Abolitionist Social Work - Cameron Rasmussen, MSW; Durrell Washington, MSW; Michelle Grier, LMSW; Vivianne Guevara, LMSW
Episode 43
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Shimon Cohen:

Welcome to Doin' The Work: Frontline Stories of Social Change, where we bring you stories of real people working to address real issues. I am your host, Shimon Cohen.

Shimon Cohen:

In this episode, I talk with Durrell Washington, Vivianne Guevara, Cameron Rasmussen, and Michelle Grier of the Network to Advance Abolitionist Social Work (NAASW). Durrell is a PhD student at the University of Chicago School of Social Work. Vivianne is the Director of Social Work at the Federal Defenders of New York in Brooklyn, New York, an Adjunct Faculty at Columbia University School of Social Work, and a facilitator in the community. Cameron works at the Center for Justice at Columbia University and is a PhD student in Social Welfare at CUNY. Michelle is a Black feminist, Brooklyn raised and social worker trained, who is leaning into practices that foster radical healing, racial and gender justice.

Shimon Cohen:

Their collective grew out of the need for social workers to support each other in abolition work. Particularly, out of the discussions over the last year where many social workers and national social work organizations have supported social workers, either working with the police or replacing police, and the NAASW says a loud "no" to both.

Shimon Cohen:

They share their definitions of abolition and discuss how - and if - abolition can be applied as a framework for social work. They talk about ways that social work has supported - and continues to support - carceral systems, surveillance and gatekeeping - and the connection to White supremacy, and liberalism/individualism. There was also discussion on social workers - and social work as a whole - not living up to the Code of Ethics and social work values, especially, with the emphasis on licensure and private practice. They emphasize the need to engage in collective work and support to envision the world we want, as well as how to take smaller steps to implement abolition in the present while working towards a long-term larger vision. Members share their experiences working in the field in ways that do and do not align with abolition and how they navigate that, again stressing the importance of how their collective provides a supportive space where they can engage in abolition work. This is an excellent discussion for those looking to learn about abolition as well as folks who are already doing this work. I hope this conversation inspires you to action.

Shimon Cohen:

Before we get into the interview, I want to let you all know about our episode's sponsor, The University of Tennessee Knoxville College of Social Work. First off, I want to thank them for sponsoring the podcast. UTK has a phenomenal social work program with the opportunity to do your bachelor's, master's, and doctorate of social work online. Of course, they also have excellent classes in person in both Knoxville and Nashville. UTK is committed to preparing social workers who will support human potential and

dignity and challenge racism and all forms of oppression. Scholarships are available, go to www.csw.utk.edu to learn more. And now, the interview.

Shimon Cohen:

So Vivianne, Durrell, Cameron, Michelle, I'm so glad to have all of you on Doin' The Work. This has been a little while in the making and just super excited to jump right in into this topic that is growing within social work. It seems to be a growing movement around abolition, and abolitionist social work. So let's jump right in. Michelle, how would you define abolition?

Michelle Grier:

I think about a world in which we are knocking down the current systems and thinking about the reason which, and when I say systems, I mean carceral systems, I mean systems that connect to criminalization that continue to incarcerate Black and Brown, and connect folks to oppressive ways of being. How do we start to think about and get imaginative about other ways of being collectively together, and actually create ways of being that allow us to all have access to the things that we need to live our best lives. And I will pass the mic.

Shimon Cohen:

Durrell, you want to jump in?

Durrell Washington:

Sure. Abolition, I think I always kind of go to this, to me, is freedom and liberation in equity in a world where every one communities can self-sustain themselves, and we no longer kind of rely on systems of surveillance and monitoring. And I'll stop there and pass it on.

Shimon Cohen:

Vivianne?

Vivianne Guevara:

Thank you. And I agree with what Michelle and Durrell have both said and defined abolition. I don't really have my own definition but my thinking about abolition is including the imaginative, but also including a returning to our ancestry and our roots on how we address harm and how we come together to build community and to build systems of accountability. I guess I'm going back to systems - maybe they're not systems - of ways of holding each other accountable that don't alienate, that don't discard, and that don't cause further harm.

Shimon Cohen:

Cameron?

Cameron Rasmussen:

Yeah. I'll say two things. And one is that when I saw your list of questions, the only one that made me nervous was this question, because it feels like a lot of pressure to try and define this thing that... I feel like I actually read and think and talk about it a lot, but then to try and define it succinctly feels very difficult and feels like pressure filled. The place that I often go back to is the definition by Critical Resistance, that is I think almost 20 years old and sort of stands the test of time. For me, that part of

what that tells us is about abolishing prisons, and police, and punishment, but also abolishing the conditions and where sort of social realities that sort of have made those things what they are. And then, to create the kinds of social conditions that we need in the world.

Shimon Cohen:

Nice. Yeah. I mean, we could have a whole discussion on definitions and the limitations, right, of that, but I appreciate you all sharing your thoughts on it. Because I know that people listening, especially folks who are just going to be getting into this idea, this might be the first time they've ever heard about abolition. Or they've heard about it in a social work context as well. So I think it's important, and that kind of goes right in is like, how does an abolition framework apply to social work? Who wants to take it first?

Durrell Washington:

I mean, I can jump in. I feel I've been trying to write about this for a long time. And it's a really good question and a hard question, and I think I've landed to where I'm trying to stop trying to fit abolition into social work and I'm starting to question how can social work fit with abolition and I think of, I've been in social work school, all my degrees are in social work, from a bachelor's, master's, and PhD now, and kind of everything I've been taught around like fighting for social justice, trying to help people realize their right to self-determination. All of that reminds me of abolition the more that I kind of learned, but I feel like as someone, I think everyone here knows, one of my mentors, Jae - Kirk James - who works at NYU, talks about this dissonance between social work, kind of like what we talk about in our actions. And I think if you look at the Code of Ethics that kind of fits somewhat with abolition, kind of fighting against suppression and things of that nature. But social work does this history of aligning itself with carceral systems, and serving as kind of a mechanism of surveillance and gatekeeping and some sorts. I think there's a lot of adjusting social work needs to do in order to fit with abolition and I appreciate this group because we're trying to think through it. So yeah, I'll stop there.

Vivianne Guevara:

There's a discussion even within our group about whether or not we should abolish social work. And thinking about the preamble, at least, the first line of the preamble to the Code of Ethics to which, I guess, we are all supposed to be following. The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human wellbeing and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. And I think, at least, my experience with some social work students now and when I was in social work school is that, there's a large group of social workers and social work students who are concerned with their own personal interests. Whether it's financial, professional, and really focused on what they are going to get personally, and not focus so much on what they're doing as social workers to uphold at least that very first line at the preamble. So I think that's one of the conversations is, do we abolish social work as well and start somewhere else? With how we talk about and think about partnering with people, and what we think, and how we talk about empowering people and what that means, and instead of doing things to people and fixing things for people, rather than partnering with people on this path, on this journey. And I'll leave it at that for right now.

Cameron Rasmussen:

One of the most compelling and moving parts of abolitionist thinking and practice, for me, has been like a shift to focusing on starting with what we need, and that we the collective we and having that be what

drives how we move. Instead of starting from the realities of the moment and saying we only going to go as far as this certain political conditions allow, we actually need to start from the place where we actually really need to be and then move and figure out how we sort of move towards that. So that has been an instrumental sort of shift for me, in terms of we have to think about where we want to go, and work towards that. And then if we look at social work, so much of social work has been caught up in carceral, state power, and sort of nonprofitization. It has not made it possible for us to work towards the things that we actually need.

Michelle Grier:

And I'll say ditto to what everyone said, that's why I'm so grateful to be in this collective group, to learn and to also to be able to build out how we think about this moment, how we think about abolition in connection to social work. I will say that in... I think someone framed me incremental abolition, which I never really heard that framing in context of a nonprofit, because that's a space that I occupy most of my days think about longer vision. I'm definitely into having this conversation about what would it look like to do something outside of social work, to get rid of social work to have something else. And also, what does it look like to do something today? What does it look like to do something a few years, a few decades from now, and what does it look like 100 years when we're not here. When I've had conversations with folks around abolition and social work, the larger frameworks, the things that are more theoretical are hard for people to grasp and contextualize into their day to day. And so, a lot of the movement work that's happening right now in spaces like ours and other folks who are actualizing the work is, what can this look like on a day-to-day basis? What can that descent and these conversations and the craft start to look like? And I don't know if I can name which one is better, in terms of the framework, but getting there and being able to do that. Imagining and trying some new stuff out, is what I'm excited about.

Shimon Cohen:

As you all are talking about how to apply that and abolition framework to social work. I think we need to talk a little bit about the ways that social work is not abolitionist, right? And you were getting there in some of your answers just then in terms of ways that social work is carceral, ways that social work is about doing things for other people with all these conditions attached to it. So maybe we can spend a little bit of time talking about that maybe even some of your own experiences in, I'm assuming, we've all had those social work jobs where we're part of an oppressive system. And everyone needs a job, right? So that's another part of this contradiction is like we have this profession that says it's all about social justice, but yet we're in a capitalist society and everyone needs to get paid, and can you get paid to do abolition work is a good question, right? So maybe if we can kind of talk a little bit about that, that could be helpful for folks listening.

Vivianne Guevara:

I feel like my entire social work life has been in carceral systems starting with my very first internship which was at a nursing home, and it wasn't until actually that I started working as a public defender. I was like, "Wow, the nursing home life is pretty similar to carceral life." At least the nursing home that I worked at. And thinking back, and people can't leave, there's no freedom for the residents that have to stay there. They have a monitor on their body that will alert the entire facility if they try to leave, like that nursing home there wasn't really a lot of engagement with the residents other than from the daily nursing interaction. There wasn't anything that said, "You're still alive and we want to create the rest of your life with you that's productive and meaningful." It was like, "Basically you're dead and you're just here until you die." And so working with people who are incarcerated, the carceral system, the DOCs

and the BOPs treat people very similarly of you're here to die basically. And there's not really much that we have to provide to you or that we are going to provide to you other than keeping your heart beating, which a lot of times isn't even that. And so, working as a public defender for as long as I have been, definitely have started off thinking that I was doing a good thing by being a public defender and helping people get out of jail. I'm helping people re-enter the world after being incarcerated, I'm helping keep people from stepping into a jail. But then after the first couple of years, which maybe for other people takes less time, realize that I'm absolutely part of the system, I'm part of the criminal justice system, I'm part of keeping it moving, I'm part of keeping it alive. I get paid because people go to jail every day, and so for me, I'm at a point where I'm questioning can I really do this and call myself an abolitionist? And that's a personal question that I have for myself.

Shimon Cohen:

I think all that was so important because it's your experience, and I think that us sharing about these experiences is how we grow in people listening that have had the same ones are going to relate and can build on that, and then others like students right now who are thinking about what their... There's a lot of students who are already coming in to social work programs fired up already about abolition, right? And so, that's a whole other thing that schools of social work has to deal with and they're dealing with it, because they're getting the fire from the students. Because it's like you come in fired up about abolition and then you get trained to be part of a carceral system, right, oppressive system, you're telling a different story like how you came in you think you're doing it, you're being helpful, and I can really relate to that too thinking like, "Oh, I'm doing these things in these ways I've been trained." And then it's like unlearning that has to happen as well, so I really appreciate it.

Vivianne Guevara:

And it's an unlearning and I think where I was going was that in those moments when I'm really thinking of like, "Wow, I really want to quit my job because I can't be a part of this anymore." I don't know, it's kind of like this thing where there's so many people that are public defenders, and who think they are also, freeing people and freedom fighters and doing great work, but are continuing to cause harm in the way that they interact with people. And the way that they represent people, and the way that they honor on uphold our laws, and the ways that operates. There are a lot of lawyers who do fight against that and are pushing to change laws because that's the only way, to change the system is to change laws at this point before abolishing. But there are a lot of lawyers who don't see abolition as a goal, and that is troubling to know that there's a lot of public defenders who are accepting this as the way that the world is instead of trying to challenge it.

Durrell Washington:

I guess I can jump in. So similar to Vivianne, soon when I had my field placement as a social work student I was like, "Yeah, this isn't it." I knew I wanted to work with young folks, so my first placement was about a program for children with incarcerated parents. So trying to help them maintain connection through letters, visits, we help provide that. When parents came home, help connect them to resources if there were some kind of custody battle. And that was pretty cool, but then I was at a mental health outpatient clinic where everyone there, for the most part, was court mandated. And so it was sorta like us working with probation officers or parole officers because they had to check in to make sure that they was meeting their sessions. And I remember meeting guys who had to take off of work to make sure that they had a session, or had to leave a session early because they needed to make it home because of curfew. Because we were only open in the evenings because we tried to make it so that those who need to work could work and then come to the sessions that they needed.

Durrell Washington:

And I really respected my supervisor because he wasn't down for calling parole officers, probation officers. Most of the time they had to show up, because we weren't trying to kind of give them that information anyway. But I was just like, "Yo, this ain't it. How do I be a part of something that's bigger that can kind of change this?" So I started to think about policies so that's why I went to Columbia for was to study policy, how can I get involved with this. Because most of the people who kind of advocate for certain laws or passes those laws don't look like the people that laws are defining. But then on that road, I got into research and I was like, "Yo, how can I control my own work?"" Then like, "Yo, go get a PhD you do the research you want to do or whatever, you have to be at a school."

Durrell Washington:

So there's that whole the academic thing. And I kind of found my niche with that, even though the policy job I did have... Cam introduced me to Vincent Schiraldi who ran the justice lab, and to my knowledge, there aren't too many folks in the justice lab who identify as abolitionist, but we did pretty much like abolitionist kind of work so basically going around in different jurisdictions trying to get them to scale back on the use of youth prisons. And I remember having a meeting with the twelve youth judges in Milwaukee, and their concern was like, "Well, if we stop locking them up we lose our job." So that's the concern with everyone, not the wellbeing of the kids. But okay, let's do some reducing but how do we still keep our job? So I'm like, "Yeah, see this is the part of the problem." If you're not thinking that ultimately we won't need you, then how much really good are you really trying to do?

Durrell Washington:

So that's ultimately led me to kind of like research, but then also understanding kind of, I think part of the question was how does social work kind of go against abolition. I think social work licensing, so a bunch of my friends are directly impacted folks so if anyone's not kind of familiar with that language, formerly incarcerated folks who are doing social work. I think about how much it takes for them to get licensed and all the kind of, what do you call it? All the paperwork that they have to go through and the statements of good conduct that they have to collect depending on what their and put them on what the charge was just to get a license. And the fact that we don't have a universal license.

Durrell Washington:

So depending on where are, what you have to do in order to practice is just reminds me of criminal legal policy, how every jurisdiction is something different. No one wants to have a universal system because then it makes it a lot harder to do the work that we're trying to do, because things look so different. So you have to be really localized in kind of advocacy that you want to do. And I'll pass.

Michelle Grier:

That licensing hit me. I'm supposed to take my LC exam. I'm just completely avoiding it because what's the point? I'm already doing the work. And also, just remembering school, there were so many people who graduated and who were like, "We want to do private practice. We have a parent who's gunna front like us to go in a private practice and we're going to have a clinical supervisor who will support us for three years, and then we'll be a clinician." And that their main goal in going to social work school. And I didn't know that coming into social work school that's what social workers could do, I had no concept of private practice as a part of social work. So I was like, "Why wouldn't you go into a PhD program? Why won't you become a psychologist or psychiatrist?"And then just understanding that it's an easy in, or this is the way, or it's the way that you like... Also think we have to talk about the social

constructions of White womanhood and what's considered a proper job before you get married to other folks. I know this might be off track from abolition but in thinking about-

Shimon Cohen:

It's all connected.

Michelle Grier:

... Capitalism. It's like that just hit me so hard. The way that other people were graduating and step into space and I came here with a really clear comprehension. When I was in undergrad I was doing a lot of writing. I'm supposed to go do research and I wanted to learn how to do the practice work and really like get involved in if I'm going to do research and coming out of organizing where people are getting burnt out, but not really understanding how to do some of that. And the people I knew who were doing that in community were social workers, so in my brain social workers were community organizers and aunties from the community who held space.

Michelle Grier:

And then going to school and seeing that's not what it was, really, really was confusing. I think it's still confusing, I think it's going to be confusing for all the students who were walking in the door looking for an abolitionist space, right? That's how also how this collective came together because it was like, "We need to be able to have these conversations and show some examples and also highlight the reason in which we're trying something. I don't know where I'm going with all this because I felt touched by things that folks were saying and a little maybe triggered by them. But yeah, I'm going to pause.

Cameron Rasmussen:

Well Michelle, what you said made me think about a couple things, and one, the NAASW was born, if you will, in the last year during the uprisings, and in part in response to social workers being touted as the replacement for police or the right partnership with police. And to say directly social workers partnering with police is not the answer, and even saying social workers replacing police is not the answer. And this is a larger conversation about what people need. There's a piece that came out from Mimi Kim, Leah Jacobs, something like seven or six other people, wrote this piece around sort of carceral social work and defunding the police. And in it they offer a definition of carceral social work, which is sort of saying there's the direct partnership with law enforcement that I think it includes working with police and working for prisons and probation, but also like Durrell was getting at running ATIs where you're violating people and sending them back to carceral systems.

Cameron Rasmussen:

So that's one - is like the direct sort of link to carceral systems, but then two is all the logics that underlie sort of carceral systems, so that's White supremacy, or capitalism, or coercion. And so, so much of social work is connected to these larger carceral logics that aren't necessarily directly, sort of, partnering with law enforcement, but reinforcing the idea that an individual is the problem. I remember the first place that I worked was preventive services around families, and I thought we did some good work, I think, but it was so much about individuals and there was actual funding restrictions on the ability to do more for advocacy related work. I'll give one other example which is a bit... I don't know, it's a weird thing to say but I'll just give it. Somebody texted me today and there's a protest happening this weekend and they were like, "Do you want to get arrested in this sort of civil disobedience?" The answer was

immediately no, in part, because I have a record for something, but also, because I work inside prisons, and I want to be able to get inside prison.

Cameron Rasmussen:

I already have an arrest, if I get arrested again, that is going make it hard for me to go inside. And that's a reality to contend with and I decided to say no, but it's on the fringes of this conversation, but it's relevant in that so much is pushing us away from those kind of direct protest organizing that actually gets to the collective solution.

Shimon Cohen:

Yeah. All of that and we haven't even talked about child welfare, and it's one of the largest systems of social work, right? So many graduating social workers are going to go work in child welfare, bachelor's level, especially. And now it's more of supposedly about family reunification, but really?

Vivianne Guevara:

Yeah. And I think that the criminal legal system and the family regulation system are where a bunch of the things that are wrong with social work collide. So the licensure, the mandated reporting, and the carceral nature of social work, right now, all kind of collide in those two systems. And with the licensure, I mean, for me it's kind of this circular thing that goes on in my head especially with the clinical license, and people are probably tired, oh, this group is not tired of hearing about it, but all my friends are. And so it's like we have the licensures and the clinical one, especially, which is based on not one... A lot of social work now is based on knowledge of the DSM, which I find horrifyingly fascinating because the DSM is rooted in racism and White men's judgment of others and what's wrong with others. And so, we have this whole tie and connection with medical social work and with the DSM, that one of our placement exams where our license is based in.

Vivianne Guevara:

And then, we have this power to drop dime on people, basically, if we decide they're not a good parent, if we decide their kids are in danger, and why do we have that power? I don't want that power, I don't think a lot of us should have that power, but there's a lot of social workers who embrace that power and call it being professional. So that is also one reason to abolish social work and come up with... Well, and several reasons to come up with a way to abolish social work or what we define as... What social work is defined as right now and why, Michelle what you said, a lot of folks are coming in social work to do, is to get that power. And I don't agree with that either, that's not why I went to social work either. And we're similarly shocked that my peers wanted to be private practitioners, and I was told that social work school is about social justice.

Vivianne Guevara:

And so having to find kindred spirits at that time, my five friends at social work school, and everybody else was on this other track that I didn't understand. And I think now more than ever, thankfully, there's a lot of pockets of folks, not even pockets, big groups of people that are working to change mandated reporting or to get away from any reporting. I don't know about licensure, but that's something that I want to work on. Because like Durrell said, there's so many people that are kept from that licensure, who are directly impacted people and the folks that we are supposed to be partnering with as social workers, and they're left out, and they're kept out. So yeah, there's all of these different things that kind of collide in social work that I hope that more and more students and more people in the field are

changing their mind about and realizing, "Yeah, this is the work that we have to do, and the work that we have to do is going to put us out of our jobs. So let's find a way to be happy about that and work towards that goal."

Shimon Cohen:

Yeah. Just to jump in too, when you're talking about the licensure, I had the honor to interview one of the founders of NABSW right? The National Association of Black Social Workers, Mr. Garland Jaggers, who was there in '68, and Dr. Denise McLane-Davison, who is their national archivist, and who's a professor at Morgan State. And they were both very clear that they were one of the loudest and first organizations that said, "No, there should not be licensure." And so I just want to give props to them, because they've been strong in that position for a long time now.

Vivianne Guevara:

And it's also kind of, it's not difficult, but it's a conversation to be had. Because I understand that, as people of color, we want to be professionals, we want to get our licenses, we want our degrees, we want this because there are also things that we've been kept away from too. And so, I want to celebrate also when students get their... When they're graduating, or when they get their licenses. But I think what the licenses mean, and what we have to do to get them, which is just do our work, basically, that needs to change. And the power that those hold changes, because in New York, I don't know about other places, like Durrell said they're different, the licensing is different everywhere.

Vivianne Guevara:

But in New York, there's two licenses that are different, one is not better, they're different. And one has the power to do things that the other does not have to do, but that does not have the power to do those things which are provide psychotherapy and make treatment plans based on that assessment, and sometimes make recommendations on medications. Those are the three of the things.

Vivianne Guevara:

But it stratifies social workers in New York to the point where those with the clinical license, it's not everybody, but a lot of social workers with the clinical license, and then by extension, folks who are looking at social workers give that clinical license more weight. It's better. It's almost like having an advanced degree and it's not having an advanced degree. And so, unnecessarily stratifies social workers, because I could probably pass the LCSW exam too, but because I have not been supervised by somebody who can give me my hours, I can't get that license. Doesn't mean that I don't know what another person is doing with as much experience as me, or that I don't know how to do what an LCSW does, it just means that I didn't have that type of supervision. So anyway, that was my rant on licensure. Sorry, I'm going to be quiet now.

Durrell Washington:

Yeah. Really quick, the follow up on that, I think it's very much and Cam, you've written about this and this is in a lot of conversation. Social work, I feel like it's going through this identity crisis to where they've been fighting forever to be recognized as a profession. I mean, I'm going to make everyone read Flexner's "Is Social Work a Profession?" who is not even a social worker, so someone that has nothing to do with the profession saying whether it's legitimate or not. And this fight for legitimacy is the reason why we have all these licenses, like in Illinois, you have to get licensed if you want to work in a school. So

if you want to do special types of social work, there's a license for it, which makes entirely no sense because if you could drive kind of two hours away you go to Wisconsin it looks totally different.

Durrell Washington:

And I think it's all trying to be seen in the same light as economist, and psychology, and the medical field. When to me, one of the things I love about social work is how interdisciplinary it is in nature, like we take some from psyche, from econ, and from sociology. And then we all do our own thing that centers around social justice. And then, focusing on people. And they're not just people, but role that the environment plays and those kinds of things. And I think we say that's what we care about, but that's not kind of what I actually show. So I think that plays a large role, and kind of the reason why we have all these barriers to practice in certain instance.

Shimon Cohen:

So let's shift a little bit in terms of how can social workers implement, and even beyond social work, how can people implement an abolitionist approach to their work and their lives?

Cameron Rasmussen:

There's some framing that I've been sort of thinking about for the last maybe year. And I'm still trying to identify exactly where this comes from, but maybe it's Gramsci, who I don't even know was a person until the last six months. But there's a sort of a framework that comes out of anti-fascist work in Italy in sort of 30s or 40s, I believe. Anyhow, the idea is sort of thinking about the state, and the power of the state, and different strategies around the state. And so there's work against the state, there's work outside of the state, and there's work inside the state. And when I sort of heard that, and thought about social work, it made a lot of sense to me to think about abolition in terms of work against the state. Work outside the state can work inside and around the state. And so much of social work is implicated in state power.

Cameron Rasmussen:

And it sounds sort of like highfalutin, but so much of social work is connected to state funding, to calling the state and police and child welfare and whatever. So, that sort of framework has helped me think about the different ways in which I'm trying to do abolitionist work. And some of that's about work against the state to get people out of prison, to reduce the size and the harm of carceral systems.

Cameron Rasmussen:

There's work I'm engaged with outside of the state, which like mutual aid work, restorative, and transformative justice, trying to like help resolve conflicts and harms completely outside of the state. And then there's work, like I said earlier about, I'm a part of a program that goes into one of the prisons here in New York State. And that's through a nonprofit that goes into New York State Prison, and it's not a direct partnership. I mean, in a way it's a partnership, it's not working for the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision but it's working with them. And I wouldn't argue that work is abolitionist in spirit, but it's still in some ways legitimizing the idea that prisons should exist. So I think that the work outside and against the state is pretty clear for me, the work inside and around the state is where I think we're grappling a bit with how do we do that, and discern what's the right move in any given moment.

Vivianne Guevara:

I feel like Cameron is always very eloquent, and has all the theories, and has read everything. And I'm like, "I'm just here, this is how you do it." So I don't have that framework, but I'm going to read that person so I can have that framework, because I think that's a good way of thinking about it and more organized. But my unorganized way of thinking about that is and it comes from being a public defender because that's the social work that I have done. But outside of that, also facilitating processes around accountability and resolving harm outside of systems, outside of calling the police, which I have got a lot of learning from that, for myself. On the next time that I'm encountered with harm and conflict to take more than a moment to think about how can I resolve this without entering a system or without calling the police or calling a system. And as a survivor, which a lot of people are survivors, that's hard. And it's difficult to think about that, because you don't know what's going to happen beyond not calling the police.

Vivianne Guevara:

You don't know how things are going to get resolved beyond relaying on what we all have relied on for centuries, for decades, and so there is a lot of unlearning. And so with the learning, that's what I've done as a public defender is really just read how laws came about and all this information is out there, how these laws came about from back from when the colonizers came here. And how the DSM came about from whoever met that first time decided we need to codify this and describe people's behaviors and give it a name and a little code. And how did the family regulation system come about with some people came together. And what I came up with is that all of these things were created by people who came together a long time ago, mostly White folks, and said, "Hey, this is the way that we're going to govern and rule the world." And they made these laws however many years ago, Native people, Black people. People of Color, colonized people, we're not a part of that decision making. And now we're here and we are part of the decision making now, and now we're reclaiming our time, and now we are reclaiming our ancestry and our roots and our land.

Vivianne Guevara:

And so, now it's time for us to revisit all those laws and be a part of making new ones, if that's what we want, be a part of making new systems if that's what we want. And so that's how I simplified it in my mind and that's why I talked about with people now, including people who I work with, who are facing time, who are incarcerates, and also my office. I'm often the one that's like, "Whatever, be quiet, you don't know what you're talking about, this is never going to happen." And that's what they said about restorative justice five years ago, which now it's, not that it's taking off or that it never has been a thing, but in my office, at least, it was not a concept that people could wrap their minds around. And now it is, five years later.

Vivianne Guevara:

So I think that the more people talk about, these are just laws, they're made up, all of these things are made up and it's up to us to undo them, and re-learn, and re-teach, and figure out what's best for everyone. And so, that's what I'm on now. I hope it doesn't take five years, something tells me it's going to take longer than five years, but I hope it takes less than five years for people to realize that we can just not pay attention to these things or fighting against these things. As simple as it was for people to put this together, however many 100 years ago, we're going to have to dismantle it.

Michelle Grier:

I was like Gramsci? Haven't heard that name in a long time. Organic intellectuals, makes me think of like Malcolm X, and all folks who just take the theories and make it applicable to folks and make it relevant, allow people to feel and hold it. And so when I think about my engagement with abolition, I think about coming to social work with so much of like, "Oh, I want to learn how to do this."

Michelle Grier:

Because there were things that happened during the course of my life, survivorship, family ish, that I was just like I want to know how to deal with this. And I was there like, being back in this time with COVID where we have to go a little bit slower, coming back to family and doing some of the healing work there, and trying to figure out this conversation with them is in many ways, where I find that I'm learning the tools to do this work. Having an intergenerational conversation and talking about harms that have been done, talking about how do we address depression? And how do we address living with certain needs and things in that space, and get through that.

Michelle Grier:

And the reason why I mentioned this is because I just think that there's a different level of stuckness that happens in family that I think if we can conquer this together, that I'm going to get free with you and no one's getting left behind. And that means that yes we might have had a little bit of something through becoming police officers, through being social worker to whatever, but I'm willing to let that go so you can come up with me and we're going to figure that out together. Then can really have a model from looking at forward. So it's been really nice to come to this moment, where literally having younger cousins, and older folks who are in their 80s, and we've had conversations that are dealing with things that we haven't really ever reckoned with. That were not accessible to me when I was younger. And I feel like if we can continue this, and move past this, even after this moment of COVID where we've reconnected, then for me that feels like a practice in abolition.

Durrell Washington:

Yeah. I'll be brief. I echo everything everyone said. I think personally thinking through kind of the question about how I practice this. Because I'm a doc student all I do is read and write, I practice within my writing and being intentional with language that I use. And even pushing back when I have to write a paper and I use abolitionism as a theory, and they're like, "Oh, you can't do it." I'm like, "Well, if you don't understand it, that's your problem. That doesn't mean I can't use and then apply it." And then kind of I use it in my self-care, so I'm really big on community work. So I also teach on the inside, in Illinois, and work with like the Final Five campaign, which is the youth abolitionist group.

Durrell Washington:

All that stuff kind of keeps me centered, and grounded, and I think it's so easy to get caught up in the world of academia and how toxic that can be, and then being intentional of who I work with. So if I don't believe in you as a person, I'm probably not going to work with you. It's like I won't, there's no kind of tension between folks, it's just if I'm investing any time outside of family life, it has to kind of be worth it for me. Also things that keep me going.

Shimon Cohen:

I really appreciate all that and you all touched on so many different aspects to it, as well. And I think that those are all examples of ways people can put this into practice that are all accessible because they're all

different ways, so I think that's one of the key things, is like there's not one right way, which is also part of the unlearning, because I know for me I'm so ingrained. And I hear from students too of like, "Just tell me what to do, tell me how to do it?" And it gets complicated, because who's been doing it? And how do you do it? And we don't live in a abolitionist society, otherwise, like we'd probably have a better sense of how to do it, right? So what do you all think about... How do you engage with people who are not abolitionists? Who don't identify? Maybe they've never heard of this, and everyone's in different places, right? But what are some ways to help move people towards this approach? And how does that connect also to like the work you're doing as a collective?

Durrell Washington:

Those are actually some of my favorite conversations to have, federal imprisonments, because some people is just like assholes. But it's often like a Q&A back and forth, because I always talk... Especially when it comes to prison abolition, right? Not even just abolition is kind of the historical roots of it. I always come to the fact, I ask people, if we have over 70% recidivism rate, how is the system working? So if you don't believe in abolition, there's another way, there's something else we should be doing, please tell me how what we're doing is working at all? And then how come it's always like you don't care until it's like somebody in your family. Yep, the person who's in front of the judge is your brother or your cousin or your child, is when we seem to kind of care. And they never kind of really have an answer. And I also think it's because people don't even really understand what abolition is, they think is this utopia, like open all the cells, let everyone out.

Durrell Washington:

There's no accountability, there's no healing, there's no kind of community investment. So I think that was the point of the class that I taught. So I got to teach a class on abolition, it was not to make anyone in my class an abolitionist, it was just so that if anyone ask you what abolition is you can give them the answer. And that's all I really cared about, was that you understood something kind of like something concrete. And I would get the question, "How come we don't... like you have all these speakers..." When Michelle came to my class and did a super awesome job like, "Why do you have all these speakers, how come you don't invite a cop?" I'm like, "Because that's the dominant narrative, if you want to see what a cop point of view is, just turn the TV on." Why in these spaces with something that's not kind of the dominant ideology, we have to give space to kind of opposition or whatever.

Durrell Washington:

So once we kind of get in that level playing field, and it's like, "Oh, you know what? Maybe." Like, "Okay, I can see." And yeah I'm not down like oh yeah, I'm converting people, but I'm always interested in the conversation, because I can barely get a answer with how this system we have now is actually working, and how doesn't do more harm than good.

Shimon Cohen:

Yeah. I think that is a good approach to ask those questions and put it back on the person where now they're... Because so much of it is like, right, like the first thing that always comes up, and I've been like I did a prison abolition interview, I had a guest on speaking about prison abolition - K. And some of you may know, and I deliberately did not ask this question, but then people were like, "But why didn't you ask it?" Right? Because it's always like, "But what do we do with murderers? What do we do with rapists?" Right? That always comes up and it's like, "Well, how's that working right now?" Right?

Shimon Cohen:

Because we know that, I mean, that's a whole bigger conversation, but it's just like what you're saying, Durrell, it's like the current system that is in place, how is that working, right? And who is it working for? And who is it not working for? So I think that's always a good approach of like... And that's something I'm even trying to work on more with my teaching rather than sometimes providing information, just asking more and more questions, and someone's got an issue they can give the rationale, they can explore.

Shimon Cohen:

How do you explain that we're saying we're about social justice, but this, this, and this happens where we're locking people up and we're taking people's kids away? How does that work? Tell me. Right? It's not easy to answer that and it shouldn't be. Sorry, I was going on a little bit there.

Michelle Grier:

You're feeling it. You're feeling it.

Shimon Cohen:

Yeah, I am. I love this conversation, this gives me energy talking with you all.

Michelle Grier:

I just think that it has also be a conversation about why we're so into punishment. When I heard you talking, it made, remind me of conversations I have with parents who are on corporal punishment. This is the way to teach, is the way to learn. And why is it that it has to be something that involves humiliating someone, devaluing someone's humanity in order for them to do something different, in order for them to fit into society. And then we curse folks out. And Vivianne, you said in the beginning, reconnecting with our traditions, I think a lot about Toni Morrison and with memory and just being able to connect back. That's not what other countries are doing. And even if folks can't connect back to an Indigenous practice, that's not what European countries are doing, so let's have that conversation.

Michelle Grier:

And Durrell, when you were talking about being able to just see the other narrative, there's so many other ways and it's just not the dominant way here. And why is that? What is that caught up in? I think if we wanna get heady about it, I think about the Protestant ethic, I think a lot about religion, and how punishment comes back to are you deserving of divine love and care, and it depends on how you think about that. Like in my world, my God definitely thinks that I and all my peoples deserve love and care, but that's not the reality for a lot of folks. And so some of the conversations I have, have to get to that level, being able to understand where folks values are coming from. And in that way, sometimes it is okay for them, they have a dominant figure, and that dominant figure is then the one articulating what their world looks like, which a lot of times is about punishment and not being deserving. And we have to be able to have those conversations with folks.

Michelle Grier:

I think when folks get shut down, when it feels like their experiences aren't heard or understood, then that could become problem. So yeah.

Cameron Rasmussen:

A couple of different thoughts come up, I'm listening to everyone and like, if people are at least sort of on board with domination being the opposite of what we want, then I think that's a good starting place, and you can sort of work back and say, "All these things are reinforcing domination, and so let's get rid of punishment, let's get rid of prison." I think it's a less harder sell. I think what, not sure who was saying this, but there is getting at the dissonance between what people think something is and what the reality of it is. And to what Michelle was saying about what we haven't learned, right? This is like, especially as a White person, there's so much that I haven't learned because of socialization and the teachings. The other thought I have that it's something that I've been trying to do inside myself from last year, is getting closer to the paradoxes and the tensions. And then it goes a little bit, to what Michelle is saying about, we gotta meet people at where they're a little bit.

Cameron Rasmussen:

I have feelings of revenge and wanting retribution. And I also know that's not going to get me what I need. And so, acknowledging the reality of people's feelings were also trying to name the reality of systems and policies that don't actually get as closer to what we want. And then one other historic piece about the paradoxes is around violence, which comes up a lot, is like people want some scaled alternative that just doesn't exist yet. And what we have doesn't work, or it works in sort of oppressive ways.

Vivianne Guevara:

Yeah. Then there's the, I don't want to said the part, but the very real existence of prisons and the carceral system as an extension of slavery, and as designed to do exactly what is supposed to do, which is to oppress people of color, or Black people, and marginalized people, and poor people. Which it is very successful at doing. And my answer to folks who asked like what about the rapists, and murderers? My friends are asking me that question all the time.

Vivianne Guevara:

Because my friends are not social workers and do not work in carceral systems, so those are a lot of the questions that I get from my family and friends. And I think in one way, I'm happy that people do not have to work in carceral systems and happy that people are removed from seeing that, but at the same time, I wish that most people could be more connected and see it for what it is so that they can't ignore it. I think a lot of people in the world can ignore it, because it is not there in front of their face as much as it can be, I guess. It is there, it is right in front of people's faces they just don't see it, I think, a lot of times.

Vivianne Guevara:

But agreeing with what everybody said about it's not keeping, I don't know if people said this, but it's not keeping communities safer. The carceral system does not keep communities safer, it also doesn't provide for survivors and victims. So if folks think that the carceral system, the way it exists provides for folks and supports folks who have been impacted by harm, or harmed by crime, or impacted by crime, any kind of crime, violence financial, at least as far as I can see from sitting right there, there's nothing that happens with folks who are survivors or victims, other than somebody going to jail. Which sometimes I don't get to talk to folks or survivors and victims in federal cases, but the times that I have, it's not what they wanted. They didn't want somebody to go to jail, they didn't want somebody to suffer, they didn't want somebody to even die, what they wanted was to me to know that it would

never happen again, to them, or to anybody else. And perhaps something else that would provide the healing that the government did not give them.

Vivianne Guevara:

And there's this thing in the criminal legal system that judges sentence people to an appropriate punishment for various reasons, and one of those is deterrence. And deterrence is supposed to create this fear in people like, "See what happens if you do this? You don't want to do it, do you?" To the person who's getting sentenced, and to the people that are in the world. And there's even literature and knowledge that deterrence doesn't work, because nobody's really finding out what people are getting for doing certain things, what kind of sentence people are getting, so you're not deterring the general public. And you're also deterring that person, specifically, you may not be because if you're sending them to prison for something that's rooted in that person's poverty or oppression, and you haven't solved that, which prison is not going to solve that, and you haven't healed that person, they're not gunna be deterred.

Vivianne Guevara:

If you're not providing people with resources, with food, with adequate shelter, with basics, with respect, with dignity, with employment, with the things that they want and need, it's not going to deter anybody from doing what they were doing before.

Michelle Grier:

Also when people get incarcerated just for being who they are, loitering on the street, walking down the block, or being Black, driving, and now we're like, in addition to now we're just changing up laws, and so one day it's not okay to have as much marijuana on you, the next day it's like, "Ooh, it's just recreation." Which like, I'm oversimplifying it.

Shimon Cohen:

I mean it shows what Vivianne was saying about a group of White Christian men getting together, colonizers, and coming up with all these laws, right? And how arbitrary they can be, as well. I mean, they're not arbitrary in the sense that they were all designed to support them. Right? And their property. And Cam, when you were talking about the state, and you all were talking about violence, Vivianne's talking about violence. The state is the biggest perpetrator of violence, right? Poverty is violence. I mean, I know you all know this, but I just want to put it out there. We're focused on so called violent crime here and there, which is much less than the violence that the state is impacting on people's lives on a daily basis, or over 600,000 people in the U.S. dying of COVID for example, what we've experienced this last year, and that type of violence, but they're building more prisons every day, which is another form of violence what it does to communities and families.

Shimon Cohen:

So I appreciate the conversation, I think for me, it's this evolution... You know... It's like this ever-evolving process, and I hope that people listening can be open to that process, and those contradictions. Because at least for me, there's no way you can do this work and not be stuck in that contradiction, because of the system that we're in, right. Of like got to have a job, what does that mean? And if if you want to be working for abolition, all that and people who are going to be graduating from social work, or people who are starting out on social work and they're trying to... Like field, right? Some of you were

talking about field placements, and the new 2022 EPAS from the Council on Social Work Education is like anti-racism's all in there in now.

Shimon Cohen:

And faculty and administrators are going to model anti-racism and feel placements, and it's like really? How is that going to happen? Do you know who all these people are? I mean, seriously. But it all connects to what you're talking about, right? So just people coming in fired up about abolition, and they go into their family surveillance field placement, and then what? They're going to start talking abolition, they're going get put on a performance improvement plan, they're gonna get kicked out of the placement. I'm kind of going off about it, but these are very real issues for people who are doing this work, it's like you all know and getting involved in this work of like there's going to be major blowback on folks and how do people navigate that. How do you all navigate that, have you been able to kind of carve out roles where you can do this and still be in your a role? Vivianne, you were kind of saying you're not sure how long that can hold up.

Vivianne Guevara:

I don't really get, I mean, other than... I don't know, just basically people not listening to me at the job. There's no blowback of like, " You can't talk about that, you can't say that." It's more of my own internal like how much longer can I do this, and call myself an abolitionist. And so it's either I do move in the direction where I am now of like, I'm not gonna shut my mouth anymore. And I'm very free flowing in the office, and not when I'm in court, and not when I'm talking to service providers, and not when I'm talking to POs, that's the direction I'm moving into. Is like, I might work myself out of a job by opening my mouth too much, I don't have a problem with that. Or I quit. So I think those are the two paths. You know, I keep talking until I get fired, or I quit. And maybe I won't get fired, maybe other people come along, on this journey.

Durrell Washington:

Yeah. I feel like because I'm a student, there is a privilege of being a student with how much you can push, almost, right? And I push a lot. I'm interested to see what happens. So I plan to stay in academia, I plan to apply for tenure track positions, and I'm interested to see how receptive the academy is going to be to meet me. I have a piece coming out on abolition. Gy the time I graduate, I will have taught my class three times. So abolition is all over my CV. And I feel like a lot of times faculty are super supportive of students who try to do like this whatever's deemed like radical work, or whatever. It's like students trying to push the field, but I wonder how receptive they will be to a colleague to when now it's like this isn't your advisee anymore. This is someone who's on the same kind of level as you and in a sense, so I'm intrigued to see what happens next.

Durrell Washington:

But I have colleagues who's in the academy and at pretty big schools, so it's like, there seems to be a pathway. But I'm interested to see how this momentum continues, even with CSWE statements, and I'm waiting for to get past the statements and get to the action because like because we've been doing these anti-racist statements forever and so we'll see how that goes. But yeah.

Michelle Grier:

Yeah. The organization, not right now, there's no push back. A lot of folks I work with are abolitionists and work alongside of. And so it's nice to be able to have these conversations when we're talking about

what does it look like as a nonprofit to be able to hold that space. And where there's a tension, that has been a big part of my role, is leading. As a leader, what then, can I be doing in space to allow folks to explore it and bring it into the organization without collapsing it or making it something that has to fit into a bubble? But I will say, I worked in schools before this and then I worked in child welfare - the family regulation system - and when I worked in the family regulation system, we were just trying to get Undoing Racism to come in, and that was really hard.

Michelle Grier:

And I got pushed to the side, got a lot of pushback for that. It was like, "These are some of the other issues." And it's not that there weren't other organizations doing it, but I do think that when in doing any sort of... Like bringing other conversations into these organizations, it's like who's on leadership that can be in allyship with you to bring it forward and make if a priority. And if it's not our priority in the finances, it's just not the priority for the organization then it's not going to be. I mean, it's really interesting when things do become buzz words or become initiatives and how those live or cast aside based on who is the person in in charge, who has a tenure, or is transitioning through or brought in for that. And so I don't miss that. But I will say is that if you're in those spaces, and you're trying to do something, there are HR protection laws, that allows you to be in that space and try something.

Michelle Grier:

So if you're a social worker in a school, there are certain laws that protects you. And you can name like under my Code of Ethics this, you can write HR letters. Being able to either get insurance outside of the school or work with an advisor outside of the space. I always say if you don't have a collective, or some mentors to go to, then you're just out here alone, on a branch, and that's not cool. So being able to have some folks to work things through and then also making those decisions when it is time to quit and go, and understanding what that can look like for you. Because sometimes that can be scary, for folks who have families and things other things that they need to take of. And sometimes it's infamous can happen right now like, "I quit bye. Jerry Maguire out the door." So that's okay. But you can figure out what that is for you. And that's really important because I think people are hard on themselves, I need to do this today but this was here before you came into this field. It will be here, hopefully not for ever but it'll be here for a while.

Michelle Grier:

So take your time figure it out and work with others. Imagining and assuming that you're alone or that you're the only one who can make change is huge ego. And collective... Gotta be with the collective.

Cameron Rasmussen:

Michelle, I love everything you just said. And for some reason, now I'm thinking about Jerry Maguire and I'm like Jerry Maguire-ing it is a good idea, but don't Jerry Maguire yourself alone, you got to do it with other people. Otherwise, you're just like losing a job. Part of what I was thinking about as you're talking Michelle is like, some of us... I think you and your org and where I am at, it is one of our political homes. And we're able to have, the organization might not be explicitly sort of stating everything we might want, but it's a place where we can have these conversations and be, appear, sort of linking together. And not everybody has that, I think that's real. And I have a friend, colleague, and they just were deciding between two jobs, and one was clearly going to be a place for them where they would already have a political home and the other one they have to build it in sort of a hostile environment. And they

decided to go with the one that's a bit more hostile for a variety of reasons. But they sort of knew that going into it.

Cameron Rasmussen:

And I think if you don't know going into that, and when you go into that, then your like... And the other thing I'll say is, we just hired someone at my job and we interviewed six or seven people, every person was asking about abolition. And like that just wouldn't have happened two years ago. And so people have different expectations, I guess, the last thing I'll say is for those folks whose day job isn't their political home, which I think it's probably more often the case than not, like finding it elsewhere, and I get that's hard for some people, depending on if you have children or other responsibilities, but that's partly why the NAASW was created, I think, to be another political home for all of us in it and to try and create more political education for folks out in the social work world.

Shimon Cohen:

Yeah, so that goes perfectly into my final question for you all is, how can folks get involved?

Vivianne Guevara:

Well, I'll start us off. So we're figuring that out right now. Actually, I joined when the group was already started, thankfully, gratefully. And I think we're figuring it out how to move forward, because it was supposed to be a time limited project, and was supposed to be over. At least me personally, I've gotten a lot out of being with everyone and feel honored to meet new people. And get to know people from the group that I already knew in a different way. And so we are figuring it out, I think there's more political education coming, I think we're trying to figure out how people can get involved with the group, how we're going to move forward, for how long? One way that folks can get involved immediately is by filling out our survey, it maps carceral social work, abolition social work in different sectors and in different physical locations. So we're working on we're gathering that data now by the survey so people can go to our website and fill out the survey. It's pretty quick.

Vivianne Guevara:

It's also meant to be educational and to get conversation started in one's own head and with other folks in thinking about carceral social work, in thinking about abolition social work. So that's one immediate way that folks can get involved.

Shimon Cohen:

So tell us the website and then I'll make sure it goes in the show notes and on the podcast website.

Durrell Washington:

I believe it's naasw.com, I want to say it's a dot com. And I'll just say really quick because I don't think no one said it, the name is the Network to Advance Abolitionist Social Work. I think I was the last of the current members to join, Cam invited me. And I think it's like a super dope group of folks with different backgrounds, who are really care about the work. So sometimes I'll get into a group and it just feel like busy work that's not that important. I love late Wednesday nights with folks and seeing Michelle's amazing background and then watching Cam in Hawaii at one point. You know we talk about the role that social work and abolition and what this even is, I think it's super cool. And yeah, please, folks fill the survey out. I think the information will be really important for the field not just for us.

Cameron Rasmussen:

I can say something about how he came to be. Which is this is a great interview as the uprising were happening last summer, a group of us started to meet on Zoom to think about what we could do around abolition and social work, and where we might be collaborate on some kind of useful something. And over time that developed into what is now called the Network to Advance Abolitionist Social Work, and the original idea was let's not be so ambitious that we're not going to build this massive thing that we can actually realize. And think some of us have been involved in something called the Social Workers Against Criminalization, which we started in 2015. And we had great ambitions, very low capacity, and at least in my personal, for me, like not that much knowhow. We did small things that I think were useful, but they didn't last because we had these big ambitions and just not the capacity and knowhow . And so the strategy was sort of, "Let's start small and see how we go as we created this, what was going to be a year long thing." But we did political education, we're doing some research, we've created a website that is going to have more resources on it soon.

Cameron Rasmussen:

And then we tried to sort of interject in social work month in March for abolitionist ideas into the social work discourse and conversations. And now, I think all of us have felt it's felt like a good space to be in. It's felt physically good, emotionally good. And we think we've done something useful and so we're going to continue building the NAASW.

Shimon Cohen:

I think it's great. I think it's really needed in our field and in the world, and that's why I'm so happy that you all took the time to come on the podcast and talk with me. And I just want to thank you all for doing the work in the community.

Vivianne Guevara:

Thank you. I also just want to add that, we had a student intern, and I just want to give her a shout out, Nikki Rahman, who was our students, and who really made a lot of this possible. The website, our social media, all of the ads for our political education all came from our student. And so for all the students out there, this is work that you can do, this is work that you can get together with other students and interested faculty to do. I just wanted to also give a shout out to the other members, Mimi Kim, Caitlin Becker, Sarah Knight, Rosie Ríos, Tiffany McFadden and Sheila Vakharia.

Shimon Cohen:

Thank you for listening to Doin' The Work Frontline Stories of Social Change. I hope you enjoyed the podcast. Please follow on Twitter and leave positive reviews on iTunes. If you're interested in being a guest, or know someone who's doing great work, please get in touch. And thank you for doing real work to make this world a better place.