closed for a while because of COVID outbreaks. So people have their court dates and these court dates keep on getting continued far into the future. And so there's a lot of confusion about when you are actually supposed to show up to court and if you're not there, the judge will look out into the courtroom and then just issue an FTA. And then an order goes out for your arrest and then the minute that you're stopped by a police officer or you have any interaction with law enforcement whatsoever, then you end up in jail- you end up arrested on this FTA. I think on average, the bonds end up around \$1,000 for an FTA with pretty much nothing else. We've seen a lot of like, again, that's what I mean when I say low level- you haven't done anything violent, you haven't done anything to warrant necessarily being separated from the population, and you certainly haven't done anything that warrants death here, like the potential for death or serious injury from a disease. That's what we've been seeing. We've been seeing people held on low level bonds and last week we paid around 25 or \$30,000- that was this this past Saturday, for 10 people. For 10 people- It was \$30,000 for 10 people and I mean like it's a lot of money.

Miranda Jones: These are not murderers, these are not rapists or anything like that. Right?

Richardo K. Brown: No, these are people that were again if it's low level enough that like you're charging less than, you know, less than \$30,000 to put someone in prison or put somebody in jail, rather. And if it's low level enough for it to be around that cash amount, then it's not something that- you haven't been charged with anything that's violent, you haven't been

charged with anything that the court has looked at you and said this is a person that should be locked away, prior to trial.

Miranda Jones: Once these people got out on bail, because they were in jail, could they have potentially gone home, you know, because they had been in there and been arrested for whatever reason, some low level offense, could they then go home and then expose their families, like, you know, is that possible?

Richardo K. Brown: Right now, yeah. That's what we're looking at. Even if everyone got released, even if everyone was able to pay their bills, if they go home now they've now interacted with people that may have COVID. They are in a population now that has a high likelihood of testing positive for COVID. And so now, whenever they go out to the community now, there's a further risk of disease.

Miranda Jones: Wow. And one of our comments makes a very good point. She says, "The sheriff's office exercised discretion when they didn't arrest Rod Steven Sturdy after he attacked three siblings (including a minor) for having BLM sign". So her question is, why can't the sheriff use that same discretion when responding to people with low level offenses? What is the law/policy that limits these choices? So I don't know if our audience actually kept up with that but there was some individuals who had, I think, and correct me if I'm wrong team- that had some Black Lives Matter signs in their car and I think they were followed and assaulted and this man wasn't arrested. So do you have any thoughts on that because you just said y'all pay this extensive amount, right, and one of our demands is actually in cash bail, so we definitely stand in solidarity with you all there, but you all pay this extensive amount, yet this person who one could argue is a threat, was allowed to go free. What do you say to that?

Richardo K. Brown: The entire reason why we issued this press conference, the entire reason why we made the points that we did and we asked for the things that we did was because we knew that they were within the discretion of the sheriff's office to do. We weren't asking for things that were impossible. We weren't asking for the moon here. We were just asking for the sheriff to use the power that is within their job: the power to choose who to arrest, to choose what to enforce. And for better or worse, that is the power that the sheriff's have. That is the power that the police chief has.

Miranda Jones: And is it lawful? Because one of the things he says is they have to do what is lawful. So is it lawful?

Richardo K. Brown: I mean none of us are lawyers and we would rather not talk about what's lawful or not, but I mean from our interpretation of what's lawful and from the general public's interpretation of what is lawful, like yeah no- that is it is a perfectly lawful thing. It is within the power of the sheriff's office to do that.

Brittany Battle (she/her): It was lawful for them to lock up this man that attacked these kids. That was lawful enough, right, when he stood up there and did that press conference.

Richardo K. Brown: Yeah.

Miranda Jones: Lillian, I want you to chime in from Prisoner Outreach Initiative. Kind of explain where you all come in with this, this kind of attack on Triad Abolition, the work you all have been doing around, you know, trying to make sure that folks are not exposed to COVID. So I'll pass the mic to you now.

Lillian (she/her): Well, I want to start by saying that we at Prison Outreach Initiative stand 100% in solidarity with Triad Abolition Project. By singling out a group and making this faceless statement on social media, what they're doing is they're trying to put a target on a group of activists and they're trying to silence free speech. And that's not something that we are here for and that's something that we are loudly going to say- that we stand with Triad Abolition Project and furthermore, we stand with the Forsyth County Community Bail Fund and the original press release that may or may not have been referenced by the sheriff. I want to chime in on the point about the sheriff's discretion because back in March, when the pandemic first started, and when activist groups came together and called for action on PPE and masks and testing for incarcerated individuals- there was a honk protest, a car solidarity protest that was held on April 7th and in the Winston Salem Journal, there is a statement saying quote, "Forsyth County officials have worked to release nonviolent offenders and evaluate bonds of people who are in the jail." So back in April, when they thought that maybe these protesters would go away if we just give them something- they obviously had the power to reevaluate people's bonds and they obviously had the power to release people- and now all of the sudden after a summer of protest, after today's car protest, they suddenly do not have this power because they know we're not going away. I want to say this weekend, I pulled up the numbers, 13 people were arrested. I didn't look through each of the individuals but I pulled up a couple of failures to appear. Today, someone got arrested and was given a \$750 bond for a failure to appear. Now, how is that in the interest of public safety? If that person had \$750 then they are suddenly safe to go on the streets? But if they don't, then they should be in the jail because they could not appear in court and are therefore being exposed to COVID? It is simply unthinkable that this is a moral and just way. There's another bond for \$1,000. I want to talk a little bit about the conditions in the jail during COVID, not just during the outbreak. So in March, all of the programs and all visitations in the jail were stopped. So that means people did not get to see their families, that means Alcoholic Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, religious services were all stopped. Furthermore, the only way to get in contact with your family was through a phone call. And if you've never called the jail- it is not a cheap and it is not a convenient process. In order to call your loved one or in order for your loved one to call you, they have to call, you pick up the phone, there is a 30 second statement that you have to sit through, you have to accept the charge and you only have 15 minutes to talk before you're cut off. And that call will put you back \$3 and 15 cents, not to mention the charges for putting money on your account in the first place. And so the jail has every incentive not to reopen visitations, they're making

money off of this. An hour long phone call is \$12 and 60 cents, plus the \$3 that it costs to put money on your account. And so they have every incentive to pretend that they can't do anything and they have to just keep arresting people.

Miranda Jones: One of the commenters on the Forsyth County Sheriff's page kind of talks about this idea that we are often on the outside looking in, we being the general public, and we don't understand that the sheriff can only do so much and the sheriff has to do, again with this word, what is lawful. And hopefully, Brittany, and even Bailey can speak to this. We actually met with the sheriff back this summer and I remember, and Brittany tell me if what I'm saying is correct, I remember asking the sheriff, how much autonomy does he have? And he pretty much said, I have total autonomy, if an officer has on the wrong color shoes, you know, I can let them go. Brittany is that correct? Generally speaking, is that what he said?

Brittany Battle (she/her): That's what he said Miranda.

Miranda Jones: That's what he said. And so as you all were talking I remember that because we, you know, it was myself, Brittany, Bailey and a couple of the activists, (I don't know if they want to be named here)- but we went to address him, we went to ask a lot of questions about what he has purview over and he was very clear that he can do a whole lot of things. So what does this mean that all of the sudden I'm looking at the three things that he says: he says he wants to ensure that the demands they're making are lawful, ensure that the demands are being set forth within the responsibility and authority of the office of the sheriff. And we see politicians always talking about what they don't have the authority to do- we get that from county commissioners, city officials, the sheriff- when you go to them with something that they don't want to do, all of a sudden, is somebody else's problem, right? But when they want to be elected, they can do everything right. They have these grandiose campaigns- I'm going to do this and I'm going to do that. And so, you know, that's one thing he said, and he said, ensure that their demands are in the best interest of public safety for all residents of our county. But what about- does that include those who are incarcerated, because they are residents right? And is our sheriff saying that these people deserve to be infected with COVID because they have allegedly committed a crime. Is that really what's being said here? Have we kind of kind of come to that, as a society? So I'll let you guys speak to that.

Brittany Battle (she/her): Miranda, I just want to say the comments on his posts are shameful and he should be ashamed that he has support from the type of people that wrote those types of things on his post. When you are a Black man, regardless of what your career is, if you are being supported by white supremacists, who are blatantly white supremacist, you should know that you're going down the wrong path. You're going the wrong direction, right, because some of those people that made comments on that post hate Bobby Kimbrough. Right. And if they could, they would put Bobby Kimbrough's Black self under the jail somewhere. And they only support him because they believe that he's going to continue to enforce laws that keep them superior and keep Black and Brown people inferior and oppressed. And he should be ashamed

that he calls himself having support from those types of people. There is not a soul that can tell me because someone did not show up to court in the middle of a global pandemic when some of us don't even know what day of the week it is, right- I don't know what day of the week it is most of the time because the stress of being in a pandemic. So you're telling me, because someone did not show up to court in the middle of a global pandemic, they deserve to be incarcerated? And if they don't have \$750 they have to sit inside of there?

Brittany Battle (she/her): That's unconscionable. That's unconscionable right? These are human beings. These are human beings and to make a statement that this is about protecting the community- these people are not part of the community? These are not human beings that deserve protection as well? It's shameful.

Miranda Jones: So potentially it's the sheriff putting more blood on his hands. We know from this past summer, we know what happened, unfortunately Ancestor John Neville, and we know that the sheriff does not like that statement- we know that that bothers him deeply. And we have a question, someone says, "the people who murdered John Neville were also not detained long term, wonder why?". And I think that's a valid question for our sheriff. And I also think it is valuable for our sheriff to think about how many people could potentially lose their life due to this very deadly pandemic. Go ahead Britt

Brittany Battle (she/her): And Miranda, when those people were getting arrested; the people that murdered John Neville, the people that laughed as his dead body laid on the ground- that laughed about it- those same people, he stood in a press conference on July 8th and said they were good people. But now the people who are incarcerated because they did not show up to court don't deserve protections? He has to keep the community safe from those people? Explain that to me.

Miranda Jones: And so, as one of our commenters said, she said, "Sheriff Kimbrough's statement against TAP (Triad Abolition Project) walks back all his previous statements where he was in solidarity with the people from this summer." So we just wanted the activists to come on to respond to this kind of, this Facebook post that Sheriff Kimbrough and his team put out so that you all will kind of get a better picture of what actually happened, who issued a press release, who did not issue a press release, and what the activists are calling for- because we're not calling for anyone to be hurt or maimed, and we're also not calling for anyone to lose their lives, either. You know, so we want you to kind of, you know, make this thing personal, think about people that you know or you may be connected to who could potentially be exposed to COVID and they absolutely don't deserve that because as Britt said, these are human beings. Before they go, I wanted to find out if Richie or Lillian wanted to add anything else and if they wanted to kind of end on a note of telling us what their organizations will continue to do in this press.

Richardo K. Brown: I would just like to just point out that again, all the people that we help every week, all the people that we've been helping this entire year- if they had the money to pay their bills, the Court has decided that they are safe enough to be at home and if they had it, they would have paid it and they would be home right now. And so what we're going to be

continuing to do throughout this crisis and as long as our organization exists, is continue to pay these bails, continue to pay these bonds and continue to do our best to try to get people home.

Miranda Jones: Lillian

Lillian (she/her): And if I may plug the bail funds fundraiser- y'all are trying to get as many people out before the holidays as possible and we've been trying to promote that fundraiser as well. So please donate. We've been doing some of the coordination with the people getting out on bail so I've spoken to moms and girlfriends, and it is terrible to be put into a situation where because one of us might have \$500 we can decide on someone's freedom, it's shameful that that is the way that our country is set up. The Prisoner Outreach Initiative, from our perspective, we're going to continue keeping in touch and getting testimonies from people in the jail. We just partnered with an elementary school kid in Halifax, and they wrote to people inside the jail. And so that's something that, you know, children, adults, all of us can do- is just let people know that we're here and haven't forgotten that they're human and inside there and we stand with them.

Miranda Jones: And do you have any testimonies from the jail that you'd like to share before you hop off?

Lillian (she/her): Not specific testimonies, but if you go to our social media- we've throughout this pandemic have recorded testimonies from people incarcerated, people have written grievance after grievance of med techs not wearing masks and guards not wearing masks. And so I don't have any testimony in front of me, but I do encourage people to look at all of that material because the people inside the jail or not are voiceless, they are being silenced. And so we're trying to amplify their voices.

Miranda Jones: Okay- thank you Lily, thank you Richie for joining us this evening and clarifying a lot of that and we urge any of you, you know, in our community to go to their respective pages and send them a message, ask any questions, give feedback and so that you have a kind of, an informed perspective on what's going on with our incarcerated siblings. Now let's get to what we are pushing for. I am of course joined by members of Hate Out and Triad Abolition Project and we are still declaring that once the Winston Salem Police Department does not need \$78 million, the people do. And so one of the things that we've been leaning into is actually a quote by our very own police chief, Catrina Thompson. Selene, would you like to read this quote or would you like me to read it because I think it is very appropriate for what we're discussing.

Selene Johnson (she/her): You go ahead Miranda, you probably have it right in front of you.

Miranda Jones: I do, I do. Alright folks. So she said, "We're expected to be everything: teachers, babysitters, healthcare workers, mental health providers... oh and by the way, handling crime as well. I'd be happy to relocate our funding into those programs or into those people,

organizations that can provide those things.” This was stated by Chief Thompson on a town trust talk on June 16th. So, this is kind of the heart of what we have been fighting for all of this time- we have been showing up at every city council virtual meeting and we have declared that there will never be a meeting in which we will not be there. So, we will be there with all of our fervor, all of our passion, all of our intensity to kind of talk about what it is that we want from our city council on behalf of the people, all the people of Winston Salem.

Miranda Jones: And so one of the things that you know we looked at is that this is actually not new, other cities are ahead of us in terms of reallocation of funds. So cities like Asheville, North Carolina; right up the road- Hartford, Connecticut; Norman, Oklahoma; Salt Lake City; Newark, New Jersey; Oakland, California; Baltimore, Maryland; Portland, Oregon; Washington, DC; Seattle; San Francisco, California; Austin, Texas; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Los Angeles, California; and New York, New York. So other cities are ahead of us. And certainly if bigger cities can, if they can reallocate, we can reallocate. And so we're going to kind of talk to you about that, but I want to also give you an overview of what specifically, we have been saying we want the funds to go to. So we would like for the funds to go to SOAR which stands for Successful Outcomes After Release. We know that that's a program that has been operating but we feel like it's not operating at its maximum. We recognize that incarcerated siblings once they are released will need a great deal of support to kind of re establish themselves and get back on their feet. So we don't want them to be given a million dollars from a committee that they have to fight over right. We want YouthBuild, which is a national program to be funded by our city and I'll let, of course when the time is appropriate, I'll let Aly speak to that- we want forgivable loans for Black businesses, public transportation and an increase in the minimum wage. We're also calling for civilian police oversight authority for the Winston Salem PD and Forsyth County Sheriff's Office ran by the people. We would like an end to the cash bail system, demilitarization of the Winston Salem Forsyth County Police Department and the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office, and the creation of a mental health crisis intervention mobile unit, which that has been done right around the corner in Greensboro, so their progressive, you know, in that, but before we jump into that- I'm going to segway to Brittany to kind of talk to us about this idea, well not even idea, but this false notion that policing reduces crime or more policing reduces crime. So, Britt, I'll give it to you to kind of explain why that's absolutely untrue.

Brittany Battle (she/her): So the data on crime rates and police force sizes, show us that simultaneously since the 90s, both of these things have been going down. Violent crime rates and property crime rates have been going down while the size of police departments are also decreasing nationally. And so that's from Pew, which is a national, well recognized, well respected, research consortium. So that's first. Despite knowing that, the public, at a national level, still thinks that crime is increasing- and so that's very important, right, because this idea that our country is more dangerous is really influenced and really intentionally held up by things that we call copaganda. So we all love things like Law and Order SVU and Criminal Minds and Dateline episodes and 20/20 episodes. Right. But those things make us fearful because they make us think, wow, we really need the police to keep us safe. But as I said, the data show that raw numbers of police have declined. Right. So now I'm going to talk about a report from USA Today, which tells us that data shows that the raw numbers of police have declined over the past five years, right, and at the same time the violent crime rate has also dropped. And so we

have folks who even are former police officers themselves, right. So this USA Today report includes a retired New York Police Department official who says that there's little clear connection between staffing numbers in police departments and crime. So essentially saying that more police does not necessarily deter crime, right.

Brittany Battle (she/her): And then a report from the Washington Post, which we will also share, has again said that even as national spending per person on public safety or police departments has dropped, right, in recent years, again, crime has not risen. Okay. So the data shows us that there is not this connection that we assume there is. We're actually on a downward trend with crime rates; both violent crime and property crime simultaneously, as police departments are reducing their size. So it's very important for us to keep that in mind. It's also important for us to keep in mind the more general point, right; we all want to be safe, but being able to call the police after you are robbed, does not take your robbery back, right? Our goal is to prevent robberies, to prevent burglaries, to prevent the crimes that people are most afraid of because we know that when people do not have access to quality health care, to food, to housing, to education, to employment opportunities- they make bad, difficult decisions sometimes. And so our goal of course is to keep us all safe. We don't want you to have to call the police after something bad happens. We want that thing to not have been seen in the first place.

Miranda Jones: Absolutely and Bailey, if you will add to that and talk to us about what the Winston Salem Police Department and the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office has done with the budget that they've had. If you want to kind of get into the jag grant, as well as the Colbert funds to purchase military riot gear- if you will explain that, so that the people can kind of be informed about what's really going on.

Bailey Pittenger (she/her): Okay, so I'm just going to kind of give a brief overview of how we can actually look at the budget and understand where money is actually going and how money is coming in for policing. For the general fund with the city, The Winston Salem Police Department, as we know, gets 78 million this year, and that's 36% of the general funds. So that's 36% of what our taxpayer dollars as a lump are going towards, is going towards policing. We can also look at the budget and presentations from WSPD and kind of deduct that 29% of city employees are WSPD employees. So, of that 78 million that's going to the police department, I believe it's \$65 million is just for personnel. So one way of looking at this kind of upward trend is, even though crime is maybe decreasing, money that's going into policing is actually increasing and it's increasing in the personnel section, specifically from the general fund. In addition to that, the police department also gets money from grants, including federal grants. And so one of the things that Triad Abolition Project kind of followed over the summer was looking at the CESF grant, which was-

Miranda Jones: I have a question for you Bailey because I'm a teacher. And so I'm just like everybody else out here, just like we all are. When you say general fund, what does that mean? So if I'm thinking about this amount going to the general fund, what does that mean to the average person out here?

Bailey Pittenger (she/her): Right, so I understand the general fund best as something that that's where taxpayer dollars are kind of like divided into different departments within the city. Other parts of the full budget are kind of like paying different parts, like infrastructure type parts of the city, to like keep it running but then there's personnel stuff that's usually in the general fund. I also learned that retirement funds are not part of the general funds. So digging into the budget, you can really get into the weeds and see it's really complicated.

Miranda Jones: And it doesn't include the money that's in the reserves right?

Bailey Pittenger (she/her): I don't believe so, not the general fund.

Miranda Jones: Okay.

Bailey Pittenger (she/her): That was a good question. So, although we see the number of 78 million going to WSPD, they're actually getting additional funds beyond that. And so it's pretty regular for any department to apply for grants, that's completely normal. But because policing and the police state is such a large part of the United States, a lot of funding comes from the federal level into policing and this is really where we see military grade equipment coming from, rather than coming from city budgets, at least in Winston Salem, that's how it is. But there was one Coronavirus emergency supplemental fund that was distributed from the Department of Justice this year. WSPD got over half a million from that fund just by applying for the grant. And after asking a lot of questions we found that that fund, which was over half a million, part of it went to a civil disobedience response team. And so this money went towards equipment such as shields, barricades, gloves, password protector tools, helmet, shin and arm protectors, gas masks carriers, gas mask filters, foggers and foggers carriers. So this was all to protect the police from civil disobedience, aka the marches that were happening over the summer, even before they really began. So that half a million came in back in May, so that was well before the marches really picked up in June, into July and August. So not everything is being reported on the front end of showing what the police money is doing for the police and so it does take a lot of digging. And so that's one example of kind of an extra fund. Another one was the JAG grant, which is another federal level grant that's usually distributed to just about every police or Sheriff's Department per year and this year the JAG grant was approved unanimously by city and county officials, even with people speaking within public comment saying like, hey, we don't want this, it's going to increase policing. Specifically this year, the JAG grant actually increased surveillance. With the JAG grant, WSPD and FCSO are sharing a new real time crime Center, which is kind of connected as well to the federal government. And so right now we're getting a ton more cameras throughout the city and it's using this thing called fuses technology, which I'm sure we can drop a link to so that you can kind of see more information of what these cameras are like, so I'm gonna drop that as well.

Miranda Jones: And so, you know, as you're talking about all of this, you know, riot gear and the shields, and all of the things that the police will get with all this funding. My question is-

what about the people? Particularly Black people, how do we shield ourselves from police? Right.

And you know, I know a couple of times people say, oh, they need more training. Training, training, training. Training is not the answer. Okay, it's not, from some of the things that I've been reading. And so what do we do? Is there a real fear of Black bodies? Right. Is there a fear that kind of makes folks think we have to have this, these people are gonna destroy our neighborhoods, they are going to destroy our towns? You know, that no matter how peaceful, **Miranda Jones:** the people are, why do you all, and now maybe I'll point to Aly, why do you think folks feel like there has to be this extraordinary amount of money given to the police?

Aly Jones (she/her): And I agree quite a bit with what Britt said about the fact that we've been trained as a society to be afraid. And it is partially our obsession with shows like Law and Order and Criminal Minds and all those fun dramas, the lifetime network in and of itself. But also the media does a fantastic job of making you scared. You know, the report on every little crime that happens, without very much follow up first of all, and without any real detail about its place in the overall scheme of things. And so when you have, you know, something like nationally, it's the amount of violent crime that gets reported is somewhere around its sub 10% , the number of calls that are going in- that's really important to look at that people are actually calling an auto vehicle theft, more than they're calling in violent theft. And and not just that, but one of the really important pieces, I think, to look at is, you know, Bailey was pointing out a huge amount of our, our police budget goes to personnel and if people take a look at the USA Today article and then kind of jump off from there- there are a lot of excellent points about being smarter. It's not about the number of bodies, but when you have them working and making sure that officers have time to participate in their communities as well. It's, you know, Miranda, you talk about the fear of Black bodies, and I think anyone who says that's not the case is a liar. Mm hmm.

Miranda Jones: Mm hmm, and it's across racial lines.

Aly Jones (she/her): It is across racial lines 100%. And one of the best things a community can do if it's going to insist on having a traditional police force is one- make sure that those police are from that city itself, that they live in the areas that they patrol and that they get out of their cars. Some of the most successful reforms have been seen where police are actually instructed to walk their beat, to ride their beat, to meet the people that they are serving because they are service people.

Miranda Jones: And thank you for that Aly. And Selene, one of the things that you have been, you know, leaning into as you've done research on what Greensboro is doing in terms of addressing mental health- you've been kind of finding out about how police are really not trained to deal with mental health or mental illness, right, and issues. Will you speak to kind of what you've been learning and kind of maybe some of the transit that you've seen as someone who may work in that field too, you know, to some extent or not.

Selene Johnson (she/her): Absolutely. One of the programs I learned about recently is the CAHOOTS program that's out of Eugene, Oregon, a city that's just slightly smaller than Winston Salem. This program has actually been around for 30 years and it is a program where they train the 911 dispatch folks to recognize when a call has a mental health component and instead of calling the police, specifically, they actually call for CAHOOTS and it's a two person team that consists of a medic which could be a nurse, a paramedic or an EMT and a crisis worker who has significant training and mental health.

Selene Johnson (she/her): And they deal with everything from conflict resolution, welfare checks, substance abuse, suicide threats, all kinds of things like that. And what's really interesting about it is that, you know, we've been talking about the budget and you know how a lot of times it's like you think that these things are going to be so costly, but actually their program is about \$2.1 million annually. But when you look at the cost savings where police officers are not having to respond to these kinds of calls, they're actually averaging about \$8.5 million dollars reduction in public safety spending in their police department because so few of these calls are actually needing police assistance on top of it. Let's see- last year, they had 24,000 CAHOOTS calls and they only requested backup from police in 150 of those calls. That's less than 1% of calls that needed police back up. So, and the other thing is, you know, Minneapolis is actually looking into doing a program, very similar. They've been piloting a program with mental health workers going along with police since 2017. However, what they found is that the presence of the police being armed actually escalates the situation. And so they are looking into the CAHOOTS program or something similar, because in those cases the professionals who are responding have the option to call police backup if they need it, but it's not automatically assumed that police are necessary. So I could probably go on, but I'll leave it at that. I think our city council definitely needs to look into, you know, something we've got our neighbor city, Greensboro, doing mental health folks responding to calls. We've got cities that are around our size that are doing it, Asheville is doing it. It's definitely something that we should be doing and I will just add- we talked about this a little bit, but some people say, well, mental health is not the responsibility of the city and that that's not where the funding should come from. And I want to be clear that we're not talking about mental health treatment, we're talking about the response to these emergency calls. So to have mental health folks joining the police and or taking those calls instead of the police, I will point out that these programs are funded by the city, like the city of Eugene funds that CAHOOTS program, it's not funded by the state or by Medicaid or anything like that.

Miranda Jones: Thank you for that. And, you know, in the words of Yoda- Yoda always says no, try not, do or do not, there is no try. And so we have to absolutely move power, you know what I'm saying, to where they are doing, you know, power has to be responsive to the people. And one other point that I wanted to kind of highlight was, you know, this idea of what are police actually responding to with the dispatch calls and what they are actually doing? Does somebody want to jump in and kind of talk to us about why are people really calling and are people really calling them because somebody being, you know, murdered, you know, God forbid like is it, you know, is it something small? So, does Britt or anybody else want to jump in and talk about the dispatch?

Brittany Battle (she/her): So I wanted to give a little national context quickly first. There are more than 10 million arrests per year, nationally and only 5% of those arrests are for the most serious offenses: murder, rape, aggravated assault. So the vast majority of people are being arrested for things that are not violent crimes. In Winston, and this figure that I'm about to give you comes directly from the fiscal year of 2021 police budget overview from Winston Salem Police Department.

Brittany Battle (she/her): If you do simple calculations in that presentation that they have available, of all the 911 dispatch calls that Winston Salem Police Department is responding to, only 6% of those calls are for what are called, Part one offenses, so those are the most serious offenses: murder, aggravated assault, forcible rape and that even includes burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft. Right. So even when you lump in motor vehicle theft, which is not necessarily a violent crime, right, if you're breaking into an unmanned car, but we don't want our cars to be stolen. Right. So when we're considering those most serious crimes, only 6% of dispatch calls are for those crimes. So, the vast majority of dispatch calls, the vast majority of the work that police are doing in Winston Salem, does not require someone to be armed when they arrive on the scene, right, does not require a gun, does not require a potential threat of violence to be handled. And we know that police violence is the leading cause of death for Black men in this country, one in 1000 Black men will be killed by police violence. And so we're trying to do everything we can to minimize police contact so that we don't have people getting hurt, injured, maimed, killed by the police or even to have a traumatizing encounter with law enforcement.

Miranda Jones: Thank you for that and real quick I want- oh, go ahead. Aly, yes.

Aly Jones (she/her): Yeah, I want to pop in one more thing, which is that there's actually been a lot of research done, we're talking about this money spent on the police and whether or not it's going to make us safer- there's some fascinating studies that I can drop a link to where we're looking at money being spent on the police actually ending up causing us to be less safe. There are a number of studies that have been done comparing us to other European nations and even small states again, compared to European nations, and our spending on police and the military is about 10 to 15% higher than these nations, our social program spending is about 10 to 15% lower than these nations, and as a result, our crime rates are actually substantially higher than these nations and it's a pretty clear statement that when you take care of your people, they aren't breaking into your car because they have their own. They don't need yours. And so it is when we care for each other, that we are safer. It's not when we hire more police that we become safer.

Miranda Jones: Thank you for that. And, you know, before we go, one of the things that I've found as I was doing my research is that, you know, our Ancestor Sister Sandra Bland would have been here if she had had \$515 for bail. And so as we think about what's going on in our local jail and jails nationally, I want you to think of her. I want you to think of an instance of Brother Khalif Browder as we, you know, think about, think about and reimagine what our city could look like. And, you know, we were going to take this to our meeting with the city officials.

Tomorrow, we've been invited to kind of come sit at the table, and we're going to do that. And we have a plan, we have a course of action and we have options. And so we have responded to that call. You all will get to see this, this is not a backdoor meeting or anything of that nature, this will be put out there. This is not any of us is going to get something for us, you know, individually or for our groups. We're going because we take this work very seriously. And so as soon as we get the green light to kind of share it and put it out there, you all will be made privy to it.

Miranda Jones: Additionally, we're going to be releasing a flyer with all of this information so that you can do your own research. We don't want you to take, you know, anything that we say, and not be able to look it up for yourself. Remember we are just like you. We are you, you know, outside of maybe Britt, who's a sociologist criminologist- we're just regular people but we believe that we can have something different and we are particularly, in Hate Out and I think I can say this with TAP as well, we're trying to move from protests to policy. So our whole goal is to dig, and dig, and dig and show up and show up and show up. And if we need to raise hell; raise hell, raise hell, raise hell. So on that note, we thank you for joining us. Look for us the next time we have the people's report episode three and you all have a wonderful evening.