

**EPISODE 1372**

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**FT:** So Money is brought to you by CNET, the site that shows how to navigate change all around us. So Money episode 1372, closing the racial wealth gap with Xavier Ramey, CEO of Justice Informed.

[INTRO]

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**[00:00:42] FT:** Welcome to So Money, everybody. It is Monday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Today, we commemorate Juneteenth to honor human freedom, reflect on the devastating and ongoing legacy of slavery. As the White House says, Juneteenth is a moment to rededicate ourselves to rooting out the systemic racism that continues to plague our society.

In honor of Juneteenth, we have with us Xavier Ramey. He's an award winning social strategist, a noted public speaker. He's a conflict mediator, and he's CEO of Justice Informed. It's a company that helps clients, including many Fortune 500 companies, catalyze strategies for inclusion, philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, and community engagement.

I first met Xavier about a month ago. We were both invited to an event called Disruptive Discourse. It was a series of incredible panels, talks, and roundtable discussions encircling workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion. The event was presented by OfColor, which is a financial wellness platform. I actually moderated a panel, and then Xavier gave what was just an incredibly powerful keynote on the state of racial inequality through his eyes, as well as his ideas for moving the needle forward.

I actually want to share some of that keynote here with you now, so you can see why I just had to have Xavier on the show. Here he is talking about the need to address the racial wealth barrier with greater urgency and how his upbringing shaped his ideologies.

**XR:** *The pace of racial change in America can no longer move at the pace of white fragility. Hard stop. You see the fragilities of those who have privilege walked and set the pace for progress. That is fundamentally the challenge of power. This is why it is important for everyone to recognize their own power, to recognize their own privileges. Some of these powers and privileges are ones that we are born with. Some of them are assumed over time. I was born in the North Lawndale neighborhood in Chicago. If you've ever read Ta-Nehisi Coates' *The Case for Reparations*, that is the neighborhood I grew up in. It was the one that stimulated him to offer such a piece, to talk about what is the claim for reparations in America. It is defined by this experience even."*

**[00:03:01] FT:** The cost of racism by some estimates is \$70 trillion. That's according to Shawn Rochester, author of *The Black Tax*. In his book, he calculated that racism in the United States since the start of slavery has left a toll of \$70 trillion. So Xavier is here to help us better understand this urgent conflict, expand on his keynote, and propose newer ideas on how companies and individuals, how we can reimagine what it would take to create a more equitable world. Here's Xavier Ramey.

[INTERVIEW]

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**FT:** Xavier Ramey, welcome to So Money.

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**XR:** Thank you so much, Farnoosh. I'm glad to be here with you.

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**FT:** It's nice to reconnect. I was just saying in the intro that I had the great honor earlier in May to moderate a panel at the OfColor event, OfColor founded by Yemi Rose, who has been on this show. He's a big advocate for closing wealth gaps. He's an inspiring entrepreneur and OfColor

is his company and he had an event, where he had some really powerful panels and you there as well as his keynote to move the audience.

I was moved, Xavier. I really was. It was such an incredible end to the morning. I took so many notes. As I was walking back to my house, I thought I would love to have Xavier on the show because you need to be out there more. I want my audience to learn from you as much as I learned – I had so much follow up too that I would love to get into with you now.

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**XR:** Let's dig into it.

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**FT:** Yeah. So why don't you just take the stage for a little bit and tell us a little bit about your company, Justice Informed, what the mission is, what's driving the mission?

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**XR:** Yeah. So Justice Informed is a social impact consulting firm. It's based in the City of Chicago, but we are very fortunate to be working coast to coast in the US and a bit actually globally now. We work with all types of different institutional types from small nonprofits to start up for-profit companies up to Fortune 500s, with philanthropic foundations and persons who are interested in charitable giving.

All of the work that we do primarily, however, is looking at this this point of the question of authorship, authorization, and specificity, and social impact. So what we mean by authorship, our mantra is we are here to change the face of expertise. What that means is that when we're talking about social impact, we're often talking about impacting communities and people who often don't have the authority to offer the solutions that most impact their lives.

So when you're talking about affordable housing, it's often not persons who are experiencing housing insecurity that are drafting legislative agendas. When you're talking about a developer

moving in Chicago, for instance, the West Loop, and building some high rise skyscraper with luxury condominiums for 3,000 to 4,000 dollars a month and a pool and all these types of things, there's not usually a conversation with displaced residents about the community benefits agreements or the lack thereof for those types of institutions and those types of civic plans.

Our hope is that the world, as it relates to social impact, is informed by those persons for whom impact is most needed. That the pace of change for social justice and social equity moves at the pace of the need and ambitions for those who are unsafe without it, not the fears and discomfort of people who are simply uncomfortable about the conversation or about what it may cost them. So this point around authorship is really important.

Then secondly, authorization and using influence. So we work with a lot of really big companies as well. I'm blessed to be the executive advisor for some Fortune 500 global leadership teams. The issues of, for instance, diversity, equity, and inclusion, which is one of our major service areas, we engage that with them in really powerful ways. But it's so different when you're talking about DEI in, let's say, India or Pakistan. Or you're talking about it in Egypt. Or you're talking about DEI in Italy or across anywhere in Europe, versus here in the United States.

Though issues of discrimination and anti-blackness and racism and climate issues and all this kind of stuff is felt everywhere, how it shows up is really regionally specific. So our second mantra is one of relational specificity. We are always trying to be super specific about who we're dealing with. That means that all of my team, they have to be very, very granular, very, very tactical about being specific about the people that they're speaking about and those who are empowering us to develop strategies for them.

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**FT:** It's not just people of color, as we like to say.

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**XR:** Yeah. It's all intersectional. So it's not just about, for instance, one type of point of marginality race. It is about all of the ways that they intersect with one another in how we build

our systems, how we use culture to envision our communities, and then how we create or do not create accountability across time.

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**FT:** I wrote down the word pace and specificity and urgency, as you were giving your keynote. Speaking of pace and urgency, a lot of people might see – Maybe they read headlines or they noticed at their own companies that there has been advancement, let's just call it that, since, say, the murder of George Floyd in 2020. DEI wasn't even in the vernacular, right? This idea that companies are now going to dedicate departments to creating more inclusivity and to end diversity at their companies.

The pace is too slow, though. You think that we should be moving faster? So how do we do that, and what do you think of the nature currently of how companies are approaching their solutions to closing wealth gaps and being more diverse?

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**XR:** Yeah. Pace is really important. When I started Justice Informed, part of the reason why I started it was because I've been working for all different types of institutions and simply did not feel that the pace of change and the urgency was one that was moving at the pace of my ambitions. I believe that all of possibility, it lives between the ambitions and fears of those who have power over you. If they have ambitions that you share, then they'll ask you to work with them. If they have fears, however, they will ask that you submit to them.

If a person is afraid of using, for instance, specific language like social justice, you go into some corporations, and they say, "That's political." You use terms like anti blackness to be very specific about types of systemic racism. People would say, "Oh, it's a very radical term." They're pointing to the fact that they may agree with your path. They may agree like racism is wrong. We both agree. But being that urgent in language, I don't agree with that. That's going to polarize people, or that's going to – We need to listen to how some people are afraid of that term, and we need to set the pace according to their fear, rather than setting the pace according to your ambitions or your need for life.

Justice Informed, the whole point is to be informed by justice, is to step away from being informed solely by profit. Step away from being informed solely by wealth accumulation. Step away from being informed by fear and say what would it mean if we were informed by justice, which is an accountable relationship with the people that are around us, ensuring that we're not simply talking about equality. We're understanding that equality is an outcome where there is equity.

Our strategies and structures and paths and processes, all of our relationships are about committing to what we have to do in the near term. The present day is all about how do we engage in accountability in our relationships and how we design society. That is the work of equity towards a future where we can actually be equal.

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**FT:** Yes. I was hearing you on another podcast. You were saying how we have to tweak this idea of like human to humane, like thinking about it in those contexts. So can you give us an example of when you have been encountering this resistance with a client who's like, "Xavier, help us," and you're like, "Okay." Because, actually, during the keynote, you said something interesting, which was that a client comes to you, a Fortune 500, a rich billion-dollar company, and they're like, "We want to close the wealth gap." You say, "Okay, show me your –" It was at their defense budget.

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**XR:** Security contracts.

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**FT:** So why start there?

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**XR:** Well, that was specifically because I was talking to one of the C-suite members who was interested in understanding how could he as the CFO embrace the work of anti-racism. Anti-racism has three foundational pillars, and I will just acknowledge that the definition of anti-racism is continually evolving, and different people are defining it on their own terms.

At Justice Informed, we look at the three pillars that come out of critical race theory and the Martin Luther King Studies Institute for nonviolence. So those are the confrontation of white supremacy, the confrontation of hyper capitalism, and the confrontation of global militarism. If you're looking at this question of how can I embrace anti-racism in my organization, in my company, the first thing you have to look at is where along those three points does my work intersect.

If you're talking about, for instance, security, security is a part of the pillar of militarization. We know that when you're talking about security versus safety, and I will say there's a difference, security is done with weapons and power. Safety is a product of relationships and equitable distribution of resources. So if you don't have safety, you end up defaulting to security, which is why we say, "Hey, we have to have non-police responses." If you're talking about your security contracts, and you're talking about operating in predominantly black and brown countries around the world, if you're talking about increasing your DEI hiring goals to include more people of color, you have to have, you have to have a lens on where security is being used, instead of creating safety.

That comes with your facilities. That comes with your offices. How are those offices secured? What are the security contracts that you're working with, and what are the vendors that you're working with? Is there any type of racial bias training that's required before they get approved for a contract? Is there any type of conversation around anti-blackness, white supremacy, these sorts of things with those security agents? Are security agents allowed to be armed on the premises?

If they are armed and you're sitting there like, "Hey, we want to open up more facilities in non-downtown spaces in large metropolitan cities like Chicago, New York, etc.," those non-downtown spaces are usually going to be inhabited by more people of color, who usually have a

different experience with any type of security, whether that's formal police, whether that's military overseas, or whether that's a non-deputized security officer.

For a major company, if they want to get involved in anti-racism, one of the ways they can do it is looking at those three pillars; hyper capitalism, white supremacy, and then the third one, as he and I were discussing, this question around militarization.

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**FT:** What happened next, when you kind of broke this down for the CFO? Was he on board? Or where is project now?

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**XR:** It was interesting. His eyes kind of lit up because a lot of this work I think – One of the things that I'm always trying to understand is how much can a person imagine, right? Remember what I was saying earlier, right? All of ambition sits between – All of possibility sits between your ambitions and fears. If all you're imagining is fear or all you're thinking about is how the market won't like this or how you have to explain this to your shareholders at the next investors meeting, these sorts of things, you're listening to fear at that point. You're not listening for ambition. Ambition and fear both have a cost and a value, right? Sometimes, it's important to be pragmatic, but it's not important to be fearful. Sometimes, it's important to be cautious, but it's not necessarily important to be overly ambitious.

When I was speaking with him, his eyes kind of lit up, and I say all of this because he had never imagined. He had simply never imagined that there was a possibility that the work would show up like this. Part of that was because he did not actually have an education in anti-racism. He didn't actually understand the three pillars. He had never gone through – You never read that. You won't hear that in *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo. You won't. There's only certain types of books that even teach this stuff. Most business schools, and I teach at business schools, most business schools stay away from this stuff. They don't even teach it.



It was at this point where, like I find with a lot of our clients, it's not that they're resistant. It's just ignorance that they just don't know. They just don't know. At the point of being introduced to this information, that is where Justice Informed, we're always like, "All right, here's our invitation. We can't force you to adopt anti-racist principles. We can't force you to be more urgent about DEI. But as a black man from the City of Chicago, what I am going to do is I'm going to invite you to a more urgent way of doing this work that is informed by people like me and our staff who believe this is the pace we should be going.

Now, you can decline my offer. You can try to negotiate or you can accept. But you can't say you didn't get an offer. You can't say you weren't invited to a bigger table and a better table. That is what I got excited about with him. So the conversation evolved, and we were actually still in discussion. I mean, this was fairly recent. We're still in discussion about this, and he's actually expanded out now to think about all of these different pillars and his own leadership with the employee resource groups at the company and his own identity and how he shows up as a white man in these spaces and such.

I'm proud of the work he's done, but he's moved to that point where in our spectrum of engagement that we talk about on our website, from that point of understanding, like increasing your understanding, to then showing that evidence of understanding, which is consensus like, "I agree. All right, let's move. Let's do something," you're now moving into the work of routing, how do we start talking about practices, policies, things that are in writing to move forward. That's where that's where we're at right now. Do I know whether he's going to go the whole 100 yards with me? I don't know. It's my job to make sure that he knows what those 100 yards look like.

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**FT:** It's interesting. You say that we don't learn these things in business school. We also don't live this in a capitalist world, right? How are we to expect that we can close racial wealth gaps in a society that is all about the bottom line? Previously, when we talk to companies about making the case for inclusivity and diversity, I'm talking like consultants, they reference statistics that say, "Well, you could make more money. This is good for the business." Truly, this is what has lit up their eyes in the past, not what you're doing. How do we move away from that? Really, it's at the core of what is a capitalist society. So we're running up against a huge behemoth.

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**XR:** Yeah. First, we have to get rid of this fallacy of merit. Merit does not make millionaires. Let's make that – Let's put that on a t-shirt. Nice little acronym. Merit does not make millionaires. It is when the entire system is organized towards your favor, with fervor, when the entire system is being organized towards your favor. That is actually what privilege is. It is when you have a systemic opportunity that is created because both culture and practices are oriented towards your favor.

When we're talking about financial wealth, first off, we have to step back and say, “We have to define wealth with an important distinction.” If wealth is simply the accumulation of money, then we fundamentally have an issue. Because the reality is – So for instance, you can say that wealth is having a ton of money. In some of the business programs that I've been a part of that are definitely not in your traditional business school, wealth is defined as having an excess of help to satisfy your aims in life, to have an excess amount of help.

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**FT:** Resources.

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**XR:** Yeah. So wealth is not always money. Sometimes, it's simply another person. It's a family member. It's the fact that the schools are funded equitably. It's the fact that roads are taken care of, right? That is wealth, being able to have sufficient amount of health and help towards the satisfaction of your aims in life.

I think part of the challenge with the way individuals think of wealth is they think of it individually. So for example, yesterday, I was just talking with one of my friends in Chicago. They're building an entirely new neighborhood. It's called the 78. So Chicago has 77 communities, and Chicago is very much, well, it used to be, I think, a neighborhood-based city.

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**FT:** That's where you're from. Let's –

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**XR:** I'm from and based in Chicago. Increasingly, it is not. It's interesting to see how the pandemic and people settling and moving different places and such has really changed the fabric of the city. I don't think that Chicago is going to be a neighborhood city for much long in the way that it was. I don't think that we're going to have ethnic enclaves. I don't think we're have cultural hubs. Everything that is cultural is eventually bought up by people who can afford it, and then diluted down out of all of its cultural power, and then sold off to people who are coming in and think it's fascinating, rather than important and holy.

I look at that, and I say, "Okay, so this is the gentrification thing." But it's also the choice thing, right? Why build an entirely new neighborhood, an entirely new neighborhood, right next to downtown Chicago? Because the rivers there, and we'll get all this money, and people can afford \$4,000 a month apartments. We have 70-plus neighborhoods that are struggling. We have generational lack of investment, predominantly on the south and west side of the city that are predominantly black and Latino.

When you look at that, and you look at the everyday person who's buying a condo or renting an apartment in, let's say, the West Loop or in River North or downtown, these are like very affluent, predominantly white neighborhoods. Mostly, for the most part, these are all millennials doing this type of stuff, who are going into these spaces without any lens on how it affects everyone else. As a lifelong three generation Chicagoan, I see and feel it every time these skyscrapers go up. I see that we're prioritizing this and not that.

People who come into communities, they don't ask, "How can I be a neighbor?" They ask, "What are the amenities?" They don't ask, "How am I a part of us?" They say, "What's in it for me?" They don't ask, "How do I ensure that I live my life in such a way that there is safety for everyone around me?" Instead, they say, "What is the security like in this neighborhood," right? They're asking all the individual weaponizable questions because it's about them.

So when we're talking about creating wealth, the first thing we have to understand is underneath the systemic injustices are the individual opportunities for piracy. When you have individuals who are saying, "Hey, I want to make so much money that I can give back," rather than thinking about, "I want to live in such a way where I'm not taking first," you're fundamentally going to have an issue. You're going to have downstream issues. When you have people who look at it as – For instance, they'll look at it as real estate, rather than land.

I talk with indigenous tribes all the time. They're not talking about real estate. They're talking about land. This is the thing that supports life, not a thing you buy and sell and hope to flip. This is life-giving. This is a question of human rights. Two nights ago, one of my friends, she couldn't find a bathroom in downtown Chicago, and that's because you can't. You can't find bathrooms in downtown Chicago, where you don't have to pay something to just deal with something that is a bodily issue for everyone. This is because we've now commodified a human right to dignity and body in this way, right?

When I was at University of Chicago, and I would teach students, we would do a downtown scavenger, social justice scavenger hunt. One of the questions I'd ask them is, "Hey, you got 45 minutes. You got to find a bathroom. Two things have to be true. One, you can't pay any money. And two, you can't feel any shame." They never could find it, and that's because there's only three locations in all of downtown Chicago where that's possible; the Cultural Center, Millennium Park. Down in the basement, they have bathrooms. Then in the Harold Washington Library.

We bought and sold everything that could have been humane because we're talking about how it can uplift humans, when it fundamentally doesn't reinforce the importance of a collective society. It doesn't reinforce the importance of interdependence, and it only further propagates the challenges of hyper capitalist mentality, both as cities, as communities, and as individuals.

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**FT:** I've learned a lot already about what individuals can do or at least think about differently, as we approach this problem together as a community, the problem being this massive racial wealth not really just a gap. It's a crater.

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**XR:** Yeah. It's a chasm. I mean –

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**FT:** It's a chasm. I'm a parent, and it's funny. You teach your kids as they're growing up, like the importance of sharing and friendship and showing up for people. Yet they grow up and they, again, are raised in this capitalist world. Then it's about take, take, take.

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**XR:** Competing.

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**FT:** Competing. Exactly. It starts young. You don't have to wait till you're an adult. So how do we square that as parents? Let's just talk about that and teachers.

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**XR:** Man, that's – Farnoosh, one of the challenges there is that we teach fear because we think that it'll keep our kids safe. Going to like racial violence and the police. You're right. My dad, I remember he said one of his wishes for me was that I wouldn't get my ASS kicked by the Chicago Police. That was one of his wishes. He told me that. Today's actually his birthday. He would have been 70 years old if he was still alive. But he knew that I needed to understand police from a very early age. He taught me respect authority. Respect the police. Respect, respect, respect. Whatever they say, just comply.

I was seven years old the first time I was slammed on the wall of an alley in an alley behind my house and tried to be ticketed by a police officer who said I was – They were trying to put a moving violation on me and my friends because we were playing around with a lawnmower. We

were like acting like we were riding a lawnmower. He said, "That's a vehicle. That's got an engine in it. That's a moving violation. You kids get arrested." I'm seven years old. These are the things, and this is why my parents taught me fear. Now, what they thought they were teaching me was how to be safe.

Now let's go over to money. What do we teach our kids? When they're young, share, help people. Then when they're 25, "Why don't you make more? Get out the house. Compete. Get out there, and you got to take it." We're teaching that because we're afraid that they won't be independent. They won't be able to have a life that they love. But we don't teach them what their enough points are. We don't teach them, "Hey, you got to have a number. You got to have a number." If your number is \$80,000 a year, then let that be your number. Find joy in that.

I used to live off of with \$35,000 a year. The reason why I did that – I was a director of a nonprofit at the time. The reason why I was able to do that was because I was living in an interdependent community, where I knew all my neighbors and we care for one another. We cooked for one another. We came over each other's houses. We babysat for the ones who had kids. We traveled together. We did vacations together. It was interdependent. None of us made more than \$50,000 a year. The wealthy ones did, and it was some of the best living of my life.

The challenge is where do you find entire communities of people like that. Many people are not even trying to be in those communities. As we look at this question of how we even define wealth, and how we look at our children, and how we look at what success is, if it's like what it is for you, I mean, here in Chicago, success is being able to self-isolate in some high rise 23 stories up that has no green space whatsoever, where all the kids' parents are jockeying for the same slot to the local school. Trying to pay it and play their way inside. They have no ability to understand just leisure that is not without restraints. There's fences and cages every – It's just – Oh, my gosh. Look what we're –

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**FT:** Sounds like New York. Sounds like New York.

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**XR:** Yeah. This is – We're teaching it.

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**FT:** Do you think the pandemic has worsened things, and also now with the advance of Web 3 and this push to more and more and more digital life? In other words, no longer going out into your community has become normalized and preferred by some people. Because now, it's just like the way that I'm used to it. On the one hand, I can see the benefit of technology in creating more transparency in the financial world. To help more people and invite more people into investing in real estate. But also, it doesn't help the community component that you're talking about necessarily.

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**XR:** Yeah. There's not a conversation in modern capitalist theory about the value of community. But there's also not a sufficient conversation about the cost of a lack of it. So I mean, we can go macroscopic and look at government affairs, departments for corporations, and how they continually small in government and ensure that what was left of a functioning democracy continues to devolve into what we have now. I believe that America is actually an oligarchy at this point. The businesses run Congress. The businesses run the presidency. Increasingly, they run the judiciary. That is not a republic. That is not a democracy.

So we have this macroscopic issue. But at the same time, the world is opening up in powerful ways. To your point, technology is opening up the world in these incredibly powerful ways. The parts of capitalism that are based on the tenets of free market capitalism and equal access to competition and these sorts of things I think are more true than they have been in the past, as it relates to the solid like frameworks of capitalism. We've seen in many ways where sometimes that can be of benefit.

What we've also seen is the other side of the structural parts of capitalism that are fundamentally incompatible with the continual propagation of human life. We've seen this as it relates to private equity companies and wealth management firms and these sorts of folks not

having stringent enough investment policies or not having an eye to ESG, environmental, social, and governance requirements and guidance. It's literally destroying the earth itself. It rips entire communities apart.

Technology created Airbnb. At the same time, Airbnb led to the capitalization of entire communities that have now been bought up by large real estate players and individuals. When we saw what happened during COVID, are completely priced out of being able to afford with cash what a major real estate developer company can when they're coming in to buy 40, 50, 60 buildings just in one neighborhood in Chicago, only to turn those into spaces where Airbnbs are being created, and Airbnbs don't make community. Community requires that you're more than a tourist. That you're sticking around for some time.

Imagine if parenting, if we turn parenting into a world of contract babysitters.

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**FT:** Wife swap and –

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**XR:** Well, no. I just mean like imagine if like what it takes to be a parent. Now, imagine that all of parenting was being done by babysitters, people who clocked in and clocked out? Would there be anything lost in the relationships, even to that child to themselves? Would there be anything lost in what they learn?

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**FT:** It's traumatizing for the child, first of all, to experience so many different people that – All the goodbyes. You know?

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**XR:** That is the black community in America. I mean, when men are ripped from their homes and put into the criminal justice system, when we see so many women having to bear the brunt, the emotional, the physical, and the intellectual labor of being the head of household in many of these spaces, the caretaking that is happening for elders and elders who are on fixed income salaries, who were having to provide for six, seven different people in a household. These sorts of things, this is the challenge. We're not actually building communities.

So whenever I'm talking about strategy for Fortune 500, or we're working with the MacArthur Foundation around collective impact and looking at all these different grantees they work with, right? When we're talking at these high levels, at the end of the day, Farnoosh, all I'm talking about is like, "Yow, do you know the power of what you want and when it cost someone else? Whatever you want to build, man, go build that thing." I ain't saying you can't build. What I'm saying is what the heck does it have to do with us? I know what you think it has to do with you. But what does it have to do with us? Nothing you do for the collective us can be done without understanding the harm that was only specifically put to some people and not others.

Where harm is specific, the solution has to be as well, and no one can build a business in the modern age without having a lens towards financial and community equity. You can't. You can't do it sustainably. You're just setting yourself up to be a philanthropist, and most philanthropists are pirates. Pirates can't become philanthropists. You're giving back money that was supposed to be put in for the sustainability of many people. You organize it over time, and then you like put your name on a frickin' school for the kids that live across town where you won't live. It's a terrible cycle, and we're trying to get people out of that cycle. We're trying to get people out of that vehicle. We're doing it with an invitation.

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**FT:** The train to nowhere.

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**XR:** Yeah. We're doing it with specificity with clarity. Just letting people know like, "Yow, it's an invitation."

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**FT:** And joy, let's not forget. That was another pillar. As our last question for you, Xavier, what keeps you going? Because this is hard work, and we are so grateful that you're doing it. It's a heavy, heavy lift. You and your clients working together to create change, I'm sure there are some really hard days. So what are the pockets of joy that you're finding in this work?

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**XR:** Let me be honest with you. It's been harder now than it ever has. When I first started Justice Informed, there were not many companies like it, and it was hard to get any business. It was hard to get anyone to agree. It was very difficult. We were very small for some time.

When George Floyd was killed, everybody got really excited. They got really excited about jumping into the work. What we also saw was not just people who were excited about their business taking on this work, or their foundation, or their nonprofit taking on the work. We saw more people who are wanting to be practitioners, more people wanting to actually do the work like I'm doing.

But two years later, what I've realized, and this is why I said it's hard to kind of wake up with joy all the time, what I've realized is that, now, it's the practitioners who are selling non-urgent, nonspecific strategies. The hard thing is sometimes they look like me. They're people of color. They're people from low income backgrounds, and they're seeing this entire space as a come up, as an opportunity. Or they're seeing it as a space not for justice, but for something that's more akin to revenge.

That's not love. That's not joy. That doesn't create peace. They want to shout out white supremacy. I do too. But the way in which it's happening is not one that's conducive towards accountability and reconciliation. We have to live in the world with the people we're protesting against. So how will we do that? Like that's a hard question.

Where I do find joy now is in these new ideas I'm imagining. Not about or for our clients but to bring in the practitioners, to sort of have a tribunal of the DEI world to say, "Hey, y'all. This work has to be done, but it has to be done in a way that restores the world. Not just individually restores some of us. It has to restore all of us."

So I'm getting more and more excited about that, though, I'm still trying to understand and reach out here like, "Yow, who wants some of that? Who wants to work on that part? What is the new us? What is the new community, now that COVID has ravaged the world and split apart so many of us?" There will be a coming back together, and that has to be architected differently. That's what gets me excited now.

[00:36:07]

**FT:** I think you should write a book. You should doctrinize this.

[00:36:09]

**XR:** I'm working on a book. I'm working on a book. I am. I'm just a couple of months through. We're hoping to release it next year. So be on the lookout for that.

[00:36:18]

**FT:** Let us know how we can support you. Because I agree, we need consistent efforts.

[00:36:23]

**XR:** They we have to be prepared for the work. They have to be clear-eyed about the work. But they also have to survive the work, and that's where the joy thing comes in. Like I can't survive this work unless I keep joy in my heart. This is hard stuff, right? What I'm seeing is when you don't do the work with the desire to restore all, eventually you get burned out at the cost of burning others too. People have good hearts. I believe that, and that's what I'm saying. Like that's the thing that we need to get refreshed and renewed in the world.

[00:36:52]

**FT:** Xavier Ramey, thank you so much. I could have spent more and more hours with you. But we will have you back for sure anytime but especially when your book is out. So happy for that.

[00:37:02]

**XR:** Thanks, Farnoosh.

[00:37:04]

**FT:** Thank you for making the time.

[00:37:05]

**XR:** Absolutely. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:37:08]

**FT:** Thanks to Xavier for joining us. Check out [xavierramey.com](http://xavierramey.com) and [justiceinformed.com](http://justiceinformed.com) to learn more about him and his mission. I'll put those links in our show notes. On Wednesday, stay tuned because I'm going to air my panel from the Disruptive Discourse event, where I speak to industry leaders about how companies can facilitate closing the racial wealth gaps. Not just having D, E, and I departments but actually having the follow through and accountability and measurements to enhance the lives of their marginalized employees and those within their community. Stay tuned. I hope your day is So Money.

[END]