SALZBURG GLOBAL SEMINAR

GLOBAL INNOVATIONS ON YOUTH VIOLENCE, SAFETY AND JUSTICE

Public Communication

MARCH 3, 2021

Focus: This group's focus is less on the policy part of reform and more on the communications. Getting public communications around criminal justice reform right is critical, from convincing stakeholders that reform is necessary to avoiding spin and the portrayal as "soft on crime".
Goal: Identify specific examples of communication efforts directly assisting in changing policymakers' ideas and the community's understanding, as well as encouraging public/private investments.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Public communications are distinct from public relations (PR) work and audience is key.

- Communications are more than a government selling something; it must explain the *why*
- This requires authentic messengers
- Essential to identify the intended audience for each narrative
  - Coalitions of unlikely partners are possible if they share common goals
  - Creativity can unlock unusual, influential audiences
- Problematic if large parts of the population feel they were not consulted

Language matters.

- Be careful with the words used for processes and outcomes as much for people affected
- Communications is not only about sending out the right message, but also about how the message is understood in the current context

Lived experience and government actions are part of communication.

- Reform is seen as more effective if citizens can witness the improvements to safety and interactions with police/the criminal justice system
- Unexpected consequences should be addressed
- Transparency is important
- A public health response to violence reduction can be very effective, but loses credibility and trust if the police return to old habits following any violence

Participation can rebuild trust.

- Young people often don't trust the government
- Technology like Twitter can bridge the communication and participation divide
- Other forms of participation in local democracy are also important

KEY EXAMPLES

- **Georgia** (police reform post-Rose Revolution)
- **Philippines** (lack of community consultation for anti-terror bill; challenges with new Sharia law)
- **Massachusetts, US** (earlier prison reform via women's groups)
- **US** (LGBT "coming out" and DACA/Dreamers campaigns)
- **Glasgow** (public health response to violence reduction)
- **London** (public health response to violence reduction, though less successful)

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- "Don't Move On Just Yet: Could a truth and reconciliation commission help the country heal?" by Quinta Jurecic in *The Atlantic*
- "In O.C., Young Adult Court offers a path to clear felony convictions" by Lilly Nguyen
- *Knowledge Exchange* from the Butler Trust
- *World Prison Brief* by the Institute for Crime and Justice Policy Research
- *Amend*, a Netflix documentary
- Centre for Mental Health
- "Colombia's ex-combatant children and adolescents" by Stephany Armas Contreras,
- Khary Mason on *Shoot Wisely the Content Creators Podcast with Amir Ebrahimi*
- *Documenting Detroit: Emerging photographers share their work* (an intimate study of incarceration) by Facing Change