

Hello, my name is Rachel Rosekind.

I believe that people and their well-being should be at the center of economic and political systems. And that budgets are about connecting *social* values with *dollar* values, about connecting community members with life-affirming resources that help them lead healthy, fulfilling lives.

Desmond Tutu said "There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in."

We live in a society with a *massive* amount of violence and a *massive* amount of preventable suffering. If poverty *is* preventable (and I believe it is) *and* simultaneously a condition that makes a person 15x more likely to be incarcerated, do we want to invest in prevention or punishment? 90% of all people who prosecutors choose to charge with crimes in our country cannot afford to hire an attorney. What does this say about equity, justice, and fairness at the front end of our criminal legal system? Why do we criminalize poverty?

Our society's systemic ills fall hardest on people of color and poor and low-income communities. African Americans are disproportionately incarcerated and subject to higher rates of homelessness. Think about what a difference a holistic wellness center devoted to repairing harms, addressing structural racism across numerous sectors, and centering well-being in and for the county's Black communities could make?

We also need a guaranteed income pilot that promotes individual empowerment, self-determination, and dignity; is anti-poverty and pro-opportunity; and ameliorates the effects of generational poverty, the trauma of racial discrimination, and deliberate under-resourcing of specific communities.

Almost 30 years ago, CA voters passed Prop 184, the Three Strikes Law, kicking the carceral system into overdrive and simultaneously draining the

coffers of social services and public universities. After its eye-popping financial projections were released, Governor Wilson said “I guess we’ll have to reduce other services. *We’ll just have to change our priorities.*” It’s notable that in the first six months of prosecutions under the new law, African-Americans (10% of the population) made up 57% of LA County’s “three strikes” filings; 17x the rate for whites, though contemporary data showed that white men committed at least 60% of the state’s serious and violent crimes.

When will we creatively explore new terrains of justice? When will we address the root causes and preventable suffering that propel so many children from poor communities, especially communities of color, into the juvenile system and on to prison? These issues and solutions extend beyond our county, but a meaningful response to them begins with *our* investment in a constellation of alternative resources and institutions that lift people up instead of pinning them down or hemming them in. For this to happen, we must *believe* that everyone deserves to live with dignity and freedom and provide equitable access to resources and opportunities that enables them to do so. Please prioritize prevention, not punishment, to seed a more just and healthy future for **all** county residents.