Panel Three & Closing Remarks

Welcome, everyone. My name is Valentina Proust. I'm a third year PhD student here at Annenberg, where I study social movements, especially in Latin America, memory, affect and feminist solidarity, and I'm also a member of the Steering Committee at the Center for Media at Risk. So, in panel two, we turned our attention to the present, examining the potential and challenges of academic visibility, but also explored how social media and academic freedom influence each other in complex and often unexpected ways. And we brought up the notions of surveillance and also authenticity.

In this third panel, we will focus on the future, exploring how social media might transform academia's relationship with free speech, knowledge circulation and public-facing scholarship. Through the insights of our four amazing panelists, we will explore the intersections of visibility and surveillance with questions about agency and equity. We will examine how social media can both amplify marginalized voices, but also reshape academic practices. This discussion will highlight how social media fosters activism, expands knowledge equity and redefines academia's engagement with free speech, public scholarship and exchanging ideas.

So we will present now the four panelists that will be talking today. They will have 15 minutes, and then we will close up with the Q&A from the audience.

So we are going to begin with two distinguished panelists, Arlene Stein and Cynthia Chris, co-authors of the presentation, Going Public in Uncivil Times. Arlene Stein is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Rutgers University. Her latest book, *Unbound Transgender: Men and the Transformation of Identity,* reflects her commitment to exploring social transformations and identity. She has long worked to bridge academic and public audiences, serving as a former editor of *Context*: *The Magazine of Public Sociology* and a former editor of *Out/look* the now defunct National LGBT Intellectual magazine. She is also the co-author of *Going Public: A Guide for Social Scientists*.

Cynthia Chris is a Professor of Media Culture at the College of Staten Island, City University of New York City. For the 2024/2025 academic year, she is serving as a Faculty Leadership Development Fellow in the Office of Faculty Affairs at CUNY. Cynthia is the author of *Watching Wildlife and the Indecent Screen: Regulating Television in the 21st Century*. She has also co-edited *Cable Visions: Televisions Beyond Broadcasting* and *Media Authorship*.

Then our second panelist is going to be Moya Bailey, who is a Professor at Northwestern University, and now she's a Visiting Scholar here at the Center for Media at Risk. Her research centers on how marginalized groups leverage digital media to advance social justice, with a focus on race, gender, disability and sexuality in media and medicine. She's the founder of the *Digital Apothecary* and co-founder of the *Black Feminist Health Science Studies Collective*. Additionally, she serves as the Digital Alchemist for the *Octavia Butler*

Network and as a board president of *Allied Media Projects*, a Detroit-based movement media organization that supports a growing network of activists and organizers. Moya Bailey is also the co-author of *#Hashtag Activism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice*, and the author of *Misogynoir Transformed: Black Women's Digital Resistance*.

And last but not least, we have our fourth panelist, Niels Mede, who is a Postdoctoral Researcher in the Department of Communication and Media Research at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. His research focuses on science and environmental communication, digital media and survey methods. He also explores topics such as science, skepticism, populism, distrust toward science and harassment and attacks against scientists aiming to identify strategies for fostering constructive science society dialogue. Mede earned his Ph.D. from the University of Zurich and has been a visiting scholar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Oxford Internet Institute and the Digital Media Research Centre at Queensland University of Technology, and since 2023, he has also served as chair of the Science Communication Section of the German Communication Association. So please welcome Arlene and Cynthia, our first panelists of the session.

We're going to be in the awkward position of co-presenting here. But on behalf of both of us, I'd like to thank everyone for inviting us. And it's just been such a thoughtful almost 24 hours. But I should also apologize. I'm not sure that we got the memo that this was supposed to be the optimistic panel, so we'll see. Actually, the subtitle of our paper is "Between Optimism and Despair." So we're like a transitional kind of thing.

In 2017, I co-authored a book called *Going Public: A Guide for Social Sciences*. It was designed for academics who are interested in writing beyond the academy. As we know, scholars are trained to speak to other scholars. There are a few incentives for translating our work to non-scholars, although after hearing some of the panelists this morning, I'm wondering whether that's the case anymore. The book was conceived at a time of heightened discussion about the importance of public engagement among social scientists.

Such discussions tended to take place at a rather abstract level. They argued for the importance of talking to broader publics without actually offering guidance on how to do so. So, my co-author and I wanted to provide a guide for those who wish to actually go public, writing op-eds books for non-academic audiences and using social media to disseminate our ideas more widely. In that book, my co-author Jessie Daniels and I embraced what I would now call a kind of mild techno-optimism.

We saw social media as a tool that facilitated the easy and quick circulation of knowledge, and that enabled individuals to develop more public profiles than previously had been possible. We weren't naive. We acknowledged that junior scholars on the tenure track are under tremendous pressure, that writing in anything other than strictly academic venues might be perceived as not counting toward their reappointment, and

that the path to tenure is typically paved by both establishing a reputation in the field and by keeping your head down to avoid becoming the subject of controversy. Or at least that's the way we saw it then. We even included a chapter on the risks of going public, which focused on members of marginalized groups such as women of color. And I'll quote us, we said, “increased visibility means increased scrutiny. Not all of it involves spirited debate or harmless rebuke. It involves far too many cases of trolling, doxxing and threats of violence against individuals, academic offices and institutions.”

We also noted that individual academics, blogs and social media posts have, at times, prompted academic administrations to investigate scholars, sometimes with material consequences.

But in the end, we argued that the potential risks of public exposure are worth it, and that academics should marshal new technologies to circulate their work more broadly.

In retrospect, I think Jessie and I failed to fully anticipate two developments. First, the rise of right-wing populism, or at least the growing influence of right-wing populism at the national level and its critique of and disdain for intellectual work. And second, the corrosive impact of corporate ownership of social media. In recent months, we can more clearly see the relationship between these two trends. And Cynthia will help me tease that out.

Okay. *Going Public* was completed before Donald Trump was elected the first time. Eons ago. It was published shortly after he came into office. Arlene and Jessie acknowledged that right-wing attacks on academics were becoming more commonplace, but they didn't foresee the extent to which uncivil discourse would threaten the work of individual academics and Higher Education at large. Like others, they did not anticipate the extent to which attacks on critical forms of knowledge would be weaponized by the right as part of efforts to shut down discussions of race, genderand LGBTQ issues in particular, and delegitimize higher education generally. And, of course, public education generally.

Perhaps they should have anticipated more such attacks. The European Right had already mobilized against Gender Studies programs. Similar campaigns had made their way across the atlantic a few years earlier, initially focusing on K through 12.

Over time, right-wing moral entrepreneurs began attacking Higher Education. Just last year, as you know, the state of Florida retooled New College by packing its board of trustees, purging faculty and staff, discontinuing DE&I initiatives and proudly dumping Gender Studies books.

Nor did Arlene and her co-author anticipate the use of social media would encourage tendencies toward uncivil discourse within academic circles. To be sure, previously disempowered groups such as graduate students and independent scholars have put social media to good use as a megaphone, making it easier for them to circulate ideas even if they have to lurch from one data-dealing platform to another to keep the momentum up.

And yet, a small but significant number of academics have used the same platforms toweaponizee and personalize their criticisms of one another. Scholars in the Social Sciences and Humanities are trained to be critical thinkers. We advance knowledge through debate and disagreement. As graduate students, we learn our craft by reading the work of others and learning to dissect the work of those who preceded us. We define ourselves as intellectuals by making arguments that draw upon existing scholarship, which we often refer to as the literature, and by moving beyond it, offering new ways of understanding the world. Academic debates can get heated, but scholarly norms tend to tamp down nastiness. Or at least that's what I thought at the time. Most of us are pretty good at keeping personal vendettas out of our evaluations of others in academic book reviews, journal peer reviews, reviews that we have to do in our daily jobs. Social media, in contrast, puts a premium on the well-constructed snark.

Taking someone down is frequently the goal. Going viral can make someone instantly famous. It can turn debate into a hit-and-run bloodsport. Those who write about marginalized groups are at greater risk for what the literary critic Eve Sedgwick called “paranoid readings” of our work from the left. In this hermeneutics of suspicion, Sedgwick argues, critics anticipate that a given text will perpetuate, for example, racism, sexism, transphobia and then attempts to unmask those oppressive subtexts.

When the old norms and guardrails no longer moderate debate, people can easily use the internet to shame, intimidate and ostracize others in the name of criticism as a way of building one's brand. The conflicts sometimes pit younger against older, more established academics, although it probably goes both ways as well to some extent. I know from whence I speak, having been the recipient of a number of these ad hominem attacks myself when I published a book about transgender men a few years back. And I'm not a transgender man, nor am I a millennial. And the book was about transgender men who were millennials, who were undergoing body modifications and their understandings of their identity as they proceeded through that process.

Remember the “okay boomer” moment a few years ago when millennials tried to stick it to us older folks for being privileged and clueless? Graduate students and younger scholars may see those of us who are riding into our golden years as privileged in ways that they will never be, or that many of them will never be. They're partly right about that. Those resentments spill out at times into the digital public sphere. It hasn't helped that in the intervening years since they wrote *Going Public*, the social media industry itself has changed. This audience knows all too well. Momentarily chastened after the January 6th, 2021 insurrection, Meta, parent company of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and other platforms, temporarily sidelined former President Trump and some of his allies, only to reverse these bans in 2023 as part of an overall shift toward lighter content moderation, and perhaps to staunch some of the competition from openly right-wing

platforms such as Parlor, Gab and Trump's own Truth Social in 2022.

As is well known, Elon Musk took over Twitter as a self-styled free speech champion, rebranded it as X and set about challenging the California law requiring social media companies to release data on content moderation. A recent report issued by X in September showed that active content moderation is actually increasing on the platform, though we have little information about criteria for labeling, removing or retaining content, I have my doubts.

What is clear is that Meta has been systematically bumping political content down the algorithmic ladder. Facebook policy boasts that it is committed to reducing the amount of political content you see, and assures Instagram and Threads users, “we won't proactively recommend content about politics.” If nothing else, this should be a straightforward reminder that if social media was once touted as an all-access, low gatekeeping, democratic-by-default medium, it's structured like any other business operation to maximize profit - and that democracy is not one of its products.

In other words, over time, our capacity to use social media to encourage critical debate has diminished in many respects. In 2017, when we published *Going Public*, we weren't so naive as to believe that social media would create a level playing field, enabling everybody to find their voice. Yet we wouldn't have imagined either that the largest social media platforms would unapologetically, even boastfully, sideline left-leaning political content.

Clearly, it's riskier to be a public scholar in 2024 than it was in 2017, when *Going Public* was published. Right-wing populists trash us for our supposed elitism, which they've made synonymous with being “woke.” The attack on universities, of course, is not altogether new. After all, historian Richard Hofstadter wrote about anti-intellectualism in American life some 60 years ago.

Yet if recent election postmortems are accurate, Trump's re-election can be viewed as the triumph of the non-college educated, or at least some non-college educated, against certain sectors of the professional middle class, namely academics, journalists and others. Right now, it seems likely that an emboldened populist Right will try to exact revenge on the guardians of critical intellectual life and discourse against our perceived excesses and the very fact that we're teaching students to think critically.

Some of us might logically respond to these developments and the risks they pose by pulling back from public engagement to avoid being attacked or censored. And I've heard a number of my colleagues already say they're turning down press inquiries, they're retooling how they teach their courses, etc, so as not to risk alienating certain populations. They will, some say, limit communication to other scholars in their special subspecialties in language that only they will understand. And while we understand this impulse to seek protections behind the walls of the ivory tower, we believe it is misguided for those walls, as we've been hearing at this conference, are unlikely to protect us.

In fact, instead of retreating from our public mission, we need to redouble our efforts to engage with non-university publics, perhaps in more strategic ways. A few notes about going forward. We must do more. As has been said here previously, to defend academic freedom, to resist attacks on tenure and to protect untenured and contingent staff who are more vulnerable than senior faculty.

This may mean more investment of our time and resources in our unions, in the labor of faculty, governance and institutional leadership. If we hope to see jobs like our own pass to the next generation of scholars, we're going to have to embrace these parts of our jobs more than ever before. We also need frank discussions about how to create cultures of solidarity at a time when many academic norms are under attack. Inter-departmental squabbles ranging from the "your office's bigger than my office" kind of thing to corrosive silences that deaden engagement in the wake of events like the October 7th siege on Gaza. Even the recent presidential election, too often result in interdepartmental intercollegiate factionalism played out in personal attacks in language that we would deplore if it came from outside academia.

And finally, I think we need to admit our privilege while working to extend those privileges to others. Universities are still among the very few institutions where autonomy is prized, where speech is relatively unencumbered and where at least some of us enjoy real job security. All the more reason for us to nurture and care for these precious spaces and build a society where everyone enjoys job security and fulfilling work. Thank you.

Moya Bailey

Hello. I want to start by saying thank you to Sophie and Madison for doing such an incredible job today. And in a practice that I think has started to go by the wayside, I want to say we are in Philadelphia, part of the traditional unceded homelands of the Lenape, of the Shawnee and Iroquois. I was really moved by a non-land acknowledgment in which indigenous elders made clear that land acknowledgements aren't enough, that they can help us think that we've done the thing, but they're really a starting place.

So I want us not to forget that our ability to gather here today is partly due to Indigenous communities who have maintained relationships with the land that settler-colonialism actively works to obscure. And in thinking about that, settler-colonialism, as we're living through multiple genocides unfolding around the world in multiple locations, I really want to work to make sure that my research supports people who are marginalized in multiple contexts. So I'm also wanting to acknowledge the labor of enslaved Africans and their descendants who have enriched this region with cultural and economic contributions that can never truly be quantified.

And with this, particularly in relationship to my talk and what we're talking about today, this acknowledgement also includes Congolese miners who mined the minerals that power our digital devices, who make the

tech of the topics of this symposium possible.

So, in an ongoing pandemic, with new ones emerging - genocides, wars, earthquakes, ecological devastation, attempted coups and successful ones, it can be overwhelming to continue doing business as usual. So I'm going to build on the work of Black Feminist creators and the creative projects that their projects have spawned.

I have Octavia Butler here on my collar, who I'm going to be channeling in this talk. So, this is a little bit of a story. I think narrative helps sometimes. So, gather around to hear a tale of hope, even as the world we know it is likely coming to an end. Let's think of our time together as a little pocket of possibility, a buoyant bubble in a world on fire. So what I'm going to be reading from is a piece that I wrote for *Just Tech* about an ethical internet, kind of my imagining for a tech future that I think creates some possibility for something else.

So, as we're thinking about what the academy can be, I hope this might offer some thoughts for a new way forward. So, as a so-called elder millennial or xennial, I actually prefer the term *Oregon Trail* generation. I hold the distinction of being part of the last cohort of kids to know life without the ubiquity of the internet. I remember life before cell phones, before cell phones became smartphones, or when payphones still worked and jumped from $0.10 to a quarter.

This straddling of epochs has shaped my questions about the internet, about tech, its presence in our everyday life, prompting me to consider the ethics of our use of this technology, as well as the ethics of the infrastructure that supports it. So how can we engage ethically, a military derived technology that has infiltrated every aspect of our lives, from refrigerators to furniture? The weaponizing potential of the internet was part and parcel to its initial conceit. Yet the history is often forgotten, and therefore remains unconnected to the current violence that this life-changing technology has enabled around the world.

So, how can we engage this technology in a new way? Well, there can be no ethical engagement with the internet under capitalism. I do think there is a less harmful path for our web wandering to take. When I was in fifth grade, I asked my parents for the internet for Christmas. Remarkably, I got it, and I marveled at the words and beeps and static of the dial-up connection. I made friends, I did research, I looked at websites and chatted with strangers I shouldn't have. The freedom that this digital space provided, and the sense that I could connect with people beyond my hometown of Fayetteville, Arkansas, opened up a new world to me.

Little did I know that this access was afforded to me because of Western class and educational privilege. I didn't know about the child labor of girls who looked like me, and who also could have been in the fifth grade mining for the minerals that made my internet connection possible, and what we now recognize as the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I didn't know about the Foxconn workers in Shenzhen, China, who made Apple products under exploitative

conditions for little wages, but not knowing did not make these oppressive conditions any less real for those who experience them.

Now that I do know, I want to answer the question “how can the internet be a just democratizing tool if it relies on oppression to exist?” So as we're thinking about the world we want, and as we study what we study, what is our obligation to the people who make these tools possible? As I researched the important social justice organizing that social media platforms make possible, I had to consider all the hidden human labor that went into creating those platforms and the infrastructures through which what were formerly known as Twitter, Tumblr, etc. came to operate.

My work attends to the labor of online organizing, but it hadn't attended to the labor of those who build the digital infrastructure that makes it possible. So how do we get there? These are big questions with multiple answers that really create more questions.

I was thinking about, on what land could one build a server with ethically sourced minerals and waters to cool said servers with planned obsolescence built into the tech we consume? Can we recycle and refurbish old electronic parts to create the computers, servers and hubs? We need to build our own network. Can we solve problems of e-waste on land, in sea, and in space? And who will monitor these servers and tend to them when they inevitably crash after being reanimated from their facilitated and faded early ends?

So, I think the answer to that question requires a bit of fictional science, which allows us to first imagine alternative futures so that we might realize them. My colleague, Banu Subramaniam, deploys such fictional science in her compelling text, *Ghost Stories for Darwin*. If you haven't read it, you should definitely read it. In chapter three *Singing the Morning Glory Blues* Subramaniam tells the story of three childhood best friends and their love for a field of morning glories near their homes as a way to explore what a just scientific practice could be.

The girls are inadvertently inspired to be interdisciplinary scholars by the strict disciplinary boundaries observed by the adults who study the field of flowers via their own strict fields of study. And so, we have a researcher who's collecting soil samples with grad students that do his research, while another researcher uses math to make sense of the flowers.

And so, there's a dozen of these different researchers that don't talk to each other and what they're doing when they finally do talk to each other, it doesn't end well. The girls hatch a plan to bring all of these investigators together. But after a night of food and fun, the scientists attempt to talk to each other, only to storm off upset by their ideological differences. But the girls take the scientists’ different approaches to heart, and ultimately they become scientists themselves and work collaboratively with each other, and with their community and with the land to create research that transforms their world.

So 35 years later, in this fictional story, they create a center to study their beloved morning glories, created with the town's cooperation and input, with attention to the

flora and fauna that shapes the environment. As one of the girls say, “we were not interested in creating an institution as an ivory tower removed from the lives of the people with little meaning, we wished to involve them in the work.” Collaboration is a central tenet of ethical science, not simply between academics but also the communities in which said research happens.

The girls work towards integrating disparate disciplines and fallow fields of study through their eventual achievement of what they call the first ever joint PhD, culminating in multimodal studies of morning glories.

And so, by envisioning scientific study as a collaborative and community-centered project, the chapter provides a window into what science can be that I think we can also think about in our own disciplines. How might we reimagine the scholarly project if we were actually working communally and working with the people that we are connected to?

So, this is my story, an attempt to answer that question. I imagine a future life on a server farm commune where I tend to the words and beeps, turn flashes of light powered by the sun and wind. The community of server farms exists on land in relation with the traditional stewards of the region. I envision one such place outside the city limits of Detroit, where the Nishnawbe, Odawa, Ojibwe and Potawatomi have navigated the land for centuries. Our presence was sanctioned by the indigenous communities that traditionally used the land, and they have access to all the servers they want and need.

We work together to make sure our disruption of the regular comings and goings of flora and fauna are minimized, finding natural clearings and erecting structures that fit the landscape and diffuse the energy and heat generated by the power required to run these servers. To that end, there are internet quiet hours where the internet sleeps, as we do. Light pollution is eradicated and electrical waves are reduced, we can communicate with similar such communities around the world by essentially writing letters back and forth that may reach our pen pals instantly, but are only opened in the light of day in the time zone received.

Given the taxing nature of internet use on the environment, we make every effort to limit our internet connectivity and to use it judiciously. We also work to harness natural energy sources through new technology like lightning collectors and ambient energy harvesters. We move at the speed of trust and the speed of our circadian rhythm, remaining conscious of the pace at which we want our lives to proceed.

The farm is not only for servers, but also for food, and we reuse the bits of e-waste that cannot be refurbished or recycled for fences and planters, kids learn to code as they learn to plant. We learn how to solder our own servers, creating the technology we need at a sustainable pace. We eat well and have digital dance parties.

It's a different way of relating to the world in real life and online, and I think it's something that collectively we can make

possible. So, even beyond the institution, I want us to think about how we actually want to be in community with each other, both as academics and as human beings. Thank you.

Niels Mede

Wow. That was beautiful. I thank you very much. Thank you also for having me here. I'm trying to bring on some more positive perspectives also on academic speech and social media, and also try to refer back to our keynote address yesterday.

Well, I could obviously repeat what we've been discussing so far that there are many challenges, many threats to academic speech on social media, such as misinformation, skepticism, science denial, incivility, trolling, hate speech, harassment, threats and attacks. Unfortunately, the list goes on and on.

But there are many opportunities for us that we've discussed also and that I would like to highlight here in this last panel on futures and liberation. Social media has made academic speech so much more equitable, inclusive, open and transparent. They allow scholars like us to connect to each other without needing to travel to expensive conferences. At least partly without paying expensive journal fees or having like established media contacts, thereby amplifying marginalized academic voices.

They allow us to promote our research to the scholarly community, popularize science and education. Educate the public and also other audiences without having established media contacts, institutions and so on. Social media also allows to address mis- and disinformation and those places where it's like circulating. If we would stay in our ivory towers, we would not have the chance to debunk, refute, challenge, mis- and disinformation where it's circulating.

Social media also then allow us to engage with these skeptical critical audiences and engage in conversations that have the potential to foster mutual trust and also, importantly, then receive feedback from publics and other stakeholders. For example, criticism and reservations, but also maybe research ideas, priorities and demands of the public.

There is the potential of social media to allow us means to engage in democracy, speak out against injustice, loss of academic freedom, budget cuts and even bigger or more severe injustices. Being an active voice in civil society. So, from this perspective, science has become much more equitable, open and relevant, legitimate or trustworthy, even transparent, through social media than ever.

But yes, there is still the dark side of social media, Which we've been talking about as well here, because there's also engagement and dialogue of a negative kind. All of these are very severe challenges to academic freedom, freedom of academic exchange and dissemination, and more generally also to the status of science and scientific expertise in society. So, what does that mean for academic speech or more generally, what does that mean for science communication, the broader science communication ecology? That's something that concerns me as a scholar, as a science communication researcher.

What do I mean by science communication ecology? I mean, not only scholars, but also publics, communicators, journalists, science communication professionals, policy makers, and so on. Again, moving back to the negative repercussions. We do see these chilling effects on scholars and their willingness to speak out. There's research showing social media avoidance, self-censorship, loss of confidence, also loss of willingness for scholars who get attacked to engage in policy advice, which has very problematic implications for public opinion.

There is at least preliminary evidence showing that observing attacks on social media against scholars reduces perceived trustworthiness, at least among those who are already quite skeptical against science. There are also implications for public engagement with science and scientists.

So, in a recent study that colleagues and I am doing, we surveyed people in 68 countries around the world and asked them, "how often do you visit museums, zoos and public lectures?" And we find that in countries with low academic freedom, the frequency of engaging with science is limited, at least in certain countries, such as here in the lower left corner, such as China, Russia, Cameroon, and so on.

So people ranking low on academic freedom also see publics which are less willing or less able to engage with science. And lastly, there's also implications for science communication practitioners, professionals, university press offices, for example.

They are also sometimes targets of attacks, but they are also often in the line of fire, as we also discussed yesterday, a little bit between publics and scientists, as supporting scholars who are suffering attacks. And this can also cause distress in these communication professionals.

In a recent study that a colleague and I are doing, we interviewed a couple of science communicators across the world, and they explained this to us. And I brought some quotes. The first quote is a bit has very strong language. So, it was not a death threat but more like harassment, said one professional from a Swiss university. "You're a bitch. You fuck with those politicians. It was first on social media. Then on my phone. I thought perhaps he will come to the event. So I called the police." So this can escalate, as we know, to the offline world.

And this is also what I mentioned. It can also be a burden for the people who assist scholars under attack. It takes energy and strength. Supporting someone again and again is exhausting, and lastly I think Rebekah mentioned that yesterday as well. In this instance, we actually did not have very much support from our corporate team. They are very risk averse and get very fearful whenever there is some sort of attack, whether it's justified or not.

So again, many challenges, many threats to science communication in general. But there's hope. Getting back to some more positive remarks here. Targets have agency and resilience. There are so many great examples for that in this room, and yesterday also at the speaker podium. Scholars engage in counter speech and have

motivation to withstand backlash. And that's a great message as well.

There are studies that show that across the board there's not a reduction of trustworthiness when you observe scientists being attacked on social media. And I think that's also important to notice. Public advocacy is also not necessarily sanctioned by the public in terms of attitudes. There's a couple of studies on climate advocacy by scientists. And in some groups of the population, this is viewed critically, but in many other groups, or at least across the general population, people tend to approve advocacy because they make people think, well, scientists actually care for the general society and for achieving better futures.

In our 68 country study, we also found that there is still sustained public participation in protests and demonstrations on science issues such as climate change, even in countries where there is limited academic freedom, unlimited freedom of expression. So we ask them, “how often do you participate in protests related to science?” Such as COVID, but also climate change? Where there's restrictions to academic freedom and freedom of expression, we do see high frequencies of engaging in these protests.

Last slide. We can still do more to support scholars and science communicators in general who are under attack to ensure freedom of academic speech. We need to develop further support measures so that scholars can withstand backlash across different layers or levels. I would say not only we scholars have a responsibility to address backlash of institutions, as we said.

Also, I think academic associations, such as ICA, for example, and support measures can also be implemented on a national level. For example, in Germany and in the Netherlands there is national support platforms similar to the researcher support platform Rebekah talked about yesterday. National contact points, which you can reach out to in case of attacks with trained consultants. We must also, I think evaluate “are these support measures helpful in any way?” And we must advertise them. I met a few colleagues who got offended on social media or have also offline, but they didn't know about some very good support measures that are already in place.

So it's often unknown. So let's advertise that Rebekah’s platform and those her colleagues and she developed - that's important peer support. It's important to really emphasize that we need to incentivize public scholarship. It takes a lot of time and effort to be out in the public and to then deal with backlash. So having incentives for doing that might also be helpful, such as awards, such as prizes. Maybe you know the John Maddox Prize, which is awarded in the UK for scholars who engage in advocacy despite public backlash.

And then I think, well, it refers back to what I've mentioned also before. We need to hold stakeholders in the whole science communication ecosystem to account for addressing backlash and providing support. It's not just we as scholars providing peer support to each other. It's also institutions. It's also associations. It's also social media platforms. I mean, that's challenging. That's really hard. But still they face responsibility

and they need to be included in addressing and restoring academic freedom.

And if in the end we feel well, we need to protect ourselves, our families, then we might actually also just say, “we'll leave this platform, we'll leave this debate discourse.” I think that's also a possibility that needs to be considered and discussed. Well, on my very first slide, you saw my X handle. I'm not on X anymore, but I just have this account there. Last point here is I think that we as communication researchers, Sociologists, public policy experts, science communicators and so on, we have a double responsibility, I think, which is not just helping each other, addressing backlash, but also doing research on that. I think that's important. Collecting evidence, evaluating support measures. We have the tools. We have the theories to do that. And we have the places to meet and to discuss this. And I think this symposium is a very good place to do that. Thank you.

Valentina Proust

Thank you to all the fantastic panelists and the very insightful presentations they just gave, which definitely allow us to think, in some cases, in a more hopeful note about the future and the relationship between social media, free speech in academia. And I really appreciate also how you brought the thing about privilege in different ways. But definitely something that we need to take into consideration about how we can reimagine these potential futures, and also what is our role as scholars in this process of reimagining these potential futures.

So I'm excited to open the floor for Q&A in the audience. There are going to be a couple of microphones circulating. One question over here. So please wait until you have your microphone and please say your name and then the question.

Audience Member

Thank you all for your talk. And for everyone else who presented. I have a couple of things to say. So just today or yesterday, Amnesty International released a report called “Israel is Committing Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza” Today. Al Jazeera's *Faultlines* released a documentary called *All That Remains* that follows the story of Leyan, a 13-year-old amputee from Gaza who is now in Philadelphia, getting the treatment here.

So in light of these, and the conference being more concerned about, academia at risk, and even the conversations about the defending academic freedom. I'm from Lebanon as well. So I also had to witness that this year. So defending academic freedom for what exactly?

If we have been for more than a year living in a time of, and then people aren't even comfortable saying the word “genocide” because they have to say the “ICC and the ICJ, and they are calling it whatever.” A lot of people are dying. A lot of kids have lost their hands. And like there's the largest percentage of child amputees per capita in Gaza right now. And we are defending academic freedom - I think my concern is like, why are we so concerned about academic freedom? Because what did academics do in a moment of genocide? Did

they speak up? Did they do some of the work that's expected to be done? I don't think so. And I'm also talking self-reflexively being inside of this institution during that time.

And if I want to bring social media to the table, I mean, I'm not a fan of social media. I'm not on social media. And I'm all for all the criticisms that everyone put out there, but also it made it possible to livestream the genocide. So that's another aspect. And I'm not trying to make the case for social media. I'm just saying if I want to make the relationship between the two. So this is the most livestreamed genocide of the current times, and then the academy is at risk. Why exactly? Or what's at risk? Or when did it become at risk? Did it become at risk after Trump was going to be president?

Because last year it was at risk, students were getting a lot of the backlash, they were getting hit by the police. They were getting disciplined by these same institutions. And now everyone's more afraid because now it's going to be the professor's tool or what?

I don't know, I have these questions in my head because I was wondering if it's the institutions that are putting academia at risk because social media is putting academia at risk, but aren't academics putting academia at risk, when they're refusing to speak?

Because I feel like we're relatively privileged. And also we're in a country that has been funding the genocide. So it's like, why aren't we talking about this part of the world when we're here? It's because it's very much connected to harassment on social media.

I just happened to be watching some interviews with Edward Said in the past week and watched him face all the racism on national TV. Take one blow after the other. And I was looking at him. I was like, how could he just not respond? And then there's another speech where he said, like 30 years ago, that the word Palestine could not be said. So, he had to take a lot of that backlash for the word Palestine to be able to be said in these spaces, or even in the US. So, yes, there is a risk of public facing scholarship for academia, but isn't this why people are in it? Like, why are we in it? To advance our own careers, to advance our own publications, to advance our own like lines on the CV? Like, why are we in it? If we're not engaging with the real world in a way that has impact to the real world.

So I don't know. For me there's nothing less than our humanity at risk at this moment because I don't know how to see it otherwise. And also, maybe I'm bringing the elephant in the room and putting it on the table but, if we're living in this moment and we're not addressing it and we're refusing to address it, and we're asking, “why is academia at risk?” It's like, how could it not be at risk? We're being so irrelevant at some point.

And I'm not talking about this, it's not personal in that sense. It's personal for me but I'm not saying it as a personal offense to anyone, but I'm just saying, we cannot refuse to engage. That's the risk of irrelevance, which is different than other risks that have been brought upnin the conversations. And then what does it mean to reimagine? What kind of imaginary are

we looking for, for academics or for these institutions?

Because visibility has not been an issue. It's been the ethical witnessing. Maybe that's more of an issue. And then how are we witnessing ethically and what are we expected to do other than avoid the topic and dance around it and do all the mental gymnastics not to say it. Not to say the word, not to say genocide. And then what?

Moya Bailey

Your comments are making me think about Todd's comments yesterday and also what Sarah brought up yesterday about the reality of educating elite police here at Penn. And it has me thinking about the real hypocritical nature of institutions of Higher Education and their competing interests, and has me thinking about what it means to be in solidarity with workers and being in solidarity with people outside of the academy.

And I don't know that the institution itself is my site of struggle. Because of that, I think the institution has too many people that it wants to be accountable to who are not people that I want to be accountable to. So as a professor, my move has been to be accountable to my students, accountable to my colleagues and to staff who I think are also making these real inroads in trying to shape the circles of which they do have control.

What is interesting to me, too, is the way that we talk about genocide and the way we think about college and as a space for addressing these real world big issues. Going back to Todd's comments yesterday, what do we do to prevent another Kent State, which seems very probable and real, and we got very close in these last couple of encampments, and it does seem very much like we can go there again.

What is our action? How do we change and why? It's important to also continue to make space, have these conversations, to move the collective so that we're better positioned to hold our students and challenge the institutions where we can.

Because, again, I don't think that we move forward without people having a different relationship to each other. And so much of what academia can provide is an opportunity to see connections where people didn't see them before. So I am both hopeful about this moment because I think universities - because of how they've responded - shows that the people are putting pressure in the right places and we are making a difference. We are changing the way that these administrations act. At the same time, I don't know that the academy is the site of liberation. I don't know that the academy or this institution is the place that I would look to for the kind of big risks that are necessary for the world we want.

Joseph Turow

That's a terribly important topic, and I hope that I'm moving to a different question but I'm not trying to say that what you said is not terribly important because it is. But I have a question about Moya’s talk, which was a nice fantasy. But, listening to it, it occurred to me that your storyline would encourage huge amounts of social struggle and schisms embedded in the supposedly

happy world that it would be. So, for example, you say that people should find the best times to take a rest from the internet. How do you decide who says that? What's the best time? There are different time zones. People would fight about that. People who work at home would be very upset if you said that 2:00 is a better time than 4:00.

Then you talked about how it's used. I'm paraphrasing, but something like, we should not use it for frivolous things. Who decides what that means? Not to say that it would be great if we knew what that meant, but I don't think it is. And the mineral issue is still problematic with servers. No matter where you go. A couple of days ago, China said that it was not selling America minerals that are related to these products because of the Trump initiative against China.

Congo is a big issue in that context. Africa has become a cauldron, as you suggest, because of all of this. That wouldn't change under your fantasy unless they figured out a new way to create minerals or pseudo minerals. But I've heard from people that it's very hard to make copy lithium.

And the last thing, if I may suggest is, one way that we could really reduce the amount of energy used in the internet is to get rid of streaming. Try to tell people to stop streaming today. Try to tell everyone to go back to broadcasting. No. I'm serious. Do you know how much energy streaming uses on a second-by-second basis? The amount of material that is created through streaming is unbelievable. But try to get people to start to go away from that. The broadcast industry is falling apart and at the end, streaming is creating more energy dependence. Microsoft is buying islands so that it can make servers with nuclear energy. And Amazon is using new forms of nuclear energy to be able to do what it's doing. So, I'm afraid that the fantasy doesn't hold up. And it would be really nice to believe it, but I think it raises more questions than it tries to solve. I'm sorry.

Moya Bailey

No, I appreciate that. My name is Moya, and one of the things that I am trying to talk about by presenting this as a possibility, to get us to think outside of how we've been trained to think. So it's not necessarily about picking a specific time at 2 or 4, but to imagine what it would be like, what would be required for us to get there. And for me, I think that requires smaller communities. So when I'm thinking about this in terms of a community outside of Detroit, I'm thinking about a particular space of people who have already been working around these conversations. Allied Media Projects that I'm a part of already is doing this work through creating Ethernet networks. So they're creating local servers that Detroiters can use. So when the internet goes down, which happens, they still have their local internet connection that's in their community. And so they've been able to communicate and talk about things. When the power goes out, that's something that people are able to do.

Also, when I'm thinking about the energy required, one of the things I'm imagining, too, is harvesting ambient energy. Depending on things that don't require us to use these fossil minerals, these minerals that

take billions of years to be created, that are then used up in four years, right.

So this is also about shifting our perspective and recycling and using materials in different ways. So one thing I would say is this is less a literal exercise and more one of creating a possibility and opening us up to perhaps a new perspective in terms of how we think the world has to operate. There's a way that we imagine the world is how it it's always been, and it hasn't been that way. Part of my story, too, was saying that I do remember the time before the internet. There was a time before streaming. I do think that the reality of today is that things are going to shift very quickly, as we've seen, so it's really hard to predict what's going to happen next. But I don't think we get to a better place if we don't imagine something else and create space for other possibilities.

Audience member

If I can jump in for a second. You know, I'm reminded that earlier today, someone said that we're really good as a profession at identifying problems, really good at pointing out problems. And we're often not so great at presenting solutions that can actually be implemented to those problems. Right?

But to come up with solutions that can actually be implemented, we have to imagine them first? We've also talked here that someone else is in control of the narrative about Higher Ed right now, right? We are not in control of that narrative. And we are reacting right here in this room, to these big narratives that are being played out about it.

We really need imagination, right? We need to get out there. Now, I like pragmatic approach myself, you know. But I think we really do need that imagination. That part of the problem of our institutions is that we are so bifurcated or so compartmentalized.

I guess I want to give an example. In my current position, I've been observing a number of trainings for faculty on how to teach students to use AI ethically. Right? Whatever that means. Right. And that inevitably at one of these events, someone will say, what about copyright issues and stuff that's being scanned? What about the enormous energy needs of this industry? And I have heard over and over again within my university system, people way higher up the food chain say, that's a separate problem, right? That's a separate problem. They'll figure out the efficient energy use someday over there on that part of campus or whatever. And really our backs are against the wall if we continue to think and talk like that.

Niels Mede

I also add briefly, because that fits a little bit to what I was thinking about putting on my last slide and then I deleted it. Is that we really tend to pathologize or demonize so many things on social media. In that view that everyone is skeptical, distrustful, doesn't know how to use social media, needs to be educated and so on. Sure there are pockets of the public which are, and that's a problem and we need to address that. But still, as I was saying, there's agency or there's room for hope.

Audience member

It’s more of a comment than a question. But I think what your talk Moya reminded me of was *Octavia's Brood,* the speculative anthology by Walidah Imarisha and Adrienne Maree Brown. And in the opening Walidah Imarisha writes about how, as descendants of enslaved Africans in this country, the fact that we walk around as free in and of itself is a work of science fiction. In that time period, the idea that we might not live in the world, as you know, unpaid laborers or, you know, servile was completely delusional. But it's the practice of someone having to be “crazy” or “delusional” enough to be able to imagine a world where that wasn't the case, that allows us to order our steps toward that becoming a reality. So, I think imagination is one of the most pragmatic things we can engage in. And actually witnessing that exercise was really generative for me. Because I spend a lot of time talking about it and not enough time doing it. So, I really appreciated your talk. Thank you.

Litty Paxton

I'll throw in an undergraduate piece here. I think one of the risks to scholarly inquiry that maybe we need another whole symposium on is, is that social media is inhibiting our ability to concentrate. And I feel like we've been very self-reflexive about our classism and all different forms of racism. But we need to talk more about our own abilities to concentrate and how they are being impeded.

We talk about kindergarteners, and we're worried about them having iPads, and we talk about our own students and the fact that they can't read books anymore. But I think we have to talk about ourselves, too. And so I think that's a piece of risk here for us to consider. And I want to say on a brighter note that we are doing some little experiments along the lines that Moya was suggesting here at Penn. We have a class run by our colleague Justin McDaniel called “Existential Despair,” where our students sit for seven hours. That's the class. There are no cell phones allowed. There is what you call the “internet quiet hours” there. The class is set at - I loved your phrase – “the speed of trust.”

And in the space of that very privileged class, I will acknowledge that our Penn students get to read a book together in silence and eat together and then discuss the book. And that's how they meet every week for seven hours till midnight. And then, because it's Penn and we're privileged, they are walked home by Penn Security guards. So there's a lot to unpack there, but it is still an attempt to create a utopian space where slow thinking matters, where social media and its distraction and its pull is put aside. Many of us wrestle with this in our classrooms. Shall we have the laptops? Should we allow the students? I have mine here. How many times has it pulled me away from focusing on your brilliant talks? So, I think we just all owe it to ourselves to be ready to engage in our own practices and to think about how we can nurture that slow, beautiful thinking in our students and recognize that too is going to be part of what saves scholarly inquiry. Those brains working slowly, working deeply.

And I'll just say one more thing about why this matters, is that all of the problems of the

world that you beautifully and painfully enumerated, Moya, about things burning right from the climate on to genocide. We are also faced with an epidemic of dementia. Even though proportions are coming down, total numbers are going up because of the aging population. And one of the most profound things we know about dementia prevention is that people with more cognitive reserve do better, and every study shows this.

So I am hopeful in a bizarre way that we can say, “hey, this deep concentration we want to cultivate in our academies, in our students, in our lives is also going to protect you.” It's hard to say that to an 18-year-old at Penn. It doesn't touch their lives yet unless they've got a grandparent or great-grandparent. But it's going to touch all of our lives, and one of the preventions is to allow time for deep thinking and not distracted thinking. So, I think we can get together with our colleagues who do cognitive neuroscience and have some really productive conversations about this, rather than being fearful about it anyway.

I'm just curious to know if anyone wants to talk a little bit about the distraction piece and how you have clearly nurtured your own brilliant thinking through the attention economies of consumer culture and social media. Because you've all managed to do it. And I'd love to know how you protect that deep-thinking space.

Niels Mede

Thank you very much. I can relate so much to your thoughts and your words. Because I feel so challenged to find place and room for slow thinking. Not just because I am active on social media, but also more generally because I am trying to find ways to be an impactful scholar and publishing things and increasing my h-index and getting I have x years to get tenure. There are laws in Germany and Switzerland that force me to get a permanent position within six years - after that, no university will be allowed to hire me anymore on a fixed contract.

So there are so many things that make me speed up my thinking. And I haven't really found a solution to allow myself to slow down or to slow down. I have good role models. I think I have good colleagues who just say, well, calm down and do it like me. Because I do have some good colleagues, which I who don't really care for whatever, being the most cited scholar, but doing really, really good stuff in analysis and not just doing salami slicing, publishing or something like that. And that's inspiring for me. And I try to really just mirror what they are doing. Well, and then I also try to tune out from social media and use the functions that cell phones have nowadays, mobile phones have nowadays, mindfulness mode and so on and so on, even for whole weekends. That helps me. Well, that's just my immediate thoughts and reaction on that.

Arlene Stein

I was introduced to the notion of slow academia sometime today, and I thought, it's a great, a great category. I've been thinking a lot about this, not so much about myself, I'm at the end of my career. I can feel that. I can engage in a bit more of slow academia than I was able to to do earlier in my career because the pressures just aren't as great.

But I've been thinking a lot about it in relation to my undergraduate students and that they're expert multitaskers. This semester, I'm teaching an online course with 35 students. And I've been shocked by the fact that at least 20% of the class are actually at work while they're in class. And I asked them why are there so many people in the class who are actually at work? Couldn't you schedule your work time at other at other times?

And they said they just couldn't. They've got too much going on in their lives. And that made me incredibly sad that they have to work so much that their lives are so out of balance. And I think it's a major problem. I think it's part of their distraction. Their sense of their lives being very fragmented has led them to a certain kind of pessimism and cynicism that I think is really dangerous. So, it's not exactly the question that you were asking. Sorry, but I do think that this is a huge issue, and I'd love to see institutions other than privileged institutions taking it on. I'm not quite sure how to do it, though.

Cynthia Chris

I mean, these devices have become extensions of our bodies, right? I was just thinking, I put in my hearing aids because I was having trouble hearing the questions. And to do that, I had to control the volume. I had to open up my phone. I didn't want to open up my phone during this panel. And I even momentarily had to see stuff on the screen so that I could hear this side of the room better. It was a momentary distraction, but it's intrusive.

There's a prosthetic sense of it that we are psychologically and physically sometimes dependent on. And, you know, I don't think that we fully understand yet how intensively we've connected into these little things.

Audience member

Hi. I'm a first year here at Annenberg, and I am joining the students who just had comments instead of questions. I wanted to say thank you to all of the panelists. I really do appreciate your storytelling and your narrative as well. I agree wholeheartedly with Azsaneé's point about abolition being a speculative design fantasy.

Despite all the risks that came with that, like economic collapse and a whole lot of violence, and yet here I am, here a lot of us are. But the point that I really wanted to make was that one of the really big risks of not engaging in imagination and future-building is constantly being in a present moment where we are always reacting to the futures that billionaires have imagined for us. And so, if someone's going to engage in future and world-building, I think that we should be the ones to do it. That's all.

Sarah Jackson

It's not a question. It's a comment. I just wanted to say that. Doctor. Professor. Professor. Doctor. Full Professor Moya Bailey wrote an article called "The Ethics of Pace", which was published in the *South Atlantic Quarterly*, which is a top journal in about five different fields. And it would be a great piece to read about this question of pace and imagination, and how to imagine a world in which we both slow down. And it's

based in Disability Studies and disability justice frameworks.

Julia Sonnevend

I just wanted to thank Arlene and Cynthia for mentioning age, because I think it's weaponized in pretty ugly ways against other scholars in academic discourse, and it troubles me because it even is allowed in progressive circles in ways that surprises me. So I'm wondering whether you could comment on this question of how to create an academic discourse in which age is not used against scholars as they contribute to discourse.

Adetobi Moses

Hello, my name is Tobi. I'm a fifth year PhD student at Annenberg and I have mostly a question, but I do have a comment right at the beginning. This question is mostly for Dr Mede. I hope I'm not butchering your last name. I was really struck by what you said about trust in science and how that persists nevertheless, given the digital environment that we live in, and I was thinking really about how, in the case of the United States, what's been really interesting since COVID-19 was that we had this medical populism, if you will, that's really on both sides of the aisle, gathered a lot of strength.

And so, I think the conservatives or right wingers and the left wingers, they approach it from different standpoints. So, you know, left wingers might look at Dr Fauci, for example, and see his role in the HIV Aids epidemic in the 80s or 90s. Or they might point to the fact that there are persistent Big Pharma payouts to victims of things like the opioid epidemic. And right wingers might think that that same Dr Fauci created the COVID-19 pandemic in a lab to enrich Big Pharma. But I guess it kind of doesn't matter why people decide to believe in conspiracies about health information, etc., but what is interesting is that it seems to be one of the few things that garner support from different sides of the aisle.

RFK, for example, his appointment is a good testament to that because he's a big environmentalist, and if you think about it he has, you know, left wing leanings. And so, I wanted to talk about that because I think sometimes when we talk about the vitriol that health communication scholars face, it becomes about the scholarship less about the economic critique that's part of that vitriol. So it feels like if some policy analyst or scholar is being scolded online, a lot of times that rage feels like it's sort of like siphoning more economic critiques about health and about economic disorientation that's really pervasive in a lot of different parts of the world now.

I guess I'm asking if you can go beyond the rage and touch on what it means to engage with the rage instead of, I guess, thinking about how it puts the work at risk, but thinking about what it means to reach out and make scholarship relevant to their lives, so it doesn't feel like an attack on their values. Thank you.

Niels Mede

This question really refers to what I also have done a lot of research on, which is populism and its relationship with science and scientific expertise. And I think the way I approach this is that there's that there are

two so that there is not just the question of whether publics or certain popular segments of the public are misinformed. It's also about preferences for specific economic positions and so on. And I think you do have to address these as well. It's not just about educating an allegedly misinformed public or parts of the public. It's about speaking to their realities, which might mean that they do prefer certain epistemological arguments, not for their epistemological value, but for their ideological value that they have to them. Such as, “Well, they fit into my economic preferences or also into my religious worldviews,” and so on.

And to get to that point is obviously very challenging. But one opportunity to go into these skeptical groups is really to leverage their opinion leaders, their influencers. For example, there have been examples of HIV campaigning where relevant opinion leaders have been recruited for health campaigns. And so using credible access points to these skeptical milieus is one approach to respond to that, I would say. Thank you.

Arlene Stein

About the question of age. If I'm understanding your question, age has always been a source of division and and resentment in various ways. I mean, “don't trust anybody over 30.” The slogan from the 60s, etc. Today in academia, it seems to me that age resentments are overlapping and colliding with the changes in the profession and the structural inequalities that we're seeing.

The academy is changing. Even when I came into the profession in the 90s I thought that things were bad in relation to the earlier moment in which it seemed as though academic jobs were more plentiful. Now it's a lot worse. So I think what that calls for is union activity to preserve tenure track jobs, to call for more funding for universities. It calls upon us to exercise a little bit more self-awareness in our interactions within different academic departments and a little bit more kindness.

And once I step back, having gotten those negative responses online about my work from graduate students, at first I was shocked because I worked hard on this book. I tried to be as fair and empathetic as I possibly could. And then I basically get called, a TERF or an old person trying to understand transgender politics, and I resented the hell out of that.

Because I have tools and I have insights that are a product of my age. They're a product of the fact that I have a historical perspective. On the other hand, once I step back a little bit and understood those resentments in their context, I saw some of the structural underpinnings of them, and it allowed me to be a little bit more forgiving. But yes, age, we know that we know that race, class and gender are huge divisions within universities. We don't really talk about age all that much. Maybe we should.

Valentina Proust

Thank you so much for the very insightful comments from our panelists. And I'm sorry if we weren't able to take all the questions. We can definitely continue with that during the reception. But before that, I want to give the floor to Guobin Yang, director of CDCS,

so he can deliver the final remarks of our symposium.

Guobin Yang

Thank you all. Thank you Valentina. So when I was listening to all these wonderful panels, discussions and questions, I was going through a kind of roller coaster of emotions. First of all, I love the new genre of “question slash comment.” I think that's a very, very important contribution to the conversation.

But coming back to the roller coaster of emotions, I felt that there are moments of anxiety, moments of ambivalence and moments of despair. And during moments of despair, I was wondering, how was I going to give my closing remarks? There's no way I can close. But fortunately, I think the conversations came back to more hopeful notes. With calls for new imaginations, new narratives, new forms of thinking and new ways of doing things - and those are my closing remarks. I don't have to make any closing remarks. You guys helped me. Already gave the closing remarks.

So those were the closing remarks that we collectively put together. And of course, even though we are calling them closing remarks, they are still continuing our opening remarks from Professor Barbie Zelizer and the conversations will continue. Keynotes yesterday and panels today opened up our conversations in so many ways, gave us so many questions to think about.

Really, we want to go home, reflect, do some more soul searching, think about one thing we can do or not do in our thinking and reimagining of the future.

So my closing remarks are really what you would do when you are finishing a book. You write acknowledgement and that's the best moment - you thank everybody. So on behalf of Barbie, I would like to thank all our speakers and moderators from yesterday to today. I won't be able to name everybody since there's drinks waiting outside. I want to thank our wonderful organizing team and moderators. Anjali, Liz, Jenny, Valentina, Natasha. Let's give them a round of applause.

They started working on this project in the summer and worked throughout the summer and until the fall semester, putting in a lot of work, and so we have to blame them for the huge success of these panels and conversations. I also want to thank a lot of other people, our IT team: Rich, Edwin, Sean, Kyle, Deb, Frank and Peter. Who else? Many others. It's really a collective effort that's put together by the entire school and all our staff in the Dean's office. Everybody has contributed significantly to our endeavor. I also want to thank, of course, Sophie Maddocks, who's been here. Thank you. Madison and Tran, who also have worked so hard on so many things, including food and hotel flights and all the basic things, the infrastructure. Without them, this event would not have been possible. Thank you so much.

Last but not least, I want to thank everybody here. All the audience, our wonderful interlocutors for your contributions to our conversations, for your questions and comments. Thank you very much.