

Rothko Chapel

Beyond the Rhetoric



Dear Friends,

Since the Rothko Chapel first opened it 1971, it has diligently honored its original purpose to be a “focal point for people to gather and explore spiritual bonds common to all, to discuss problems of world-wide interest, and share a spiritual experience...respectful of the beliefs of others” (Rothko Chapel Articles of Incorporation). Through community gatherings at times of crisis, through concerts, meditations, lectures, symposia, and human rights awards, the Chapel has engaged critical moral and social issues that challenge our sense of being at the deepest levels. While the issues addressed have been diverse and wide ranging, the synergy between contemplation and action continues to connect all we do, reminding us that we are all part of the same human community and are stronger and more effective when we work together.

Keeping with this commitment, in conjunction with the Chapel’s 50th Anniversary, we presented a two-part series titled “Beyond the Rhetoric: Civil Rights and Our Shared Responsibility,” examining different understandings of and approaches to furthering human rights and civil liberties in the United States.

The questions that we set out to address included: How have civil rights historically been understood and applied in this country? Who benefits from current civil rights, and who has been left out? Which civil rights and liberties are particularly at-risk today? How can we become more effective advocates and activists as we work to address injustice and create an equitable society? How can we rethink our approaches to the concept of rights, responsibilities, and civil liberties? And how can we sustain our passion for social justice and long-haul activism?

The series began in the fall of 2021 with four virtual lectures and panels, concluding with a two-day virtual symposium March 31 to April 1, 2022. The fall lectures explored both the historical contexts and contemporary conditions surrounding LGBTQIA+ rights, Indigenous perspectives on the concepts of human rights, immigrants’ rights, and economic and racial justice in America. The virtual symposium then examined how individuals, grassroots initiatives, and policy makers can work together to create a more equitable future, and covered the following topics: freedom of speech, the future of civil rights, public health and civil rights, reimagining policing and prisons, sustaining activism, voting rights, and organizing for change.

This report is a summary of those programs and experiences, highlighting each of the events presented, ideas and concepts explores, and reflections and actions to consider to further civil rights from the perspectives of the presenters. If you did not have the opportunity to attend these events, we invite you to watch the recordings on the Chapel’s website and Vimeo page, and share them with your friends, family, and colleagues.

Sincerely,



David Leslie
Rothko Chapel Executive
Director



Ashley Clemmer
Director of Programs and
Community Engagement

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Beyond the Rhetoric: Civil Rights & Our Shared Responsibility

2021 Lecture Series

Our Moral Obligation: Ensuring the Dignity of All

July 22, 2021

▼ Dr. William J. Barber II



▲ Rev. Laura Mayo

Reflection Questions

- Rev. Dr. Barber reflected on how “bad public policy kills,” noting the alarming number of people in poverty who die each year from lack of access to healthcare and a living wage. How does the injustice and violence experienced under capitalism intersect with today’s most urgent civil rights issues?
- Does our current legal system prioritize the rights of corporations and wealthy people over the rights of working class and low-income people? What are some examples that come to mind for you?
- How does your and/or your community’s moral or spiritual-based perspectives impact your actions toward building equity?

Action Items

- Read [We Are Called to Be a Movement](#) by Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II
- Learn more about and join the [Poor People’s Campaign](#) to support intersectional issues such as voting rights, immigrants’ rights, healthcare access, and raising the minimum wage.
- Show up to vote in every election, especially local elections. Research and support candidates and policies that advocate for the most vulnerable communities among us. Hold your elected officials accountable for their work while they are in office.

Opening the lecture series with an overview of the state of civil rights issues in the US, Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, President & Senior Lecturer of Repairers of the Breach and Co-Chair of the Poor People’s Campaign, shared his perspectives through a moral and faith-based lens. Rev. Dr. Barber described historical and contemporary experiences in mobilizing communities across the country to address issues of economic and racial justice and discussed the work of coalitions to create lasting, systemic change.

Rev. Dr. Barber’s remarks were followed by a moderated Q&A session led by Rev. Laura Mayo, Senior Pastor at Covenant Church in Houston, TX, and Rothko Chapel Board Member. Rev. Barber shared specific pieces of legislation aimed to lift people out of poverty and ensure a healthy democracy, and he provided examples of how organizers with the Poor People’s Campaign are holding elected representatives accountable to their most vulnerable constituents. He reported statistics on the numbers of low-income, uninsured/under-insured, minimum wage workers in Texas and across the nation, and showed how the COVID-19 pandemic has exponentially increased these numbers, exacerbating the challenges faced by the most marginalized communities among us. Rev. Dr. Barber concluded by encouraging participants to join the Poor People’s Campaign movement in the struggle to bolster one’s spirituality with others to further love and justice.

[View the lecture at vimeo.com/565772294](https://vimeo.com/565772294)

American Indian Worldview & the Concept of Rights

September 30, 2021

While western frameworks focus on individual rights within a strict legal system, for American Indians the idea of rights encompasses collective, broader community inter-Tribal interests, including Tribal nations and lands. Suzanne Benally (Navajo and Santa Clara Tewa), Executive Director of the Swift Foundation, set context for the conversation by explaining the problematic character and limitations of discussing rights within a Euro-Christian legalist, individualistic, property-focused framework. She illuminated the distinct differences between this framework and Indigenous worldviews that prioritize relationships, reciprocity, and balance among all beings, including the land and animals.

Dina Gilio-Whitaker (Colville Confederated Tribes), American Indian Studies Lecturer at California State University San Marcos, shared a brief historical overview of how European Christian colonizers developed the legal framework that still undergirds contemporary approaches to civil rights in the United States, including the role of the Doctrine of Discovery as justification for the taking of Indigenous peoples’ lands and reconstructing them into property. Dr. Tink Tinker

The Struggle for Equality: LGBTQIA+ Rights

September 8, 2021

LGBTQIA+ rights, particularly rights for transgender people, are under attack in the US and Texas, as restrictions on bodily autonomy and healthcare access are at the forefront of current legislative roll-backs. This conversation began with JoDee Winterhof, Senior VP for Policy & Political Affairs at Human Rights Campaign, noting recent policy successes including marriage equality, greater representation of LGBTQIA+ people in public office, and increasing support for the Equality Act, which would provide legal protections to all Americans in employment, housing, and education regardless of sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Winterhof also identified areas of backlash, highlighting the consistent rise in murders of Black and Brown transgender women, and the relentless introduction of anti-trans bills across the country.

Adri Perez, Policy & Advocacy Strategist at ACLU of Texas, shared their work in Texas legislative advocacy, noting the overwhelming rise in anti-LGBTQIA+ and anti-trans bills from 2015 to 2021 statewide. Perez detailed ways in which Texas legislators dehumanize trans youth with violent rhetoric, threatening trans youth’s access to healthcare, bathrooms, parental care and participation in sports. Acknowledging the measurable effects of these attacks on transgender peoples’ health, Perez also celebrated the courage of transgender children and the organizations, medical professionals, families, and coaches who share their stories to testify against these discriminatory bills.

In conversation with Rev. Troy Treash, Senior Pastor at Houston’s Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, panelists discussed strategies for protecting the rights of LGBTQIA+ people, including prioritizing the passage of federal, state, and local protections based on sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Winterhof and Perez discussed the work to be done across LGBTQIA+ movements to ensure diverse representation and leadership. The program ended with presenters offering hope and visions for our communities that share responsibility for respecting and uplifting all our identities and experiences.

[View the conversation at vimeo.com/580836994](https://vimeo.com/580836994)

Reflection Questions

- How do you show direct support for trans youth and trans women of color and denounce violence against these communities?
- Do LGBTQIA+ individuals in your life and community feel supported by you?
- How do legislative restrictions on bodily autonomy impact everyone, regardless of sex, gender identity or sexual orientation?

Action Items

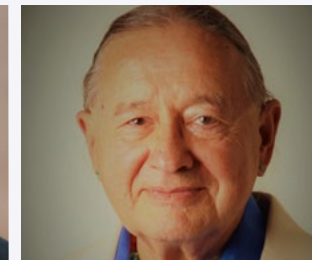
- Respect and use LGBTQIA+ people’s names and pronouns.
- Watch [Disclosure](#) to learn about the history of disparaging portrayals of trans people in the media.
- Watch [Changing the Game](#) which profiles 3 transgender student athletes telling their stories of struggles and joy.
- Learn more about and support: [Transgender Education Network of Texas \(TENT\)](#), [Equality Texas](#), [Texas Freedom Network](#), and [Lambda Legal](#).



▼ Rev. Troy Treash
JoDee Winterhof
Adri Perez



► Suzanne Benally



Dr. Tink Tinker



Dina Gilio-Whitaker

(Osage Nation/Wazhazhe), Professor Emeritus of American Indian Cultures & Religious Traditions at Iliff School of Theology, offered perspectives on language and rights, highlighting noun-focused Euro-Christian languages in comparison to verb-based American Indian languages, and discussed how these differences reflect the disparities in our legal system, relationships with the natural world, and commoditization of the land.

The conversation addressed continuing assaults on Indigenous peoples’ histories, cultures, spiritual practices, languages, education, food systems, and access to lands and a healthy environ-

ment, and showed the need to think beyond the limitation of a legalistic, individualist framework focused on property rights. The panelists closed with questions about allyship, encouraging participants to learn more about the lands we live on, the Indigenous populations in our areas, and how we create relationships that prioritize collective responsibility for US history and lands.

[View the conversation at vimeo.com/606777919](https://vimeo.com/606777919)

Reflection Questions

- How does it feel to prioritize collectivity, relationships, reciprocity and balance over individualism, transactions, extraction, and excess? What does this look like in our day-to-day lives? How could these revised priorities help us address current crises more effectively?
- How does the legal concept of the protection of private property impact our collective relationship and responsibility to the land? Do you think these protections privilege corporations and the wealthy, and if so what are some examples?
- What are the consequences of America's history of stolen land and genocide of Indigenous peoples, and do you and your communities benefit from this history? If so, how?

Action Items

- Read [*As Long as the Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock*](#) by Dina Gilio-Whitaker
- Read [*Spirit and Resistance: Political Theology and American Indian Liberation*](#) by Tink Tinker
- Watch [*Exterminate All the Brutes*](#) on HBO to learn more about the exploitative and genocidal aspects of European colonialism
- Learn more about the Indigenous lands you inhabit and the history of those lands and communities at [Native Land Digital \(native-land.ca\)](#)

US immigration policy impacts the civil rights of thousands of families each year, particularly

Defending & Advancing the Rights of Immigrants

October 13, 2021

Reflection Questions

- How has the US government played a role in creating some of the conditions that migrants are fleeing? What is our responsibility to protect immigrants coming to and already living within the United States?
- How does your citizenship status impact how you move through your daily life?

Action Items

- Read [*Immigration Reform: The Corpse That Will Not Die*](#) by Charles Kamasaki
- Provide support to immigration advocacy organizations at the Texas-Mexico border, including [Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley](#), [RAICES](#), [Texas Civil Rights Project](#)

at the Texas-Mexico border, as violence and racism against asylum-seekers continues to escalate. This conversation focused on immigrants' rights nationally and in Texas, considered the ways in which immigrants' rights have been historically understood and have changed over time, and discussed current policy decisions that drive today's immigration issues. Charles Kamasaki, Senior Cabinet Advisor of UnidosUS, reviewed the history of immigration in the United States and highlighted major disparities in how policies have been applied to different geographic regions and people from Europe, Asia, Africa and more recently, Central America. He further elaborated on the structural racism that continues to inform current attitudes and practices in the US immigration system, and the need to advance immigrant rights in the US.

Sister Norma Pimentel, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley implored citizens not to get caught up in the ideological political rhetoric on immigration, but to focus on the urgent situation of families and people in need of care, compassion, and support. Frances Valdez, Executive Director of Houston in Action, facilitated a continued conversation that examined productive ways to address immigration from both legal and humanistic perspectives. Panelists discussed ideas for establishing new immigration policies, viewing the issue through lenses of both international and domestic relations, and urged viewers to talk with their communities and contact their elected representatives to support immigrants' rights.

[View the conversation at vimeo.com/583447191](#)



► Charles Kamasaki



Sister Norma Pimentel



Frances Valdez

2022 Symposium

Freedom of Speech and Expression in Journalism, Education & the Arts

March 31, 2022

and Article 19 of the *UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights* guarantee freedom of speech and expression. These freedoms, along with access to communication and information, are foundational to other civil rights. Censorship and curtailment of expression through different media impact all sectors of communication and exchange of ideas, including journalism, education, and the arts. This panel explored current issues impacting and curtailing the freedom of expression in the US. Moderator Michael Powell, national *New York Times* reporter, opened the conversation by describing the interdependence between freedom of speech and state of civil rights in America. Recalling Dr. Martin Luther King's characterizations of speech as central to political conditions in America, he reminded us how history often shows Americans have been unwilling to listen and eager to condemn.

The panel further explored censorship, specifically in higher education. Joe Cohn, Legislative & Policy Director at Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), provided context to show that free speech controversies on college campuses are not a new phenomenon, and there have always been moments when rights to free speech and controversies over its practice were debated. Cohn also expounded on the societal implications of supporting censorship in higher education, and why suppression of free speech in this arena is unacceptable. Svetlana Mintcheva, Strategy Consultant at National Coalition Against Censorship, delved into her organization's advocacy work to protect the free exchange of ideas, especially during a time of unprecedented calls to remove books from schools. Nabiha Syed, President of The Markup, explored the evolution of social media, pointing to both its value and perils. While social media has given more communities a platform for speech and productive exchange, it also provides the means to amplify erroneous content and divisive rhetoric.

[View the panel discussion at vimeo.com/677437922](#)

Reflection Questions

- Are you ensuring that your news sources are factual and fair?
- How do we protect freedom of expression without emboldening racist and divisive rhetoric?
- How can educators be protected to ensure that their creativity in teaching is still valued?

Action Items

- Read Michael Powell's reporting with the *New York Times* on issues of free speech and expression, and stories capturing intellectual and campus debate.
- Read [*Censoring Culture: Contemporary Threats to Free Expression*](#) by Svetlana Mintcheva
- Follow work by [The Markup](#) and [FIRE](#) to understand threats to censorship on social media and in education.



▼ Svetlana Mintcheva
Michael Powell



▼ Joe Cohn
Nabiha Syed



[Houston Youth Poet Laureate Avalon Hogans](#) shared an original poem, "Big Red Road" (2020) to open this session.

"Big Red Road" (2021) by Avalon Hogans

it's taking no peace
to know peace.
our lives are prizes
for easy prices
in their eyes.
but what they don't know is,
our Red is coming,
and they won't be able to catch us
after the pride stampedes.
i see Red in their vile souls;
i see Red in the streets.
big Red road where
the intersection meets.
big Red fire trucks,
big Red graffiti.
big Red anger
marching through the city.
Red eyes over blue uniforms
and the 99 sheep.
blood on my fallen
brothers and sisters.
it's taking no peace
to know peace.
the power hungry
can't tell right from wrong;
blinded by privilege and
deaf to kendrick songs.
but only justice can
relieve the Red away.
ignore our voices,
and Red is here to stay.
it's taking no peace
to know peace.
loud Red static
all around the nation.
take a step back, america,
and look at your creation.

Where are we heading? The Future of Civil Rights in the US



► Michelle Alexander

Larry Payne

Reflection Questions

- How are you and your faith communities addressing the roots of social justice issues?
- How can we support existing organizations in our communities that organize to address the needs of the most vulnerable and the most harmed among us?
- How are you building practices to take care of yourself to be still, to listen, to “fill your cup”? How are you checking in with others in your community on how they are taking care of themselves?

Action Items

- Read *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* and *“My Rapist Apologized. I Still Needed an Abortion.”* by Michelle Alexander
- Read *How Democracies Die* by Daniel Ziblatt and Steven Levitsky
- Identify one organization that has been engaged in important work on an issue you care about and join with them to offer financial, labor, time, or network resources.

With many urgent, intersecting civil rights under attack and actively losing protections in the US, where do we focus our attention? Civil rights lawyer, advocate, legal scholar, and author Michelle Alexander shared views on today's challenges and ways forward in conversation with local Houston community leader Larry Payne, Producer & Host of Dialogue Houston, HCC-TV.

Alexander reflected on the precarity of voting rights, with power tipping toward those who aim to thwart our fragile democracy. Highlighting the rapid erosion of rights in the US today, she explored the interconnected impacts of racism, poverty, policing, and the prison industrial complex that have long stripped millions of Americans of their basic rights. Alexander asserted the US cannot be a true democracy until Americans are willing to confront the violent histories and current politics of white supremacy.

She further elaborated on structural barriers embedded in the criminal justice system that keep people locked in positions of marginality, extending beyond prison walls to surveillance, probation, parole, and lifetime discrimination. Relatedly, the practice of mass deportations of undocumented people have maintained a class of workers always on the margins who can be exploited without consequence by employers. Alexander reflected on the urgent moral crisis of our economic system, which creates massive levels of inequality, leaving millions without food, healthcare, or a living wage. She urged faith communities to address their organizing objectives not only to curb suffering from hunger, poverty, or inequality, but to fight directly against the systems that produce suffering and disparities in the first place.

Alexander closed with reflections on a shift in her personal understanding of justice toward a spiritually grounded practice, rooted in respect for the dignity and value of all of us, no matter who we are, where we've come from, or what we've done. She is encouraged by youth-led movements and abolition organizers who challenge us to co-create a world that aligns with our deepest values, and does not rely on physical, mental, and emotional violence. She urged attendees to stand up, speak out and engage in meaningful struggle for our individual and collective bodily autonomies and destinies, and to take care of ourselves and one another in the process.

[View clips from the discussion at vimeo.com/736643564](https://vimeo.com/736643564)

Reimagining Systems: Policing, Criminal Justice & the Prison Industrial Complex

George Floyd's murder in 2020 by Minneapolis police revived challenging conversations on civil rights issues within the country's criminal legal system, prompting debates about the structure and effectiveness of policing and prisons. This discussion on reimagining the criminal legal system opened with remarks from lawyer, writer and organizer Derecka Purnell, who shared her visions for ending police and prison violence: by addressing the root causes of interpersonal and community violence through abolition, rather than relying on the punitive systems of policing and prisons that further harm. Purnell reflected on capitalism, militarism, colonialism, and patriarchy as underlying structural issues in our country that lead to crimes such as murder and sexual violence. She closed with a call to use our imaginations to fight for long-term structural solutions over piecemeal reforms of a purposely ineffective system.

Moderator Jay Jenkins, attorney for the Texas Center for Justice and Equity, followed these remarks with a facilitated panel discussion including Keri Blakinger, the first formerly incarcerated reporter for The Marshall Project, and José Garza, Travis County District Attorney. The panel discussed the inhumane conditions faced by people in prisons both in Texas and nationally, noting the human rights violations experienced by those currently incarcerated. Conversations also focused on elements related to a broader understanding of public safety, including access to good jobs, affordable healthcare, and education, instead of relying on policing and prisons to “keep us safe.” Panelists also shared organizing efforts led by incarcerated people in alliance with those on the outside to address these injustices.

[View the panel discussion at vimeo.com/677440258](https://vimeo.com/677440258)

Dignity, Equity & Access in the COVID Era

April 1, 2022

This multi-sector panel explored inequities and endemic challenges related to access to healthcare, nutrition, affordable housing and living-wage jobs, all of which have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Panelists discussed successful cross-sector efforts to address these problems to further equity for all.

Juanita Rasmus, Co-Pastor of St. John's United Methodist Church, opened the session with a guided meditation aimed to help attendees remain present in the moment, and to remind us of the importance of self-care and restoration as we engage with social justice issues in our work.

Katy Atkiss, Principal at Impetus Houston, moderated and framed the conversation by examining the correlation between health disparities and zip codes, particularly among minority communities, and showed how the pandemic worsened these inequities. Dr. Umair Shah, Secretary of Health at Washington State Department of Health, discussed the need to invest in a public health infrastructure, to dispel health misinformation, and to adopt transformational objectives and strategies. Randi Weingarten, President at American Federation of Teachers, talked about the biases inherent in the education and healthcare industries, the continuing battle to teach history accurately, and the systemic underfunding of city, Tribal and rural schools. Chrishelle Palay, Director of Houston Organizing Movement for Equity (HOME) Coalition, walked attendees through the process by which communities of color navigate disasters, often through mutual aid, and how local organizations respond, recover, organize, and advocate on behalf of these communities.

[View the panel discussion at vimeo.com/677438709](https://vimeo.com/677438709)

Reflection Questions

- What lessons did we learn from the pandemic to better address inequities?
- What is the best approach for working with elected officials to ensure that they address health and economic inequities as a top priority?
- What actions can we take as individuals and what systems can we put in place as organizations to ensure that the access to healthcare is equitable, fair, and just?

Action Items

- Connect with [HOME Coalition](https://homecoalition.org) to volunteer in Houston
- Read more about “The Houston Arrow,” the geographical shape of Houston's inequities in reports from [One Breath Partnership \(onebreathhou.org/houston-arrow\)](https://onebreathhou.org/houston-arrow)

▼
Chrishelle Palay
Umair Shah
Katy Atkiss
Juanita Rasmus Dr.
Randi Weingarten

▼ Keri Blakinger
Derecka Purnell▼ José Garza
Jay Jenkins

Reflection Questions

- What have your personal and community relationship and/or interactions with the police been like throughout your life? How do your identities impact those interactions?
- How does the media impact your perception of the criminal justice system and violence within the United States? Do you think the media upholds carceral systems of oppression and violence? If so, how?
- What are the historical origins of policing and incarceration in the US?

Action items

- Learn more about & support grassroots organizers: [Study and Struggle](#), [Black & Pink](#), [National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls](#), [Jailhouse Lawyers Speak](#)
- Read [Becoming Abolitionists: Police, Protests and the Pursuit of Freedom](#) by Derecka Purnell
- Read [Corrections in Ink: A Memoir](#) by Keri Blakinger

Activism & Spirituality: Sustaining the Activist Spirit

With so much to be done on the civil rights front, how can we sustain the passion, creativity and energy needed for long-haul social justice activism? In this interactive lunch session, members of the Rothko Chapel Spirituality and Social Justice Cohort, funded by The Henry Luce Foundation, facilitated small-group breakout sessions to allow symposium participants to meet and discuss strategies and tactics to cultivate, engage and sustain effective activism as individuals and communities.

Facilitators included Suzanne Benally, Executive Director, Swift Foundation; Sean Fitzpatrick, Executive Director, Jung Center of Houston; Matthew Russell, Co-Managing Director, projectCurate; Caron Tabb, artist; and John Vaughn, Executive Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church. Attendees shared stories about the current challenges they are facing and how they sustain themselves spiritually in their social justice work. Facilitators invited moments for silence, drawing and journaling, movement and stretching, and breathwork.

A Threat to All: Redistricting, Gerrymandering & the Attack on Voting Rights

With voting rights legislation rolled back and stalled in the aftermath of the 2020 election and ongoing disempowerment of voters through redistricting and gerrymandering, this session focused on the critical importance of voting rights and protections within civil rights frameworks. Looking toward the 2022 and 2024 elections, advocates at the local, state, and national levels discussed the challenges and opportunities related to free, fair, and accessible elections, including efforts to ensure that each person's vote is counted, and to support everyone's active role in the democratic process.

Moderator Mimi Marziani, President of the Texas Civil Rights Project, articulated this moment as a turning point for democracy, and expounded on three overlapping trends: the introduction of new legislation that makes voting more difficult for certain individuals, a concerted effort to pass laws that subvert free and fair elections, and an uptick in political violence. Nina Perales, Vice President of

Litigation at the Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund (MALDEF), contextualized the voting process in Texas. She described how the state of Texas has developed systematic tactics to purge voter rolls, devise de-facto poll taxes, and create and maintain white-majority districts that lessen the impact of votes by people of color. She also discussed the ways in which Texas legislators work strategically to develop new tactics to undermine voting rights. Christopher Hollins, former County Clerk of Harris County & Principal Attorney at Hollins Law Group, discussed his experience as the Harris County Clerk in 2020, navigating an election during the pandemic, including the implementation of 24-hour and drive-through voting. Hollins related the challenges faced in Texas, known for historically low voter turnout and national threats to voter equality. The panel also discussed the role of the media in furthering division and partisanship around voting, and the need for a realistic lens and practical strategies to address these issues in our fragile democracy.

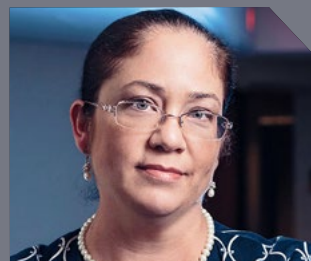
[View the panel discussion at vimeo.com/677440487](#)

Reflection Questions

- What do you do to promote voting in your community, especially for those who do not normally participate?
- How do we ensure young voters are mobilized and encouraged to vote?
- How can we navigate the negative impact of the laws that are designed to suppress voting?

Action Items

- Learn more about [Texas Civil Rights Project \(TCRP\)](#) and [Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund \(MALDEF\)](#) and other organizations working for free and fair elections.
- Be an informed voter. Use non-partisan resources like the [League of Women Voters Guide](#) to learn more about policies and candidates before going to the polls.
- Assess, verify, and diversify your media sources.



►
Mimi Marziani
Christopher Hollins
Nina Perales

▼
Suzanne Benally
John Vaughn
Matthew Russell
Caron Tabb
Sean Fitzpatrick

Movement Building & Organizing for Change

Building and sustaining civil rights and equity for all requires intersectional movements focused on individual and collective engagement. In this concluding session, seasoned organizer and lecturer at Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University Marshall Ganz offered perspectives on the role of movements in building power and change, including the dire challenges we face today with assaults on our democracy and wellbeing led by white nationalist authoritarians, and the importance of building relational leadership skills as we organize in ways that align with our shared values. Ganz joined grassroots leaders and organizers in conversation about their work and struggles as they shared insights into effective organizing strategies.

Greisa Martinez Rosas, Executive Director of United We Dream, shared her inspiring and energizing experiences organizing and working with poor, undocumented, queer youth in the US, including the creation of a network of 1.2 million members who are unafraid and unashamed to fight for security and inclusion. Krystal Two Bulls, LANDBACK Campaign Director with NDN Collective, discussed how her Northern Cheyenne and Oglala family had to mobilize for community health against extractive industries in Montana, and how her experience as an anti-militarist veteran helped her lead at Standing Rock and with the Landback movement. Thanu Yakupitiyage, U.S. Communications-Digital Director at 350.org, highlighted the importance of intersectionality in the climate justice movement, pointing to inequities in how communities contribute to and are impacted by climate change, and emphasized the importance of storytelling to shift cultural narratives.

Panelists continued to converse on the power of hope, joy, and radical imagination in organizational work, and highlighted the critical role that artists and youth play in reimagining and visioning equitable futures. Panelists also shared efforts to create safe spaces for learning and relationship-building between youth and elders, and panelists encouraged communities to develop strategies that center and align with the needs of our most vulnerable.

[View the panel discussion at vimeo.com/692349994](#)

Reflection Questions

- How are your communities centering, listening to and supporting the most vulnerable and marginalized among us? What is your perception on the term white supremacy? Do you see a culture of it within your community? If so, what is your experience?
- How are you sharing your unique skills, resources, perspectives, and courage to affect societal change working in solidarity with others?
- What is the role of collectivity in social change movements?
- What are tangible ways you can prioritize hope, joy, and imagination in collaboration with your communities to build equity?

Action items

- Incorporate rest, self-care, and joy in the process of dismantling oppressive systems, both individually and as a community.
- Invest in grassroots organizing led by those most directly impacted, for example: [NDN Radical Imagination Grant](#), [Landback U](#), [United We Dream](#), [The Rising Majority](#), and [The Frontline](#).
- Read [Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement](#) by Marshall Ganz

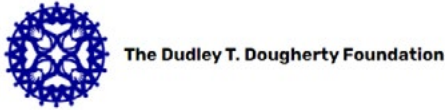


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Marshall Ganz
Greisa Martinez Rosas
Krystal Two Bulls
Thanu Yakupitiyage

Thank you to our Underwriters, Sponsors and Promotional Partners



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Thank you to our Promotional Partners

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"Beyond the Rhetoric" is part of a multi-year effort to further the Rothko Chapel's programming and community engagement around the topic of social justice, while honoring the Chapel's history both as a landmark of modern sacred art and as a celebrated site for transformative and inspirational experiences.

The Chapel will conclude this series with our 2023 Rothko Chapel Óscar Romero Award by recognizing individuals and organizations exercising courageous, grassroots, human rights advocacy to future civil rights in the United States. Learn more about this and other future programs, as well as how to get involved at rothkochapel.org.

Thank you for your continued support of the Rothko Chapel.

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