

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

MARRIAGE AND THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

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INTRODUCTION:

RON HASKINS, Co-Director  
Co-Director, Center on Children and Families  
The Brookings Institution

SPECIAL VIDEO PRESENTATION:

THE HONORABLE SAM BROWNBACK OF KANSAS

OVERVIEW:

CURTIS WATKINS, President and Founder  
East Capitol Center for Change

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ANTHONY WILLIAMS  
Mayor, District of Columbia

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ISABEL SAWHIL, Moderator  
Co-Director, Center on Children and Families  
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LINDA MALONE-COLON, Professor of Psychology  
Hampton University

DAVID BLANKENHORN, Founder and President  
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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. HASKINS: Good morning, and welcome to Brookings. My name is Ron Haskins. I am a Senior Fellow here, along with Belle Sawhill who will be the moderator of the second panel. I run an organization that is part of Brookings that is called the Center for Children and Families.

Let me begin by thanking the Annie E. Casey Foundation for providing support for this event, and also noting that I think it is quite remarkable that Casey that is not widely known as a conservative foundation has undoubtedly provided more support for community groups who are interested in marriage and indeed are promoting marriage at the local level than any foundation in the country. So I think that is quite a remarkable thing.

I also want to thank David Blankenhorn of the Institute for American Values both because they have helped us plan this event, and David has been very helpful in selecting speakers and planning the themes for the event, and also because they supported the publication of the paper that is the main focus of this meeting, a paper called "The Consequence of Marriage for African-Americans."

We have planned the session with two goals in mind. The first is to examine the Consequences of Marriage Report that succinctly stated in page 8 of the report as follows, "Does marriage bring the same benefits to all groups, and in particular of course to African-Americans?" and the evidence being very strong, especially with Caucasian families, that marriage conveys very substantial

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advantages to both adults and children in these marriages, and the question is whether that also applies to African-American families.

Then the second question if the answer is "yes," as the report claims it is, what can be done to promote marriage. We would like to focus on the remarkable programs in the District in Columbia, in fact, I very little hesitation saying that the District of Columbia probably has more programs that were designed specifically with marriage in mind and to promote marriage and provide incentives to marriage and remove disincentives for marriage than any other city in the country, so we are going to focus on the District of Columbia.

We would like to begin with a brief statement by video by Senator Brownback. Senator Brownback has been a strong supporter of these programs in the District, and his Chief of Staff Mary Dietrich is here. Thank you for coming. Mary's status has declined slightly in recent weeks, though not in my mind. You will be back.

(Laughter)

MR. HASKINS: Senator Brownback certainly has been a leading voice or one of the leading voices if not the leading voice in Congress for the importance of marriage for all Americans and to restore civility and to enhance child rearing in our society. The Senator could not be here, but he urged us to use this video and we are very pleased to do it. Let's have this video. I have no idea how this works, but it is all set up.

(Start video)

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SENATOR BROWNBACK: My name is Sam Brownback. I am sorry I can't join you in person. I would love to be able to be there, but other obligations were taking me to different places.

I do want to voice my strong support for this conference and for the people there and the effort. We need to build more family units in this society. We need stronger and healthier marriages. I don't think anybody disputes that, and that has been one of my key focuses as the Chairman of the D.C. Appropriations Committee. I have worked with Mayor Williams on this topic; I worked with the Delegate Eleanor Holmes North on this particular proposal. And everybody agrees, Republican, Democrat, conservative, liberal, we need more family formation. This isn't to denigrate anybody else or to say anybody else is wrong or in a different position, it's just we know as a society in all of the social data that we have that the best place, certainly not the only place, but the best place to raise a child is between a mom and a dad bonded together for life, and that that child feels the most secure is the most protected in the overall social data in that situation. Not that all marriages are perfect, they are not, they're clearly not, lots of problems, but we know this from the social data.

And we also know from the social data that too many of our children are born out of wedlock. We are up to nearly 35 percent of those children born in this country today are born out of wedlock. Within the African-American community it is even double that number. We need more family formation.

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And that isn't to oppose either that you need a village to raise a child, you do, but you need both. You need a family and you need a group of people surrounding them, a village of individuals surrounding them, you need both. And it really a useless debate, we need both of them and we need to dedicate ourselves to what it is we can do to build stronger and healthier marriages.

Some of the proposals in the District of Columbia, the Marriage Development Accounts. Putting up three dollars to match one dollar put up by a couple that is a low-income couple who wants to save for marriage, wants to save if they are buying their first house, wants to save for buying a car or getting job training. Three dollars is put up, one by public, two by the private sector, and one by the individual, encouraging that family formation, encouraging people to come together.

And I think we have to look at our welfare system for the signals it sends of discouragement to young particularly single moms not to get married. I have talked with women who had children who were single both at public hearings and in private meetings. A number of them say to me very consistent statements, very rational statements, saying that I am going to get penalized if I get married. I am going to lose a certain amount of my public assistance. I may lose the health care assistance for my children. I would be willing to get married personally, but I am not willing to do that to my child. I've got to have health care

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for my child, and if this is going to force me to lose that health care or put it at risk, I am not willing to do that, and that is a fully rational point of view.

Therefore, what we need to do is to say please get married and we won't remove your public assistance. We don't take the health care away from you. We will hold you harmless. Indeed, I think we should incentivize you to get married because there is so much good that comes to that child and ultimately to the government by a child being well raised between two loving people that are bonded together in marriage.

This isn't rocket science. It is difficult. Marriage is an institution where people make sacrifices. My wife has made sacrifices for me and our family, as I hope that she feels I have made sacrifices to her and for our family. But it something critical. It is unifying, it is bipartisan, and it is desperately needed for the future of the country.

I like to think of families as the fundamentals, like in football you got a block and tackle and if you can't block and tackle, you can't do anything. If we don't have strong families, we are going to have a lot of problems on down the field. Matter of fact, we are not going to be able to do much of anything. It is that fundamental. It is blocking and tackling. Strong families generally in this society produce strong children.

You can raise good children in other settings, I want to repeat that again and again, but it is difficult and it is more difficult, and the best setting that we know by all the social data is a mom and a dad. Can't we get together on that?

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Can't we really push that? Can't we as a country and as individuals do everything we can to preserve and to enhance this fundamental institution?

That is what I see this conference is about and that's what my efforts are about. I look forward to working with anybody interested in this cause.

Thanks so much. Thank you for letting me join you in this fashion. God bless you all.

(End video)

MR. HASKINS: After that rousing opening statement, I think his position is pretty clear. As I said before, he has backed up his beliefs with very strong incentives for the District including appropriations and hopefully new appropriations for next year. I think those are a little bit up in the air at this point, but hopefully they will remain in the budget and we will have even more initiatives in the District.

We are going to start with Curtis Watkins from the East Capitol Center for Changes, one of the most remarkable community-based organizations in the country. Curtis was the founder of the organization and plays a major role there. They operate programs for young people and for adults, and they have probably been the leading voice in the District in promoting marriage, and they are involved in several programs as you will see in just a moment. Curtis, thank you.

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MR. WATKINS: Thank you, Ron. Thank you, everyone. I think I'm going to take off my glasses. I think I've turned 50, my eyes are getting a little bit better, so I'm going to take them off.

(Laughter)

MR. WATKINS: My name is Curtis Watkins and I am the President of the East Capitol Center for Change. We are an organization servicing communities east of the river in Wards 7 and 8, and Prince George's County. I am here to tell you about the marriage promotion currently being implemented in the District of Columbia and give you an overview of the new marriage initiatives that the District government intends to implement next year.

A key of the current marriage promotion work in the District is to reach distressed communities with message and services to create strong relationship in marriage. My agency was selected to do this work because we service a community where there is great impact in reference to single parenthood. In the communities east of the river we find that there are a lot of single parents in our communities. Most of the residents that we serve in the community are African-American. Before I begin, I want to clear up one misconception about doing marriage promotion work. We are not saying that being married doesn't that one single parent is not important. We are saying that single parenthood is important, but I know firsthand my mother raised me and she was a single parent and it was very hard for her to do that alone. Also, I grew up without a father, so this work is not just a cliché for me to do this, this is part of

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my calling to help the community because what I have seen in the community is there are lot of single parents and a lot of kids making wrong decisions because they do not have that two parent household.

In 1963 when I was 6 years old, way back then, Dr. Martin Luther King gave the "I Have a Dream" speech. During that time, 70 percent of the households were two parent households. That has fell well below 50 percent now, so we have an issue that we need to address. And I am in agreement with Senator Brownback that this is a situation where we cannot do it alone, we need to do it with the combined efforts of everybody within the community.

Last April we had a kickoff event for our marriage initiative, and Congresswoman Norton noted that it has been the institution of the black family including both father and mother as its head that has gotten African-Americans through the most unjust periods of U.S. history. She also noted that even though the unfortunate public policies that have helped to make marriage less and less normal for segments of our community are to blame, but only determination through the D.C. African-American community can ultimately turn this situation around fully and restore healthy marriage to its proper place in our culture.

As the son of a single mother and a married man and a father today, I stand with the Mayor and others who believe in this work that is worth pursuing, not instead of, but in addition to programs that support income benefits, work asset building and needs of families of all types. Ultimately, research on attitudes toward marriage has shown that one of the greatest obstacles to

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permanent unions among low-income people is not the lack of desire, but the lack of resources. While marriage has been thought of as a romantic institution over the last two centuries, what we have found is much longer history tells us that marriage has been the vehicle to improve oneself and one's family. In some ways, the intent of this new effort that I am about to describe to you is that even the most modest gains with income and assets, potential partners can translate into a greater well-being for families overall. I want to emphasize this, and I am saying that there is a stable relationship and a positive one in the first place because without that, that is not creating a foundation for success.

Here is what agencies and numerous partners are doing about this issue in the District. In April 2006 we launched Together is Better: the D.C. Campaign for Health Families, Marriage and Communities. Together is Better is funded through a federal-D.C. appropriation line item that is strongly supported by Delegate Norton and Senator Brownback. The citywide campaign is dedicated to promoting the well-being of children, helping couples developing skills, knowledge, and financial resources to form and sustain healthy marriages. It addresses the issues of family structure and poverty by offering a full frontal approach of public awareness, marriage education, fatherhood training, asset building incentives, to engaged and married couples. Three organizations, the East Capitol Center for Change, the D.C. Metropolitan Healthy Marriage and Relationship Coalition, and the National Center for Fathering, worked together to

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implement this campaign across the District by providing marriage education and fatherhood training.

Well over \$3 million of the appropriation provides for marriage development accounts which we refer to as MDAs, and also pre-MDAs. This is for engaged and married couples to save for post-secondary education, also first-time home purchases or start-up or expansion of small businesses. Accounts are administered by the Capital Asset Building Corporation which is better known as CAB, and one of the executive directors is here today, Colleen Daley (?). This is for participating couples who are eligible for a 3 to 1 match of \$3,000 of their personal savings, up to \$12,000, that can be used for the purchasing of a qualified asset such as their first home, college, vocational training, and start-up of a small business. As a requirement for participation, couples receive financial training through CAB in its network of service providers. For couples to be eligible, first of all, they need to be a District resident, already married or engaged during the savings period, have combined income up to \$50,000, have assets no more than \$10,000, excluding their primary home and one vehicle.

Here is a very glimpse of the campaign results today. There was a handout that was given as you walked in and it has more details overall, and also this is our brochure "Together is Better." So look at that, and that will give you a more comprehensive look at what we are doing. But I want to cover three areas now and give you some of the results that have happened.

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In the area of healthy marriage and relationship education for adults and youth, almost 400 residents have received relationship and marriage training through East Capitol Center for Change through work East of the river with Nisa Mohammed who is here today also, and through the network of 12 service providers who have been identified to the D.C. Healthy Marriage and Relationship Coalition.

A citywide task force has been formed also to plan how the faith community can promote marriage, marriage education, fatherhood training, and the MDAs, as well as recruit mentor couples, marriage mentors. This is so important because a lot of these individuals who want to get married, they might be struggling because there are a lot of obstacles in the way of them progressing into a successful marriage, so we feel this clergy task force is going to be one of those items that allows us to go a lot further. Also, over 100 practitioners, clergy and other professionals, have received training to implement relationship and marriage training programs.

Under the area of Marriage Development Accounts, since the kickoff event in April, 90 couples have attended the MDA information sessions, and a total of 27 couples have applied and been accepted for the Marriage Development Program. Twelve youth have opened up what we call the pre-MDA accounts. CAB has also contracted with the Urban Institute to evaluate the collective impact of the programs and activities of the Together is Better campaign. The first phase of data collection is scheduled for March 2007.

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Under the fatherhood area, the National Center for Fathering has equipped 12 trainers representing 11 community-based organizations to lead the fatherhood training curriculum Quenching the Father's Thirst. The training efforts of these 12 trainers have resulted in 122 men completing a 6-week class on responsible fatherhood and being introduced to the opportunities through the Together is Better campaign.

Here is a glimpse of what is ahead for 2007 before I turn it over to the Mayor. During a recent hearing before the Senate D.C. Appropriation Committee, powerful evidence was presented by the Urban Institute expert on the hefty tax on marriage facing low-income households with children. They pointed out that cohabitation and not getting married has become a tax shelter for the poor, and that is only being real, and I am glad that brought that information out because that levels the playing field on what we are talking about. I can attest to that personally growing up in the East Capitol Dwellings Community, a public housing development. I saw frequently fathers who really wanted to engage with their children, but what was happening was that they felt that that choice would have been economically not sound, and let's be real about it, any economist will tell us people make rational decisions when it comes to maximizing income. Sadly, under the policies of the past and even the present, those choices have not always been in harmony in maintaining a two-headed family household.

That is why I am pleased to tell you today that for 2007 the Appropriation Committee has called for expansion of the current set of marriage

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promotion activities in the District by providing \$1 million to the District's Department of Human Services to support occupational training for married parents to improve their prospects for full-time employment. This is important. If we want people to get married in some of the communities that we work in, they have to have those resources in order to be successful, so we feel this is an important component and I applaud the city on what they are doing, and also the appropriation for this year. The Mayor will discuss further that the city intends to enhance this support by eliminating the marriage penalty for low-income couples who decide to wed for the first 2 years of their marriage and assign priority status to the married couples and their families for low-income federally funded housing. Thank you so much.

(Applause)

MR. HASKINS: Thank you, Curtis. We at Brookings are extremely pleased that the Mayor has agreed to join us today. You have extensive him in your packet, but I would like to make just two points about the enormous achievements that the Mayor has made during his service as Mayor of the District since 1999.

The first is without question I think the most important thing any mayor of any city can do, and that is that he has created prestige for the mayorship which was sorely needed in the District of Columbia, and I think the District of Columbia now has a greatly enhanced reputation for decent government and for generally a lack of any corruption, and this is of course a

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baseline requirement for any decent government, so that is an enormous achievement.

The second, and I have been living here a long time and I think I have read any number of articles saying that the District could never be financially responsible until Mayor Williams came along, and now we have a District that for 7 years has run a balanced budget, and he has taken the surplus fund from the District from a negative to a positive, and I believe it is over a billion dollars now, further enhancing the District's credibility as a fiscally sound government. Those two achievements are enormous.

And on top of that, he also I think without question is the single most active Mayor in the United States on the kinds of initiatives that Curtis just described to us on marriage which I think is politically venturesome, to put it mildly. Mayor Williams, thank you very much for coming.

MAYOR WILLIAMS: How is everybody? Are there any protestors? Did they get here? They have given up on me, I guess. They used to follow me around, and I guess they have just given up, which is kind of disappointing. I was kind of getting used to them. I knew them by name; they would show up at my house at night and serenade my wife and I until about 2 o'clock in the morning.

MR. HASKINS: They're at Fenty's house now.

MAYOR WILLIAMS: Are they?

(Laughter)

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MAYOR WILLIAMS: I am going to just give you some thoughts and reflections on our program in the city and hopefully end my remarks which I've got to wrap up because I'm going to be out of office in a month, so I've got to wrap them up. But I am going to try to touch on a couple of points hopefully intentionally, and maybe inadvertently some points that are of use to you. I don't want to get into a lot of the technical details because I think the technical parts of this are not as hard, it is just the will to make it happen. Do you see what I'm saying? And really understanding of the need.

I want to acknowledge Linda Malone-Colon who we know is the author of the report. It is a path-breaking report, it is worthy of note I think across this country, and I would urge folks wherever they are on policy issues, wherever they are in government on whatever side of the aisle, and you know there is a big schism here, it is kind of an elaborated version of nature versus nurture, I guess, or individual worth versus society, or freedom and responsibility, all those fractures in our society. Wherever you are on that fracture point, you ought to look at this report because it is very, very important.

Then Carole Thompson and the Annie Casey Foundation have been enormously supportive of the District's efforts to just get on its feet in the human service area and get out of receivership in a number of areas, and then in some areas to actually start making some real headway for, example, in children and families, support for children in a number of different ways. So I want to take this opportunity while I have the podium here at Brookings to acknowledge the

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Casey Foundation as really a phenomenal organization, and Ron Haskins and Isabel Sawhill, the Co-Directors of the Center on Children and Families, Curtis, thank you for your work and what you are doing, and then finally David, the Founder and President of the Institute, thank you for your leadership as well. Let's give all of them a big hand because they have all worked very, very hard on these issues.

(Applause)

MAYOR WILLIAMS: In about 10 minutes I will give you my thoughts on how I approach this, and let me just start and roll the tape all the way because it is important and just kind of give us a point in time and a sense of orientation.

When I became Mayor of the District of Columbia, one, because I am kind of nerdy and like to read a lot, a lot of history, and also because I didn't come here with a lot of experience, I came here, and actually now I can say it that I am ready to leave and I can actually admit it, I came here with a breathtaking lack of actual experience of living in the District. The opponent said I only had lived here 3 years which was wrong; I actually lived here 4 years before I was elected mayor. Think about. That's kind of scary, you know?

One of the things I did was I made it a point to talk to as many people as I could here in the city with thoughts on policy, and in the District there is no shortage of those people. Because of the nature of our city, everybody has a thought on how the District ought to be covered from the Congress, and let me

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acknowledge Mary Dietrich who has been a great friend of the District and I think will continue to be in a new role. Mary, I know what it is like when elections expected them to go, let me just put it like that, but anyway, I want to acknowledge you and your work.

The second reason to read all these histories though is because it is important to understand the District as a community. We are a city, we are a government, we are a county, but we are also a community. When you understand us as a community, you understand the enormous pressures that have been placed on this community, like a paradigm or a symbol of the kinds of pressures that have been placed on communities across the country particularly as it relates to African-Americans so that when you look at the history of the District you see the major cycles you see in our country. You see enormous growth of the District through world wars and through the civil right, and then you see abandonment of the District after World War II and the great flight which was accelerated by the riots in 1968. And as this abandonment increased and as this flight outside of the city increased, the pressures in the African-American community, undermined as it was by a lack of an economic foundation that was supported by the country, undermined as it was by this flight, undermined as it was, let's face it, in many, many instances by mismanagement, really became untenable.

Right after the Civil War there was an enormous influx of people into the District of freed people. Did you know that? Thousands and thousands

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of free people, and the reaction of the District government right after the Civil War, even before the Civil War, but particularly after the Civil War, we had thousands of freed people emerging in the city. The reaction was these black holds, and what they were intended to do was to somehow or another in a benighted, very malevolent way incentivize African-Americans actually to leave the city. Imagine that. Then you had the mechanization of the farms. We all know in books like "The Promised Land" and the huge mechanization of the farms and the black migration that happened in the early part of the 20th century that happened in the District as well. And rather than an enlightened response there was still the same kind of very negative malevolent response to communities and to the dignity of the African-American community and this undermined the family is what I'm saying in a very, very fundamental way, in a very, very brutal way. African-Americans were really not recognized and welcome in the District of Columbia for a long, long time.

Then when you came to the 1950s and urban renewal, urban and model cities was supposed to fix the African-American community, looking at the hardware and looking at the software and looking at the investment we are going to fix the community. If you want to see a finished example for better or worse if you are a student of cities and urban design and social policy of cities, if you actually to take a tour or you want to actually see a finished example of urban renewal, because urban renewal wasn't finished. They started these grandiose projects and actually thankfully in many instances they didn't finish them.

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Southwest Washington is actually a finished example of urban renewal, and as part of urban renewal there was also a complement here in the District which actually dictated that communities East of the river would be zoned low income with all the forces and dynamics that are undermining communities and undermining structure, the results speak for themselves.

What do we have now? Now we have in the District in the United States which itself, I think it may have changed, we may not have the highest, we are one or two highest incarceration rates in the world. A huge percentage of that incarceration rate are African-American men. Let's roll the tape back again. If you look at some of the problems that are facing the United States and where we are going in the future, we are in a very, very fragile place in our country.

The sovereign credit of the United States for the first time is being questioned. Do you know what I mean by that? In other words, people for the first time are questioning the dollar as the ultimate safe haven. That is not body. Memo to anybody, it is not a good thing. Because what people are saying are the fundamentals, like Senator Brownback is saying, the blocking and the tackling, is it happening? Is this a good investment for me? I'm just saying this as a kind of icon for what people are thinking about the fundamental integrity and viability of our country.

What I'm telling you is there ain't no, to use the technical phrase, fundamental viability and integrity if in our nation's capital we have a huge incarceration rate, a huge recidivism rate, and a huge dismantling and

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disintegration of the family. So that is how I come to this, from a kind of intellectual point of view.

Now let's roll the tape back again. I am not that emotional, my wife will tell you and everybody knows, but in my own way let me tell you emotionally, because I'm emotionally deprived.

(Laughter)

MAYOR WILLIAMS: Part of it is in a beautiful, wonderful sense I am a real example of what we are talking about. I always tell people this isn't an argument between the village and the family supporting the child, both are necessary, and I am a great example of this. I am standing here as the outgoing Mayor of the District of Columbia, more or less, whether you are a critic or supporter. I wouldn't be standing here as Mayor of the District of Columbia if there hadn't been a progressive government that gave me opportunities.

A great example is I got out of the military and I used the G.I. Bill. That's an example of progressive government. Before World War II there really weren't veterans' benefits to speak of anywhere, so the G.I. Bill is an example. Scholarships are an example. That is progressive government. The civil rights movement. I certainly wouldn't be standing here if there were not the civil rights movement, so that is an example. So progressive government and the civil rights movement.

But what's the third example? The third example is that I had a loving family who adopted me into their home. I was adopted into a home and I

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had a father who worked 35 years. I always tell people this, he worked 35 years or something like that. My mother will tell you the exact number. I forget, but it is 35 or 36 years he worked in the Post Office and never took one day off for sick leave. Isn't that amazing? He raised eight children. I realize the reason why he didn't take any time off for sick leave is because he had eight children, so he wanted to get out of the house.

(Laughter)

MAYOR WILLIAMS: My dad wasn't the most talkative person in the world. A phone call with my father, you can talk about me and him together, a phone call was, "How are you? How are you? Merry Christmas. Okay. Merry Christmas to you. Thank you. Great call." End of conversation. Not a good political attribute, I'll tell you. You want to be more comfortable using the phone as a mayor, looking back. But the fact is I was brought into a loving home of people who supported me and provided me structure.

This need for structure, I know I got in trouble saying this, but I think there is a connection here and it ranges throughout life. Look at what is happening in sub-Saharan Africa. They have these male rogue elephants and they are running out of control. I mention this comparison to the male rogue elephants without any structure or support because the grandmother matriarch has been killed and all the bull elephants who would normally provide these male elephants with a kind of structure and upbringing and a kind of notion of how to behave are all killed. What happens is they are just running amuck. They're completely out

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of control. Obviously, you can't compare elephants to people, and obviously I don't want to make a strict comparison of elephants to people, but I think on some level there is some connection there.

What I'm saying is very, very fundamentally in a very, very intrinsic way, children thrive on support. They rebel against support, they revolt against support. Their parents are idiots during their teen years. They go from knowing nothing to knowing everything in their late-twenties or thirties, and in that one period they revolt against structure, but they need that structure.

An example would be boats on the seas. What is the first thing a boat does on a high sea? The first thing a boat does on a high sea is it points into the wind to get anchor into the wind so it is oriented to the wind so it can combat those high seas, and then when the sea subsides, then the boat goes on about its way. It's kind of heaving to into the wind. What happens to a child who has no family? Seas get rough, times get tremulous, things are in turmoil, there is no anchor, there is no sense of orientation and children get lost because they need that structure.

This whole thing about whether you need a family or whether you need the village to support it is I think a ridiculous kind of comparison and juxtaposition. An example I would give to you is you have Point A here and Point B here. In the middle is a mountain. Only a fool would say that if we want to get thousands of people from Point A to Point B, that is what we are going to call safe passage to opportunity, one or two people a year make it out of

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thousands because they are able to navigate up this mountain. Some people say that is fine, everything is hunky-dory because a couple people made it, and that is ridiculous. Obviously, more people are going to make it if they have structure and support. Would you go on an overnight trip into the mountains with only one person? No, you are going to be safer with two or three people to support you.

Would your trip through the mountains be easier if you had a trail that had been blazed and some improvements had been made, some grading had been done, some rest stops along the way in terms of infrastructure to guide you on your way? That's how I can compare the need for government to provide the supportive services. You need a safety net, you need health care programs, and you need income maintenance programs. These are sorely needed. You need programs to provide an early start for children. There is a woeful lack of attention in our country and we need to step up to it.

This is a national problem and not just a city problem of a dramatic need for more intensive programs focused on the needs of African-American men. This is my own humble two-cent opinion worth what you're paying for it, but one of the reasons why I think you see less satisfaction among African-Americans as opposed to whites is because the marriage materially is less satisfying, and it is materially less satisfying because there is less income coming in, and there is less income coming in because right now we are in a place where all the reasons we have stated where the opportunities for African-American men are very, very low. Think about that.

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Stop and pause for another snapshot. When you look at homicides in the District, a disturbingly, atrociously, horrifyingly high percentage of the victims of homicide are who? Who do you think the victims of homicide are mostly? Young black men, highest cause of death. And what category of black men? Ex-offenders. Amazing isn't it? It's horrible. Think about that.

So if you take a class of children that we are talking about here at Point A and they are going to go on through life, and you take this class, look at how that class is going to dwindle. It is kind of like Napoleon's army coming back from Moscow where it started out at 500,000 and ended up at about 10. A huge loss. That is what we are talking about with our number here. So there is a need for the government to focus on this as a point of stability and integrity in our society. How can you have this number of men wandering aimlessly without support by the government as a whole?

Having said all that, the family unit is also supportive as well, and the two work together. They complement one another. In my mind, it is not a question of whether the mayor is ultimately accountable or the Congress or the state. What I am trying to tell you is that everyone plays a role about and including the family which is why in my roundabout way I am trying to say for personal reasons, intellectual reasons, social policy reasons, the kinds of initiatives that we have started here in the District I think are initiatives that ought to be pursued throughout the country.

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One of them is, as you know, the Marriage Development Accounts which provide a match for couples who are saving for their first home, for continuing education, and for small business help. Again, I think that needs to be complemented by more intensive programs on the national level and local level, a more effective level, and I will admit ineffectiveness on our part where it relates to ex-offenders. We have had a lot of conferences and a lot of meetings and a lot of proclamations, but we need to get some traction.

The Together is Better campaign which is a local and national initiative aimed at strengthening families, marriages and communities by providing free resources to help couples build strong relationships and safe and stable homes is a very, very important initiative as well.

Then occupational training provided by the District Department of Human Resources for low-income unemployed married parents to assist them in gaining employment. Just as the two aforementioned programs have to go, I think, with a more intensive effort as relates to ex-offenders, I think the last program, the occupational training, has to deal with two things we need to do better in the city. One thing is we have worked very, very hard to try to provide people doors into opportunity into the workforce here in the District with this expanding economy, but we have to do a better job between the District and the federal government of providing effective one-stop shopping. Somebody did an article about how difficult it was for someone to navigate the job placement, job

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training opportunity process here in the District. Everybody is trying to help and there are all these agencies.

If you are a public policy wonk like we are and you are looking at this diagram and saying how does this work, and I am the Mayor and I'm looking at it and saying how does this work, imagine someone trying to get a job trying to navigate through that. So we have to provide one-stop shopping.

The next thing we have to do, and it is particularly effective here where we are talking about supporting families, about 8 years ago there was a lot of discussion about performance metrics in government and government is going to be like the private sector, and in the federal government there was something called the Government Performance Results Act. I tried to bring performance measures into the District government and now you are seeing a lower cut of this where people are saying we are now going to lower this down and we are going to start talking about areas, we are going to start talking about individuals and agencies and holding them accountable, and all of this is very, very good.

But we have to use modern technology and use this data between and among with the leadership of the Mayor, and I believe that our new Mayor is certainly capable of doing this and that he is inclined to do this which is all very, very good, and he has certainly got enormous energy which is also very, very good because it is going to take a lot of energy and diligence. But to use modern technology between the government, something like Life Starts, the Casey Foundation, the church community, we are going to start managing cases.

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So we have to start saying everybody get together, which often still doesn't happen. Then when everybody gets together, instead of talking about the time of the meeting, talk about what we are going to accomplish. And then when we talk about what we are going to accomplish, we have to start talking about it in terms of individuals and families. So we are going to monitor here is Tony Williams, here is Tony Williams' mom, here is Tony Williams' dad, and manage those cases toward success. And then the success of those cases is going to roll into these numbers that the agencies are talking about in terms of success. Do you see what I mean? But it is going to be based on individuals.

Eight or nine years ago you didn't have any opportunity to do that, or before you didn't have the opportunity to do that because you really didn't have the technology. Now you have the technology to do that and we have to seize that technology, it's out there, to really start intensively managing these cases.

I don't know how you would do the sensitivity analysis. Some people would say from the sensitivity analysis you would take the worst cases and work on them. Some would say you would take the transitional cases. That is a question to be raised and a question to be discussed, but it is a question we have to address. I think if we do that, if we are able to use the leadership of the mayor's office to build on the programs that we have talked about, combine the nongovernmental activities with the government activities, I think we are going to be able to not only build on these incentives that we have started, but really start building a secure and durable dynamic foundation in our communities here in the

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District of Columbia, particularly the African-American community, particularly the African-American family. And I think if we are able to do that, I think we are able also to start leveraging the success here in terms of these success factors we have talked about to push the federal government to do more of what it ought to be doing.

I mentioned one cases, but there are other cases of affordable housing as a big example, but another case would be the area and the issue of ex-offenders which is a huge unaddressed issue in our community. Everybody plays a role. That is the important thing I think about family structure. It is not just government, it is including government but not just government; everybody plays a role at the community level. The family really, really is important and everybody in that family is the center.

I tell people this story that when I was growing up my dad, and this home I was brought into, it was a beautiful home, and my dad, even though he wasn't very talkative, he was very, very creative in providing the kids entertainment. For a while there he was working on the swing shift, and so what he would do is he would sleep during the day and then he would go to work on the swing shift. It really was I think an attempt for him to get out of the house now that I think about it.

But anyway, the swing shift started at about 5 o'clock or so. But then during the day what he would do during the summer for example is he would take us out to the beach, and then while we were out playing at the beach, that is

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basically when he would sleep. Once my sister and I were drowning and my dad was asleep soundly, fortunately there lifeguards, but he was a good dad. The point is he took us out and he was very, very supportive.

One of the things he also took us to, one of the nice things talking about growing up in Southern California there are all these opportunities like there are here, there are mountains and the seashore. So he also took us up to the mountains and he took us up to this place called Mount Wilson? If you have ever been to Los Angeles, drive up route 2 and go up to Mount Wilson. It is about 5,000 feet over the L.A. Basin. Wait until it rains. Don't go up there on a smoggy day because you will see about 2 feet in front of you and you will say big deal. Wait until it rains and all the smog has been cleared out and then drive up there. It is an incomparable view of L.A., all the way from Santa Catalina, all the way up to Santa Barbara, all the way down toward Palm Springs. It's an incredible view.

Mount Wilson has the Mount Wilson Observatory which until 1948 was the biggest telescope in the world, and unbeknownst to a lot of people, Mount Wilson is where Edwin Hubble, you know a discoverer discovers something but doesn't know what he or she has really discovered, they know it's big, he stumbled on the Big Bang theory. We had gone all these years as a society from the Earth as the center to the Earth is not the center, the Sun is the center, the Sun is just one of many suns, there are many galaxies, there is a universe, and the universe is expanding. You know what? Not only is the

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universe expanding, we don't know how and at what rate, but we know it's expanding, we know its real origin, but it is expanding and there is no center of the universe.

When I read that, I said that is very, very powerful and that is really apropos here. There is no center. Everybody plays a part. When you're talking about bringing up a child, everybody plays a part. The government plays a part, civil society plays a part, organizations play a part, church plays a part, but very, very importantly, the family plays a part as well. That is why to get all these cylinders working, to get all these parts in unison and in harmony rationalized to support these children, the things that we are doing in the District, the things that are happening elsewhere, are so very, very vital to the success.

So I want to urge all of you success in your conference. Is there is anything that we could do to be supportive and to help you in any way as a guinea pig or otherwise, please let us know. God bless you, and keep doing what you're doing.

(Applause)

MR. HASKINS: Let me pose one question and give the audience time to ask a question. Let me ask the question this way. One of the things the Casey Foundation did before it decided to get involved in marriage and funding programs that would promote marriage and study marriage is to have a series of meetings with inner-city black ministers and to ask them what they thought about this and whether the family was vital and whether there was need for such a thing

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and how important it was for child development and so forth. So we had a meeting, and in the middle of the meeting I was just sitting there listening, and a minister from Atlanta suddenly said, "Where is Jesse Jackson on all this stuff?" That leads to the question that this is extremely controversial to promote marriage and to say marriage is vital to the future of the black community, why is that? If it is so self-evident that it is crucial to child development, crucial to the future nation as you have just so eloquently explained it, why is it controversial primarily among liberals and among a great proportion of the black leadership right here in this town and all over the country? Why is that?

MAYOR WILLIAMS: Some of the black leadership would say you're talking to the wrong person when you're talking to me, but I will answer anyway. It's a long story.

(Laughter)

MAYOR WILLIAMS: I think there are two reasons. One is I think that people feel that it is devaluing the heroic, there is no other word for it, heroic work of African-American women raising families on a single basis. My wife when I married her was a single mother and my first reaction was, I don't know if I really want to marry a single mother. I see that she owns a house, I still don't own a house as my detractors will tell you. She owns a house, she has raised a child, she comes from a beautiful family, she is a very, very intelligent woman, but the initial reaction to a lot of people was to devalue that. And I think

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that for understandable reasons, a lot of people in the community don't want to do that and I can understand that.

Then the second thing is people feel that by focusing on programs and the mission of support for the family, you are basically exculpating the federal government and the business community. What we heard from Senator Brownback, and I think most of you if not all of you would agree that it is not an either/or. Both are important. So in other words, we have to still continue to support single mothers so that their work is successful in supporting the family.

We have to urge as I was trying to say in my way, and all of us would agree, urge the federal government to do more in terms of intelligent cost-effective investment, but also support the family. It is not an either/or thing.

MR. HASKINS: Thank you. Questions from the audience?  
Please stand up and state your name and ask a succinct question.

MR. JONES: I am Rachel Jones with National Public Radio. I am interested in the marriage penalty abatement or are you going to delay it for 2 years. Is that something that is already set in stone? Are you still looking for funding for this? Will it happen?

MAYOR WILLIAMS: Our Deputy Mayor -- you have been promoted.

MR. HASKINS: And it happened right here at Brookings.

(Laughter)

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MS. : There is a proposal that we have for it that is the appropriations act that would delay that impact and also try to work with individuals, males and females, to try to get them better jobs to try to alleviate that penalty. I can't say for certain that that funding is secure. We are hoping. It was in the mark-up, but it is not officially in the President's bill yet.

QUESTION: (Off mike)

MAYOR WILLIAMS: I would say with a high degree of probability, but you can never say assurance, as you know, with any legislation.

MR. HASKINS: I think it would be appropriate to observe that this is what happens when you don't pass appropriations bills, it leaves a lot of uncertainty, and this is just one example of that. One more question.

QUESTION: I have always been curious, what is the research? How much of the upswing in unwed births is due to the more unwed births, or how much is it due to fall in wed births?

MR. HASKINS: How much is due to what was the last part?

QUESTION: Less births by the middle-class and more births by the unwed, to what extent is the uptake in the unwed birth rate due to decisions about child rearing?

MR. HASKINS: Two points I think that are based on data, and then either of you are welcome to add to this. One is that obviously if you think it as years at risk for out-of-wedlock births, so if the marriage rate goes down, women have many more years at risk for out-of-wedlock births, and that clearly

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has happened. Then the second thing is that it is clearly the case that there has been a huge increase in out-of-wedlock births primarily because of the decline in marriage, so they go hand in hand. Although teen birth rates have declined throughout this period and overall birth rates have declined, it is just that the proportion of births outside marriage has increased.

Further, this increase has been not exclusively but primarily among low-income families. Who is it on television, the female?

MAYOR WILLIAMS: Murphy Brown?

MR. HASKINS: Thank you. Murphy Brown, and everybody thinks this is something that occurs throughout society, but statistically that is largely untrue. It is primarily low-income women, women with low educations, who have births outside marriage, so there is that association as well.

MR. WATKINS: I would like to add to that in some of the communities that we are working in east of the river, 74 percent of the individuals are having kids out of wedlock, and so we have a lot of single parents, and 74 percent is extremely high.

MAYOR WILLIAMS: As a community we have to pick the right issues, so I was really chagrined when we got all upset about the guy, who was the gang guy who was being executed in California? Tookie or whatever his name is. I don't personally support the death penalty, but I think in terms of a broad strategy as a community, to me that is not exactly the biggest thing to celebrate and push as an issue. When you have, for example, disintegrating

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families and other issues that are facing our community, I would pick some other issues that go I think in the right direction.

And I think right now you have a kind of combination of factors in a real perverse way. People in the African-American community respect children on one level so you don't have abortions, so you are respecting life in that way. But when it comes to the community and society as a whole really respecting that life by giving it upward mobility and real opportunity, it is not happening. So there are really two things going at cross-currents. Do you see what I am saying?

MR. HASKINS: Yes, absolutely. Thank you very much. Again I want to thank you for coming to Brookings, it was very kind of you to do so, and I greatly enjoyed it. And Curtis, thank you as well.

Now we are not going to take a break, but we are quickly going to switch to the second panel.

(Applause)

MS. SAWHILL: We are now going to hear about the research report that was prepared under the sponsorship of the Institute for American Values. We have with us one of the authors today who is going to summarize the report for us. She is Linda Malone-Colon, she is a psychologist. She teaches at Hampton University, and she is currently doing some research on the quality and stability of African-American marriages. Linda, we look forward to hearing your comments or your summary.

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MS. MALONE-COLON: Thanks, Isabel. Good morning. As Isabel has indicated, my task for today is to provide you with an overview of the report "The Consequences of Marriage for African-Americans." We felt that this was an especially important and necessary report to complete because prior to this report, while there was substantial evidence that marriage benefited white Americans in many domains, the evidence with regard to if and how marriage benefited blacks was less clear. In fact, a brief review of the research reveals that some studies indicated that marriage had no effect on the well-being of African-Americans or that it benefited whites substantially more than it benefited African-Americans.

Further, we think that this was an especially important report because this whole issue as the Mayor and Ron Haskins have alluded to of marriage and family structure has been surrounded by controversy and contention for some time now, and especially so following the Moynihan Report in 1965, and so much so that some leaders and scholars have suggested that marriage does not matter so much for African-Americans and that we have other different family forms and supports, especially the extended family that support the development of children and healthy families, and therefore the importance of marriage is less significant.

So relative to this report, we asked four major questions: What are the economic, psychosocial and health-related consequences of marriage for African-American men, women, and children? Secondly, do the consequences

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differ for blacks and whites? And if there is a difference, what accounts for these differences? And what are the policy implications?

So in the interest of time, what I will share with you very briefly first is the methodology that we used, then really getting to the heart of the study, the consequences that we found of marriage for African-American men, women, children, families, and communities. And then again briefly, how the consequences vary for blacks and whites.

As to methodology, we did a review of academic journal articles, reports, and books from 1990 to 2004 that focused on the consequences of marriage for African-Americans. Most of the studies that we employed used comprehensive controls so it allowed us to say with greater confidence if the results that were found in studies were actually due to marriage itself. We also did our own analysis using general social survey data from 1973 to 2002, and compared very high-quality marriages with others.

Here are the consequences that we found. First, the research suggested both black men and black women benefit from marriage in terms of economic, psychological, and social well-being. On virtually every indicator of economic well-being, married African-Americans do better. They earn more, they are less likely to suffer from economic hardship and poverty, they have higher levels of occupational prestige, and they are more likely to own their own home, for example.

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Psychologically, married black adults report more happiness, life satisfaction, and fewer emotional problems, and they are less likely to commit suicide. Socially, marriage benefits blacks in the areas of civic involvement, virtue, and crime. For example, compared to blacks who are unmarried, married black men and women report that they are more likely to reject illegal and unethical behavior, and married black men are less likely to be involved in criminal activity.

Unfortunately, the health-related consequences were less clear. There is very little research in this area, first of all, and the research that does exist is very mixed. In the study that we did using general social survey data, we found that married black men report better health than unmarried black men. However, conversely we found that married black women report poorer health than women who are unmarried. Also, overall married black men appear to benefit more from marriage than do black women. The exception, however, is in the economic domain where black men and women benefit comparatively from marriage.

As for the consequences of marriage for African-American children, we found parental marriage produces important benefits for African-American children. They are less likely to live in poverty, they typically benefit from greater parental involvement, are less delinquent, have higher self-esteem, are more likely to delay sexual activity, have a reduced incidence of teenage births, and have better educational outcomes. Also, infants of married black mothers are healthier in average.

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While parental marriage clearly appears to benefit black boys and black girls, it is especially important for black boys. For example, black boys living in two-parent homes have markedly higher self-control and self-esteem than those living in single-parent households. They are more likely report feeling personally empowered, confident, likable, lovable, and physically able. Also, almost invariably studies found that a two-parent household is strongly associated with less delinquency among African-American boys. Studies focusing on African-American boys find that those living without a father in the home are much more likely to get into trouble with the law, to get into fights, and to have school-related discipline problems. Consequently, having one's father in the home, and particularly one's married father, is a crucial determinant from the research of better outcomes for black boys.

Further, as an aside, the research suggests that married black fathers are more involved in their children's lives economically, emotionally, and in terms of childcare. Again, marriage clearly appears to benefit the well-being of both black boys and black girls, and black boys appear to benefit most, particularly short-term. However, there appear to be some unique advantages in addition to the ones that I mentioned earlier black girls that are long-term.

Here the research shows that black females who grow up in intact families are considerably more likely to marry, they have higher incomes as adults, they are less likely to have children out of wedlock, and they are more likely to marry if they do have children out of wedlock.

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With regard to family outcomes, first, the evidence clearly indicates that marriage is highly associated with improved economic standing of black families, and for families with children, the difference in economic benefits appears to be even more pronounced. Also, marriage itself and not just the addition of a male into the household appears to be producing these results. Not only is economic status of married couples greater than that of nonmarried couples, but it is greater than that of cohabiting couples as well.

The second question, married adults are more likely to report feeling close to their extended families, and they are significantly more likely to receive emotional and financial support from them. Also, with regard to family relations, married black mothers report more reciprocity in terms of material and emotional support with their mothers. In terms of the relationship between marriage and communities, we found that higher local marriage rates appear to inhibit crime in black communities. For example, studies have found that higher marriage rates among black families with children significantly predict lower murder and robbery rates in black city populations, that single-mother households in a city predict higher crime rates, and that black women are less likely to be victimized when they live in neighborhoods with higher proportions of married couples.

Next, do the consequences of marriage differ for blacks and whites, and the short answer to that question is yes. As for adults, the studies that we reviewed suggested that while there is definitely a marriage premium for both

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blacks and whites, the premium is smaller for African-Americans, especially African-American women.

There is one exception here. Economically, marriage appears to benefit blacks more than whites, particularly with regard to a reduced likelihood of material hardship and a greater boost in income. Also, overall, black women appear to benefit from marriage substantially less than do white women, particularly when it comes to psychological, health, and family outcomes. By contrast, the difference in benefit from marriage between black men and white men appear in most cases to be minimal.

Lastly, as for the difference between black and white children, in some ways, black children appear to benefit more from parental marriage than do white children, where in other areas, the reverse is true. Regarding both levels of parental support and risk of delinquency, black children seem to benefit more. Yet regarding educational performance or early sexual activity, substance abuse, and high school completion, white children seem to benefit more.

In summary, the research suggests that marriage benefits blacks in most domains; that marriage benefits black men and black boys even more than it benefits black women and girls, and it is especially beneficial to black boys; and finally, that marriage benefits whites more than blacks, but not substantially so. Thank you.

(Applause)

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MS. SAWHILL: Thank you very much, Linda. That was very clear, succinct, and timely. We have a wonderful panel here. I am going to take them in the order that they are on your program. You have their bios in the materials that were handed out, so I am not going to give you a lot of details on their distinguished backgrounds. We will start with David Blankenhorn who is President of the Institute for American Values who put out this report. We will then go to Joe Jones who is President of the Center for Fathers, Families, and Workforce Development. We will then go to Avis Jones-DeWeever who is with the Institute for Women's Policy Research where she is the Director of Research on Poverty, Education, and Social Justice. And last but not least, we will go to Nisa Mohammed who is the Executive Director of the Wedded Bliss Foundation.

Each of them will have 6 minutes, and we are going to try to limit you to that so we can have time for discussion. David, over to you.

MR. BLANKENHORN: Thank you. Good morning everyone. I want to acknowledge Linda Malone-Colon and the other scholars who worked on this report. My colleague Alex Roberts is out there in the audience, he worked hard on it, and others. So thank you. I was very pleased to be a part of this.

I think one of the most interesting and to me satisfying shifts in my professional lifetime is to see us increasingly grappling with this issue as an important social problem. There is a lot less denial; there is a lot less wanting to change the subject than there was even 5 or 10 years ago. I have really seen this shift. Maybe it is not as much of a shift as we all think it should be, and Ron was

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saying so and so leader doesn't acknowledge it, but I think there has been a real change of a sense of this is a serious problem no matter whether you are a liberal or conservative or anybody. This is a big change, and I think we need to acknowledge that.

Thanks to Linda's work and others, some of you are out there, not only is it seen as a problem, but it is seen as a problem that we can do something about. We are beginning to develop programs and approaches and ways to think as a society that we can actually do something about this, because how long has it been, Linda, that people have said there is nothing that can be done, you can't put the toothpaste back in the tube and so forth? No, we are free people. We can make changes. There have been some good signs in recent years, and there is good work being done. So not only is there the sense that something is necessary, but there is the sense that it is possible to make social change around this topic.

And that is a new thing. If you go back even a few years I think there was much more of a kind of hand-wringing sense that nothing could be done. So I think that we have the window of opportunity. I don't know if the wind is at our backs, but there is an opportunity in this next period to actually do something.

I want to just take a couple of minutes to draw your attention to one of the documents in your booklet called "The Other Marriage Penalty," and I want to again acknowledge Alex Roberts for his important work on this topic. It is a policy idea. As you heard from the Mayor and as you have heard from

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several people, low-income couples face this terrible marriage penalty if they decide to get married. Sometimes it can be 20 percent of their annual income or higher gets lost when they marry. And not only is there a marriage penalty, think of this, there is a kind of cohabitation incentive. There is an incentive to deny to the authorities that you are a couple, so there is an incentive for fraud. It is like paying people, offering them this bribe to say things that are not true about their relationship, to cohabit instead of marry. And if they marry, there is an enormous financial incentive to divorce.

What would happen if non-low-income Americans, what would happen if we all lived under such a regime where you lost 20 percent of your income on the day you got married and there was a strong incentive to live together or to say you weren't a couple, and every day when you got in a spat with your spouse you could say I could improve my income dramatically by getting a divorce? What if we all lived under such a regime? My goodness, it is a wonder that anybody gets married under such conditions.

It is a serious problem, and we have done something in recent years I think wonderfully to reduce the marriage penalty facing middle-income people, but we have not done anything about the marriage penalty facing low-income people. In almost 2 minutes you can read this thing because there is a way to fix this now.

We used to think that we had to change every rule of every welfare program in the country in order to eliminate the marriage penalty. You can't do it.

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There are a million reasons why this would not work. It would cost a jillion dollars. But what you can do is you can on a case-by-case basis solve it for this individual couple. If they report they are suffering a marriage penalty, you can fix it for Sally and John in San Antonio. You can fix it in part because there is this great new tool called the Marriage Calculator. I want to acknowledge Wade Horn in the back. Most of you know him and his work running the Administration for Children and Families. One of the many things he has done besides fund this study and fund this research brief is to design this marriage calculator. You can now figure out exactly what your marriage penalty is. The thing that this policy idea would do is allow the mayor and the governor of a state to say from now on this is America, we are not going to penalize a low-income person for getting married. We are going to make this problem go away for this individual couple. It is a new way of thinking about solving the problem.

Lastly, I only have 30 seconds left, but this problem, this crisis of marriage which is of course not an African-American crisis, it is an American crisis, this crisis, this problem, this challenge, requires cultural change fundamentally. It requires a change of our attitudes and values. But policy matters, too, and it can contribute to this. And if I could think of one policy idea that I would like to encourage, it would be for states around the country to use their extra TANF money, and a lot of states could do this, to implement this program to not reduce, get rid of the marriage penalty for low-income Americans.

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We ought to just do that and say this is America, we are not doing this anymore, and it would be a better country today that we do that. Thank you.

MS. SAWHILL: Thank you, David, and you have really made your time well. Joe?

MR. JONES: Good morning. First, I am going to acknowledge a couple of people. First, Afra Vance White (?) who has joined me from the Center for Fathers, Families, and Workforce Development, a program assistant in our Building Strong Families which I will talk a little bit about within the context of my 6 minutes. He is a very sharp young guy dressed immaculately with this big sign up that says "Stop." So we do know when we are supposed to stop. But also to really thank the Center on Children and Families for continually introducing the subject matter relevant to children's issues that are at the forefront of why we are here. And I want to unabashedly say that I am a citizen of the United States of America and I care personally about each and every citizen in this country, but I particularly care about African-American families because that is the community in which I live, and I particularly care about the outcomes for the children of families within that context.

There are some very beautiful things happening in our country and there are some beautiful things happening in the State of Maryland and in the City of Baltimore, one of which is the Mile High Scholarship program at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County where Dr. Freeman Lubowsky (?) has intentionally created an opportunity for young African-American boys and girls in

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high schools to go into math and sciences at the university, and it is producing some of the most educated children in our country focusing on math and science issues.

But there are also some significant challenges, and I just want to point out a couple relevant to my community in Baltimore. In Baltimore in our criminal justice system, 52 percent of the men between ages 20 to 30 are either under criminal justice supervision in terms of jail, prison or parole and probation. In our school system 76 percent of African-American boys who go into the school system drop out. That is unacceptable. So when you think about this whole issue of whether or not marriage is relevant in the African-American community, I come at it from a couple of different vantage points.

I remember in 1996 when we changed welfare, there was some language in there that said something about the formation and maintenance of two-parent households. I remember being at an event a couple of years later here at Brookings and there was a representative from the National Governors Association who said that the governors have said to the federal government, What the heck does that mean? How do we do this?

I also remember Congress taking a dramatic shift during the mid-1990s from being Democratically controlled to Republican controlled, and I also remember the election of 2000 between then Governor Bush and Vice President Al Gore, and there was another shift in the conservative ranks.

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And I also remember during the 1990s a group of fatherhood practitioners one of whom had to be this guy named Wade Horn who started the National Fatherhood Initiative, and he was the one practitioner who kept talking about this marriage stuff at a time when most of us had no clue as to what it meant because it was not of its time yet. Dr. Horn continually talked about it, and being a smart guy that I am, I recognized that when the Congress shifted in the mid-1990s and when Bush took over the presidency in 2000 that there was this public policy that was being promoted and it was going to impact communities, and that as organization and as an individual I could either stand on the sidelines and allow public policy to move forward and impact my community and have no involvement in it whatsoever and wait until after the fact to see what would happen, or I could get in the game so to speak and figure out how this was going to happen.

So what we did as an organization is began to engage folks in the healthy marriage community, who I absolutely knew none of, to begin to say, help me understand. So I even had conversations with people who ideologically I did not agree with and people who I really fundamentally agreed with to help me understand what this public policy entailed, being the smart guy that I am.

I also recognized that I was in a very, very liberal community in Baltimore, predominantly African-American, and to be able to introduce the subject matter of marriage, and at this point we were not even talking about healthy marriage, we were talking about marriage, it was really the kind of subject

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matter that you need to be prepared to get your behind whipped around. And we began to think through how we could understand a public policy that we thought had some merit but really were not quite sure about it. Keep in mind, I was also married, I had been married for 16 years, so I could not be against marriage, I just did not know how to introduce it from a community standpoint.

We began to have these community conversations, and I invited folks from both sides of the aisle to Baltimore to help me help my community to understand what this subject matter actually entailed. So we had people there from the federal level and from the state level who were responsible for devolving resources from the feds to the state to implement potential marriage programs in the city and how that would intersect with what we were doing around responsible fatherhood.

I can tell you that a lot of the men who I provided services to told me that I felt abandoned by this issue of fatherlessness, I felt anger, I feel hostility, I feel resentment, and I don't know to really adjust it. But then we began to think about what it would take to really begin to work with families earlier. Then we had this research that came out, "The Fragile Families and Child Well-Being" study, which indicated that young families around the birth of their children were very much interested in being together, and matter of fact, many of them were living together. So we decided that we wanted to get into the game, and are fortunate that in our partnership with the Administration for Children and Families, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the State of Maryland, we have put

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together the Healthy Marriage Initiative within the context of the Center for Fathers, Families, and Workforce Development being absolutely key to help families at the beginning of the establish of the child coming into this world will have two loving parents who care about one another at this point, to begin to introduce skills to them to help them to learn how to negotiate that relationship so that the relationship doesn't disintegrate and the children don't fall further into the cracks and into poverty in a lot of cases.

But the most interesting thing that needs to happen at this point, and I am very pleased that Dr. Horn a few weeks ago convened a strategy session to begin to look at the intersection of health marriage and employment, I think that is the central next step to what we do as it relates to this work. And with 6 minutes, that is about all that I can say that would hopefully make sense. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. SAWHILL: Thank you, Joe. Avis?

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: Thank you. Good morning. Before I begin I first want to start off by making it plain that I am not anti-marriage. I am married. I have been married for over 10 years. My husband is in fact in the audience. I don't know whether he wants to claim me after this.

(Laughter)

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: My parents have been married for over 40 years, his parents have been married for over 50 years. So I think that I

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probably know more than most the benefits of marriage and the value of marriage. In fact, I believe in it so much that I think that every individual in America who wants to get married should be able to get married despite their sexual orientation.

But with all due respect to my passionate colleagues here today, I must argue that I have a severe problem with the idea of allocating hundreds of millions of dollars in marriage promotion programs, particularly when those programs are linked to some idea that they will in fact substantively address the poverty problem in America today, and I am particularly troubled by that when we make that linkage specifically with regards to the African-American community.

When I think about the various challenges that the African-American community faces today, I see a community that in many ways is very much in crisis. This is a community that has a poverty rate that is about double the rate of the nation as a whole. It is a community that is largely concentrated in geographical areas that have very limited job opportunities, particularly related to job opportunities that provide above poverty level wages. And it is a community that is very much victimized by generations of generations of poor levels of schooling in terms of underfunding and in fact substandard school systems.

So when I think about those and other problems that are faced by the African-American community, for me to think that marriage promotion is the best idea that we can come up with to specifically address those challenges leaves me very much disappointed.

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But if I were to in fact accept the argument that there was some linkage between marriage promotion and this idea that poverty would in fact go down in the African-American community, the fact of the matter is that there would still be large segments of that community that would be left out of this equation. The reason why is not because there is some sort of moral deficiency in the African-American community, that is certainly not the case, it is not because there is a lack of valuing of marriage in the African-American community or a lack of a desire to be married within the African-American community, all the survey research on that shows us that that is not the case. The problem is that the numbers just quite don't simply add up.

If you look at the statistics, there are frankly about three African-American available women for every one available African-American male. So there is not a 1 to 1 ratio there. In addition to that, this also assumes that, number one, everyone is straight, and we know that that is not the case, and it also assumes that everyone will marry inside of their race. That might be a safe assumption with regards to African-American women because they are the demographic group that is most likely to marry inside of their race, but that is not a safe assumption with regard to African-American men, as they are one of the highest demographic groups to marry outside of their race. In fact, the only demographic groups that marries outside of their race at a greater rate than African-American men are Asian-American women.

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What complicates this matter even more is the fact that those very men who are most likely to marry outside of their race are those who we might characterize as "the most marriageable." As African-American men's earnings increase, as their level of education increases, as their job prestige increases, so too does the likelihood to marry outside of the race. So I think it is very irresponsible of us to in some way insinuate to the sister in the hood that for her to be rescued from poverty he needs to wait for her black knight to come and save her from that horrible situation. I think that is very, very irresponsible because the reality of the situation is that for many of those women, that day will never come.

What does she need? She needs three things. First, she needs access to a quality education from pre-K all the way up to adult education. For us to continue to stick our heads in the sand and not to acknowledge that we have two very separate, two very unequal public educational systems in this nation I think is a national disgrace. Secondly, we need to acknowledge that we need to expand access to higher education in America and not decrease it as we have done with the last iteration of welfare reform. And thirdly, we need to make sure that she has access to quality jobs preferably in her own community where she can access a living wage and also have access to decent benefits and the ability to have some security in her life to know that that job will be there, not just today, but tomorrow and for years to come.

Finally, I want to have us remember that a little over a year ago we were all probably glued to our television screens, horrified at the images that we

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were seeing coming out New Orleans having to do with Hurricane Katrina. I would also remind you that around that time, President Bush made a trip to New Orleans in which he stated to the nation that we have a bold duty to confront this poverty with bold action. I ask you what has he done since then? I will tell you that a lot of bold action has occurred, but it has not had anything to do with reducing poverty. In fact, I would argue that it has everything to do with, if anything, making the situation worse. We have embarked upon a reverse Robin Hood domestic policy agenda that has pilfered the funding of a variety of programs that are meant to aid America's poor and we have used that funding not to reduce the deficit as the budget language would imply, we have used that money to subsidize tax cuts for America's wealthiest citizens. That is the reality of the situation. In fact, the only place we have seen an increase in funding, and particularly any new funding, that is in any way even theoretically related to poverty reduction is here with marriage promotion.

I think that we really need to acknowledge marriage promotion for what it is, as diversion away from a true policy agenda meant to attack poverty in America today. The sooner we recognize that, the better off African-Americans will be and the better off America will be. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. SAWHILL: Nisa?

MS. MOHAMMED: Wow. I should have come before you.

(Laughter)

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MS. MOHAMMED: I want to try to bring you a different view from the sister in the hood, women that I work with on an ongoing and consistent basis who are involved with men and who have children by these men -- but all along in their hearts want to be in a stable relationship. In fact, most of them, if you ask them if you would rather be a single parent where you have a parent and provide at the same time, or would you rather be in a healthy marriage, what would you choose, and 99 percent of the time when I ask these questions to the women that I work with around the country, the answer is they would rather be in a healthy marriage. Given all the circumstances that they are confronted with and the resources to change their circumstances, they would rather be in a healthy marriage. So the task that my organization has accepted is to provide them with the resources to have what they choose in their lives, which is a healthy marriage.

These women watch "Oprah," they watch "Dr. Phil," they see all of the marriage experts and the therapists on TV, but they don't see them in their neighborhoods. They don't have access to what generally people with resources have access to to stabilize and strengthen their marriages. These women do not have access to these things, but they still want it. So they go from one man to another man still looking for the knight in shining armor but without the resources and the community support for it to be successful.

I want to talk to you a little bit about a couple that is a couple's group that I work with with the East Capitol Center for Change, and we meet on Tuesday nights. I want to talk to you a little bit about Katrice and Troy. Katrice

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and Troy have children from previous relationships, but they also are expecting another baby in the spring. So that is three children with four different parents. The thing is that for Katrice and Troy, they are trying to struggle together. Left to their own volition and their own ability, they are going to break up pretty soon because they are struggling to be together under circumstances that are not suited for them to survive as a couple.

Katrice is very anxious about their relationship because they are not married. She wants to get married, he is talking about marriage, but she is afraid that he is not going to commit to her, so she is kind of withholding herself in terms of what she can offer in a relationship. He is getting anxious because he looking for something from her that he is not getting, and in a minute it is going to be over for both of them. Luckily, they found their way to our couple's group and we have surrounded them with a cocoon of support to help them be successful.

What we have found is that couples need resources, and as I said, a cocoon of support to help them be successful. Our job is if they decide to get married, to help them to be together, and I want to recognize Robert Jones from the East River Collective. One of the things that we do in terms of the case management is that we work with these couples as a couple, but also individually so that he can say to me, There are some issues going on that Katrice really needs to really work on, and I can say to him, wait a minute, she is afraid that he is not going to commit to her, so that we can both work with them on an individual basis but also on a couple basis as well.

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I want to talk to you also about Robert and Brenda, another couple from our first group. A very low-income couple lived together for a while, got married and are very happy go have gone through our program, so much so that they took the curriculum that we used, "Basic Training for Couples" which is authored by myself and Dr. Rosario Slack, to their church because they wanted the church members to know about the success they had experienced in this couple's group.

In the black community there are certain ways you can know you've kind of made it to elite status. One of them is if you are in "Jet" magazine and people know you've kind of made it. If you go on "Oprah," you know you kind of made it also. But if you reach bootleg status where people now are bootlegging your material, you have kind of reached the same status.

(Laughter)

MS. MOHAMMED: At our couple's group, after we finish the 8-week session with this group, they did not want to end. They were like we don't want to stop, we have to keep going, this is really helping us. So now we meet with that group once a month.

At our monthly meeting, we were talking to the couple and she was sharing how she took our curriculum to her church and they really liked it and they were copying the DVDs and they were passing them around, and I was like, You're doing what? She said, Oh yeah, we're copying the DVDs and the pastor is giving out. I said, You are bootlegging our DVDs? She said, Oh yeah,

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yeah. She didn't see any problem with it. I was like wow, we have really reached a level where people are now going to bootleg our material.

(Laughter)

MS. MOHAMMED: But that shows the need and desire for the information, that they seen some value in "Basic Training for Couples" and what it is that we are doing with the community.

We are trying to change the hearts and minds of our community to reconsider marriage. Marriage is the answer to the social woes or to the poverty problems in the community, but for a lot of couples, marriage can be a part of the answer. What we are looking to do is to have people reconsider marriage in their lives. I ask mothers and fathers around the country, How many of you want your daughters to grow up to be single parents? To have to parent and provide at the same time, wait for a child support check and biweekly visitations at best for their children to be involved with their fathers? Nobody wants that.

I ask them also, How many of you want your sons to grow up to parent before they are ready or responsible to have to face child support enforcement wage garnishment and possible jail time because they are a parent before they are ready or they are responsible? Nobody raises their hands. People don't want this for their children, and so if in fact we want something better for our children, if in fact we want something better for ourselves, we have to begin to do something better. And I like to tell the couples wedded bliss is possible for

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you, marriage takes skills, and we are here to offer the resources to help you to get those skills. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. SAWHILL: Congratulations on having your materials bootlegged.

(Laughter)

MS. MOHAMMED: Thank you.

MS. SAWHILL: I think that is the way social movements begin. I think that everybody here has made some terrific comments and I am glad that Avis raised some of the larger issues about the allocation of resources. And I think that those of you who are working at the community level are doing a heroic job and we all admire you, and it is wonderful to have this new research available on this topic as well.

I think the question that always comes up when we have these kinds of conversations is given as several as you have said that people want to have marriage in their lives and they aspire to that and that there are all of these benefits that Linda talked about, they are not universal but they are pretty impressive, why is it not happening more and what can be done to bring it back. We have a variety of explanations here. We have the explanation that I think Avis has particularly focused on which is there is too much poverty, there is not enough stable employment, it really is something where you should fix that fundamental first and then marriage would follow.

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I think a second explanation is one that there is a social norm or attitude or lack of community support for marriage, lack of skills, lack of sufficient role models, and some of the programs that several of you are involved in are I think designed to deal with that.

I think there is another factor which we have not talked about much which is of particular interest to me as some of you may know who know me, which is that perhaps there are too many young people in their teens and in their early-twenties who are having unintended, unplanned pregnancies because they have not had the right access to contraceptive services or perhaps the right kind of sex education or whatever and they are falling into single parenthood by default, and then once you are a single mom it becomes a little harder to later marry. So that would be another kind of policy solution to these problems to get people to an older age when they are more able to either parent successfully on their own or find a lifetime partner.

I guess I would like to come back to this question of what is the best policy to pursue here. I know a lot of you are going to say, and I would myself say, it isn't either/or. As the Mayor said, and as even Senator Brownback said, it takes both a family and a village. And let's assume that we are in favor of stronger families and more stable marriages and more healthy marriages. And by the way, I am glad to have the Ross Perot of healthy marriage with us today, Dr. Wade Horn. Welcome to you.

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But what is it that we most need to focus on here, and could we just go down the panel and give me very short answers if you can, because then I would like to see if there are questions from the audience. Joe, let me start with you.

MR. JONES: I think based on our experience going back to September 2005 when we first started recruiting couples, and we actually recruited couples primarily from five birthing hospitals in Baltimore around the time of the birth of the child or up until the child has been here 3 months. So from birth and 3 months they are recruitable and on voluntary basis. The mom can't come in alone and the dad can't come in alone, they have to voluntarily agree to come in together after they have individual assessments to determine where they are in their relationship and to make sure that there are no issues that would prevent them from having a healthy relationship, i.e., domestic violence and some other mitigating issues. They are cohorts over a 22-month period, so we have now several graduations of those small intimate sessions of cohorts of six to eight couples.

What the couples have said to us is, Why weren't you around a long time ago to help us? And it is not that we saying in order to exit you've got to be married, what it is saying to them is here is a set of information, a set of skills that can help you to determine how better to work on your relationship so that it is healthy, so that it is less stressful, so that you have the tools in your toolbox to be able to deal with your relationship so that when you back to a

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community where the same kind of information that you are getting here is not readily available, you have the strength in that relationship to survive not so much for the parents themselves, although that is a great outcome, but mostly so that the children have access to both parents.

I can't tell you how devastating is for me to see a little boy or a little girl who is growing up without access to both parents, and in most cases in our community, it is that they don't have access to the father. The fathers want to be there, they don't necessarily know how to be there in a lot of cases, and what we are doing is providing the tools to help them to understand how important it is for the two of them to negotiate this relationship.

And I do agree with Avis that there are some structural challenges that we have with an unequal education system and other things related to poverty that have to be addressed in terms of our domestic priorities, but given where we are with limited resources, I am actually after some time I will tell you up front initially I did have a lot of skepticism about this public policy, but given what I have learned, and I have methodically learned a lot more than a lot of people in my community because they just haven't had the ability to do so, I do see this as one of the tools that we have to provide to the couples who are young and trying to form their families who want to be together who say to us thank God that you are here now, thank you for helping us and we want to be able to help other couples in our community to learn the same kinds of skills.

MS. SAWHILL: Thank you. David?

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MR. BLANKENHORN: As I mentioned, I think if I could just choose one policy change now it would be eliminating the marriage penalty.

MS. SAWHILL: Right. Yes, you made that pretty clear.

(Laughter)

MS. SAWHILL: You said that we could do this one couple at a time, I think. The usual public policy analysis of your proposed solution is that it is extremely expensive and that as a society we are not going to pay the price, and you sort of glossed over that a bit.

MR. BLANKENHORN: Fixing the marriage penalty for low-income Americans in this new way I think would be less expensive than changing all --

MS. SAWHILL: Has anybody done an analysis of that?

MR. BLANKENHORN: We don't know how much it would cost, I don't know how much it would cost, but I think it would be an affordable and good investment.

I also think that the weakening of marriage in our society is obviously not some specifically low-income problem and it is not a specifically African-American problem. We have this fundamental social institution that is weakening and has gotten weaker across the board, and so as I think about ways to strengthen it, I don't think of it in poverty terms.

MS. SAWHILL: Let me get back to your specific idea, your policy proposal.

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MR. BLANKENHORN: Yes.

MS. SAWHILL: Wouldn't it be good to try to have a demonstration in which that was done and we looked at what the behavioral impacts were? And are we doing that?

MR. BLANKENHORN: As we know, there hopefully will be started now in Washington this program they hope next year. Wade, aren't you funding some demonstration projects on this?

MR. HORN: If you change the rules in the system to get rid of all the marriage penalties, it is a very expensive thing to do. But what David is talking about is something very different. We now have a tool, the Marriage Penalty Calculator, which allows us to determine on an individual couple basis the actual marriage penalty or the bonus that some couples face, and it ranges from bonuses to penalties. It will be far less expensive to actually use that on an individual couple basis to determine whether this particular couple faces a penalty, and they only would then get relief from that penalty if they decide voluntarily to get married and get married.

But never, as I understand David's proposal, would there be an incentive to get married in the sense that there would be a marriage bonus that would be provided through this demonstration project.

MR. BLANKENHORN: Correct.

MR. HORN: The best you would ever get to is even. And a lot of people talk about marriage penalties in low-income communities being a problem,

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and this tool provides us with the opportunity on an individual couple basis to calculate for that couple only if they say they want to get married what the penalty might be.

So costing this out is difficult because you don't know how many couples will actually go ahead and get married, but it seems to me that a demonstration is well worth doing and states right now could do that starting this afternoon. They have all the authority under the TANF program to do that if they so choose. It is a new idea and states haven't yet really thought about this, and I think the D.C. demonstration is a good idea, but it is not as though anyone needs authority to do a demonstration.

MS. SAWHILL: Did they do an estimate of how much this was going to cost in the District?

MR. HORN: And there are ways to make it less costly. For example, you don't want to give somebody marriage penalty relief for the rest of their life.

MS. SAWHILL: For 2 years?

MR. HORN: That would be up to someone to decide. You could do it for 12 months; you could do it for 2 years. You could put a ceiling on how much marriage penalty relief you want. There are ways of managing the costs of such a demonstration. Again, it has the virtue of not being expensive as rejiggering the rules because when you rejigger the rules to get rid of the marriage penalties, you dramatically increase the marriage bonuses, and I for one would

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worry a great deal about creating incentives for marriage for couples who really don't want to get married but they do it precisely and only for the marriage bonus. This has the ability of saying we'll just make it neutral.

MS. SAWHILL: Thank you for clarifying. Avis, you have talked about this diversion of millions of dollars into marriage promotion, marriage education, whatever. Where would you have put those dollars?

MS. JONES-DEWEEVER: Since this is connected to the welfare reform legislation, I probably the first place that I would put it would be childcare assistance because that is a huge, huge economic problem for working families, and that is one area where we definitely need relief. If I had other areas where I would place it, I think other areas that have been cut that it is definitely needed is access to education and training particularly if you look at what has happened to access to higher education under welfare reform which made it even more restrictive under the latest iteration of welfare reform. So we need to make sure that women have access to those avenues that will give them the credentials to provide a better economic outcome for themselves and their families.

MS. SAWHILL: Nisa, I think when you talked about one of your couples you mentioned the complexity of children by different parents or different fathers and how that complicates everything that you do in the relationship between the two people who are now contemplating marriage or having a child. Do you want to say a little bit more about that?

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MS. MOHAMMED: It is pretty commonplace in the black community. That is why one of the sessions in our curriculum is "From Yours and Mine to Ours" because we generally find almost regardless of the income an education that sometimes somebody is bringing children from a previous relationship to this new marriage, and it can be a daunting experience. And if it is a second marriage, it has a greater chance of failure than the first marriage especially now with these complexities.

In our first cohort, all the couples had a child by someone previous when they came to their new marriage, so what we try to do is help them to figure out the maze of child support, the baby's father wasn't interested until now that you're married and he is calling all the time now, now that you're with somebody else. Visitation, what that is all about. New dad in the home having now new discipline for the children, the discipline that had been lax before and now there is a new parent. Even if there is a new mom in the home, the discipline may have been very strict before, now the mom wants to lax the discipline. So there are a lot of complexities that without proper guidance, without proper resources and support, people flounder in trying to resolve and get through this maze and a lot of times they just say to hell with it and just don't do it and this second marriage ends up the same way the first one did.

So we try to provide the resources and the support for couples to be successful considering if they are bringing children from previous relationships to this new marriage.

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MS. SAWHILL: Linda, we have been neglecting you. You are the big guru here. Would you like to add anything to this conversation at this point?

(Laughter)

MS. MALONE-COLON: I guess I will say as the third sister from the hood, I really came into this as a clinician and outside of the Healthy Marriage Initiative and an awareness about what the federal government was doing. Some years ago this really became a calling to me because I was hearing the stories of people who were in relationship and out of relationship and having difficulty with their marriages, and I was hearing the stories of the children whose parents were having difficulties with their marriages and parents were breaking up. And I was having my own experiences and observing what was happening in the black community and in my family. So I knew that this was an important issue and I knew that we were in crisis and I knew that this was something that I wanted to do something about and had a calling to do something about.

My approach is still uncovering what is really going on in African-American marriages, why is it that we don't have the quality of marriages that we have had in the past and that we could ultimately have. I don't think we are really there yet in terms of the research. There is so much more research that needs to be done. There is research that needs to be done with African-Americans taking the leadership because we are aware of some unique nuances within our marriages that may be contributing to problems, and clearly there are social, structural,

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environmental factors that are affecting our marriages that we need to give attention to. We need to be clear about what those things are, and there are interpersonal things that are going on. Those structural things are there now, and they are going to be there for a while and we have to be vigilant in working to strengthen the context in which our marriages exist.

But also we still want to help people who are in marriages and wanting to get into marriage to have healthy marriages. So what is going within our marriages, too, that needs to be uncovered that needs to be attention to. It is great that Nisa has developed the excellent program that she has developed, there are more programs that need to be developed, there is more information that we need in developing programs to make sure that we are addressing the unique concerns that African-Americans have.

So I guess if there is something relative to policies or where money is is going to be directed, we need more research. We need more research to get a better understanding of what is going on.

MS. SAWHILL: Since we are a think tank, I think it is okay to say that.

(Laughter)

MS. SAWHILL: We are out of time. I apologize that we haven't gotten more of you in. If there is anybody who has a burning question, I will take it.

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MS. LOGAN: My name is Cassandra Logan and I am a researcher at Child Trends, but this question is a personal question. Dr. Malone-Colon, is that your name?

MS. MALONE-COLON: Yes.

MS. LOGAN: Your findings of the benefits of marriage, I was just wondering about a technical question, I noticed you used data from 1973 on, but was your analysis longitudinal and did you find actually that marriage benefits individuals economically and emotionally in the other ways that you found or that more economically sound people, healthier people, are more likely to be married, the direction of the association?

MS. MALONE-COLON: We know that to a certain extent the results that we found are due to selection effects, the people who are better off are more likely to marry. But the research still suggests that there is really a marriage premium independent of the selection effect, because as I said, a lot of these studies use very comprehensive controls. And this was actually a literature review of the research that has been done looking at marriage, and so some of the studies were in fact longitudinal and some were not.

MS. SAWHILL: The selection issue is a huge issue.

MS. ROSEBARIS: I am Jonetta Rose Barras. I am a journalist, but I also have been doing a lot of work around fatherless daughters. I was a little bit disturbed that we continue to do this research and not really look at what is happening with girls who are growing up without their fathers and how they may

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very well impact marriage and the rate of marriages in this country. And I would like to urge those of you who are involved in this to really begin to look at that issue because a lot of times in this marriages, it really is that these women are coming to relationships without the necessary skills to maintain and effectively manage or even work inside of marriage. So I would urge Wade who was really instrumental in getting me into this issue, but I would also urge those of you who are in think tanks like Brookings and like you, Dr. Malone-Colon, to really sort of look at this particular issue. Because your research suggests, and I will just say this and then I will be done, you are looking at the impact on boys. A lot of the research that has been done prior to now that you used in your study is really looking at the impact on boys. So you are perpetuating this notion that it is just boys who would benefit, and in fact, girls benefit, and sometimes healthy marriages are much more likely to increase and be enhanced with girls who are assisted and girls who have grown up without their fathers being assisted. So I just wanted to encourage you.

MS. MALONE-COLON: I just wanted to say something really quick. Thank you so much for your comments, and I so enjoyed your book, so the work that you have done in this area has helped to enlighten me as well. I want to make a correction on that. We did not just look at the impact of marriage on black boys. In fact, the research generally looks at the impact of marriage on black children and fails to disaggregate for boys and girls, so that is part of the problem. But what we did find within those studies that do disaggregate for boys

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is that marriage appears to be even more beneficial for boys in some of those short-term indicators that we looked at. But then in terms of some of the longer-term indicators, we see some special benefits for girls.

MS. MOHAMMED: I wanted to add something really quick also to address that. One of the things that we have found in our work is that some people are not even ready for "Basic Training for Couples." So one of the things that Dr. Slack and I are working on is a curriculum for men and a curriculum for women, kind of like a basic training for singles, developing men for marriage and developing women for marriage because some people, even if they are in a relationship, they are not ready to come as a couple. Some people need the individual work that you are speaking of to really help them deal with their own internal issues that can hopefully get them to the point where they can be successful as couples. So we are working at doing exactly that, developing curricula to address the unique needs of girls and women and boys and men.

MS. SAWHILL: Thank you to all of you, and thank you to the audience for being here today.

(Applause)

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