[MUSIC PLAYING] KARLENE GRIFFITHS SEKOU: All right. Well, good afternoon, everyone. It's good to see you all. I'm Karlene Griffiths Sekou and I will be your facilitator of our conversation with Professor Keisha-Khan Perry.

Is that Professor Keisha-Kahn Perry? Oh, there you are. OK. [LAUGHTER] And as we move through the rest of our program, we'll be talking about gentrification contested lives and the politics of displacement. So I will go ahead and introduce Keisha-Khan Perry now, then we'll watch a brief video. Professor Perry will give a brief framing of our conversation. And then we'll engage in a conversation.

Keisha-Khan Perry received her BS In Spanish and Women Studies from Georgetown University, and her MA and PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin. She is currently an associate professor of Africana Studies at Brown University, where she specializes in race, gender, and politics in the Americas, urban geography, and questions of citizenship, intellectual history, and disciplinary formation, as well as the interrelationship between scholarship, pedagogy, and political engagement.

She has conducted extensive research in Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, and the United States. Her first book, Black Women Against the Land Grab-- The Fight for Racial Justice in Brazil, the Fall of 2013, Minnesota Press, is an ethnographic study of Black women's activism in Brazilian cities, specifically, an examination of Black women's participation in leadership in neighborhood associations in the reinterpretations of racial and gender identities in urban spaces. Winner of the National Women's Studies Association 2014, Gloria Anzaldua Book Award, this book includes an analysis of the relationship between environmental justice movements and land and housing rights struggles in Brazil.

She is currently writing the book, Anthropology for Liberation, that draws heavily from her ethnographic research experience in Brazil, with the emphasis on the complexity of doing activist research amid racial and gender violence. She is also working on two other book projects, the historical paradox of citizenship, Black land ownership and loss in the Americas, and evictions and convictions, which represent a continuation of her ongoing research on Black land loss and ownership in relationship to the material articulation of citizenship in Brazil, Jamaica, and the United States.

Another ongoing research project is a multilingual and transnational exploration of Black women's political work in Latin America. She examines how Black women mobilize political movements across borders and how they understand themselves as agents in creating a diasporic community. She has won numerous awards over the years to support her research such as the National Science Foundation and Fulbright fellowships.

There was no part of this that I could edit out. We are indeed honored, and I might say that Professor Keisha-Khan Perry is someone that I look to as an emerging scholar, and she has been all that one would hope for as a mentor in this field. So please join with me in extending a warm welcome to Professor Keisha-Khan Perry.

[APPLAUSE]

KEISHA-KAHN PERRY: Thank you so much for that wonderful introduction. I'm not sure if you're going to show the video before I talk or after.

KARLENE GRIFFITHS SEKOU: I show the video now.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- Gentrification is constantly being talked about. In the past 10 years, the number of Google searches for the word gentrification has more than doubled. And mentions in the news and in literature have gone up. So people are talking about gentrification, but they often mean different things when they use the term. Gentrification is a process of neighborhood change that includes economic change in a historically disinvested neighborhood by means of real estate investment and new higher income residents moving in as well as demographic change. Not only in terms of income level, but also in terms of changes in the education level or racial makeup of residents.

Gentrification is complex and needs some explaining. To understand it, there are three key things to consider. The historic conditions, especially policies and practices that made communities susceptible to gentrification. The way that central city disinvestment and investment patterns are taking place today as a result of these conditions. A And the ways that gentrification impacts communities.

Over the last century, many policies and practices have created racialized patterns of disinvestment in city centers that have left low income communities of color particularly susceptible to gentrification. From the 1930s through the late '60s, standards set by the federal government and carried out by banks explicitly labeled neighborhood's home to predominantly people of color as risky and unfit for investment.

This practice, now known as redlining, meant that people of color were denied access to loans that would enable them to buy or repair homes in their neighborhood other housing and transportation policies of the mid 20th century fueled the growth of mostly white suburbs and the exodus of capital from urban centers in a phenomenon often referred to as white flight.

Take the GI bill as an example. The program guaranteed low cost mortgage loans for returning World War II soldiers, but discrimination limited the extent to which Black veterans were able to purchase homes in the growing suburbs. In fact, the Federal Housing Administration largely required that suburban developers agreed to not sell houses to Black people in order for the developers to access these guaranteed loans.

Left behind in central city neighborhoods, low income households and communities of color bore the brunt of highway system expansion and urban renewal programs, which resulted in the mass clearance of homes businesses and neighborhood institutions and set the stage for widespread public and private disinvestment in the decades that followed.

In more recent history, the foreclosure crisis also contributed to neighborhood-level vulnerability to gentrification. In low income communities of color, disproportionate levels of subprime lending resulted in mass foreclosure leaving those neighborhoods vulnerable to investors seeking to purchase and flip homes in bulk.

Today, both people and capital are flooding back into these historically disinvested neighborhoods. One reason new people are moving into these neighborhoods is because of their relative affordability. In many US cities, the rental market has gotten increasingly expensive, and even moderate income earners are on the hunt for lower housing costs. This means that in some places, they are looking in historically disinvested communities-- often the same neighborhoods previous generations left behind during the days of white flight.

These neighborhoods are often characterized by older historic housing stock that appeals to new residents and close proximity to city centers where jobs, restaurants, and art spaces are increasingly locating. Cities are also investing in revitalizing some of these neighborhoods. For example, with improved transit access and infrastructure in part to draw in newcomers.

On the ground, gentrification may look like real estate speculation with investors flipping properties for large profits, as well as high end development, and landlords looking for higher paying tenants, increased investment in neighborhood amenities like transit and parks, changes in land use-- for example, from industrial land to restaurants and storefronts-- and changes in the character of the neighborhood, as community-run businesses are replaced by businesses catering to new residents needs.

While increased investment in an area can be positive, gentrification is often associated with displacement, which means that in some of these communities longtime residents are not able to stay to benefit from new investments in housing, healthy food access, or transit infrastructure. Instead, lower income families, often families of color, may find themselves facing rent increases, evictions, or other displacement pressures, and left with no other choice but to move to suburban or even exurban areas, far away from their jobs and the businesses and service providers they know. This can mean more time commuting, less time spent at home, and increased isolation, depression, and stress levels.

For children, displacement can disrupt educational pathways and generate negative health impacts. Even for longtime residents who are able to stay in newly gentrifying areas, changes in the makeup and character of a neighborhood can lead to a reduced sense of belonging, or feeling out of place in one's own home. For example, unique cultural vibrancy can be lost as places of worship see their congregants displaced to faraway cities and towns.

In addition, family-run businesses and nonprofit organizations may be forced out as their customer base disperses, or as their commercial rents rise past what they can sustain, affecting the ability of those who stay

to access the goods and services they need. There might also be changes in neighborhood norms in policing. For example, an increased police presence in order for new residents to feel safe.

On the whole, we can not ignore that the adverse impacts of gentrification ranging from individual health effects to the suburbanization of poverty are only the most recent wave in a pattern of urban restructuring that has been imposed upon and negatively affected, low income and communities of color over generations. Public, private, and nonprofit sector leaders have the opportunity to implement strategies that give longtime residents a chance to benefit from increased investment in their communities and even be part of driving how some of the changes in their neighborhoods take place.

In order to invest in communities without displacement, policies, programs, and financing tools are needed to protect renters from formal and informal displacement pressures, facilitate the production of more affordable housing, and preserve and upgrade the existing affordable housing stock. Involving community residents in planning and decision making about their neighborhoods and region can and should be a key piece of all three of these strategies.

Taken together, these strategies can help keep communities together so that everyone can enjoy access to improved schools, better food options, more job opportunities, and safer neighborhoods, qualities we know make cities and regions healthy and vibrant.

[END PLAYBACK]

KARLENE GRIFFITHS SEKOU: We're ready for you. How is the view for you now? Is this better?

KEISHA-KAHN PERRY: Thank you.

KARLENE GRIFFITHS SEKOU: OK. You're welcome.

KEISHA-KAHN PERRY: She's a very lovely young woman but it was just one person that I've seen. So thank you. Thank you so much for inviting me to participate in this conference and for being so accommodating, and especially you, Karlene Griffiths Sekou, thank you so much for the wonderful introduction. And of course, for including me as part of this conversation.

I'm hoping that this will be a conversation primarily because I firmly believe that questions around not just displacement but around housing justice and land redistribution will be important questions over our day, in the same way that we've been thinking a lot about affordable health care. I think we're going to have to start to prioritize and think more deeply and carefully about what housing justice looks like for the upcoming decades. And what a true democracy, in the United States, for example, will look like with housing justice on people.

All right. I really hope that it's part of our dialogue as we move forward. I also wanted to begin with just reading just a brief excerpt

from my book, Black Women Against Land Grab-- The Fight for Racial Justice in Brazil, under the section that I wrote entitled "If We Didn't Have Water," spirituality, land, and environmental justice. Right?

And I wanted to begin by saying that to begin to comprehend this inseparable connection between Black women's religious culture and politics, the words of the late Brazilian literary scholar of Bahian culture Jorge Amado, in his novel Sea of Death come to mind. Quote, "The ocean is large, the sea is a road without end, waters make up more than half of the world, they are 3/4 of it, and all of that belongs Iemanja." Unquote.

In the African diasporic religion of Camdomblé, practiced by the vast majority of Bahians, Iemanja is a highly revered goddess of the sea, primarily and commonly known as [NON-ENGLISH], The Mother of the Waters.

Each year, in Salvador, February 2 marks the most important days of celebration, the Festa de Iemanja, which takes place in the Rio Vermelho coastal neighborhood. With more resources today, particularly government sponsorship, the festival has been transformed from a community practice into a massive cultural project of interest both locals and national and international tourists.

The dominant ceremonial presence of Black fishermen and Camdomblé religious leaders, most of whom are women, reminds us, however, that although Rio Vermelho is now predominantly white, elite neighborhood, Black fishing colonies have historically occupied the coastal lands of Salvador and have carried out these traditions since the slavery period.

So a little bit that I focused on in my own work, Gamboa de Baixo, is now one of a few coastal Black urban fishing colonies that exist on the bayou coast. And two Iemanja festivals still occur simultaneously. The large one is in Rio Vermelho, and the smaller one in their neighborhood.

Like most fishing communities, local residents pay homage to the goddess of the sea for protecting the fishermen and fisherwomen while they work and for supplying the sea with sufficient fish, an important natural resource that sustains the local economy and African-inspired culinary tradition. More important, Gamboa de Baixo residents express their gratitude to Iemanja for protecting their children while they play on the neighborhood beaches.

And partly, what I talk about a lot in this book, and I've actually had no intentions to talk about Afro-Brazilian religion. In fact, I included it primarily because in Salvador, the expectation of an anthropologist is that you do more research on religion or Candomblé or you're doing research let's say, cultural practice [INAUDIBLE]. Right. So I tried to avoid it.

And I found that it was impossible to not talk about how Afro-Brazilian religion uniquely inspired the [INAUDIBLE] to fight against the issues and fearing for it that created what they call a wave of clearance of predominantly ethnic goods. As they were modernizing cities like Salvador. All right, so that's what I was actually in essence for state

consideration. Not just how inspiring the religion was in terms of the kind of strength that it gave them, but how necessary access to resources such as a sea was for the sustenance of their communities and livelihood.

But it is important that oftentimes when we think about the structural forces of gentrification that is certainly fueled by a long history of colonialism and colonization of cities. But also some of the underlying question provincial capitalism that underline these decisions that informed groups like this one. If you haven't read N. D. B. Connolly's book on A World More Concrete-- Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida. What the essence is that often times in the context the he convenes that are profoundly impacted by these processes get lost. And the cultural practices, the community practices, the ways of being I think oftentimes get lost.

There is a way that abstract oftentimes take over. So gentrification is not just a displacement and they're lost. There are people that are being immobilized and lost in the process.

So, I would say that over the past 50 years, a lot of my work has been framed around these primary questions that I hope that we can discuss today. Right. So, one is how we understand the key question of Blacks position. Specifically the loss of land, territorial rights, mass evictions, and housing demolitions, and forced displacement as a form of anti-Blackness. Right.

So while I document some of the symbolic and cultural practices that profoundly impacted, I want us to think it happens when we think about question like gentrification-- people being pushed of modernizing neighborhoods. What if he [INAUDIBLE] form of anti-Black partners? Also part of the key argument with all of my work, is always been that can't think about Black disposition without how police violence and racial terror rate first [INAUDIBLE] with the destruction of Black men and Blackness. So in essence, mass operational terror, in terms of state violence and mass incarceration, and so forth, work in tandem with mass evictions, the destruction of Black urban neighborhoods, and gentrification.

All right, so I want you to think about one of the first things that you see, which is not really mentioned in this neighborhood, is the first thing that appears in a gentrified neighborhood is increasing police presence. All right. So partly the neighborhood has to be safe so the new colonizers that-- so I'm sure you see this in Boston, for example, where neighborhoods that are in so-called transition immediately have an increased police presence. And what you see is that something is missing and increases.

For example, so in my recent work on evictions and convictions, I documented that if looked at and analyzed, how in these neighborhoods that were changing, the numbers of stop and frisks increased tremendously.

Another factor that eagerly [INAUDIBLE] internationally, when I was doing my research, first of all, I had no intention of doing research on pulls and beats. Right police turf. But people saw that as almost being a part

of a process, trying to eradicate and eliminate this culture in the neighborhood. Increased police presence, saying that [INAUDIBLE], justifying presence by saying, you know, a bunch of Black folks, criminal prosecutes, and so forth. And just everyday terrorizing of the neighborhood that would justify this so called [INAUDIBLE] terrorist. All right.

Also, a key argument and point that I want to make-- I hope you talk a little bit more about what this means-- is how these predominantly Black urban spaces should be understood as always racialized, gendered, terrains of domination. In this Black world of politics are each connected to resistance against your direct [INAUDIBLE] nation, as practice evolves from removal and dispossession.

And let me unpack that and say that some of my work has really looked closely in terms of documented the everyday experiences of Black people specifically in urban spaces. If you look at-- oftentimes, how a Black women experiences the effects of law. So people needed-- a lot of the discourse about police having to [INAUDIBLE] focuses primarily on Black men dying in a pool of blood or even police confrontations, right?

Partly what I'm arguing is that, if you look at, for example, instances when black women, maybe the police has called on them. Well, if you're in office and then the recent cases that he or even a black women is rolling on a sidewalk or at a pool party, that they're constantly these-- or music is too loud, there's constantly these constant conflicts and moments of confrontation that turn violent, that some of these spaces-- completely-- key spaces of trying to kind of make a fake claim. And ownership of domination over these spaces, right.

So, if you look at something they'll say-- there's a lot of nuisance laws. Where are they reinforcement of nuisance laws or the police is called on Black women, on even just poor people who are [INAUDIBLE].

I think-- I wanted-- I want you to think about that these spaces are just-- are always racialized and gendered and profoundly impacted how the racialized and the gendered poor experience these spaces. I think-- I can't remember the name of this woman, but she recently, for example, died while trying to go down a flight of stairs in New York in the city subway. And then think about how much money is spent on policing the city of New York. People who are jumping the turnstyle, but little has been extended in infrastructure that would have avoided her killing.

So they are waiting for Black people to be shot by the police. You're not going to see these other spaces [INAUDIBLE] and their experience the deadly impacts of poor infrastructure of increasingly spending, et cetera. So I just want us to keep that in mind.

Also, that this kind of dispossession of housing, land, et cetera, foreclosure, debacle these processes, that this has also been at the center of activism broadly in America. So for North America all the way to Brazil, is part of my own work-- is that there has been a lot of focus on what China would call the Black enterprise that informs the that all discussions around the [INAUDIBLE], life, slavery, and globalism.

And I say this because if you walk down the road of Black famous scholars, they focus primarily on public education, housing, et cetera. A lot of my work has been trying to get us back to our feminist roots, to look at some of the material mentions of not just a lot of racism, but also the kinds of activism that have emerged as a result, right. So I think if you really are trying to understand social [INAUDIBLE] through the Americas, say how it is at the center. The fight against this possession and displacement is at the center of those social movements.

And also add-- and I think there's something for us to talk about today, which is that oftentimes these activist [INAUDIBLE] anymore. But Black women are key political protagonists mobilizing [INAUDIBLE] against forced removals and for police abolition, for example, for better infrastructural resources, bus [INAUDIBLE] petitions involve men. That they're at the forefront of these conversations and always say often pretty standard [INAUDIBLE] capitalism. That a lot of us are oftentimes not paying attention to. So I think that a lot of work has been trying to give attention to those kinds of things.

So the woman in the neighborhood that in the city of Salvador, Bahia, that is concerned about her access to teach and want to practice religion, but that community also has culture. She's concerned about how it [INAUDIBLE]. How she will get murdered early in the morning. And even in cities like Rio de Janeiro, where one of the first things that happens is that they'll change the-- to really molt racial discrimination, is that they will change the transportation and stuff to make it more difficult for poor and Black people to access the more privileged and [INAUDIBLE] parts of the city.

For those of you-- now, I won't take too much time so we can have a real conversation. For those of you who are knowledgeable of, for example, the assassination of [INAUDIBLE]. One of-- she was shot and killed last year. One of the main parts of her political agenda was really about improving neighborhood infrastructure, but also improving, for example, the public transportation that made it-- that she felt-- and many argued for discriminatory in terms of how it may be inaccessible to certain parts of the city. So one thing that's most noticeable definitely during the development of infrastructure for the Olympic games or the World Cup, is how they basically made it more difficult for poor Black commuter to reach areas where person or tourists would be frequenting.

So finally, what I'm suggesting here is that we think critically about how all these processes are interconnected and also the kinds of activism that comes out of these experiences at the grassroots and the formal level. And I would just like to open it up for more of a conversation, but I'm also saying that the significant part of my work is not just focusing on the displacement of the violence that takes place, but also the kinds of causes for urban redevelopment that are more exclusive that comes out of neighborhoods in terms of socialized housing, in terms of collective land rights, and other kinds of projects that promotes in the tradition of Black activism in this country and throughout the diaspora that promotes communalism, that promotes a much-- a much more inclusive for engagement in free spaces and beyond.

So I'll [INAUDIBLE] and just open it up for conversation.

[CLAPPING]

KARLENE GRIFFITHS SEKOU: Thank you so much, Professor Perry. And I just wanted to also put that in conversation with some of the particular discourses that are raised, typically when we're talking about gender, when we're talking about the changing contours of urban neighborhoods or displacement of people, right? Who Is displaceable? What bodies? What lives are rendered disposable are rendered displaceable?

And the argument often is that gentrification is good. It's actually community reinvestment, community re-development. And that with these neighborhoods, with the revitalization of these neighborhoods, come an infusion of capital. You have an infusion, an influx of businesses and an entrepreneurship. And who is included in that and who is left out, right? And with that the cultural erasure and erosion.

I know-- perhaps six months or so ago, if that, early last fall, there was an incident in Brooklyn, in a particular segment of Brooklyn, where a Black man who had mental illness. Someone called the police on that Black man. And this story happens in terms of the policing or overpolicing that Professor Perry has mentioned with gentrification, or said revitalization comes this policing and the incident in Brooklyn is that the police was called by a new neighbor, someone new to the neighborhood, and this gentleman ended up being killed.

I just thought of this but the neighbors and those who have been long-standing community members know this man. They know that he has mental illness. They never call the police on him. He is a part of the community. And so there is an understanding but when you have others who are coming in who are not a part of the cultural, communal fabric and who subscribe to a different set of values and who don't take time to understand and learn and be in relationship to the community in such a way that those who have been there then you have this antagonistic and violent colonialist relationship with the community. I mean, in addition to pushing folk out because of the economic inaccessibility to housing, in particular.

We are all familiar, many of us anyway, with Pool Party Patty. You know, people who call the police on Black people in the United States around the country. Or Barbecue Becky and all of these incidences where Black bodies are not supposed to be in certain places and are therefore criminalized and displaced through the criminal justice system, as it were. So this is all a part of the textured conversation among other things. And in local context, Boston is perhaps the fourth fastest with the last report that I heard, fastest gentrifying city in the country with the typical studio in Boston now averaging about $2,000, right?

This week alone, two elderly women in Mattapan are being kicked out by their landlord because he wants to raise the rent and they've occupied and lived in that community for years and they have nowhere to go. They're on social security. And these are the kinds of day to day narratives and stories that are happening in conversation with this. There's a lot to

cover. We can talk about the border and immigration and whose lives are contested and whose lives are displaced. But let's get to a dialogue. And if we have-- do we have any questions for Professor Perry or comments on the subject? Yes?

AUDIENCE: Yeah. I was sort of just thinking in terms of what possible sort of solutions to begin to deal with the question of gentrification? So many years ago the CRA, the Community Reinvestment Act, was something that was pretty popular. And this was a little before-- particularly in Boston we had the crash and so forth and everything. But is there any legal strategies to look at how to deal with the city, the state, and federal government, even the banks in effect, for not really investing in communities in the way of giving loans to the community people, but then giving loans to others who had capital and so forth?

Because the real question becomes, what is equity? You know, what is value, and how they judge those things? And particularly if someone's been in the community for 30 years, they've created value in that community, if someone's become a benefit. So is there any legal strategies to begin to hit to the various institutions within city government, state government, that also sign off on these federal government, as well as the banks, to figure out how to really address this? Because it's a very, very serious issue nationally that we're doing.

In fact, you know, I'm teaching at UMass. We got professors can't even live here. Forget about students that live in the community more. They're recruiting professors, and it's like, where they going? They're gonna live way outside of the city because of the high cost expense. So you got to make, like, $75,000 to rent an apartment in Boston now.

KARLENE GRIFFITHS SEKOU: That's right. That's right.

KEISHA-KHAN PERRY: That's a really important question, and I probably won't be able to get into some of the nitty gritty about legal strategies even though I think a lot of-- I would say the best folks to talk about that are the grassroots organizations that are probably part of a much larger and national network, such as Right to The City, that have been mobilizing and trying to [INAUDIBLE].

Also, if we learned anything from when the recent Amazon problem in New York, it's that socialism is actually working, and activism should be first, right? They [INAUDIBLE] from activists, for example, or for others who have not only ran out Google, destroyed communities. How Amazon has been previously disrupted [INAUDIBLE] there. It begins at home prices in places like Oakland and Seattle, you'll see precisely how the big boom and the invasion of these big corporations have decimated public school systems, as well as any sort of affordable housing that previously existed, right?

So I think the important lesson there is not just how to mobilize the law, but the law, oftentimes, if you understand, work in favor with [INAUDIBLE]. But how activism actually does have impact. I think that's one of the important things here. I think there's also another point that came up that Karlene mentioned, and as well as you just mentioned, there

is something to be said about who's considered not just displaceable but also disposable.

And I want to draw upon Frantz Fanon's idea of zones of non-being. There is a collective sense that these communities are already zones non-being even before the development takes place. So this essence that, when you start to think about where they'll run the new highway, where they'll build a new Whole Foods, wherever or who's gonna get either eradicated or permanently eliminated-- who's going to be killed as a result of the increased police actions-- is that Black lives equalled little value in the society. And I would say globally, which is the connection that I'm making through South America.

So I think those are key, fundamental issues that need to think about it. That this is from before the police encounter, before the thought about where we're going to build this or where we're going to do this is how people understand the meaning of Black life. And I would say that Black life pulls little value in relationship to capital. And so I think that's something to think a lot about.

Also, I think that the irony that [INAUDIBLE] now is that Black culture, Latino culture, they're all part of what a lot of people are seeking and they go for these spaces. But when they get to these spaces, the very Black culture contributions, right? So the [INAUDIBLE] is a problem, the loud Black woman is a problem, but [INAUDIBLE] communities think that did this happen? The hip-hop that we love's too loud. The [INAUDIBLE] that you previously consumed. The suburbs is now too Black for you.

I think there's a way that there's this irony of how culture appropriates in these moments. And in the case of Brazil, Brazil understands itself as the [INAUDIBLE] in terms of Afro-Brazilian culture is at the center of Brazilian culture. But the actual Black people who reproduce so-called that kind of national culture can't be in these new modernizing spaces that become a key part of how Brazil understands itself as a modern nation.

And I would say the same thing happens here. What is American culture? What is American culture? Well, the very people who produce that culture are not permitted in these new coveted modernizing spaces, right?

So the very Black culture that produces the hip-hop that we hear everywhere, right, that predominantly White are singing, you can't have them live next door. I think those are so apparent that I think I didn't point out that's pointed out.

And then another part of it that I think that NDB Connolly points out in his book is that there's always some level of negotiation on the part of Black people, right? So, basically, that's the problem of how hegemony works is that there are always some Black people in the community that oftentimes consumes this discourse around development, around advancement, and around that gentrification is good, that actually he's going to do better off, and then negotiates on the part of the community to their detriment. So I think those are the some things to keep in mind as well.

KARLENE GRIFFITHS SEKOU: And also, just to give you concrete resources, City Life/Vida Urbana does that work, Dorchester Not For Sale. In other parts of the US, Buy The Block, where you have some really radical grassroots folk or who are organizing. I think of cases-- this is happening, of course, in the United States and abroad, and of course the Brazilian context.

But I was in London and working with BLM in London. But a group called Sisters Uncut, a radical feminist group that their sole design was to disrupt this process of social housing that was being sold, 60%, to private corporations. And the laws there are different, but they literally were occupying buildings and preventing and disrupting displacement of families. Year-round, activists coordinated to occupy buildings and the refusal.

And the same thing is happening in Italy against the fascist government of Salvini. Antifa groups are running flank, rather, to shield refugees who are coming through who have no housing, who have no place to go, and other lower income populations who are being displaced. And in those contexts, you're able to take over buildings, and the laws are such that it is not an easy process to displace people, right? In Italy, it's actually against a law to displace people from housing, so it takes years and years and years and years.

And so there is a dimension of policy in addition to law in the United States that I think we must address here. Yeah, so, yes, [INAUDIBLE].

AUDIENCE: Yes, I wanted to thank you, as well, for spending some time with us. I'm really a fan of some your work. And I'm curious, so what you said actually struck a few chords with me, particularly around the ways in which culture, Afro-Brazilian culture and trans-national, maybe Black culture can be argued, centers and sort of produces this capital market that, particularly in Brazil, you see the Black lives and Black bodies not being valued as much as they should be. Yet, when they're in spaces-- I'm going to try to word this, because there's three parts to my question.

I'm curious, as someone who practices Capoeira and who was in Brazil last year, sort of practicing Capoeira within a comunidad and seeing how Capoeira in Pelourinho Square, for example, is made for market consumption; it's viewed as a tourist attraction and it's utilized in that way. Yet, to your point, the lives are not valued. How do you view, sort of, that particular process or that cultural practice in this project of displacement, if that makes any sense? That's one piece of the question.

And then the second piece is centering more around when you say house demolitions, for example, in Brazil, what comes to mind is house demolitions in Palestine. And I'm curious if there are any connections between the two or if they look differently. And I'm basing this off of an experience being in Palestine and seeing house demolitions there, and then being in Brazil and not necessarily seeing the same sort of house demolitions, but understanding that the infrastructure was created in such a way where people were only allowed to build on top of their houses. They weren't allowed to build horizontally, if that makes any sense. So that's it.

KEISHA-KHAN PERRY: Thank you so much for your question. I think part of what I'm suggesting here is in that we looked at-- So I've written about this demolition in Brazil, but I would make that same argument, I think, because it fits. And the argument is that Black people only serve a particular kind of purpose, right? So I think, for example, there is no tourism, there is no nation, without Black people in the Brazilian context right now, right? So part of [INAUDIBLE] argument is that even, and at all levels, Black people are called-- they live in a Brazilian nation, but also in sustaining everyday life, right?

So this morning, for example, I walked up, talking to one of my friends who is an activist, and I said, oh, are you going to be doing Carnival? What are you going to be doing? And she said, well, you know, I'm working. And I said, [INAUDIBLE] hearing problems in of course. And she said, well, I tried to take Saturday off, but the woman who owns the house won't get Saturday off.

She has a five bedroom, six bath house, dog and cat, and the reality that in order for her to go enjoy all of the Carnival and all the music that Black folks are playing and producing, it also means that there's a Black woman who then has to maintain their house to allow that to happen, right? But, also, the wealthy neighborhoods-- and I think this is where transportation starts to play-- is that those neighborhoods historically were always close to wealthy neighborhoods. So Black women used to-- and domestic workers, and all kinds of workers-- would live in proximity to these wealthy families where they would go and work. But now, they're saying, well, you don't have to live so close anymore. Especially all these lands that are considered to be kind of coveted, coastal, part of the newer global discourse around what is considered beautiful, beachfront.

Historically, in a lot of these countries, beaches were where Black people occupied. They were considered the poorer or more undervalued lands, right? So I think there's a sense that you only are valued that insofar as your labor as domestic workers, your labor as cultural workers, but certainly not your value as people. And what's happening now is a lot folk have theorized is that there's now a surplus labor, right? Because of machines, washing machines, and other kinds of machines that you can give Black bodies are increasingly disposable.

And I don't say that across the Americas because their labor and [INAUDIBLE] were necessary. So whereas the past-- and this is why NDB Connonlly confirmed this-- in the past, people would actually go to great lengths and make sure that Black folks were not incarcerated. Nowadays, the surplus labor is being pushed out, oftentimes through mass incarceration and [INAUDIBLE]. And as long as there's demolition and killing and death, right? To popularize [INAUDIBLE] in terms of labor.

So I would say this is one of the contradictions of what it means to be a nation that understands itself to be kind of Afro-Brazilian in culture, but in a sense, insofar as they produce their culture or produce a particular kind of labor when labor laws weren't necessary. And especially as they're going to consume even more [INAUDIBLE] culture or so-forth that

their bodies are disposable, and certainly their neighborhoods are disposable.

And I think that-- [INAUDIBLE] I'm sorry. I meant the [INAUDIBLE] demolition. Demolition as forced out [INAUDIBLE] documented are common practices throughout the Americas. How many of you probably remember growing up with housing projects and seeing high rises. Or New Jersey, which is where I grew up, actually, you could see the landscape was a lot of high rises.

If you're driving through New York, and you go to particular areas where social housing were increasingly being demolished, that was part of their strategy always. So I think that demolition, in terms of rebuilding and clearing-- basically what they call Slum Clearance, oftentimes funded by major [INAUDIBLE] by the real thing-- demolition was a significant part of that. They would just clear the land and clear the land, the people would be displaced, and the history and everything else would go with it, right?

I think, if you want to read more on just the practice and logic of demolition, I would say Mike Davis is probably one of the best persons in this time for that.

KARLENE GRIFFITHS SEKOU: Great, thank you. We have time for, perhaps, one more question before we--

KEISHA-KHAN PERRY: And I just will add one quick thing, Karlene, is that in the beginning of my book, I start off with the neighborhood Palestina. And the name of the neighborhood is basically inspired by Palestine. And I tell the story how Dona Telma is standing in front of a bulldozer in the neighborhood of Palestina, Palestine, in Salvador, trying to avoid the bulldozer from coming down onto her house, right? And there are several communities throughout Latin America that are named Palestina, are named based on communities in Palestine. And I would argue that it's out of solidarity for the Palestinian struggle.

KARLENE GRIFFITHS SEKOU: That's a great connection. Thank you for that. Do we have one more question? If not, we will wrap up.

AUDIENCE: I had a question.

KARLENE GRIFFITHS SEKOU: Yes.

AUDIENCE: So I'm White, and I was in one of these neighborhoods, not too far from where this gentleman was killed by the police in Crown Heights, I believe that was. I actually lived in Flatbush before I came to HDS. And so I'm sort of wondering how-- I mean, maybe, like a 101 of people sort of get wrapped into, you come into one of these neighborhoods-- I know even now I'm here at HDS, I'm not too far from Central Square, which they used to call it Central Scare.

And so there is this idea that, before I even came into to come to HDS here as a student, I didn't know what I was getting into. I didn't know that I was in some ways contributing to this process. And so I'm wondering how, as a White person, to be a better ally. What are some basic things

that we can do once we're wrapped up in this? Once we come into a neighborhood, see these things going on, what to to, you know? What to do about it.

KEISHA-KHAN PERRY: That's always a tough question. I appreciate [INAUDIBLE] within your personal urban politics. For many years, before Mike Brown was shot and killed, I would say that I attracted mostly White students, and they were asking very similar questions, [INAUDIBLE] issues. I would say that the best people to learn from, in terms of the kind of really important [INAUDIBLE] are the White activists that have been doing the work, that have been a little of conscience, who are working very hard around not just questions around kind of racial violence, but just generally around housing justices before.

I think what we focus on but kind of failed to recognize and understand is that social housing and it's just like socialized healthcare, like [INAUDIBLE] really benefits all of us. Capitalism, racial capitalism, and the way that it has developed in places like the United States, really has worked to the detriment of all people. The reason why, for example, you can't afford good quality housing [INAUDIBLE] and you're not losing a significant portion of your income, is because-- I mean, it sits at the heart of how it impacts [INAUDIBLE]. So if you look at the homeless population in the streets of Seattle, you look at the homeless populations in Los Angeles, it has profoundly impacted Whites as well.

I think when people start to really understand our struggles are interconnected, and it's not just I think we need to think about how we can participate not just sort of in terms of gentrifying neighborhoods, but in terms of anti-eviction [INAUDIBLE], and so forth. I think that even if you look at the anti-eviction mapping project that operates out of Oakland and New York, those are projects that are majority led by Whites who have solidarity in communities of Color. I mean, I think there are-- You know, like I said, I hate to over-simplify it, but there are White people out there doing good political work that you can learn from that oftentimes I would say not prudent, but they're certainly-- There are people out there doing the work.

And I would say that whether it be leading one of our grassroots organizations that we mentioned, but that they see themselves as profoundly connected because I think, the moment when you start to think about, well, I'm-- Maybe I should rephrase this and say that there's a way that one of my colleague calls it kind of half-connected human, that a lot of us are half-connected, is that the reason why we start to perpetuate is because you see ourselves as being profoundly connected in very important ways. Yeah, I would say that there are just very good contributions as White out there and doing the work that you can learn from in terms of these organizations that exist. People are out there, [INAUDIBLE], mobilizing, they're using their [INAUDIBLE] skills to the advancement of social movements. I hope that helped.

AUDIENCE: No, totally. Totally. And thank you for the anti--

KEISHA-KHAN PERRY: Thank you, thank you. But there are student feminist studies at [INAUDIBLE] and feminists with the UT [INAUDIBLE]. She's one of

the folks who founded the ant-eviction mapping project out of Oakland primarily because the housing justice movement is a movement for all people. I mean, if you see the impact of what happened to house, yeah, it was decimated. I think if you started to see how this is impacting all of us, I think you would see how gentrification doesn't benefit not just poorer Black folks, but Latino and Brown folks.

We shouldn't, as a people, spend in a significant portion of your income on housing, in the same way that we don't have access to good public education and good public healthcare.

AUDIENCE: Thank you.

KARLENE GRIFFITHS SEKOU: Great. Well thank you. Thank you for your questions. Professor Keisha-Khan Perry, thank you so much for--

KEISHA-KHAN PERRY: Thank you. I want to say thank you again for all of you. I know it's always awkward to with Skype and the sound and movement and so forth. And if it looks weird, it's also 'cause I'm standing up. I have a [INAUDIBLE].

But I thank you so much for your questions. And if any of you, if you want to follow up with any questions via email, please feel free to do so. And we did a lot of names of organizations that escape me, but if you send me an email, I'll try to send you the information. So thank you for your questions and your attention.

KARLENE GRIFFITHS SEKOU: Great. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

[MUSIC PLAYING]