

**MIKE LIVERMORE:** Thank you for joining us. My name is Mike Livermore, and I'm a professor here at UVA Law. Today is the third installment in the PLACE and Power series of virtual conversations, exploring connections between human place-based relationships and the law and politics of environmental governance, including governance of the built environment. This series is sponsored by the Program in Law Communities and the Environment here at UVA Law, the Virginia Environmental Law Journal, and the Virginia Environmental Law Forum. I'm delighted to be joined today by our moderator, Rich Schragger, and two fantastic guests, David Troutt and Thad Williamson. I'll introduce them all briefly and then turn it over to Rich.

Before doing that, I would like to highlight the Q&A function on your screen. It's at the bottom toolbar. We encourage audience questions and so please feel free to contribute there and then Rich will moderate the Q&A portion of the discussion today.

So on to introductions. David Troutt is a distinguished professor of law at Rutgers Law School and is the founding director of the Rutgers Center on Law, Inequality and Metropolitan Equity. He teaches and writes about race, class, and legal structure. His most recent book is *The Price of Paradise- The Costs of Inequality and a Vision for a More Equitable America*.

Thad Williamson is an associate professor of leadership studies and philosophy at the University of Richmond. He served as the first director of Richmond's Office of Community Wealth Building. And then, more recently, as a senior policy advisor in the mayor's office. He is author or editor of several books, including *Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship-- The Civic Costs of the American Way of Life*, and he's a co-editor of a new volume, titled *Community Wealth Building and the Reconstruction of American Democracy-- Can We Make American Democracy Work?* And I hope the answer to that question is yes. But we'll hear more about it in a little bit.

Our moderator today is Rich Schragger. He's a law professor here at the University of Virginia. His scholarship focuses on the intersection of constitutional law and local government law. He also writes and teaches on urban policy and the constitutional and economic status of cities. Recently, he is the author of a book,

*City Power-- Urban Governance in a Global Age.*

I'm very much looking forward to interesting conversation on these themes. And I will turn it over to Rich.

**RICH  
SCHRAGGER:**

Thanks Mike, so much, for your kind introductions. It's terrific today to have these two scholars, activists, participants in public policy circles as well, Thad and David, and I just want to thank them for coming and joining us. As Mike said, this is part of the new PLACE program at the University of Virginia School of Law, where we consider the built environment as part of the environment more broadly. And also the distribution of people, the resources that they have access to, and their placement in metropolitan areas and in rural and in urban areas. These are all issues that are central to these authors' works and central to this inquiry that we're engaged in here.

So I wanted to just start, as Mike said, you're both authors. I want to start with David to talk a little bit about *The Price of Paradise*, your book. A terrific book. The subtitle of *The Price of Paradise* is *The Costs of Inequality and a Vision for a More Equitable America*. And we've had now, obviously, an election season which is not quite over-- or at least for some folks is not quite over-- in which there have been lots of debates about both racial and socioeconomic equity in the United States. And I know your book address some of that. Could you say a little bit about what your argument is in *The Price of Paradise*? David, I want you to unmute.

**DAVID TROUTT:** Sorry, right. It's funny, we're on these calls all day long, and we forget when we're actually presenting. So the book begins by centering the problem of structural inequality in American life. And it's centered as a problem for all of us. And it's defined primarily as place-based inequality. Which is to say that most of the inequality that we see in empirical outcomes is the result of institutional practices that differ from place to place. And that you can compare what obtains in a middle class community, even within the very same institutions, from what obtains in a low income community. And you can see how norms, rules, and practices within the same institution help to contribute to disparate outcomes.

And so that's what place-based inequality is all about. And it leads to the kinds of outcomes that individually we all get very upset about it. What is it that's actually

doing it? And what's doing it are inequitable processes. So if inequality is the outcome, inequity is the means.

And so, first you kind of have to define-- I think, because it's a ubiquitous term nowadays-- you have to define equity. And I try in the book to define equity as deeply informed by fairness, but not exclusively about fairness. You know, fairness would be, I get one, you get one. But you know, if you've already got five, maybe I should get two or three. Because equality would ultimately break down if we discounted what time had produced for you. So equity is really fairness plus time.

And you have to make that argument for folks who struggle with that, especially if they see these cumulative advantages as being the result of their own hard work and people's cumulative disadvantages as being attributable to personal characteristics and the like.

And so the book works through six sets of assumptions that are held by many Americans and tries to break them down. Such as the notion that middle class people are entirely self-sufficient, or that poor people are living through a self-created fate. Or that segregation is really a thing of the past, or that racism doesn't particularly matter much to outcomes anymore.

And then, ultimately, I argue for law and policy that is animated by a norm of mutuality. A recognition that this unequal system that we have is producing enormous costs, and enormous wastes, not just enormous pain and harm. And therefore, we all have something in the outcome and may have to make some sacrifices in order to unburden what, as Kamala Harris put it so eloquently the other night, to unburden, for some of us, what has been.

**RICH SCHRAGGER:** That's great, David. Just say one more sentence or two about what the price of paradise, what is that price that's paid? Just say a little bit more about that in the title, because it's really, I think it's the essence of this argument.

**DAVID TROUTT:** Yeah, I think we're actually seeing the price of paradise right now. I mean, we're seeing it manifest in so many different ways. But essentially, the price of paradise is the multiple costs. The costs that are internalized disproportionately by particular communities on whom we will greatly rely for the future, right? Because as populations of color increasingly make up a majority of the labor force, if they are

not given the inputs and the development of social capital consistent with a global economic structure that relies primarily on services and high-skilled labor, we all lose, right?

If people are not paying taxes and are not being and not able to live productive lives, we all lose. If people live in communities that essentially make them sick-- yeah, there are clearly some climate issues there that affect us all-- but we pay for those individual costs. And if you flip it and try to imagine what would happen if we were a far more equitable society, we'll see that we would generate a tremendous amount of wealth beyond what we currently have. And we'd have just many more participants in a democratic system that was really able to show itself to be robust.

So it's really in our philosophical DNA to do the right thing. It's just, unfortunately it's so often been in our historical practice to do the wrong thing.

**RICH**  
**SCHRAGGER:** Thanks David. That's great. I want to move to Thad and just get Thad to jump in here. You have a new book, which is not quite physically ready, but will be very, very soon, about community wealth building. And I'm wondering if you'd like to say a little bit about that and maybe how it relates to what David's talking about.

**THAD**  
**WILLIAMSON:** Thanks. And actually, it is physically ready. There's a few copies. But it was literally just published a couple of weeks ago. And firstly, thanks for having me. And David, good to be in a program with you, and your book sounds awesome. I'm ready to go read it and maybe put it on my syllabus for next term. Because it seems 100% on point.

But the new book that I've co-edited with Melody Barnes of UVA Democracy Initiative, and also Corey Walker of Wake Forest. You know, taking a critique of the kind David just articulated, kind of his background, or given. What is a constructive policy paradigm for actually addressing deep-seated inequities, problems, at the scale they exist?

And we kind of have two kind of overlapping arguments. And one is actually an argument about national politics. Which is that, whereas the three of us and others probably on the call can sit around all day long and come up with ideal national initiatives and policies and programs, basically the entire history of the last 50-plus years indicates there's not going to be adequate political support to actually do the

right thing. And actually fund that at the scale that exists.

And even with President Obama, that Melody served in a pretty high level role under, the federal government had important initiatives. Obviously, a huge breakthrough on health care, but in terms of things that are going to really fundamentally re-scale inequity in American cities, you didn't see enough. You didn't see very much. And I have no reason to think that the Biden-Harris administration, at least initially, is going to be able to do a whole lot better. Yes, it'll be a dramatic improvement in so many ways. But you look at the forecast, the high possibility of a divided government. We're going to have a stalemate at the legislative level on a lot of things.

And so I don't mean to rain on people's parade right now. But I'm looking at that and saying, is national politics going to deliver salvation for us on these kinds of issues for the next few years? And I somewhat doubt it. Although I do think it has an incredibly supportive, helpful role to play.

So if that's right, then do we give up on these bold equity goals? Or do we continue to sit back decade after decade as the inequalities grow and grow of both income and wealth? Or can we possibly imagine a different approach that starts a little more bottom up?

And so, that puts the second argument, which is actually an argument of local politics. I don't think this is an uncontroversial argument we're making, but we're saying is that it may be possible at the local level to build a robust consensus around bold equity goals and get buy-in that kind of overcomes the usual partisan gridlock. On the grounds that it's not in the community's interest to continue to have extremely high poverty rate, or continue to have an extremely dysfunctional public school system, so forth and so on.

And obviously, there's conflict of interest and ideologies at the local level. I'm not saying that. But what we're seeing in several cities, and Richmond has been part of it, where you can knit together, with skilled political leadership, you can knit together, an approach that says, we're going to take the lead on establishing bold equity goals. And we're going to do everything within our power to intentionally and strategically direct our resources towards those goals. And then we're going to look

up the ladder to the state government and federal government to get the additional resources and what we would need to bring things to scale.

So we're calling that community wealth building. And you have the Office of Community Wealth Building in Richmond. We could talk about that more. But it's one sort of simplification of it. There's a similar office in Rochester, but also I think other cities are doing similar things, whether they're calling it community wealth building or not.

And just to summarize, before we have to go on. Four key things. One is inclusive participation up front, you know. And I think this is absolutely critical, because for democracy to be real, it has to depend on some level on the idea that the individual person can make their voice heard and have some kind of measurable impact. That they can see some kind of outcome based on the effort they put in. And that's typically very, very difficult to do when we talk about national level things, other than the actual act of voting.

In our city-- and we're not the largest city, but we're not insubstantial either-- I can tell you story after story where individual people have actually made a difference and where participation has actually mattered to the things that the city has decided to do. And if you don't do that, then it's just a bunch of elite academics talking at people. So I think that's the most fundamental thing.

But then secondly, it's setting up bold equity goals. In Richmond it's been, we're going to try to cut poverty by 40% by the year 2030. And trying to communicate that goal and get agencies and nonprofits and business community and others to sort of buy into that.

The third is a holistic approach to wealth. So obviously, we mean economic wealth, but also social capital, physical capital, the various kinds of things that make up a healthy life. And sometimes our contingent would be that in any community, even if it's classified as poor or low income, there is wealth there. There are assets there. That there are things to build on. And so, it's very much in the spirit of an asset-based approach. And trying to say, the point is, if you are short in one area, maybe you can use what you already have to knit together a strategy to make up for what you're lacking.

And the last thing is, this involves economics, and innovative economic tools. And I think this points to maybe a conversation about economic development that we may be about to have. Which is, that if you run the normal market and you're not intentional about it, neighborhoods get left out decade after decade after decade. So you have to do something different that's actually going to shift the way resources flow in both the public economy but in the private economy.

And there are a variety of ways that have been tried or are being tried to do that. But for me the bottom line is, is it bringing more wealth and assets into places that have been neglected? And also to people who have been left out of the pie.

**RICH SCHRAGGER:** Thanks, Thad, that's great. So there's a ton of issues. I want to remind our audience that you can ask questions of our panelists through the Q&A, the function at the bottom of your screen. Just type those in, I'll take a look at those and try to distribute those to the panelists as we go. But I'd like this to be a conversation.

So talk a little bit, Thad and David, you both referenced recent events, which is the presidential election. In which there was, I think, there are two big things that I'd love for you to address. One is the Black Lives Matter movement, which brought, I think, renewed attention to spatial inequality, to economic inequality, and to the problem of race.

On top of a presidential campaign in which there was a demonization of cities, right? And obviously President Trump seeking to frighten, particularly white suburbanites, right? And I wonder what your reaction was to that discourse. How you see it playing out. If it's just a repeat of kind of what we've seen before in our political life?

And also what you think is possible. And Thad, you've said a little bit about this. What you think is possible in light of the polarization that that discourse has reflected, I think, that recent discourse has reflected. And either of you can start. David, if you want to jump in, that's great. And then Thad after that.

**DAVID TROUTT:** Wow, so much to unpack in that question. My goodness. All right, let's start with the Black Lives Matter movement. So the significance of the Black Lives Matter movement, I think, is that it really helped to become the kind of galvanizing point

for so much anti-Trump resentment on a number of different issues, but focused first and foremost on police brutality. So police brutality then represents that institution with the greatest staying power for reproducing racial inequality. There are many institutions that do, but none as efficiently and as consistently as police control of Black bodies.

And so, what the Black Lives Matter movement does, as far as I'm concerned, from a theoretical standpoint, is that it really shows us system design, right? Through a critical institution. How one institution props up other institutions and how accountability, or some sense of justice, is impossible within that institution, because it wasn't designed for it, right? And so that's very powerful and very threatening.

And I think what we'll probably see politically out of the Black Lives Matter movement is that the growth of all sorts of household political names over the next couple of decades, very much like out of Black Power into Manpower Development Corporation. And then school board elections, we saw a generation of Black elected officials at the local level in the 60s and the 1970s. So I think it's very critical in that sense.

Then on the other side, it is also an attack on systemic racism in the middle of a pandemic that is disproportionately taking the lives of Black people and brown people. But of Black people too, right? So Black lives matter in that respect too, because Black lives are being snuffed out disproportionately by this public health emergency. Which is itself showing cumulative disadvantages, right? In the exposure to the virus that becomes inescapable for so many Black workers, based on the types of jobs that they've had to have. Not just low wage jobs, but even really good jobs, like bus drivers, you know. But they're public regarding, public union jobs that reflect an inability to get into other positions. And so you're protected in these public unions, but you're not protected from a pathogen, right?

And so the explosion, which of course in this president's mind, leads to another perfect opportunity to exploit the division, and to exploit the division through kind of crass binaries, like cities and suburbs. Which don't typically hold, right? I mean, they're plenty of cities that he doesn't name because he needs them. They're only cities like, like the Newarks and the Milwaukeees and Detroites and the Atlantases that

are problematic for their large Black votes.

And so, finally to this point of using the exploitation of this false binary between city and suburb to galvanize white voters and white fear against intruding Black mobs. I was really kind of happy to see what appeared to be its ineffectiveness.

But I can't go that far. I don't really know. For one, because suburbs are dramatically changing and the inner ring will become, I think, increasingly-- even though it's increasingly working class folks of color-- it may become much more important as people try to flee the city but don't flee too far. So we don't really know what that will mean. We know that the suburbs are diversifying, but they're primarily diversifying in rings and not within jurisdictional boundaries.

The other is just, I'm not sure that that resonates with the 45% of the electorate that voted out of suburbs, and the overwhelming percentages that Trump got nationally. I'm not an election results expert, but it seemed that it either came too little too late, or it just did not resonate.

As so many of the issues that Thad talks about at the local level, have probably come to intrude upon that rhetoric. And suggest, you know, we are hearing a lot about equity here. We are seeing some experiments in governance that suggest a norm of equity. And it hasn't killed us off. And that there may be actually something to this. All dampening the effectiveness of Trump's divisive racial, city-suburb message.

**RICH** Thad, do you have some views on that?

**SCHRAGGER:**

**THAD**  
**WILLIAMSON:** Yeah, well, in Richmond the last five or six months, Black Lives Matter has just been, it's been a thing that's been happening. There have been protests basically continuously since late May. And I'm sure everybody on the call is aware about the monuments on Monument Avenue being taken down. And the transformation of the remaining Robert E Lee statue into basically a Black Lives Matter shrine and community space. It's basically been completely taken over and remade. And there were a lot of people on Saturday after the election was called by the mainstream media, that people gathered there. And we went down there too. And you know, it's just become a community space and a movement that really, even the rich white

people who live right there have more or less embraced.

And so it's just been just really interesting. And that's one of the things that is maybe different about this time. Obviously, African-Americans have been experiencing routine police brutality for as long as this country has been around. But there is something about the George Floyd video in the context of a pandemic that triggered something a little bit different. And I'm not sure how long it's going to last. Or if seemed to just engender, like a, oh my God, this is incredibly wrong and I have to do something about it, in more white people than I think had been the case previously at a national level. And that's even reflected in some of the people who turned up in Richmond.

But also, I think some of, basically what David said, I do think that Trump has helped radicalize local politics. I do not think the monuments would have been torn down or we'd have had all these protests if someone else other than Trump had been president.

But it's going back to Charlottesville 2017 and before, that sort of just pushed to the question to the fore. Like, are we going to be an inclusive multiracial democracy, or are we going to be a white supremacy? And people are being forced to take a stand on that, in city after city.

Definitely Black Lives Matter was a force in our local mayor's race. Basically that movement helped spawn a candidate who ended up finishing second. And it helped push the incumbent who won to do some things, including establish a police civilian review board. Which would have been almost off the table just like two years ago. And now everybody is for it, right?

So I think there has been some change. But the question is, is it going to be lasting change that really addresses these structural issues that are a lot harder than just a review board or tearing down monuments? So that remains to be seen.

And the last thing I would say, on the suburban question. My dissertation and a lot of my earlier published academic work focused on the impact of sprawl on political participation, but also voting patterns. And, as David said, the inner suburbs have really flipped in a lot of places.

So I was just looking in 2000, in Richmond, Henrico and Chesterfield were both overwhelmingly Republican and voted for Bush over Gore. And then both of them went for Biden this time. And the flip was about 20 points. So it's a 20 point flip in 20 years. I would call that significant change.

And again, you get out to the outer rings, and it's a similar pattern. With the farther out it's much more conservative. Which leads to some interesting situations when you have Congresspeople like Abigail Spanberger who are in districts that kind of span both the suburbs and the deeply rural areas and is trying to navigate that.

But I didn't think Trump's appeal to the, as he called it, the white suburban housewives-- which itself is a misnomer, to say the least-- I didn't think it was going to work. And actually I don't think it did. So I'm sort of encouraged by that.

**RICH SCHRAGGER:** Thank you. Thank you both. So I have a comment and a question from a listener who says, so many aspects of inequality are built into the physical structure of our cities. And both of you have written extensively about this. So I think this is a great question. What role, then, the questioner asks, does the built environment play in moving towards equity, when we're talking about say, structures? We might be talking about structural institutional role, but we're also talking about the structures of geography, space, and the built environment. What are your thoughts on that? David, do you have some?

**DAVID TROUTT:** Sure, yeah. At CLiME over the last couple of years, we've done a fair amount of research on a range of housing issues, but also on the phenomenon of disproportionate complex trauma in low income communities. And just how crippling exposure to violence can be in neurological development and neurobiological life course. So much, in terms of people's mental health, and ultimately their physical health, can be closely associated with their experiences, particularly of stress.

And what does it have to do with the built environment? Well, so, it turns out, of course, that low income people of color, for the most part, live in much older housing, right? In communities that are generally older, less invested in, in terms of just landlord rehabilitation, renovation, upkeep, the city's investment in infrastructure. And so part of the danger of living in these communities is the

danger of the built environment itself, and the stresses that it imposes on the body.

And it really becomes part of a constellation of forces, along with concentrated poverty, segregated poverty, and isolation from all sorts of other opportunities, that help to trigger violent reactions, right? And so, this combination of public health vulnerability arising from an unhealthy environment on top of the desperation in so much behavior-- hurt people hurting people-- that then compounds so much of that is then reflected in all sorts of institutional responses, right?

Problems between tenants and landlords that lead to evictions, because landlords won't fix things, but tenants won't pay. And landlords have unequal bargaining power, access to lawyers, and they will basically churn through tenants, who are then blacklisted and pushed into worse and worse housing. Or child welfare institutions. Child welfare does not care that your landlord won't fix that ceiling. If it's deemed uninhabitable and you haven't cured it, you can lose your kids, right?

And so, yes, we assume that housing court is replete with inequality, because it's primarily affecting kids. And we assume that family court is replete with inequality, because it's affecting low income people, for the most part, too. But behind it are a set of conditions that are not entirely reduced to the built environment, but are certainly working hand-in-hand with deficits within the built environment.

**RICH** Thad, go ahead.

**SCHRAGGER:**

**THAD** Yeah, obviously I agree with all of that. I would just add, it's not the built  
**WILLIAMSON:** environment in terms of the actual physical outlay of specific places, but it's also the ways these overlap with the legal boundaries. So in Richmond metropolitan area, we basically only have a bus system in the city. And then for years and years the counties have basically been able to block public bus service out to the very place where the jobs were growing, and on pretty much explicitly racist grounds. And it's only in the last handful of years, frankly, where some support for more limited bus service to the counties has become possible.

And so the result is, we've had a situation where low income African-Americans do not have access to the growing jobs centers and economy. And where a lot of the entry level jobs would be.

Likewise, similar story around housing. So, we have six large public housing communities built between about 1940 and about 1970. None of them are in very good condition. The heat fails, there's some deep infrastructural problems. But up to this point, it's been seen pretty much exclusively the city's problem to deal with. And no one has said Henrico county, Chesterfield county, you have a responsibility to help the Richmond metropolitan region as a whole figure this out. And how to accommodate better quality low income housing units.

And so consequently, you get a dynamic where any effort within the city is met with a lot of fear, because people think that if you demolish these things, people are just going to be thrown out on the street. And that's not irrational, based on what could potentially happen if this is not done the right way. But then the city itself hasn't to date had the resources to do it the right way, right?

And by the right way, I mean, one for one replacement, better quality units, hands on support for each and every household to make sure they get through the whole process in a good way. And so that speaks to, in Virginia and I think in many other places, the cities have been stuck with all the problems, and had the fewest resources. And then get blamed and batted around when they don't magically come up with the answer.

So I still think that that's where we are in Virginia, at least. Although I think there's more awareness that that is the dynamic than I've ever seen before, so I'm hopeful.

**RICH**  
**SCHRAGGER:** Yeah, can I just ask very quickly-- and this might not be a quick answer. There's a long and ongoing debate about place-based interventions versus mobility-based interventions. That is, giving money to people so they can move to better locations or more resource-rich locations, or concentrating on improvement in the neighborhoods. Do you have views on that debate? Is it a sterile debate? How should we think about it?

**DAVID TROUTT:** That debate is my life.

**RICH**  
**SCHRAGGER:** This is the big-- [LAUGHING]. Go ahead.

**DAVID TROUTT:** You know, it isn't and it isn't. I think it's really changed over the last four years. But I was among those who was, you know, it's a both/and. But I was heavily invested in mobility strategies because, you know, theoretically and empirically, they make the most sense. It is the most efficient way to get resources to people who have been systematically denied resources, right?

It's very much the Brown v. Board theory of resource allocation. If you get low income people-- low income people of color, because low income whites already live in middle income neighborhoods and enjoy the same schools and the same political representation the same supermarkets as much wealthier whites. So if you can do that for low income people of color, you can spread the costs in a much more equitable way, and then much more quickly see all boats rise.

And then there's good, you know, Raj Chetty, and the rest of the mobility scholars, have demonstrated that beginning with the psychological effects and then on toward the more material effects over time, it really does work.

That said, it works, but it is not easily compelled. And we know this, right? We know this by how difficult it is to pronounce HUD's program for making it happen. Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing. I mean, could we come up with a better name than that? Like maybe, Community Wellness, closer to what Thad's been talking about, since it does have these much broader benefits.

But in any event, that is to say that we have had tremendous difficulty, as a legal and regulatory matter, compelling communities to open themselves up. And I think what we've learned in the Trump years is that other than more affluent and middle class professional Blacks, there is not much appetite for low income Blacks to move into neighborhoods that they increasingly believe, as late as 2020, are racially hostile to their presence.

And that although there is they can certainly cite chapter and verse about the resource deficits within the institutions that they currently interact, if they think about the suburbs, they think about being pulled over by cops. They think about being hassled. They think about being snarled at. They think about their kids being over- and hyper-disciplined in school. They think about being having their kids classified as special ed. On and on and on.

And so, it just, as a practical matter, it is hard to imagine investing all of our efforts in a mobility strategy, despite its efficiencies. On the other hand, cities are, and I think will continue to be, the center of things. And we are certainly seeing this in Newark. And so the job in Newark is, and places like it-- where Blacks make up a majority and people of color make up a vast majority-- is really to be able to hold the line and then ensure that the displacement does not follow revitalization and the entry of a white population that really hasn't been there in two generations.

**RICH** Thad, do you want to address that also?

**SCHRAGGER:**

**THAD** Yeah, I'm very much in the both/and. I'm laughing because about 10 years ago, **WILLIAMSON:** there were two competing volumes of urban theorists. One of them very much place-based camp, and the other one was the mobility camp. I was the only person who had a chapter on both, and somehow got away with that without making anybody too angry.

But I think it's certainly, as a moral matter, if somebody's path to mobility involves moving out of city to a suburb, great. Yeah, I would never say no, you can't go. That's ridiculous. But I also think that sometimes by itself, it feels a little bit like a lifeboat strategy, in which you're not really dealing with underlying structural things that are going to impact the majority of the people actually living in those environments.

So I want to strengthen neighborhoods and cities as far as you possibly can go. But then do other broader policies that facilitate social mobility. And we understand social mobility is often going to mean you're moving at some point. But I want to make sure that even when people are moving, it's a good community that's left behind for those, and not just people being abandoned where they are.

**RICH** Yeah, great. So I love the nuance of the two. They've been pitted, but there's a **SCHRAGGER:** range of strategies, certainly. Some of them will involve mobility, some will involve place-based. But the debate does get pretty heated sometimes, among policymakers and scholars, at least.

Let me ask a little bit about community wealth building, Thad, because we have some questions in the queue about it. One comment was, a questioner asks, a lot of

these local movements are women-led and unpaid. And is that something we should be concerned about? Or we could work on?

Number two, are there good models of the kind of civic engagement that's necessary, and time and effort that's necessary, to generate this kind of bottom up effort? Particularly among groups and neighborhoods that have been excluded from the political process in significant ways, or alienated from them?

David, you could answer that too, in terms of any experiences you may have had. Are there models of how to do this? So the makeup of kind of local, bottom up, community wealth-building groups. Who's advocating for them and how do you get folks involved? Your thoughts?

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Yeah, go ahead, Thad, and then David.

**THAD**

**WILLIAMSON:**

I'll share a little bit about Richmond. Not to say that there's ideal, but I do think we tried to be thoughtful about exactly the set of questions. So, we had an anti-poverty commission under the previous mayor, Dwight Jones, that came up with some broad recommendations. But there was a question about, how are we going to actually implement this? And do we really know that what we would recommend specifically is going to be value-added, from the perspective of the communities themselves?

So we created a citizens advisory board that consisted deliberately of folks who lived in low income neighborhoods or themselves low income. We wanted to actually get the most outspoken activists we possibly could find and bring them in. Both because they knew a lot and because it could help get the entire community on board.

And you know, it certainly was messy, but I regard that as critical. Because it meant then when it came time to implement it, we could say, our North Star is this plan that this group of people has signed off on. And so I went in there and became the director, especially until it became more formalized as a formal agency, I was thinking, I'm mainly responsible to those people who sat in the meetings with me for a year, and who collectively supported and helped shape this effort. That we're going to try to do everything that they're expecting us to do.

And so I think that mechanism of accountability on the front end is important. And it may be hard to replicate. But the next thing we did to try to make it sustainable is we did pay people for their service on the board. And we were one of the only boards, maybe the first in Richmond at a time, that it was a paid board. And the Councilwoman, Ellen Robertson and I worked with very closely at that time, was adamant about that. And we got the mayor and council to go along with that.

So that speaks to the thing, if these things aren't sustainable, if they're running on unpaid labor. And if it's important, if we value it, if we say participation is really important, we have to compensate it in some way. And certainly, money, I think, is appropriate. As well as voice and influence and respect.

**RICH** David.

**SCHRAGGER:**

**DAVID TROUTT:** That's a great thought, the importance of compensating. It's actually something that I try to do within my own center, but we haven't been as successful in doing across Newark. So let me just give you a little bit of Newark, because I think people may not know much about that example. And it is helpful to hear from the places where we're currently experimenting.

So Newark doesn't have a Republican Party to speak of it. It doesn't have a white middle class. It doesn't have a middle class. Really, about 18% of the city is middle class. So you have to understand it in context. And yet, it's the biggest city in New Jersey and it's in the middle of Essex County, which is one of the wealthiest counties, but also one of the most segregated counties.

And so, you know, there are all these contrasts. There's a very progressive mayor with whom we work very closely. And he, Ras Baraka, is committed to notions of what we call equitable growth. And so, equitable growth is all sorts of things. But it begins with a commitment, first and foremost, to the resident population, as opposed to the hope of outsiders coming in and transforming the culture. And giving them what they need. Getting for them, through local government, what they need. Making up for resource deficits of the past. And that so much of market-making and economic development needs to go to the accumulation of greater and greater resources that can be spread much more equitably among populations that

have not seen it. And have not seen it for a very long time, for reasons that we've alluded to in earlier answers.

But on this question of participatory democracy, the extent to which you really have a robust grassroots. You know, we do and we don't, to be honest. I'm really in the middle of it, and it's been quite an education. I feel very privileged. I'm in the middle of it as a center director, engaging in anchor institution work out of a very progressive university commitment to the city. And that is actually meaningful. There are a number of us. I don't know if that's true of every city. But the anchor institutional commitment is real. And you see us in every facet of community building.

Then there are the CDCs. Newark is very fortunate to have some old CDCs that have been around, feels like everything is rooted in 1967, when we had the uprising. It's kind of the historical point of reference for so many things, including the birth of these organizations. And they're strong. And so they are very much at the table with city government, with the anchor institutions, as well as a few large corporations. Missing from this picture is small d, democracy, where you really have a kind of a robust citizen participation, whether it's organized or not.

That's not to say that there aren't advocacy groups. That's not to say that there isn't a grassroots. But the primary medium is city government. The mayor has a tremendous amount of power in setting the tone about transformational change. And it's a wonderful thing, but it's a delicate balance. So part of our job is to find ways to broaden participation in it, and to institutionalize the various elements of equitable growth.

**RICH**  
**SCHRAGGER:** Talk to me a little bit about housing, because we have a few questions about this, too. Which is, so exclusionary zoning seems to have, the attacks on exclusionary zoning which started in the 60s and 70s, have now, seems to be, resurged, at least on the coasts.

Is it necessary for state involvement to get the equitable development in metropolitan regions, the housing that Thad was talking about, say, in the richer parts of the metropolitan area? Are there aspects of the NIBMY movement, for example, that you think are good? That you think are bad? That are not relevant?

Any thoughts about those, about that issue? If, Thad, you want to start, and then David.

**THAD**

**WILLIAMSON:**

Yeah. Yeah, I see NIMBYism even within the city of Richmond, in relatively affluent neighborhoods that are majority white and that may view themselves as being very progressive. And yet when the multi-family development proposal comes along, you know, it's, oh my God, the traffic. And that's always kind of disturbed me. And I think it just an ongoing thing. It's not going to go away.

But that's where, if you've gotten upfront clarity of what your community-wide goals are, and say, hey, you remember how we said we're going to cut poverty by 40%? Well, to do that, we need to have better housing options for people so they grow their income, they can move up to a slightly better place. And this can be one those places to keep them in the city and have us benefiting from their advancing prosperity. And at least sort of pushback on it.

But almost always it's going to end up being a fight and a grind that's going to be decided at a council meeting, depending on how many people turn up. So I don't think it's just a county issue. And I think this is one where maybe race is truly salient, still. No matter what geography we're talking about.

So on the other hand, I think Richmond has seen some intentional efforts to do land trusts, and to try to make more housing permanently affordable. And one of the opportunities that we have is that we have thousands of vacant properties, either vacant lots or housing units, or some kind of structure that is not in use. And if we could figure out a way to rapidly get those kind of converted, it could expand the supply. And if we were super intentional, we could make as many of those permanently affordable through a land trust concept.

So I'm encouraged that that thought pattern, that really wasn't present around Richmond when I came like 15 years ago, is now a very mainstream. Everybody supports it. It's just a matter of, will they prioritize it enough to put the muscle and resources in to make it happen at the scale needed?

**DAVID TROUTT:** Yeah, I would agree. Two sides of that question, right? I live in New Jersey. NIMBYism

and not so much NIMBYism is alive and well. We really don't see much penetration in the exclusionary ethos of most, at least middle class suburbs, to fight to keep

things out. And yet we have the vehicle of Mount Laurel or the New Jersey Fair Housing Act to at least ensure that there's some serious attention paid to it. And I think many in the state feel like that's probably enough.

So we don't hear a lot of these fights anymore outside of the Mount Laurel declaratory judgment action context. In places like Newark, yes, and other places, increasingly, it is the fear of displacement as a result of gentrification. That's slowed, obviously, in the last nine months. But that was very much the concern over the last couple of years. And as I say, not just in Newark. It's really, we're seeing suburban gentrification in particular towns around New Jersey. And they're almost uncertain how in the world they're supposed to deal with such an urban problem.

The primary means that we've used in Newark is to first do some of the things Thad was just suggesting to preserve inventory, right? Preserve inventory at all costs. You've got rent control, beef it up. You've got public housing, don't lose any more of it. You've got vacant and abandoned properties owned by the city, make sure that you not just land bank it for easy disposition, but that you make sure the disposition focuses on affordable housing, affordable housing supply.

We passed the Right to Counsel Ordinance to make sure that people are at least represented by lawyers before they're evicted. We passed an inclusionary zoning ordinance, which has struggled to get out of the gate. But all of these are mechanisms to try to preserve the inventory against what we've seen in so many other cities. And that is just the loss of that inventory to increasingly wealthy residents. So it's not perfect, and we are trying to scale it.

I very much like the idea of land trusts. I very much like the idea of limited equity co-ops and things like that, which I happened to grow up in Harlem, in my own youth. And I see how it can work as a model. Home ownership is going to be very difficult in a city like Newark where median income is \$37,000. So we have to work with what we have. And that begins by preserving what's currently there.

**RICH**  
**SCHRAGGER:** And David, just a quick follow-up, these are city-led efforts, the statutes and ordinances that you've described? You have the power to adopt an inclusionary zoning ordinance or a right to counsel, or these other things? It's not at the state level, it's at the city level?

**DAVID TROUTT:** Land bank is at the state level, right to counsel is city level, even though the courts are controlled by the counties. Rent control's at the city level. IZO's at the city level, yeah.

**RICH**  
**SCHRAGGER:** Thad, do you face problems in a [? delegable ?] state in Virginia, in terms of the restrictions on what Richmond can do, vis-a-vis these kinds of initiatives that David's talking about?

**THAD** Yes. We don't have another hour to talk about that.

**WILLIAMSON:**

**RICH** That was a leading question, I think.

**SCHRAGGER:**

**THAD**  
**WILLIAMSON:** Yeah, well, I would hope that that can be addressed. I mean, there are so many innovative tools that other states do. And it's just frustrating, because you'd always say, can we do it here? Our city attorney's office historically is pretty conservative. They assume if we're not doing already, we can't do it. Whether it's a minimum wage ordinance, or a living wage ordinance, or flexibility around procurement to help develop social enterprise, allowing more progressive tax structures. All kinds of things like that we would love to be able to do in the city that have been blocked.

And so my thing is, like, you're not going to give us equitable funding on all these different levels, and we're still living with the consequences these racist structures. Can you at least give us the flexibility to be creative?

**RICH**  
**SCHRAGGER:** Right. Some level of authority. Well, thank you both. We are we are very close to being out of time, so I'm going to wrap up. But I did want to thank Thad and David both for being with us today. And we had a bunch of questions, which hopefully Thad and David can take a look at and maybe respond to some of these folks. But just didn't have time to get to them.

So I appreciate you both participating today. Go buy their books. David's is *The Price of Paradise-- The Costs of Inequality and a Vision for a More Equitable America*. Thad's is, Thad, remind me of the title. *Community Wealth Building and the Reconstruction of American Democracy-- Can We Make American Democracy Work?* Yes we can. I hope. But thank you both, and thanks, everyone, for joining us.

**DAVID TROUTT:** Thank you, Rich. Great to see you again. Thank you, Thad, it was a pleasure.

**THAD** Likewise, David. Thank you. Thank you, Rich. Hope to see you soon.

**WILLIAMSON:**