

GiveWell NYC Research Event, December 14, 2015 – Open Philanthropy Project

**GiveWell NYC Research Event, December 14, 2015 –
Open Philanthropy Project**

This transcript was compiled by an outside contractor, and GiveWell did not review it in full before publishing, so it is possible that parts of the audio were inaccurately transcribed. If you have questions about any part of this transcript, please review the original audio recording that was posted along with these notes.

Elie Hassenfeld: All right. Thanks everyone. I want to talk a little bit more about the Open Philanthropy Project. I just want to give a very brief high-level overview of what we're trying to do, and then we'll just let Chloe dive in about her work on criminal justice reform. Open Philanthropy, we mentioned it a little bit in the first session, but it's our partnership with the foundation Good Ventures. Good Ventures is a foundation that was started by Dustin Moskovitz and Cari Tuna. Like Natalie said, Dustin is the co-founder of Facebook, and now of Asana. We've been working with them over the last few years to essentially answer the same question that Holden and I had when we started GiveWell, which is: Where should I give to accomplish the most good?

Where GiveWell tries to answer the question for the retail donor, someone giving maybe a few hundred dollars, up to a million dollars, Open Philanthropy is trying to answer the question for the extremely large philanthropist, philanthropists that could give hundreds of millions of dollars a year. We're partnering now on this project with Good Ventures. We hope to partner with other really large philanthropists in the future. Last year, we started a partnership with Mike Krieger and Kaitlyn Trigger. Mike is one of the co-founders of Instagram, and so we're hopeful that Open Philanthropy will be a way that tech philanthropists and other large philanthropists give in the future.

We're basically looking in four broad cause areas. The major areas of focus for us are US policy, where I think philanthropy has had a lot of success, historically, in changing policy and having effect. The idea here is that government spends so much that charity can potentially leverage a great deal of money. What we call global catastrophic risks, which are areas where there's a very low probability of some catastrophic event happening that could really derail the trajectory of humanity. Over the last couple hundred years, we really increased wealth and reduced poverty by a significant amount, and anything that could significantly derail that progress is potentially very, very concerning.

I think one of the types of risks that gets a lot of attention is the risk from asteroids. This is something we have looked into; there is a page on our website about it. I think it's an area where NASA has done a pretty good job of tracking at least the most dangerous ones, but there are still risks that we're focusing on. Two of the top priorities are risks from artificial intelligence, and also what we call biosecurity and pandemic preparedness, so either emerging natural pandemics or synthetic, engineered pandemics, either accidentally released from a lab or the subject of a state or bioterrorism. There are areas that don't seem to get as much attention philanthropically as they might deserve.

A third area of focus is scientific research, basic science. Again, this is an area where philanthropy has had some of its biggest successes historically. The biggest questions we're trying to answer right now, with each cause, are: How big an impact could you have if you succeed in this cause? How neglected is the cause, with the idea that the

fewer people who are involved, the more likely we are to be able to make a difference with the money that we're recommending. Finally, how tractable is it? How likely is it that we're able to make a difference if we get involved?

Just in terms of our progress this year, a lot of our focus has been on hiring people who know much more about the fields that we're focused on than we do. Chloe is one example of this. She knows criminal justice reform well; she's an expert. We're not, and so now she's leading our grant-making in that area. We also hired Louis Ballard, who is a program officer focused on farm animal welfare, which is trying to reduce the suffering that animals have in largely factory farms. We're now working with trial hires that we hope will become full-time hires in scientific research, and then in artificial intelligence.

Finally, as you just flag that I spend most of my time on the topic of GiveWell that we talked about, and then on general organization capacity building and hiring, and so I am probably not going to be a good person to answer general questions about Open Philanthropy, though we'll see. If you're interested in asking them, feel free, but I think our hope with this session, and this is sort of new for us in one of these events, is to focus primarily on criminal justice reform, which is really our most developed program area to date. I guess I'll just turn it over to Chloe, and let her tell you about what she's doing.

Chloe: Okay. Hi. It's nice to be here. I just started Open Philanthropy full-time in August, and I have hit the ground sprinting, I think, because I am so excited about this cause and the opportunities here. A little about my background. I'm a lawyer; graduated in 2007 and did a number of law jobs, all in criminal justice, then ended up at the ACLU doing policy work, working with our ACLU affiliates around the country on mass incarceration, the issue generally trying to pass legislation, and generally advise our affiliates on the issues so that they could engage particularly in some of the smaller states where the ACLU is the only game in town. Through that work, built up a huge network of contacts, relationships, spent tons of time thinking about the issue, building up an analysis of different types of interventions, both in matters of policy, but also ways to deal with the topic. It was with that background that I came to Open Phil, and I'm really excited to bring that expertise to bear.

Just a tiny bit about the problem. I could say so much more about this, but what we're starting with is that a big development in American policy over the past few years is an increasing attention to the problem of over-incarceration and over-criminalization. The graph from the 70 goes like this, or the [inaudible 00:06:44] goes like this from 1970 until 2010, and then levels off a little bit. For all of these years, lots of people were making noise around this increasing problem, but no one was paying any attention. Due to a variety of factors, it began to gain traction and really quick, and that's in part what drew Open Philanthropy to this topic. In addition, there's a bipartisan consensus around this being an issue of concern, and so it's not in this normal, polarized space that many American policy issues are in.

It's been shooting up. Not only the US prison population is the highest in the world, US incarceration rate is the highest in the world. 35 US states have a higher incarceration

rate than any other country over 500,000 people. Maine still the lowest, teeny, tiny Maine, with, for our standards, five people basically incarcerated, still has a higher incarceration rate than any country in Europe. There's a neat graph that compares every US state to all the other countries in the world over 500,000. It's pretty striking and it's not just Louisiana and Texas that have the problem.

I mentioned there's this growing consensus that this is not good, and also that the harms are outweighing the benefits, and the benefits are even contested. We have our researcher, David [Rudeman 00:08:04] is looking now into the question of whether incarceration is criminogenic, and it seems like it is. It's complicated to sift through all the research on it, but there's a notion that it's not like it's a bad policy idea, but it is safe. It actually looks like, in fact, it's not good. I need to mention that we need to look for other solutions.

With all of that going on, the amount of research that is going into this field are incredibly small. I want to get at some point numbers comparing investments in American criminal justice reform compared to education, health, and other top issue areas, but I don't know what those other areas are. I think it's probably a lot of money into criminal justice; it's in the tens of millions of dollar range, which is incredibly small given the millions of people incarcerated, and all of the collateral effects that it has.

To find good opportunities, I spent a lot of time talking to colleagues in the field. I talked to lawyers, advocates, organizers, journalists, academics. I connect to other funders in this space; I see what they're thinking about, and as a criminal justice policy expert myself, I spend a lot of time thinking about what solutions are likely to be best. There's no single solution. There's no Supreme Court case, or federal bill, or magical one thing that's going to solve this, in part because this system is really many systems, and it's like the garbage can for many other failed social policies, so it's a little complicated. I'm going to share some areas of focus that I'm looking at now, and say a little bit more. After I run through them, I'll share some more detail on them.

My priority grant area is on advocacy to change state and local laws and policies. That's going to end up getting the most resources in any grant scenario. A second key priority area is prosecutors who are getting a lot more attention in the wake of Ferguson, and here in New York. They are extremely powerful actors within the system, basically unaccountable, electorally or otherwise, and they have huge amounts of discretion over what they do in their offices. They also turn up in legislatures and are very impactful with their testimony there, so that's a key focal point.

Also looking at alternatives to incarceration that have the potential to be systematic solutions, new ways that we want to go, new premises to set our system on, so looking at restorative justice and this program called Lead that I'll tell you a little bit about later. I'm also looking at grants aiming to increase and diversify the constituencies that are pushing for solutions on this, so it's not just the teeny tiny number of people who know a lot, but faith, and women, and evangelical Latinos, and different constituency bases whose ... If their interest was turned then this could really amp up the advocacy capacity in this space, because the political opportunity is right now, but the field has not

developed enough to really functionally take advantage of that, and so we're trying to come up to speed pretty quickly.

In all the areas, I'd say I'm aiming for something clear and tangible in terms of benefits now with the investment, and then also having attention towards the structural implications of moving in that direction. It's not like, "Good now, but it sets up in a very bad position in five years."

On the first area, which is advocacy to change laws and policies, our biggest investment to start will be the Alliance for Safety and Justice, which is a new multi-state policy reform group led by the same team that did Prop 47 in California, which none of you may have heard of in New York, but it was a big deal in California. It's resulted in a 16,000 percent reduction in the prison population in one year, basically took six felonies: drug possession, some low-level drug and theft crimes, and reduced them from felonies to misdemeanors. A felony can send you to prison for many, many years; a misdemeanor, you can only go to jail, and I actually don't know what the cap is in California. It might just be a year cap, so it's pretty significant, a felony down to a misdemeanor.

That team is a politically sophisticated team, and really is actually starting from a strong safety analysis. What do communities need in order to be safe and healthy? They have a huge constituency of victims of crime that they have pulled and worked with, to figure out, where should resources be going? How do we actually foster real safety, rather than spending tons of money churning people through prison? Grounded in that, they brought Prop 47, and grounded in that also, they'll do reform in multiple different types of states.

A concern that I have about the grant is just the size of the undertaking, if they're going to work and bring their model to multiple states at the same time, working on multiple dimensions. The team is the best that there is in my view, in terms of this type of state policy reform, but it will still be a lift. Also, different states have different conditions. Of course, other states are not like California, so to speak. On the other hand, California has, I don't know, I forget the number, but dozens of law enforcement constituency groups, who are extremely vocal and strong, and their oppositions have changed. It's not like easy sailing in blue California on criminal justice. In fact, it can even be harder in places that are controlled by the Democratic Party to move, because of the sensitivity within the party to appearing to be not taking a strong stance on criminal justice issues. Fun political dynamics that have been cycling through for several decades.

On prosecutors, I'm looking at investments in increased accountability, including investigating the wild and west world of prosecutorial elections that people understand very little about. Most people don't even know their prosecutors are elected, let alone who they are, and on what basis they should be making the decision. Most prosecutors are uncontested, or elected an uncontested races, and often what happens, even if it's an open seat, the person will retire a little early, and then basically get their successor in their. It's pretty un-democratic in that way. There's also a lot of misconduct that goes totally ignored, and so there's a couple of grants looking at trying to understand that

space better, and also to bring to light more of that misconduct, because once exposed ...

For example, there was a mini version of the accountability project was done by another funder called David [Menchel 00:14:49], who funded some research into a place called Caddo, Louisiana, where the prosecutor was just out of control, in terms of withholding evidence, and just doing a lot of real misconduct. Once it was exposed, he didn't reach stand for reelection, and then they just had an election where I think it was a state judge ran for a prosecutor in one. Just exposing that, those realities, can be beneficial to improving the conduct of the office.

Looking at alternatives in other area, I'll just go into a little detail on ... I'm looking at an organization called Common Justice in Brooklyn, which provides restorative justice alternative for victims and perpetrators in cases of serious violence. This is interesting because very few, if any, interventions in the United States focus on violence, particularly serious violence. It's considered kind of a third wheel, but it turns out restorative justice conferencing, which is one on one conferencing in a certain controlled setting where people have been prepared, is extremely, has been shown to randomize controlled trials in numerous places to be quite successful, and in fact, better than the current system at making victims feel whole afterwards and reducing recidivism.

It looks promising. Hasn't been studied with this population here in New York, and that's part of the program, is both doing the work but also there's a ongoing research study. In addition, on why I'm excited about this grant is that the director of the program has been thinking about how to talk about violence and what to do about this difficult issue, longer and in a more sophisticated way than anyone else, and we're at this point with criminal justice reform where people are realizing that you don't actually really end mass incarceration just looking at low-level drug offenses. What are we supposed to do? Danielle has thought really long and hard about that, and has a sophisticated way of really moving through that. It takes account of the need for accountability, and understanding people's context, and coming up with a solution that is grounded in people's need for safety, and some kind of correct compensation for the harm that was done.

The last thing I'll point out is this program called Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, coming out of Seattle. The basic model is that basically, all these agencies in Seattle got together and came up with an MOU, so instead of people interacting ... An individual person will end up interacting with lots of different players and municipality without them talking to each other, which results in a lot of churn through the system. Here are the police, the defenders, the prosecutors, the treatment providers, the mayor's office rather, the ACLU, and there may be another, but at least those players got together and figured out how they were going to work together and communicate. When encountering someone engaged in certain low-level activity on the street, such as prostitution or low-level drug sale, instead of making an arrest, and doing the thing, and it's determining new services, and actually it's a mental issue, and you spend all this

money, and go around and end up with services, they just bring the person directly to services and skip all the other pieces.

A recent study by the Arnold Foundation show that it is more effective at reducing recidivism than the current model, and just costs a ton less and is more and human and better for the person, who doesn't spend time in jail while completing this circuit. Lots of municipalities are interested in this, and the proposal is to have a national coordinating center to assist these cities in doing it. In some places, you're really trying to build a political consensus for reform and fighting tough fights. In other places, you have officials who are like, "We would love to not be doing this the way that we're doing it, but how do we do it in another way?" This is an example of investing in something that really supports governments in doing things differently, in a way that's been assessed, and researched, and have some basis for supporting.

That's just a overview. What was that? 13 minutes overview of the basic, where I'm starting with, and I have a lot more interesting opportunities identified, and 2016 is going to be a pretty interesting year. I don't think we've crested yet on the amount of intensity of interest in the issue, but of course, with the presidential race, people have a hard time focusing on anything, so we'll see what happens. Questions. Yeah.

Male: Some of you have mentioned your B1. There's definitely a contrast between working through the political system and dealing with officials, and letter process, an [inaudible 00:19:40], but then [inaudible 00:19:43] kind of contacts, and then just dealing that kind of the bottom of the funnel for the administrative route that can ... You have a B1, which is more effective, which is more likely to have a successful outcome. Are you weighing your recommendations [inaudible 00:20:04]?

Chloe: That's an interesting question. I have to think about that a bit before I'm going to give a really good answer. Do I have anything top of mind. First of all, I don't have the experience with every jurisdiction in the US to give a real answer to that question, a real comparative one. My sense would be that the places where it's really an administrative question, where they're like, "Yeah, please just work with us," are ones where the volume is pretty low. They tend to be smaller jurisdictions, or places where it's just Where someone, if you're good with them, they can just do what they want. They sheriff could change all these policies unlike, for example, a place like New York, which is very intensely packed with various different actors, and different interests. It's unlikely where it's just going to be a kind of bureaucratic solution, but those latter places, where politically-informed advocacy are more important, also tend to be the ones where the people are, and thus the numbers are.

I don't think that that would be true in every case; you would certainly want to be looking for opportunities where you could take a less fraught route to a solution, but when I'm thinking back to my experiences, particularly working with the ACLU and multiple jurisdictions, I think you could broadly say there's an inverse relationship between size of the problem and ability to solve it with that type of intervention.

Male: Those are all really [inaudible 00:21:58]. I was wondering if you've done any work to kind of get a broader view of the picture, and say conceivably in five years, we can maybe, with this nonprofit, we can free this many people from criminally [inaudible 00:22:10] sentences. Do you look at things at the broader scope level, or are you mostly working with fundraising?

Chloe: Definitely want to look at things broadly, and that was something that I think my interest in thinking that way was, I think, part of why Open Philanthropy decided I would be a good person to work on this. My general thought is that it's too soon to come up with a grand strategy, because so many of the critical pieces of infrastructure aren't yet in place, and that's part of what I want to be doing. The Alliance for Safety and Justice that I mentioned is going to fill a significant gap in well-informed, solutions grounded, victims' needs grounded, politically sophisticated criminal justice reformed. Once they start to get going, and we see how well does their strategy to coming out of California work in other places. If I see that happen in two, three states and it's looking really good, I can start to imagine how that's going to play out in another 30 states, but I can't tell you that now, because I've just seen that model in one state.

I think that's true across a number of dimensions. For example, we've never had sophisticated communications in this field on any level. No organization has really had them. What will happen when that capacity is brought on line, and people hear about this topic from a different perspective? Will minds change very quickly, or will there be very significant sticking points that we have to build other things to address? Hard to say, so yeah. The one thing that we can look at for a model here, I think, but that's different in some key ways, is the speed at which we've seen decarceration of young people under 18, which has seen about a 50% reduction in rate, but over about a 10 period. That shows us that that type of thing is possible, particularly interesting given that in the '90s, everyone was talking about super predator kids, and lock them up, and they're going to get you, and now people are like, "Yeah, incarcerating kids is probably really not a good idea, and we're very reluctant to do it." Total shift in mindset that you wouldn't even have noticed unless you were focusing on it all the time.

There's the question: How did that happen? The first report on that is going to come out, I think, in the next very short few months, but it can be difficult even for the people who've done the work, after the fact ... I have to figure out, what was the combination of different types of interventions that brought about that shift in thinking, and then what would it take to do that, in terms of money, number of people involved, geographic spread, to accomplish that on the adult side? I am aiming to get to the point where I can answer that question.

Male: [inaudible 00:25:04], so much. In New York State, it's you're tried as an adult at 16, and I think New York is alone, at least at that young.

Chloe: I think there might be one another state. [crosstalk 00:25:19] I'm sorry.

Male: Why is that cannot be changed equally, and what's it [crosstalk 00:25:23]?

Chloe: Yeah. I'm less familiar with the details of it, but there is a campaign called Raise the Age in New York, which is specifically focused on that. I think they've got somewhere with the governor, but it needs to be funded, so there's been this huge effort of many, many groups, but it's kind of stuck. That's my sense of where it's at right now.

Male: What needs to be funded?

Chloe: Part of raising the age, if you raise it from 16 to 18 is, you bring many thousands of people under the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts and detention centers, which means you need to have more capacity there.

Male: If there is more expenses [crosstalk 00:25:59].

Chloe: Yeah. Yeah, or even if they weren't, you'd need to do some stuff there, but in fact they are much more expensive, because we treat kids with more care. That's a whole process, but yes. On the other hand, so New York is stuck at 16, whereas Connecticut is proposing raising the age of jurisdiction to 21, so you bring a whole three more years of people into a different mindset of how we think of people's where they are at developmentally. I was just speaking to someone in this room, back there, from Princeton earlier about the impact of brain science, and the juvenile side has been so huge because people realizing, "Oh, dealing with an 18-year-old, you're not dealing with a fully functional, present, person able to think 10 steps ahead and understand the consequences of their actions," in the same way that you would dealing with a 30-year-old person. People have found that in policy to be something relevant to consider.

Yeah. It's where you set that age, is really important. It's that kind of decision that I think is total invisible for most people, is being very relevant. I think most people would assume that incarceration is driven by crime. In fact, it bears very little relationship to crime; it's mostly driven by policy decisions like that. Crime has been dropping precipitously. It's now at the lowest level in decades, but incarceration, until very recently, has just been going up, and that's a function of many things, including ... For example, prosecutors, I mentioned before, using their discretion in ways that end up with many more people getting felony convictions than before, for the same behavior. That's just one example of policy driving incarceration, rather than crime.

Male: Why does any measures and metrics of effectiveness in terms of [inaudible 00:27:53] are you doing, or what can you do as far as [inaudible 00:27:58] this area goes?

Chloe: First of all, it's definitely not my forte to think in those ways, but luckily I have colleagues at Open Philanthropy who do think like that all day long, so that's good. One of the first, another grant that I didn't name specifically that we're working towards, but it's not yet final, is a campaign to close Rikers, the jail in New York City, and then rely on various much smaller jails in the boroughs. Part of it because Rikers is a very terrible place, but in terms of my mission of decarceration, they built it and then they came kind of thing. There's like 10,000 person daily census on Rikers, and there is a consensus among the experts that could certainly that number drop to 5,000 if not lower.

For example, many people are there simply because they can't pay money bail, and if you didn't have that jail, you just wouldn't have the option of having a ridiculous policy of incarcerating people because they don't have \$200 to get out of jail. Happily, an interesting aspect of the Rikers work also was, we're pretty clear we're starting with 10, we think we can get to 5. That's a 5,000 person reduction with, I think Alexander called it, a 20% chance of success over however many years, with this input. He came up with a dollar, and I can't actually remember what the dollar per individual no longer in jail per year was, and found that to be favorable compared to give directly. Yes, you can.

Of course, some things are harder, like what's the value of Evangelical Christian Society if this is a thing that they care about? I can't put a number on that, but we can imagine it being very impactful, given spaces, or the number of legislators who really care about their voice and not so much care about the ACLU's voice, for example. Once we have Rikers in place, we could maybe compare to Rikers in a more qualitative way, and still be thinking of it in terms of efficiency, and of dollar spent, because that's certainly a volume. Obviously, we don't want to spend a million dollars getting a hundred people out of prison in Virginia, unless you've done it with such a leading edge policy reform, that if 20 other states did it, it would actually add up to a lot.

As a general value, I can do that calculation in my head, having done the policy work. The specific 250X or whatever is going to be much easier in some places than others, and we'll have to do our best. We don't only want to things where we know exactly how many people are going to be impacted; again, because the Evangelical example, you might get ... That could be really great and in fact critical to remove policy obstacles, but it's not actually a specific numerical outcome.

Elie: We're trying to undertake this type of analysis, and one of the ways we've been thinking about it recently is comparing the impact, the estimated impact of a program, to our GiveWell's top charities, as some baseline. There's a couple recent blog posts that we wrote, that touch on this, that talk about how we're thinking now about the size of grants that we should be recommending that Good Ventures make, both in Open Philanthropy and to give all top charities. If you're interested in this topic, and this question in general, two recent blog posts going to it.

Male: I think all of the issues you mentioned were focused for pre [inaudible 00:31:31], and I presume that's really ending mass incarceration, where you do something if you've already been sentenced to long-term prison. That just doesn't look cost-effective, or it doesn't [inaudible 00:31:44] forward in that [crosstalk 00:31:47].

Chloe: In the Alliance for Safety and Justice case, a key thing they're already starting with ... They're growing out of an existing organization, so I've started work, even though we haven't moved the grant to them yet. They're working with Michigan, where they key policy reform that's sweeping now is un-parole. It's not uniformly the case. I'm thinking way upstream, though in general, I tend to be biased towards upstream, because if you can get upstream, you stop people going down. Yes, we need to attend to the number of people who are already sentenced and in prison. A big factor that many people don't consider, or are unaware of, is that something ... In many states, about a third of prison

admissions are people coming back on parole and probation violations, technical violations. You missed one meeting, or you missed 30 meetings. I don't know. It could've been a sea of violations, but it's not actually for a new crime.

Those are people who say, "We're in on robbery. Got paroled or released after a certain number of time, and then we're on supervision," and then came back in. When you look and say, "What is that person in for?" It says, "robbery," but really what they're in for is technical violation of parole and probation. This is getting really technical, but which it means is I think that there is ... That population is more gettable than would appear to be the case, just based on that if you just looked in it and you're like, "Oh, my gosh, how many people are in prison for what length of sentence?" It's hard to calculate, because in order to suss that out, you need very specific state data that they won't just hand over to you. You need to have relationships to get it, and just know that that's the sort of dynamic that comes up.

The bigger scale leading edge reforms, I think, that I think we could be working towards, would be things like mass retroactive changes. Actually, Prop 47 in California is retroactive, for these felonies changing down to misdemeanors, and because in California you can no longer be held in prison on a misdemeanor, you can only be held in jail, that led to significant releases of people. On their new status, they couldn't be in prison anymore. They had be in jail, and then jail, they're not going to stay there for as long of a time. In various states, you can't actually do retroactive reform, like in Florida, it's in the Constitution. You can't do that, so it's kind of state-specific thing you have to figure out.

Part of the goal of investing in Alliance for Safety and Justice is that they will be the state policy experts to spot those opportunities, and look at whatever is going to get the deepest into the guts of things in particular states, whether they be front, middle, or back end.

Elie: All right, so let's just take two more questions, because it's getting late, and then we can-

Male: I'm just wondering about the intertwining that some of the findings that you have, say reducing drug offenses from felonies to misdemeanor at the California experiment. Do what degree does the felony and misdemeanor division influence police behavior? The one example I'm thinking of, and I'm forgetting the name of the recent University of Pennsylvania law graduate who lived in a tough Philadelphia neighborhood. Her conclusion, as I recall, was that the cops were being rewarded for felony dope busts, but were insufficiently going after homicide busts, because homicides, they're difficult, they're complex, you don't get ... For five easy dope busts, you get as much credit in your policing behavior watch as you do for, say, one homicide. Her, to me, interesting conclusion was, there has to be much more vigorous prosecution of homicides than a much less vigorous prosecution of the drugs [inaudible 00:35:50].

Chloe: That is true.

Male: Can that inform a public policy which could then be impelled by charitable donations from donors looking for a thing? That's the real question.

Chloe: That book is called *On the Run*. I can't remember the author. A book that, if you're interested in that phenomenon and want to nerd out on this stuff that I think is fabulous is called *The Collapse of American Criminal Justice*. It talks about some of the perverse incentive, to the way these systems have emerged. It's by William Stuntz, S-T-U-N-T-Z, who was, for many years, a criminal procedure professor at Harvard Law School, and was in fact my criminal procedure professor. Really brilliant guy. Yes, the incentive structure driven by, for example, federal funding streams, has really benefited or driven police departments to adopt policing practices that over-emphasize, in some analyses, drug busts. Not only is a certain number of drug busts going to be equivalent in some way to a murder, but in fact because there's drug task force money, specifically you want to be churning those through. The Brennan Center has done research, and has made recommendations for changing how certain grants are made at the federal government level.

Something that I'm not thinking about right now too much, but I have returned to this topic in the future question is whether there could be some interesting advocacy, or moves to shift Bureau of Justice Assistants, National Institute of Justice, and DOJ, on Department of Justice. Structure those funding streams, and where money is being spent, in terms of researching the impacts of these policies, or alternatives, or whatever. I haven't dug into that federal agency stuff, but if you think it could be interesting, inspired in part by our Fed Up campaign at Open Philanthropy, which is trying to get the Fed not to raise interest rates. It shows that you could think about trying to move federal agencies to change how they're shaping this face, and it would have huge effects because of how much money is involved.

I think also just attending in general to the perverse incentives that are set up by the ways that people are rewarded, both financially and professionally. For example, back to prosecutors. You get promoted based on your wins, not on your diversions, and you could change that. For example, you could have a promotion set of matrix that looks at the degree to which you actually send people to non-incarceration solutions, and reward that. That's something that I think different people have started to think about, and I'm interested in groups that might push that further, for example, through the budgeting process. There's all kinds of ways I could imagine that percolating through.

Right now, what's in front of me are opportunities where excellent leaders are ready to go, with ideas that I can see being really useful, and then things like what you just mentioned are ones that I have flagged for, that should I encounter the group or a person that's going to be doing really interesting work there, I would certainly be interested in them. I'm not yet at a point of proactively formulating entities that are going to take on that type of thing, because I haven't run out of the other seemingly impactful things. I do think that that's the right way to think about it. Any last ... [inaudible 00:39:53], you had your hands up before I was done.

Male: [inaudible 00:39:58] Fed Up. Interesting.

- Elie: This is just something that I'm not going to be the right person to talk about. Macroeconomic policy is one of the focus areas of Open Philanthropy, and Alexander Berger is the one who's led our work there. The big picture idea is that the feds decisions could affect so many people and so much money that they could be incredibly impactful. There's a very strong constituency that seems to be arguing for higher interest rates, and it's not clear that the constituency that's saying this, the economy will be severely affected. The popular constituency whose lives will be affected have a stronger voice, and so that is the idea behind the Fed Up campaign, but it's not something that I can really get into.
- Chloe: There's a good long, long write-up on the blog.
- Elie: That's always true with you. Yeah. That is always true.
- Chloe: If you just look up, "Open Philanthropy Fed Up," and-
- Elie: You can always just email Alexander directly. Anyhow-
- Chloe: Are you really telling [crosstalk 00:40:58].
- Elie: No. He loves it. I think it's funny that Holden and I left a finance company, because we were really excited about charity and less excited about economics, and Alexander's working at a charity but stays up late on weekends reading about macroeconomic policy, and so we just ... That's a pretty funny outcome. Anyhow, so did anyone have a last question, and I know we've gone a little bit over. All right, so Tom, why don't you-
- Tom: Among criminal justice reform advocates, is there much disagreement, is there generally a consensus on what kind of interventions are going to be useful, or are there controversies?
- Chloe: When you say interventions, you mean ...
- Tom: Just different tactics for improving the state of criminal justices. [inaudible 00:41:43]
- Chloe: I'm going to take it to mean you're not talking about tactics but for advocacy, but rather tactics for, what would we want a good, well-functioning system to look like?
- Tom: Yeah.
- Chloe: I think most people don't have a good answer to that question, and I think that people should get much more comfortable having an answer. My working hypothesis is something like Lead, the program I mentioned out of Seattle, for low-level stuff, something like, or in the realm of common justice, meaning restorative justice, for more serious violent cases, though it has to be tested. Again, it's a hypothesis. For your low-level thefts and assaults, I think so many of those are crimes of either, actually related to drug use, which would be addressed by better, not just diverting people to services, but

more investment in services, or economically related and are just ... They're problems that will be reduced through better economic policies and addressing poverty.

That's where I'm working at. I wouldn't say that there's a consensus in the field, if you're asking me, "When will they say that?" My experience has been actually, because I felt like it's really important to be able to say that, when I've talked to my colleagues and said, "Well, what do you think about this?" They're like, "Yeah, that seems like a great place to ... I could agree with that as a working hypothesis about what we want things to look like." It's an incredibly rapid turn from, try to get people to notice that this is even a problem and care about it, to, now everyone's asking what the good solutions are going to be, and what are we going to spend billions of dollars to implement. That's a couple of years, where people are just so used to having to do this, that they haven't yet shifted orientation to speak comfortably in a solutions frame, but I think it's important, and as I said, I have my working sense of what that looks like.

Tom: It seems like it would be good, implement for solutions [inaudible 00:43:44] get a sense of outcome, get more information of outcome. That would be [inaudible 00:43:48].

Chloe: Yes.

Tom: It would also cycle back [crosstalk 00:43:51], right?

Chloe: Yes, and so that's part of ... In the portfolio, one of the things I'm going to be trying to do is both invest in those alternatives, and invest in research on those alternatives, to see, am I right? Also, if I'm right and people are right, then let's tell people about it, and try more of those same types of things.

Elie: Great. Thanks. Thanks to everyone, to all of you, for coming. We really appreciate your engaging with us, and talking to us about our research. This is probably not as much fun as other charity events that you could go to, so we especially appreciate your participating in pizza and questions with GiveWell and Open Philanthropy, so thank you..

Chloe: Thanks.