SNCC 60TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE, 2021

Attorneys General and District Attorneys

Speaker 1 (00:00:23):
Too much bother me

Speaker 2 (00:00:25):

Too much. He,

Speaker 1 (00:00:29):

So he's leaving life. He's come.

Speaker 2 (00:00:38):

He said he going,

Speaker 1 (00:00:40):

He said he is going back to

Speaker 2 (00:00:43):

Going back to

Speaker 1 (00:00:46):

What left the world. He left

Speaker 2 (00:00:54):

That

Speaker 1 (00:00:54):

So long. Oh,

Speaker 2 (00:01:01):

He's leaving said

Speaker 1 (00:01:12):

He's going back

Speaker 2 (00:01:16):

To

Speaker 1 (00:01:16):

A simpler, a brother live in his world that live without him

Speaker 2 (00:01:39):

In

Speaker 1 (00:01:53):

Bow,

Speaker 2 (00:01:54):

The midnight, the midnight, he kept

Speaker 1 (00:02:02):
Dreaming. That's some he beats
Speaker 2 (00:02:09):
Stop,
Speaker 1 (00:02:12):
But he so found out the hard way.
Speaker 2 (00:02:15):
The dreams
Speaker 1 (00:02:16):
Don't always come. One. The he wants did he
Speaker 2 (00:02:49):
Midnight,
Speaker 1 (00:02:50):
The Georgia
Speaker 2 (00:02:51):
Midnight baby. Yes.
Speaker 1 (00:02:55):
She's going back to
Speaker 2 (00:03:00):
A simpler,
Speaker 1 (00:03:18):
I better in his world, the new, without
Speaker 2 (00:03:21):
Him in mind. Yo
Speaker 1 (00:03:39):
Going back to
Speaker 2 (00:03:56):
Jordan,
Speaker 1 (00:04:01):
Live in world without
Speaker 2 (00:04:05):
Him bow.

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Speaker 3 (00:05:11):

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Trey Murphy and I currently serve as the director of, uh, community organizing at the NAACP legal defense fund. And I'm also a co-founder and the director of strategies and programs at, uh, small grassroots organization known as organized and black. I am honor and privileged to be here with you all today at the SNCC 60th conference, celebrating over 60 years since the founding of the student nonviolent coordinated committee. And I am extremely honored to be moderating a panel, entitled attorney generals and district attorneys to struggle to make the justice system work over the next hour. Plus we will be having some rich conversations around the justice system around the role that black leaders play within that justice system around this current racial justice moment that we find ourselves in and what we need to do leaving this conference to be prepared, to create a justice system that works for all regardless of their race and identity, just as SNCC focused on so long ago, 60 years ago, the framing for this particular panel is the black community has used protests and legal actions to Ghana instruments of power.

Speaker 3 (00:06:33):

Over the past 60 years today, black mayors and officials with substantial budgets exist in large cities. There's been more than a tenfold increase in the number of African Americans in the us Congress. And there are a number of African Americans who have major responsibilities within our judicial system. There are also African American CEOs of multinational corporations and major institutions and even more African Americans whose impact and who has an impact on the intellectual and cultural life of America. Today's activists, as we did in the, as SNCC did in the sixties, are dealing with the continuing struggle to end racial discrimination and economic exploitation. Therefore, as we contemplate the ongoing struggles conference, participants will need to consider how to best use the newly achieved levels of power to make a meaningful difference in the lives of African American and people of color. That is the framing for this particular panel before we get into the esteem panel.

Speaker 3 (00:07:47):

And I will say we have a powerful lineup for you all today, but before we get into the steam panel, just a couple of quick housekeeping rules, there will be opportunities for you all to drop questions for panelists to answer the way that you can do that. There should be a Q and a section on your screen that you all can see. And if you drop a question inside of that panel, on that Q and a section, we will be sure to come back to it. If we have enough time at the end, we're gonna try to get in as many questions as possible. So we're gonna ask that you keep your questions succinct and concise, but we promise that we will try to get to every question. We also are requesting that you drop your questions in, in advance of the Q and a section.

Speaker 3 (00:08:38):

So if you have a burning question that you're like, oh, I want to ask this, I want to hear this particular answer. Please make sure that you drop that question inside of the chat ahead of the Q and a section, which will take place in roughly the last 30 minutes or so of this panel. And if that question is directed to a specific panelist, please be sure to also identify that you would like a specific panelist to answer your particular question with that being said, I have the honor and privilege of now introducing our steam panelists. First we have, uh, we have the, um, uh, Scott

Coleman. Scott Coleman is a native of Columbus, Mississippi. He received a bachelor's of arts in English, in history from Milsap college after college Scott was selected to teach in, uh, in Ghana, south America by well by well teach a non-profit non-governmental organization based at the center for international development at Harvard university.

Speaker 3 (00:09:52):

Well, teach provides opportunities for individuals to contribute, working, to contribute working in developing countries while participating in the program. Scott taught English in a small rural town. Scott is also a graduate of the university of Wisconsin law school, where he graduated, uh, where he graduated come to law while in law school, Scott interned with the chief prosecutor for the international criminal tribunal for Rwanda Tanzania, and was one of, uh, 25 students nationwide awarded a summers honor in internship with the United States department of justice. He is also a member of the school mock trial after law school. Scott was one of 28 young legal professionals nationwide to be awarded a prestigious scattered fellowship to work with the Mississippi center for justice. During the fellowship, Scott worked with a group of nonprofit and organizations to combat the growth of predatory lending in Mississippi and helped to develop affordable assets. Building alternatives in 2011, Scott Coleman was appointed the youngest African American justice, um, court judge in Lowes county. In 2012, he was appointed municipal court judge in Aberdeen, Mississippi, and in 2013 was appointed the first African American prosecutor for the city of Columbus. In 2015, he was elected district attorney for the circuit court district 16, which includes lo clay and, uh, NABI counties. He is the first African American district attorney to represent a major white district in Mississippi's history. Thank you, Mr. Scott for joining this historic panel.

Speaker 4 (00:11:48):

Thank y'all for having me. I hope everybody can see me honored to be here. And, uh, it's Scott cologne, Scott cologne,

Speaker 3 (00:11:56):

Scott cologne. Apologies Mr. Cologne. Next up we have, uh, Mr. Mr. Uh, Fred cook, Fred cook, Fred Frederick Douglas Cook Jr. As his full name is <laugh> I, Mr. Fred was born and raised in the district of Columbia. He attended district of Columbia public schools and graduated from McKinley technical high school in 1965 after high school, Mr. Cook enrolled at Howard university and graduated in 1969 with a degree in psychology and a commissioned as a second Lieutenant in the United States air force, Mr. Cook defers, some of his us air force service and enrolled at the Howard university school of law, where he graduated with honors in 1972 upon graduation, he served as the law clerk for the honorable George w Draper, the second and associate judge of the superior court for the district of Columbia. In 1973, he was appointed a captain in the judge advocate General's department of the United States air force and served four years in that capacity.

Speaker 3 (00:13:12):

In 1977, he returned to the district and began a law practice with a large corporate law firm in which he became a partner in 1982 in 1987. He was appointed by mayor Marion by to serve as the corporation council of the district of Columbia now called the attorney general of the district of Columbia, where he was head of a law office of about 250 lawyers and an equal number of

support staff. In 1990, he left government service and returned to the private practice of law in his practice. He worked primarily on governmental relations, municipal finance, telecommunications, land use public contracting sports advertising litigation, intellectual property education, general corporate matters in civil and criminal litigation matters. He is also an adjunct facility member of the facility of, um, I mean, sorry, adjunct faculty member of the faculty of Howard university school of law, and serves on a number of board for not, not for profit organization. He is the father of full adult daughters, all of whom he is very proud of. Thank you for joining us, Mr. Cook.

Speaker 5 (00:14:37):

Thank you very much, uh, for having me, I hope that we're gonna have a great session.

Speaker 3 (00:14:43):

Thank you. Thank you. And certainly last but not least, we have the honorable Marilyn Mosby, Marilyn MOS, Marilyn J Mosby is the 25th states attorney for Baltimore city. She was the youngest chief prosecutor of any major American city at the time of her election in 2015, a first generation college graduate States's attorney Mosby earned her bachelor's degree from Tuskegee university in her J H in her JD from Boston college law school. State's attorney Mosby's passion, uh, has always been to effectuate change by driving a more just efficient and fair criminal justice system. Her conviction integrity unit has successfully exonerated non wrongfully incarcerated men since she took office in 2015, she is a member of the association of prosecuting attorneys and was an integral contributor to the, uh, association of prosecutors attorneys reform proposals provided in the 21st century principles of prosecution of peace officers. She is married to Baltimore city. Council's president Nick J Mosby. They reside in west Baltimore and are the proud prince of two beautiful daughters. Thank you so much for joining us, Madam state's attorney.

Speaker 6 (00:16:11):

Thank you for having me, Trey. I'm really excited and honored to be on a panel,

Speaker 3 (00:16:15):

Right? Well, with that being said, we're actually going to move straight into the panel with this. Um, and so we now hear the esteem credentialized of, of each of the panelists. And so, um, and so I'm going to start, uh, with, with just a little bit of grounding, um, for, for this first question, many would argue many would argue that we have come a long way since the founding of SNCC in the civil rights movement of the sixties, but there are still systemic racism that is happening all around us from the wave of voter suppression bills being enacted, following this most recent election, the 2020 election to the extra judicial murders of unarmed black people, such as Freddie gray and yourtown Madam state's attorney, um, Brian Taylor and Louisville. And of course, George Floyd of Minneapolis, it is clear at least to me, but maybe to many that this notion of black lives still doesn't fully matter inside of this country, in each of your professional opinion. And I'll go to, to you first, Madam state's attorney, uh, since you, since your current district attorney right now, and each of your professional opinions, what must change in this country for black lives to fully matter specifically, what is broken within our current legal system that allows for black lives to be taken extra judicially, to not be cared about, to not be, uh, recognized as a full integral American community member or citizen.

Speaker 6 (00:18:02):

So, Trey, I think in this traumatizing sort of moment in our country's history where every time we, we open up our computers or turn on on the news, black people are being assaulted and murdered by the police on camera, no matter who and what we're doing at justice, you, you, you mentioned the word justice, but for us it seems unattainable. I don't even think we know what that looks like anymore. We, we can tell you what it isn't. We know that justice isn't failing to use your turn signal and ending up dead justice. Isn't allegedly selling a loose cigarette or passing a counterfeit $20 bill during a global pandemic for groceries, eating ice cream and sleeping in your bed, or God forbid sleeping in your car to fast food drive through at ending up dead justice. Isn't the refusal, as you've already indicated to, to see our humanity based on the color of our skin.

Speaker 6 (00:18:47):

And so I'm encouraged, right? You know, after this uprising, according to the AP polls, the veil of ignorance has been lifted from Americans in this country regarding race relations and police brutality, but let's be real, right? We can now boast and say black lives matter, and it's no longer a controversial term. And, and since, since the time that I charged six officers for the death of a black man and in the city of Baltimore, but that culture of violence, that culture of policing that overly dominant policing enforcement against black people in this country has to change. And it's not something that's new it's existed since the United States constitution carved out an exception to the abolishment of slavery, which was for, for criminals, right? And since that time, black people in this country have literally been stigmatized and depicted as criminals, not only in the minds of police, but in the minds of society. So no matter who and what we're doing, we're always depicted as, as criminals. This is why a 13 year old kid that may have had a gun is within seconds shot and killed by police. But a white kid can openly carry a shotgun and walk past several police officers. After he openly shot people and killed people. This is why a Lieutenant in the United States army wearing a uniform is considered a threat. The system is broken and we have to move from policy from, from protest to policy. And now is the time to do so.

Speaker 3 (00:20:10):

Mm. We have to move from protest to policy. Is that not a word, Mr. Scott, I'm coming to you next. Tell us about you. You spent some time in, in Mississippi, I believe. Um, if I'm not, if I'm not mistaken or maybe it was Alabama, I'm actually currently

Speaker 4 (00:20:27):

In Mississippi right now. I'm currently the district attorney for my area.

Speaker 3 (00:20:30):

Oh, perfect. In, in Mississippi. Yeah. Mississippi. Yeah. In Mississippi. Yeah. So, so Ms. Scott, tell us, tell us a little bit, I mean, you are in a thick of it. There was an old saying that, that if we could fix Mississippi, we could fix the country. So, so tell us, tell us a little bit from your vantage point, what is broken? What are the barriers that exist right now within the confines of the legal system that, that continue to uphold this notion that black lives doesn't matter, um, so that we can know what we need to address and where we need to go at from here?

Speaker 4 (00:21:05):

Well, I love that question and I'm so honored to be on the panel, especially with the OG Marilyn Mosby. I she's been doing for a long time for the people are in the reform movement. She's one of the, and Iggy how I wanna piggyback on what, uh, Marilyn said, because that was so powerful when you go, we need to go from protests to policy. And one of the policies that I think we really need to look at is the war on drugs and, uh, how we approach the war on drugs. Because when you talk about overpolicing, when you talking about, uh, targeting biases, profiling, a lot of that historically in the last 40 years has been driven by this desire to clean our streets from drugs. And, uh, the, the, the results have been terrible. You know, we've not, you're not, we have not been able to decrease drug use significantly.

Speaker 4 (00:22:00):

And that's because drug use is a public health problem until we recognize that, you know, the only difference between tobacco and marijuana is that tobacco has been legal forever. And marijuana has been illegal since the early, but as far as, but because we made marijuana legal and other drugs, we have given our police this, uh, we we've incentivized policing in a way that's been harmful to, to minority communities, black and brown people, poor people. And that's why I wanna shout out again, Maryland, because you've been a on that. If you look at the policies she's taking about how to approach drugs and not charging people, possessing their drugs, treating people like addicts and trying to get them, you know, in the direction where listen, maybe they can get their, you know, they can hopefully get their life back on, on track, but doing the, the way the system has dealt with it historically has only made the problems worse. And it hasn't done anything to, to rid our community of drugs, but it's also caused a lot of problems. So that'd be one thing I would point to, and I, I let the professor, uh, also ask him, add his voice to it.

Speaker 3 (00:23:12):

Well, well, well, thank you so much for that, Mr. Scott. And I just wanna highlight that particular piece that you just said around treating the issue, the epidemic of drug use as a public health crisis and not necessarily as a law and order crisis. I think that, that is that, that is so powerful. And as you pointed out, many of these failed policy stem from decades ago, right. And so, you know, there's a question, I feel like the, the SNCC elders would oftentimes ask a question on the table is what has changed right. Versus what remains the same still, right. And how do we grow and evolve as the times grow and evolve. So I appreciate that Mr. Scott, and, and bringing that out, uh, uh, professor cook, I'm gonna call you professor cook <laugh> because Mr. Scott started off that trend professor cook cook, let's come to you because you you've actually been around, you know, the block a few times. Um, and so you said, so share with us a little bit around what is broken within the legal system. You, you had the fortunate pleasure of being the, uh, attorney general of the district of Columbia before it was called the attorney general position. Uh <laugh>. And so, um, and so I would imagine, and then underneath of the iconic Maria by, uh, and so I would, I would imagine that you also have a particular viewpoint on this issue of what is broken within the criminal justice system that causes black lives to not fully matter.

Speaker 5 (00:24:45):

Sure. I, I, yeah, I got some thoughts. Um, I, I think that, you know, having worked for Marion and with a number of other members and leaders of SNCC, what I really see is in the criminal justice system and in society at large, the problem is fundamentally the same. It's a lack of

imagination. Mary used to say to me all the time that what we were obligated to do was to make a profound difference in the lives of the people we cared about. And if you come from that lived experience of being, uh, part of the least, uh, the left out the left behind you understand the way the system works to your detriment, to the, to the detriment or the group of people, you, you, you associate with you feel like, you know, and so what you really then have to do is to develop a sense of imagination and not simply be a black face, doing the same job that somebody white did before you have to reimagine the job.

Speaker 5 (00:25:38):

You have to reimagine the power that the job has. You have to reimagine the difference the job can make, and that's not easy. And, and I, my hat's off to, to, to Ms. Mosby and, and to Mr. Cullum, who are in difficult situations because they are being asked to step outside, well, not being asked. They decided to step outside the mold of their predecessors and to do those jobs differently. And to be, as Ms Mosby said to be more about justice in the, in the written large sense of justice, and it's not just, let's figure out a more humane way to arrest a bunch of people and put 'em in jail. Why were you arresting the people in the first place is the question you oughta ask. So I think that really, it's gotta be a sense of imagination. And from my perch, as the attorney general, we had limited criminal jurisdiction, criminal prosecutorial jurisdiction, but we also were responsible for public policy on a whole range of things, whether it was housing, whether it was the, the, the care of, of the elderly, whether it was education and all those things are where we have to make a difference, too.

Speaker 5 (00:26:44):

We've gotta reimagine what public school is. We've gotta reimagine how to get kids into and out of an education environment successfully. We've gotta reimagine how to keep kids outta the juvenile justice system. We've gotta reimagine how to get people trained for jobs and, and, and, and successful employment. So I think the challenge is really on all of us to be much more, uh, creative and much more willing to step outside the traditional path that has been laid out for the offices that people like us come to now occupy.

Speaker 3 (00:27:20):

Wow. Wow. That's so powerful. Thank you so much, Mr. Cook, uh, before we transition to the next question, I'm just gonna remind all attendees. You see, we have a powerful panel of people who actually live and work inside of the criminal legal system. So make sure that you are dropping your questions inside of the chat. We are going to be coming back to questions, um, and, and, uh, at the, towards the end of the panel. Um, so please feel free to drop your questions in the chat. All right, Mr. Scott, I'm coming to you next first, uh, for, for this next question, uh, last year, and it kind of follows suit on, on the previous question last year, the world witnessed and experienced a global racial justice uprising that touched every state in America. Plus dozens of countries, internationally, many are arguing. This was the largest uprising in a generation. The largest uprising in the generation touched all 50 states, all of the us territories, dozens of other countries internationally. What are some of the positive developments that you have seen from last year's racial justice protests, and to, to make an addendum to that? How has last year's racial justice uprising influenced your ability to help push forward some progressive policies and

changes that says that black lives fully matter, and that black lives should fully matter within the legal system?

Speaker 4 (00:28:57):

Well, thank you so much for that question. Uh, the first thing I would point to is really on a personal level, uh, being born and raised in Mississippi and the amazing history we, we have of civil rights act, civil rights activism, including, uh, that recently departed Bob Moses, who was a hero mine, and certainly a great partner. And, but we last year, you know what we freedom, we Mississippi changed our flag for the first time. A time were one of the last states that still had the Confederate bars, uh, on our flag. You know, some people said that didn't matter. That's not a big thing, but for me personally, my parents being, uh, my dad born and raised in Mississippi seventh generation, Mississippi, and my mom having moved to Mississippi that was really partial to them and being able to see them have the joy of not having, not living in a state with that symbol.

Speaker 4 (00:29:56):

And then also in my county, we became the first county to move a Confederate Memorial, uh, to the cemetery, uh, where it belongs not on the courthouse. You know, those were two positives in Mississippi that, that I'm, um, now, as far as how it's affect as district attorney, that was a lot of, uh, promises made about how there was going to be a new approach to crime and to, um, policing in America last summer. Unfortunately, as people have gone back into the houses, the protests have increased. The status quo is sneaking back in, and especially as crime increases people, it goes back to when professor said, people's imagination about how things can be different, really starts to shape when crime goes up and people feel like they're not safe. And so what I think the challenge is, is we've got to find ways to institutionalize, uh, our improvement, you know, because we can't just rely on individual people.

Speaker 4 (00:31:11):

When we get in these positions, the system has already been designed such a way where it's really hard to move. Even if you got the power. I mean, you, don't the, don't the judges, you don't control the defenders office. There's so much you don't control. And its been built up over 40 years, basically for one though, to get someone to plea guilty and get the most amount of time possible that for the last 20 years before you, before you got Maryland in her position, really that was the job of a prosecutor to try to get as much time as they could and make it as easy as possible, don't go to trial. And so now that we're trying to reimagine that it, you know, I thought we had a moment where the public was really captured and to focus on it, but sustaining that is, is difficult. And that's why we gotta have leadership. Uh, uh, that's really keep pushing the issue because we gotta make a lot of change in our system. There's so much that we need to prove on that, that we can't continue with the status quo. We really have to Rema.

Speaker 3 (00:32:11):

No, I appreciate that. You're, you're biting into some of my, my later questions too, around leadership. So I'm gonna be coming back to you on that, but you said something so profound and you invoked Bob Moses, uh, uh, name who was a personal mentor of mines, uh, who, who I've had to honor and privilege to study and on and privileged to studying at his feet. Um, but he would oftentimes talk about this concept and really it's a dichotomy around the constitution when it was first created. It outlined who the constitutional citizens were, which was oftentimes white

men with constitutional property and the constitutional property was black people. And so the question that he now us, uh, to, to ponder and consider as being on the table is who are the constitutional people in the 21st century? And what does it mean to be a constitutional person, right?

Speaker 3 (00:33:03):

And so as you talked about the issues of the legal system and what it was set up to do, to be able to get somebody to plead guilty, to be able to get somebody, to get the most time possible without any support, without any rehab, you know, there's a question on the table around are those the constitutional people, should everyone not be a constitutional person? And what does it mean to be a constitutional person? So I, I really, really, really appreciate, uh, your framing, uh, Mr. Scott, uh, Mr. Cook, I'm gonna come to you, uh, next, um, talk to us a little bit around what you see as some of the positive developments from last year's racial justice, uh, protest, you know, what have you seen? That's been different, you're now professor at Howard university. Uh, uh, I believe the school of law if, uh, if I'm not mistaken. Um, and so you have the opportunity to shape many of the young minds that I'm assuming was out there, uh, on the streets last year as we saw the global uprising taking shape. Um, and so from your vantage point, uh, uh, what do you see has been a positive development, uh, from, from last year's racial justice uprising?

Speaker 5 (00:34:15):

Well, I, I think here at the Howard university school of law, uh, the, the students, uh, I think are much more, um, activated, uh, you know, I I've been involved with Howard school of law since 1969. And I've taught at the law school since 19 7, 19 92 or so. Uh, and, and the level of activism of the student body has ABB been flowed over that period of time. But with the uprising of last summer, uh, after, uh, George Floyd's murder, uh, there was a renewed energy and activism on the part of the students. Students wanna make a difference. They want to change the world in some constructive ways. And I was happy to see that. Uh, I think that what, what that means is that these, these young people, these young minds who are asking difficult questions of people like myself, who elude further down the road than they, uh, well, why can't it be this way?

Speaker 5 (00:35:12):

Why does it have to be that way? What can I do to make it different? And I think that, again, it's about reimagining. It's about understanding that we collectively black folk, people who think of themselves as progresses. Can't sit on our behind and wait for the Supreme court to save us. Okay. Uh, that, that time is come and gone. What we've gotta do is take control of our communities. We've gotta take control of our city councils, our state's attorney's offices, uh, where we elect judges, we've gotta elect judges. We have got to step up and make that difference and make the change happen. It's not gonna fall out of the sky. And I think the kids and, and, and then that's a pejorative term. The students, uh, understand that and, and they are willing to do, uh, the kind of things that the SNCC people did in the, in the fifties and the sixties to put theirselves themselves on the line to put their bodies in between injustice and the rest of the world. So, uh, I'm looking forward to that. Uh, continuing, uh, I think Mr. Col said it is, it is gotta be institutionalized. We've gotta, we've gotta make this the way we do business. It, it can't just be for a season. It can't be a fashion. It, it can't be a shiny new pair of air Jordans. It's gotta be something that we do all day every day for the rest of our lives.

Speaker 3 (00:36:36):

No, I appreciate that. Mr. Cook, you are, you are absolutely right. And you're hitting on some key points. Wanna do a quick reminder for folks to make sure that you're putting your questions inside of the chat because within the next 10 minutes or so, we're gonna be shifting to, to the Q and a portion, but Madame state's attorney, I'm going to come to you and I'm gonna, I'm gonna switch up the question for you a little bit. Um, and, and I wanna ask you from, from your vantage point, what is the most difficult problem you have had to encounter in your role as state's attorney in Baltimore city related to race? You know, what is the most difficult problem that you feel that you've had to encounter?

Speaker 6 (00:37:15):

So, I mean, first of all, I, I think effectuating change from within the criminal justice system. Um, you know, I I'm honored to be on this panel because there's so many that have come before me. I E the honorable, you know, professor cook, right, who have understood the importance of trying to change a system. The it's really critical for you to do that from within, and the best way to be able to do it is from within. And so, you know, effectuating change is, is very hard, right? To alter the very fabric of, of this system so that it works for the people and, and not against them, is why I wanted to become a prosecutor. You gotta think about that role. Prosecutors are one of the most important stakeholders in the criminal justice system. We decide who's gonna be charged what they're gonna be charged with, what center recommendations we're gonna make.

Speaker 6 (00:38:04):

We make a determination as to whether someone gets into the criminal justice system in the first place, but as a black woman in this role who as professor cook stated is, are attempting to reform the criminal justice system, attempting to be creative and, and reimagining the way that we've always done things. 95% of the individuals making these decisions are white. 79% are white men as a woman of color making these decisions. And of all of the prosecutors in the country, I represent 1% of all elected prosecutors in the country. And so it's difficult because as my, my colleagues, Scott told you, right, when you try to implement reform in it, and I can talk about so many of the things, the awesome things, when it comes to like police accountability, whether it's implementing the first conviction, integrity unit, that's gonna ensure that we're, we're advocating as prosecutors, not just for those that we believe have permitted a crime, but zealously advocating for those that we believe have wrongly been convicted and incarcerated.

Speaker 6 (00:39:07):

We've exonerated 10 individuals that have cumulatively served 270 years in, in, in prison for crimes. They didn't commit whether it's creating a, uh, in deciding we're gonna end the war on drugs. And one of the major municipalities in, in the country, because for far too long, what we known is that this has been a war on black people confirmed by the Nixon, John, ER, John Erman Nixon's aid. Right? And so whenever you're doing stuff like thinking outside of the box and, and pushing against the status quo, you're attacked. And so I've been harassed. I've been sued. I've been mocked. I've been ridiculed. I have a book full of hate mail and death threats. And H Freddie gray. I got received hate mail. That called me a racist N word B I T C H. Right? So you deal with misogyny and racism. They published my children's photos in, in, in the newspaper and then said, what school they attended to the fraternal order of police.

Speaker 6 (00:40:08):

You give P labor unions a bad name because they come out. They, they put me on, on the national publications and referred to me as the Wolf, that lurks, when I stood up for my colleague in St. Louis Kim garden, when she was coming out of a under attack by the F O P and, and the police and the mayor, and, and her jurisdiction came back to a racist rant from a, a, a, a crazy woman. But these are, these are, that's not so much the, the issue for me, it's when you're thinking outside of the box. And when you are stepping outside to say, okay, we need to reform a system that is disproportionately impacted us for far too long, right? We need support. We need support from, from the communities that we represent, because as Scott had already indicated, you're doing these things, you're thinking outside the box, and the status quo comes for you.

Speaker 6 (00:41:01):

When, when I decided to stop prosecuting minor offenses, that for black people in this country can lead to a death sentence. I can tell you that the, you know, the, the drug treatment facility wrote up ends and talked about how their, their business model was gonna go bankrupt. And so I said, oh, wow, kick rocks. You're gonna have to build a different business model, not off the backs of black and brown people, but we need support because people are resistant to change. And we can't do this by ourselves. We can force it, but we can't do this by ourselves. And so we gotta create like a network of support so that we can continue to do the work that is being modeled all across the, the globe.

Speaker 3 (00:41:41):

Wow. Wow. That's so important. And I think that you highlighted some critical pieces around the challenges that, that prosecutors, particularly black prosecutors are having inside of these positions of power. Right. Um, so, you know, given, uh, and, and I'm gonna switch gears a little bit, uh, and folks feel free to drop your questions, continue to drop your questions. Um, I see a couple inside of the chat. Um, and so we want to get to as many questions as possible. Um, but I wanna, I wanna ask this question and I actually, um, I I'm wondering, uh, Mr. Cook, if you could take this one, given the struggles of the 1960s, in which it was uncommon for black people to occupy positions of power compared to today's current political landscape, uh, where we have black people who are occupying position of power, could you share with all of the viewers watching why you believe it's important for black people to have political power, you know, specifically, why is it important that we have black attorney generals in district attorney generals, uh, such as, uh, uh, state's attorney Mosby, um, and, and da, uh, Scott, um, inside of those positions,

Speaker 5 (00:43:00):

Those people can make a difference. They can make a profound difference in people's lives. Uh, they make the decisions that affect people's lives in myriad ways. Uh, I'm old enough to remember when I was in law school, there were about 3,500 black lawyers in the United States of America. And when I was in law school there about 3,500 black law students, and now there are so many more black lawyers, uh, in the United States, uh, people doing things like Ms. Mosby and Mr. Cole, uh, that were never done before, uh, in this, in the history of this country. And so you can make a difference. Uh, I, I encourage you saw my, my resume in my bio,

whatever you call it, that I was a judge advocate in the air force. I tell my students, the military criminal justice system is just as screwed up as a civilian criminal justice system.

Speaker 5 (00:43:48):

And while it's not for everybody, you are to consider going there to make a difference. You are to consider being a prosecutor to make a difference, and it's not for everybody. So I'm not saying that every, every black law student not there are to run off and, and become a prosecutor, cause everybody's not built to do that, but, but people ought to consider it because it's a way to make a contribution. It's a way to make a difference. And when there were so very few, uh, black mayors or black city council members, or black judges, or, or black elected officials of any type across the country, police chiefs, uh, things were very different now. Clearly they're not as good as they need to be, but they're sure as heck better than they were in, in many, many instances. And so I think it makes a huge difference when you can have responsible black folk in positions of authority of responsibility to make that profound difference in the lives of people, black and white, because the truth of it is that many poor black, white people are being jammed the same way.

Speaker 5 (00:44:53):

Poor black people are being jammed. So this, this, this, this justice piece is about doing justice, about being fair, about making sure that people are not maltreated because of the color of their skin, their gender, their economic circumstance. And that's what this society has done for 400 plus years. And it's built to do that. Uh, somebody often people say to me, oftentimes, well, do you think the criminal justice system is broken? And some but face I say, no, I don't think it's broken. I think it's doing exactly what it was built to do. It is not broken. It is just as screwed up as it's supposed to be. And what we have to do is undo that,

Speaker 3 (00:45:32):

Wow, wow, wow, Mr. Cook, you actually hit on a question that one of our audiences asked. And so I actually wanna come to that question. Now, if somebody asks, is the system actually broken right. Uh, to, from their vantage point. And it sounds like professor cook from what you just said, the system seems to be operating the way that it's intended to, you know, and so, so the question I think is on the table is, is the system actually broken, you know? And, um, and actually I'm going, I'm gonna, uh, let, whichever one of you want to take, take a response to that question, uh, to, to, to go ahead and do it now.

Speaker 6 (00:46:12):

I'll I guess I'll take it. I mean, I agree with professor cook. I think the system is designed, um, as I talked about in the United States constitution, the only sort of carve out to the abolishment of slavery is for that of criminals. And for decades, we've been depicted as criminals and there's, it's no, it's, it's not a coincidence that the criminal justice system disproportionately impacts us. And so when you think about that, again, it goes back to professor Cook's point. We have to reimagine the way that this system is designed. And if you have someone who has lived under these systems of oppression, then you have lived experience, right? And so I don't have to go through cultural sensitivity training or, uh, implicit bias training to know how young boys like Freddy gray were being treated by police. I'm a black woman living in a heart of west Baltimore with, with black brothers and, and a son and, and a father, right.

Speaker 6 (00:47:11):

And a husband. And so one of the things that I understood is that that power of discretion right, is so incredibly awesome to be able to reform it and to create what it should be and reimagining what it should be. And so whether that's ensuring police accountability, whether that's creating, you know, the first and the only crime control prevention division in a state's attorney's office, where I have a youth coordinator, and we're trying to focus on getting the young people before they get to the criminal justice system, taking a holistic approach, creating programs that are modeled after, um, now vice president Harris's back on track program here in Baltimore, we have the aim to be more program. First time felony drug offenders. They go through a probationary period within, on life skills, job training skills, they do community service. And at the end of that probationary period, they're give 'em a job.

Speaker 6 (00:47:59):

And their felony records wiped clean. It's the conviction integrity unit. It's creating a sentencing review unit so that we can look at and reduce and make recommendations for excessive sentences that are disproportionately imposed on people of color. In our state, we represent black people represent 30% of the state's population and 70% of the prison population. That's a problem. So these are the ways in which you can utilize your, your discretion and your power to be able to effectuate the type of change that is definitely needed in our community. So you can make the system work for us.

Speaker 3 (00:48:34):

Wow. Wow. That is so powerful. Uh, attorney Scott, I, I want to get you in, in here, um, on, on this particular piece, because, uh, it goes to a question, uh, that I had on, on my list around, you know, if we had to reimagine a new legal system, uh, that one that works for all people, regardless of that recent identity and that values black lives, what would that system look like? You know, what will we have to do to get there? And I think I, Madam, uh, state's attorney Mosby just, just dropped a bunch of gems around the ways in which she's thinking about reimagining the legal system right now, where she on from her position. Uh, so attorney Scott, if, could you talk a little bit around, you know, and give viewpoint, you know, what would you add to, to what, uh, attorney Mosby just, just laid out and, and what would that system, what would this new system look like?

Speaker 4 (00:49:27):

So it, it, it would, it would look very, very differently than what we got right now. And, and, and the way that to think about, to think about money, right? Because if you wanna know what somebody cares about, look and see what they spend their money on. You know, so what I would think we need to do is we need to spend much more money on intervention. Like what Marilyn's talking about with young people that maybe got negative peer pressure, or, you know, maybe they've got issues, uh, with things going on in their home. They don't have, uh, the, you know, they're having, they don't have the access to, to food or clothing. They got all these issues going on, you know, uh, in so many ways we're ignoring those problems. And the only time we're intervening is when they commit a crime and we're saying, listen, what we're gonna do as a result of all this trauma that you've gone through is we're gonna add more trauma to it by detaining you, putting you in prison.

Speaker 4 (00:50:22):

And we've tried that for the last 40 50 years, it has not worked. So one of the things we gotta do is we gotta have the federal government incentivize intervention in ways that actually provide safety and justice for people, you know, too often, historically prosecutors have used the victim as a means to give themselves power to incarcerate. Whereas most of my victims, I'm sure this is the same with Maryland. Most of my victims are actually black around people or poor people and their feelings about what should happen are complicated. And too often, their voice is not even being really heard. So when people say the victims want incarceration, that's really not true. That's something we, we use them by to justify, uh, incarceration, but what they actually want. A lot of times in my experience, they want services. They want safety. And to make them feel safe is not to have a police officer stopping their son or daughter every night will make them feel safe. That they've got someone who's helping them, uh, with the afterschool programs or with, uh, you know, you know, homework or tutoring. We just need to, it's not just for the privilege, that's the system to work. We have to reimagine a lot of other social services because we are failing because a lot of other institutions are failing. We've got to reimagine the whole way. Our government interacts with poverty in a way that decentivizes, uh, incarceration and incentivizes intervention.

Speaker 3 (00:51:55):

Wow. Wow. Wow. I think you just said something powerful, which is that the system relies on so many other systems inside of our society, the legal system, our ability to make sure that we can effectively reach people before they enter the criminal legal system relies so heavily on other systems inside of our society. Wow. Wow. Wow. That is so powerful. Attorney Scott. Uh, and so there, there's another question, uh, that somebody asks and, and, and I think it, it follows suit, you know, in my opinion, it follows suit, uh, this particular question because of how, you know, messed up the criminal legal system has been since its inception, but a participant, a viewer act. What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of court watch programs when it comes to holding judges and state's attorneys accountable? Right. I think that, uh, that, that we have seen in this new racial justice movement, since the sixties, the sixties, the tactic, was to be able to register people to vote, you know, and, and that was sort of a essential theme that bled its way into this larger conversation around what is the quality of life of black people during that time.

Speaker 3 (00:53:14):

Right. I, I feel like what we're seeing now is a resurgence of similar tactics. Um, definitely different, but similar in the sense that it is a question still on the table of what is the quality of life for black people. And so many people who are on the ground at the grassroots level have created programs like court watch, uh, to be able to, to find other alternative mechanisms of improving the lives of black people inside of this country. Uh, and so a viewer wants to know, what are your thoughts on the effectiveness of court watch programs? Um, and I'm actually going go to Mr. Cook because, uh, uh, Madam state's attorney, there is a question in the accused specific to you and I'm gonna be coming to you next.

Speaker 5 (00:53:59):

Well, you, I think programs like court watch and, uh, what Mr. Colum and, and, and Ms. Mosby have talked about in terms of the interventions are really what we've gotta do for a very long

time in American society. We gave a great deal of power to police officers, to judges, to prosecutors. And basically it was an outta sight out of mind proposition take the bad people away and put 'em someplace where they don't deal with. The rest of us was a, was a thought of much of the majority society. And I agree with Mr. Colum victims who happen to be of color, have very complicated feelings about what to do with the victimizers. Okay. Clearly they want to be safe in their homes and their persons that there's no, no, no difference there, but what they want to happen or how they want that to happen is very complicated because those victims can just as easily be victims of overpolicing as well as the victimizer, as their personal victimizer.

Speaker 5 (00:55:01):

So, so Marberry did a, a program that's infamous here in the district of Columbia. Uh, the summer youth program, the idea was to involve youth in gainful employment, sometimes even made up employment, but to get them connected with some activity that was constructive and to begin to put them on the path to taking care of themselves, being responsible citizens intervention on the, through the, the school system, uh, after school programs, before the school day feeding programs, uh, working with kids in their homework, uh, you know, I know that they do it in Baltimore, uh, midnight basketball. Uh, there, there are many other things that can be done to, to connect kids to constructive activity, to give them successful constructive role models, to help them make the transition from a traumatic, a difficult life situation sometimes, or just the, the, the challenges of growing up into more responsible adulthood, not to try to criminalize them, not to try to make them an economic opportunity for the criminal justice system, which is what oftentimes happens.

Speaker 5 (00:56:12):

And in many, two cases, many too many cases happens. So, so citizens have to say, how are you spending my money? How are you implementing public policy? And does that really work for me? You know, everybody wants to be safe in their home, but that doesn't mean everybody who gets convicted or has a brush with the criminal justice system needs to go to jail for 20 to life. Those are, those are two different things. And, and so what we need to do is, is what's done in, in, in Ms. Mosby's office is to look at sentencing and to make sure that people are getting just sentences and, and that there is not a racial or economic disparity about the sentences for similar conduct. So there's a, there's a whole range of things that the entire society has to do, uh, from employment, from education, from, from health disparities, to try to figure out ways to make people, uh, more participatory and less likely to be branded a criminal.

Speaker 3 (00:57:14):

Wow. Wow. Wow. Wow. Wow. That is so powerful. Thank you so much, professor cook. Um, I'm gonna come to you next, uh, Madam state's attorney Mosby, uh, and actually I'm going to also, uh, merge this question with another one, cuz we have a bunch of questions coming in the queue now, which is, which is great. So please keep adding your questions. Um, Madam state's attorney Mosby, uh, there was a question around what support do you feel like you need or what type of support, um, could people around the country give to you, uh, to, to, to help you Institute some of the progressive policies and practices and reimagining the legal system that you've been talking about and, uh, attorney Scott begin to also think about your, your answer to that question, because there was a question in, uh, in the queue as well, um, uh, specific to, um, how people on

the grassroots level or people who are outside of the legislative power, um, can, can participate in some of these, uh, in some of these bold, progressive initiatives, um, that you all are taking. Uh, and so I'm going go, Madame states, attorney first, and then we're gonna go right over to you, Mr. Scott, feel free to jump in right after her.

Speaker 6 (00:58:30):

So I think it's gonna be, I think it's twofold. I think, um, the support that I need and that I'm referencing is that like I am vilified, right? Um, on certain media outlets, I think that the media can be extremely, um, cruel and, and they, you know, have this Vil, they, they vilify you in a way that sometimes you're like people there they're like, since I got your back, I got your back. You turn around, yo, you like, yo must be way back. Cause I don't see nobody I'm already about myself. I can tell you that. You know, like for example, my local conservative station, entertainment station, not a news station, that that's what they hold their self out to be. Uh, they did like 268 negative stories on me last year, they've already done like almost 1400 negative mentions of me this year. Right.

Speaker 6 (00:59:19):

And so understanding and, and not falling for the Okie do is, is really important because it goes back to what Scott was talking about earlier when you're pushing for reform, people are resistant and they always wanted default to that tough on crime rhetoric. Right? Well, we gotta go back cuz that's the only thing that we know. And even though like unlike 63 of 66 major municipalities in the country, these policies that I, I talked about ending the war on drugs, we're not prosecuting prostitution, we're not prosecuting drug possession, all these minor offenses that can lead to a death sentence for black people based off of the data that there is no public safety value for the first time. Uh, unlike 63, the 66 major municipalities, our violent crime went down in the year that we were monitoring it. Our property crime went down 36%. Um, you know, in the year that we were monitoring.

Speaker 6 (01:00:07):

So it's being supportive of, of, of an understanding and recognizing that that negative sort of, of narrative. But I think it also is being supportive because I can tell you that, like now that Americans are no longer willfully blind about the existence of, of racial injustice and over policing in this country, I, I really think that it's incumbent on us to pay attention. It's incumbent on us to pay attention to the extent that yes, we should be voting. We should understand the importance of our local prosecutors. We should understand the importance of, of our vote. And, and, and that's what came out of the uprising from last year. So that's encouraging, right? We put the president of the United States in office as a result of what happened. Um, but I also think that when I talked about moving from PO protests to policy and implementing these systems of reform, when it comes to police accountability, you know, some of these pieces of legislation we've been, I've been, I can tell you, me and my team have been advocating for a very long time, right?

Speaker 6 (01:01:06):

And, and we've been going down to Annapolis, which is the state capital trying to change laws. And thankfully, because of this uprising and movement, like I'm encouraging folks. When I say support, we need you to come down there with us. We need you to follow through on that protest

so that we can implement the policy. That's gonna make a difference. And I'm happy to say that in the state of Maryland, we actually did. Right. We, we follow through, we have, you know, some of the best sort of police legislation and, and bill of rights. First law enforcement bill of rights was repealed. Um, and then last, but certainly not least it's it's understanding and recognizing that the way that we've always looked at public safety, we have got to change that process and that thought process because these minor offenses guys, right. And I, I talked about 'em earlier, that's how we've always defined public safety, but it's not that we have to reimagine that in a way in which it's going to, to, to be beneficial to those of us that are, are, are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system.

Speaker 3 (01:02:10):

My, my, my Mr. Uh, Scott.

Speaker 4 (01:02:13):

Yeah. I mean, I, I think so going to the question of what a citizen can do, other than voting in civic, civic engagement, as Maryland said, I would say that court watches can be helpful. Um, one of the big problems is we have a, especially in a lot of small towns, you don't really have very much press coverage of court. And so a lot of times the normal citizen doesn't have any idea what's going on and how people are being sentenced. The other thing that, uh, I think citizens should demand of their prosecutor and of their, of their court is data criminal justice system. Really, you be surprised how much of a black hole it is when it to disparities in sentencing and charging and, you know, probation versus drug court. I mean, really, there's not a lot of national data out there or state data because it's really optional.

Speaker 4 (01:03:04):

So, you know, do public records requests to your local da to your judge to get the data out there because that will help you identify in your community where the disparities are and then bring light to that issue. So that, that would be something else I would recommend. Um, uh, the final point I would say on, on, on, on strategies is we've really gotta back up the reforms. I mean, it's been shocking to see what's happened to the black female prosecutors over the last five years since I've been in prosecution from Maryland to Kim, to Kim Gardner, to Rachel rolls. I mean all across the country, it's really particularly worse for black females too. And we have to speak about we gotta about, because what they're trying to do is they're this power that for most of the history has been unchallenged, prosecutions, have discretion about who they charge about, uh, what kind of sense recommendation they have, whether they go for the definitely or not.

Speaker 4 (01:04:01):

All of a sudden the black female started doing it. It's become a huge issue and they're attack them left and right. And trying to get 'em from office. They're suing them. I mean, the things that are going on are outrageous. If we need to talk about that more and more, because it, it it's. I think if people knew how bad it is, you know, Marilyn tweeted out the, the threat she got after she went and support our sister Kim, that was, if you heard that you would've thought we were at the founding a in the sixties, what that woman was saying to her. And then if you look at, you know, kindergarten trying to get someone who's innocent, she, the persons innocent. If she can't get outta prison, the system, not her, get an innocent person outta prison. That's outrageous. Why are we talking more about that? You to prosecutor as the prosecutor, particularly our black females

that are trying to change the system, they are going through hell and we gotta support them. We gotta talk about, we gotta support 'em cause otherwise they're, you know, they're not gonna stay in it. You know? I mean, it's only so much people take us and listen, I got my kids, I, my duty, I'm gonna take care of my family. We gotta back 'em up.

Speaker 3 (01:05:07):

Thank you. Thank you so much for that attorney Scott and you hit on some powerful points, uh, which actually leads us into our wrap up. We are coming to a close of this session. It was a powerful panel. I wanna be able to give each of you the opportunity in, in about two minutes or less to be able to share some closing remarks with us. I'll just sort of put out there that, that one of the questions, one of the last questions that was asked was, um, was, was this dichotomy that we have correctly done a, a bias analysis of the police, but, uh, a viewer acts don't. We have to do the same thing for the rest of the judicial system. Particularly prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, prison, gods probation, the justice system to them is, is, and to all of us is so much more than police. And so in, in your last sort of a couple minutes, as you wrap up the conversation, just, just ponder on that and, and think about what's next, right? What do you want viewers to walk away from this panel? Understanding where can they plug in into this work that you all are currently doing on the inside to be able to reimagine a new legal system? And I'm professor, we, we can't me professor

Speaker 5 (01:06:32):

This, this, this has been great. I, I really appreciate the opportunity to be part of this and, and to meet, uh, to really outstanding examples of progressive prosecutors, uh, here in the United States. But I, I, I think really at the end of the day, what, what this really has said to us is that we've just gotta continue to be vigilant. People have gotta participate. Uh, this is, you know, you know, classically a participatory democracy and people have to participate in, and if they wanna get the democracy, they think they're entitled to, or the entire that they want. Uh, so I, I think that all of these things you've talked about are correct. Prosecutors are sometimes big problems. Uh, sometimes defense counsel are problem because they're under resourced. They're, they're not properly trained. They, they don't adequately. They're not able to adequately represent defendant. Uh, judges have biases.

Speaker 5 (01:07:24):

Uh, there's an article in the paper the other day about a, a judge who, uh, convicted a guy of, of, of, of sentenced a guy to death. And because the judge was antisemitic, the guy happened to be Jewish and he hates Jews. And he thought this guy went with, uh, sh should be sentenced to death. Uh, so judges are not perfect. Prosecutors are not perfect. Police are not perfect. It is not a thing in the criminal justice system that you can fix. You have to look at the whole thing, you have to take a holistic approach, and that requires people to be vigilant and people to participate. And I, I, I encourage people to do that.

Speaker 3 (01:07:59):

Well, thank you so much, professor cook people have to be vigilant and people have to participate. What an awesome way to, to end that off, uh, attorney Scott, what, what would you be your closing remarks? I want to give you the opportunity in the next couple minutes to leave our viewers with a powerful message around how they cut the plugin support, the work that you

are currently doing in your current role as a district attorney, um, or in general, uh, how they can, how they can be a part of this work to reimagine a new legal system.

Speaker 4 (01:08:34):

Thank you so much. It really was an honor to be on the panel. Uh, I thought that it was really informative. I thought the moderator did a great job. I'm honored to be a part of, uh, of this 60th anniversary of SNCC, such an important organization. What I wanna leave you with this two recommendations for books to, I mean, whenever I do close remarks, I always like to recommend books because education is key to really being an advocate. The first book I would, and I'm, I'm not gonna try to do the ones that everybody heard of, like Jess mercy, which is, which is a fantastic book, but some, some that you may not have heard of the first one I would recommend would be Chas the screen. It's a, it's about how we got involved in the war on drugs and, um, and, and how, what it has gotten us and how effective and ineffective it's been and how we need to reimagine some different approaches, like what Maryland is doing in Baltimore.

Speaker 4 (01:09:28):

And so that's a really powerful book because I think it, it would educate you as to how, uh, we actually started this war on drugs, which is clearly, uh, I mean, it was no secret the person that started it, Harry Aslin or did it because of, of, of, for racist reasons. And, um, so that would be a book I would recommend. The other book I would recommend is by a law professor outta NYU called prisoner or politics. Uh, Rachel Barco to me is one of the best reads, uh, about it does such a great job of explaining the different ways we got to mass incarceration and the different ways we need to correct it. Uh, for example, she does a great job of talking about how the media actually does a lot to influence, uh, lengthy and unfair sentencing by the way they depict crime.

Speaker 4 (01:10:14):

And, um, and, and it's just, it's a fantastic, fantastic book. And afterwards you'll be informed about the problems and the ways that we can, uh, solve it. So I would recommend those two books. And the final thing I would say is just, uh, like the professor said, plug in, you can follow me on Twitter, Scott colo, you could, I would definitely recommend following Marilyn other follow your state attorney, reach out to, uh, make sure that they know who you are because your voice has power too often. We think that if, no, they, they won't listen to me, but you'd be surprised how, how, uh, much, uh, a da will respond to you. They really aren't reach out to that much. So take advantage of your, your voice and we can all do this together. Thank you for having me.

Speaker 3 (01:11:02):

Thank you so much, attorney Scott, and, uh, certainly last but not least, uh, Madam state's attorney Mosby, uh, tell us what, how can folks get involved and reimagine this new legal system and the work that you're doing, what would be the final closing of remarks that you would leave us with?

Speaker 6 (01:11:23):

So, first and foremost, I just wanna say, thank you. Um, Trey, you're always awesome. I appreciate the work that you do at LDF. Um, and I'm honored to be on this panel today, uh, with professor cook. Uh, again, I, I, I appreciate you laying the foundation for our law students and a

new black attorneys coming into the field. And I am so grateful for your service, your years of service, Scott, you already know, I think the world of you, you're doing the people's work in Mississippi. And so, you know, I went to school in Tuskegee, Alabama, so I know what you're up against. And yet every single day you're doing, you're doing the work. And I'm so incredibly proud of you. Um, Charles Hamilton, Houston said it, your best lawyers can either be social engineers or parasite on society. And when we look and we consider that awesome discretion, prosecutors have, whether you're an attorney general or a district attorney or a state's attorney, whatever they may call you in your respective state, they are one of the most important stakeholders in the criminal justice system.

Speaker 6 (01:12:25):

We have to pay attention. We have the ability of actually effectuating change. And if you ask me, what is the biggest sort of civil rights issue facing black people in this country? I would tell you that it's a criminal justice system. And so don't underestimate that power and that discretion, that means you need to pay attention. You need to do exactly what professor cook is already articulated. You need to be vigilant. You need to be engaged. You need to be informed, you need to vote, right? And so, uh, we have to end and reverse the effects of mass incarceration and racial inequity. And you do that by paying attention. And so that's how you can help me. I'm nine months out for my election, right? And so understanding and recognizing that that's how we can effectuate change. We, I found out just last week that Scotland has now modeled the policies in Baltimore, right? We can have a global impact. Mm-hmm <affirmative> they stop prosecuting. They use their power of discretion, top prosecutor to stop prosecuting drug possession. And it treated as the public health crisis. That it is that for far too long in our municipalities, across the country, when it came to black people, we've been criminalizing it. We cannot just default to what we've always done. It's time to reimagine this and we can do it. If we're paying attention, we're staying engaged and we're being vigilant.

Speaker 3 (01:13:50):

Wow. Wow. Wow. Thank you so much. Madam state's attorney Mosby. What a powerful way to end this off. I just wanna just want to iterate one particular point, which is that we have the opportunity right now, 60 years after the founding of the student nonviolent coordinated committee, we have the opportunity to see this country with a new generation of leaders. We have the opportunity to be bold in our thinking to be radical, to not tinker around the edges, to say that we want the system, the legal system that we know our communities deserve. And Ella baker said it best the movement made Martin Martin didn't make the movement. And what that means is that this takes a collective of all of us to be in this together. Everybody from these esteem panelists, who are currently on the inside, fighting to create a more, just a more equitable system to the folks who are turning up in the streets, demanding that there be a change inside of the policies inside of the courtroom, inside of the legal systems that govern their lives to everybody in between who may still be on the fence, right.

Speaker 3 (01:14:57):

We have the opportunity to create a movement. And so thank you all for tuning into this sustained panel. Please stay tuned. There is still more programming to come. This is just about one gym of a larger conference that the eldest, the SNCC, the original SNCC legacy folks are put

on. So thank you again, and thank you to each of the panelists to, uh, Madam state's attorney Mosby, to attorney Scott district, attorney Scott, to professor cook. Thank you all for joining us in this rich conversation and feel free to look them up, uh, their bios and their, uh, social media handles are on the website. Thank you all. And have a good evening.