THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

BLACK AMERICA SINCE MLK:
AND STILL I RISE

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Welcome:

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Vice Chairman of the Board, The Brookings Institution

Remarks:

ROBERT LOUIS GATES, JR.
Alphonse Fletcher, Jr. University Professor
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Moderator:

CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT
Journalist

Panelists:

DAYNA BOWEN MATTHEW
Visiting Fellow, Center for Health Policy
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MICHAEL ERIC DYSON
Professor of Sociology, Georgetown University

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON (D-DC)
U.S. House of Representatives

JAMES PETERSON
Director of Africana Studies and Associate Professor of English
Lehigh University

RICHARD REEVES
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Closing Remarks:

SHARON PERCY ROCKEFELLER
President and Chief Executive Officer
WETA

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. HUTCHINS: My name's Glenn Hutchins. It's my privilege to welcome you here tonight. I'm vice chairman of Brookings and founder of the Hutchins Center.

In the Amazon, the rain forest, not the retailer, Skip, near the rubber trading entrepot of Manaus there's a phenomenon known as "the Meeting of the Waters" at which the confluence of two mighty rivers form the Amazon. They are the Rio Negro, which true to its name looks completely black, and the sandy-colored Rio Solimões. I think that's how you pronounce it in Portuguese. Also known as the upper section of the Amazon. And one of the most sights I've ever beheld in my life, the two rivers merge into one, but run side-by-side for nearly four miles without mixing, it turns out due to differences in temperature, speed, and water density.

In addition to its breathtaking beauty and unique appearance, the side-by-side progress of the two rivers and their eventual, inevitable, quite natural blending into what is understood to be the world's greatest river have long served in my imagination as a very powerful metaphor.

Tonight -- today, I guess it's tonight -- in a considerably less majestic way, the two Hutchins Centers flow together. (Laughter) Those of you in D.C., who are in and around the world of Brookings, know something about the Center created here by David Wessel and me. Are you here, David, somewhere? There he is, David over here. On monetary and fiscal policy. The Center, among other purposes, serves as a halfway house for out-of-work economists known as -- like Ben Bernanke. (Laughter)

All kidding aside, David has created a Center of Excellence, which makes vitally important but impenetrably abstruse economic policy questions understandable and accessible to non-expert policymakers and to the public at large.

In a very similar way the Hutchins Center for African and African

American Research at Harvard, headed by the inimitable, irrepressible, indefatigable -- irresponsible, is that what you said? I didn't think about that. (Laughter) Indispensable was the word I was going to use, Henry Louis "Skip" Gates, takes the work of the academy, the view from the ivory tower, and brings it to the public square in a manner which promotes understanding -- there she is.

Come on in, Eleanor. We have a seat for you right here in the front. Eleanor Holmes Norton, ladies and gentlemen. (Applause)

So the Hutchins Center at Harvard takes the work of the academy, the view from the ivory tower, and bring it to the public square in a manner that promotes understanding of perhaps the most important in our nation: the history and current state of race relations. The subject of tonight's program, "And Still I Rise: Black America Since MLK," is an extraordinary example of Skip's ability to reacquaint us with the history of our own era in a manner that educates, provokes, and should motivate us to get back to work at building our more perfect union.

Before we get going I want to take a minute to recognize colleagues and panelists here today. First we have people who are colleagues of ours at Brookings working on the Race, Place, and Mobility Initiative: Richard Reeves, Elizabeth Kneebone, Bill Galston, Bradley Hardy, and Dayna Bowen Matthew. So thank you all for being here and being part of the panel. Many of them will be on the panel. (Applause)

We have some of my colleagues from the Board, Helene Gayle right here and her new husband. How are you doing, man? Nice to see you. And is Edgar Rios here, too? I know Edgar was planning to be here. He hasn't gotten here yet.

Also tonight we have our friends from PBS, Sharon Rockefeller. Sharon, thank you. And where is James Blue? Is James here in the audience? There he is. There's my man James. Thank you for coming.

And I also want to thank my pal Charlene Hunter-Gault, for moderating tonight's panel; and two other panelists, Michael Eric Dyson, unfortunately, a Wizards

fan, we'll have to solve that problem; and James Peterson, for joining us tonight. Thank you.

Is Armstrong Williams here? I thought Armstrong was supposed to come, too.

SPEAKER: He's in South Carolina.

MR. HUTCHINS: I gotcha, okay. I wanted to say hi to him.

So before I turn over the microphone to Skip, I want to point out to the Brookings crew here tonight that the Rio Negro turns out to be crystal clear. (Laughter) The color black emanates upward in a mirror-like reflection of the riverbed. The water is crystal clear.

Similarly, Skip's gift for fashioning and clear and compelling narrative from our complex history is an example that we at Brookings should admire and try to emulate. Skip. (Applause)

MR. GATES: Thank you, buddy. Thanks so much, Glenn. Give it up for Glenn Hutchins. (Applause)

For those you who don't know, Glenn and I are very close. You know, we fight like brothers. Glenn's certainly one of my closest friends. But Glenn Hutchins has the distinction of being a person who's donated more to African and African-American studies than anybody in the history of African and African-American studies, and that is the truth. (Applause) It's the damnedest thing and it's great. It's a blessing. And every day I'm happy that I'm the director of the Hutchins Center at Harvard. It's a great honor for me.

It's great to be at Brookings. I've been on this board a couple times. Sorry Strobe Talbott can't be here. He has some family issues, but I want -- Strobe and I are Yalies. I went to Yale. It's a fact that drives Glenn crazy. You know, we go fishing, I wear a Yale cap. He gets like Yale is a four-letter word from where he's from.

But I went to Yale in 1969 and I got a fellowship my senior year to go to

Cambridge. In junior year, I started writing a guest column for the *Yale Daily News*. And because I'd been part of a program called Five-Year B.A., I had taken a year off, they picked 12 kids a year to go to the Third World and work. And I went to Tanzania because I was pre-med and I was interested in Africa. And I lived there, I hitchhiked across the Equator. When I came back, all my friends were seniors. And one of them was running the *Yale Daily News*, the school newspaper, and he said why don't you write this guest column? And I did and it took off.

So anyway, I got a fellowship, the Mellon Fellowship, to go Cambridge. And as soon as I got it, I thought of Strobe Talbott. Now why? Because Strobe had graduated. I didn't know him, but he was legendary. He had graduated from Yale, gotten a Rhodes Scholarship to go to Oxford, and *Time* magazine hired him to work in the London Bureau because he'd written for the *Yale Daily News*.

So I wrote to the head of *Time* magazine and I said you did it for Strobe Talbott, how about doing it for me? And to my amazement, they said why don't you come down? It was Murray Gart, the chief of correspondents. Come down, bring copies of your columns, and basically I had lunch with the guy and they gave me a job. And for two years I was a correspondent at *Time* magazine all because of Strobe Talbott. I never thought I'd meet him by using his name in vain like we were best friends or something like that. (Laughter)

And I didn't end up going to med school. I ended up having the career that I became and Strobe had something to do with that. So I would like to thank Strobe Talbott so give it up for Strobe in his absence, please. (Applause)

And by the way, when I was at Yale taking pre-med courses, Professor Galston, Arthur Galston, was my biology teacher, so I wonder whose father he was.

I'd like to thank my friends from WETA. Sharon Rockefeller and I have been friends for 50 years, and Dalton Delan, Anne Harrington, and their entire team. It's so great. It's a fantasy of mine to be able to make documentary films and to do it at

WETA here in Washington. I grew up three hours west of here, right near Cumberland, Maryland, where the Gates are from and 25 miles away is Piedmont, West Virginia. And so this is our home team, and to be able to come back here and make films with one of my oldest friends is a blessing. I'd like to thank our panelists whom Glenn thanked under the direction of my running buddy, Charlayne Hunter-Gault.

And the funders. You know, a lot of people have great ideas, but unless you get the funding, those ideas don't materialize. And Bank of America and representing Bank of America, our lead funder Jenann Peterson, Crystal Cobb, Rob Scott, Camille John, Barry James, and my good buddy Marilyn Whipple. She had been dragging me around the country doing these events for the premier of *And Still I Rise*, and we've become very good friends.

I'd like to thank Johnson & Johnson, which is my founding sponsor, for finding your roots and sponsor for all our Black History series; and Howard and Abby Milstein Foundation; the Ford Foundation under Darren Walker; the Mellon Foundation; CPB; and PBS.

So when many of you saw *Many Rivers to Cross* and after we did *Many Rivers to Cross*, which did very well, thank goodness, PBS said we want you to make some more documentaries. So I said great, and I made a list of 10 documentaries. I showed it to Glenn, showed it to a couple of other people, and I showed it to Ken Chenault. And you all know Ken Chenault is the CEO of AMEX.

And Ken said these are all good, but the best one, the one that you should do next, isn't on the list. It's number 11. And I said which one is that? And he said you have to do the last 50 years of black history. You have to do our time. Ken and I are about the same age. He studied African-American studies before he went to Harvard Law School. And it never had occurred to me because it's our life, it's our lifetime.

I was 15 in 1965. And when he said that, it was like a light bulb going off

because I thought, jeez, when I was 15, 50 years ago was 1915, World War I, oh, my god. You know, I age just thinking about that. And I realized he was right.

He said these kids don't know anything about what we went through. They don't know how they got here. They don't know how we got here. And he said your own kids don't even understand who you are and where you came from.

And I immediately made it number one, and that's what we've done. That's what aired two hours last week and that's what's going to air tomorrow night.

And the conceit is this: If Martin Luther King came back and he said, Michael Eric Dyson, what's been happening since I've been gone, you know, what would you say? You'd say, well, Dr. King, Dr. King, since 1970, the black middle class doubled. The black upper middle class quadrupled. He'd say, oh, my god, so we were right, we could wipe out poverty.

It sounds so strange to think about this now. But in the '60s, people actually thought poverty was like a virus which could be cured with the right prescription. They thought it was the lack of will, not structural. MLK, remember, died marching for the garbage workers and then planning the Poor People's March here in D.C.

So you'd say, Dr. King, no, no, it didn't work that way. And he'd say, well, what's the child poverty rate? You'd say, well, when you died it was 41 percent. Today, 38 percent.

No model predicted that outcome. None. So we have a class gap, a huge class gap. You know what the Gini coefficient is. Our gap within the race is bigger than for the white community and for the Latino community. Why? Among other factors, because of Affirmative Action. Many of us were able to take advantage of Affirmative Action. Why did I end up at Yale and not at Howard, like three generations of my family? Because of Affirmative Action.

I go to Yale September 1969, 96 black kids showed up. The Class of '66 had six. What was there, a genetic blip in the race and all of a sudden there are 90 smart

black people who didn't exist in 1966? Of course not. Who's in that class? Sheila Jackson Lee, the congresswoman from Houston; Kurt Schmoke, first black mayor Baltimore. Kurt got a Rhodes Scholarship, '71. That's when I decided I wanted to go to Oxford or Cambridge, too.

And then there was a little nerdy guy, wore glasses. I didn't know him very well. He was pre-med. I would see him at what we call Soul Food Weekend. Once a month each of the 12 colleges at Yale, as part of the diversity initiative, but we didn't use that word then, had to have chitlins and fried chicken. And I would see him there, but it didn't occur to me that, I mean, years later I would see his name, even on schools. And I had forgotten that we were classmates until I did his family tree for *Finding Your Roots*.

Ben Carson, Ben Carson was in our class, too. We were beneficiaries of Affirmative Action. Lani Guinier says that Affirmative Action was a class escalator, and we rode that escalator up the socioeconomic scale, moving from what my mother used to call, god rest her soul, my colored money to white money. Right? That's what it was about. It was about integrating the power structures in the United States.

Someone flipped a switch and turned that escalator off and all those people were left behind. So we have this huge class gap within the African-American community. And privately, some of our greatest social scientists, black and white, think that that class gap is permanent unless there's massive intervention from private industry and from government. After the recent election results, I don't really see that happening.

So anyway, we start in 1965, when I was 15. What happened in 1965? Pettis Bridge beatings, which I watched on TV with my parents right up there in Piedmont, West Virginia, on our little black-and-white TV. The Watts Riots right after -- within a few days of the passage of the Voting Rights Act. And then what premiered in the fall? The first black actor, prime time TV drama, Bill Cosby starring in *I Spy*. And Bill Cosby was a Rhodes scholar. Everybody forgets who that character was.

We start with that amazing year and we travel through Black Power and

Black is Beautiful and *Julia* and Flip Wilson, Afro Sheen and *Soul Train*, the election of Maynard Jackson and Richard Hatcher. We go on to the rise of Oprah and the genius of the two Michaels, Michael Jackson and Michael Jordan; the age of Jesse Jackson.

I was about to leave to go to spend the day filming Jesse Jackson for this series and my cell phone rang. And it was Jesse Jackson. He calls me "professor," I call him "reverend." And I go, Reverend, I'm on my way to the airport to fly to Chicago. And he said, well, Professor, I see that you want me to spend all day with you. You know, he said I don't spend all day with anybody.

And I said, well, I understand that, Reverend. I said, but you see we need to spend the day with you. And he goes, well, why do you need that much time? How about one hour? And I said, well, Reverend there are people in America today, particularly younger people, but some older people, too, who don't remember that the '80s really should be called the Age of Jesse Jackson. (Laughter)

Unbeknownst to me, his assistant was listening on the phone, and Jesse said, Matilda, clear my day for Dr. Gates. (Laughter)

Then Rodney King and Anita Hill, the growth of the black middle class, and the horrible era of mass incarceration of black men, all the way to the election and re-election of the first black president, and then, of course, the riots of Black Lives Matter. So this is very much the story of my generation and the amazing things that have happened to my generation.

But so on the one hand it's a story of incredible progress, the most successful period of African-American history by any measure, a period of unprecedented growth, change, and enormous hope. But, of course, it's not the whole story because at the same time, over the same five decades, far too many black lives have remained trapped in impoverished circumstances, lives largely devoid of hope. The choice is determined by structural inequalities which do much of the same work that old-school racism used to do.

While since '70, as I said, the black middle class doubled, the black upper middle class has quadrupled, the child poverty rate is basically the same. And MLK would be horrified by that.

And consider these statistics: In 1970, 148,000 black men in prison. By 2014, 831,000. The likelihood that a black man will go to prison, and that's not jail, is 1 in 3. What's the comparable rate for white men? One in 17. Twenty-five percent of the victims of people killed by the police since 2015 have been black people, twice our average in the population.

How did this happen? How did we a half-century after the apex of Dr. King's civil rights movement arrive at this paradox? Where at the same time we elected a black president twice, we have to proclaim through a new civil rights movement that Black Lives Matter. And god only knows what's going to happen over the next four years.

I have to say when Wolf Blitzer called the election for Donald Trump, I felt for the first time -- for the first time -- I began to imagine what Frederick Douglass felt the day of the Hayes-Tilden Compromise, which ended Reconstruction. And I wonder if historians will look back at this 50-year period and see it as a second Reconstruction, the period between 1965 and 2015. And there are forces that are trying to roll that back. And no one during Reconstruction -- no one, no one -- we elected black senators, we elected black members of the House, we elected black legislators -- all men, of course, because this is 1866 to 1876 -- no one believed that by 1900 there would be no black men left in Congress. Nobody believed that was possible. No one believed that there would be dangerous segregation introduced after 1890 in the Separate Car Act, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Nobody in 1875 believed that, and that's the historical model that we have to keep in mind so that we anticipate and remain vigilant.

This is the dilemma that this series confronts. We're at a crucial point in our history and with this series I hope to reflect on our recent past as a way of helping to devise ways to forge a better future.

And as I said, this series is very personal for me, one I'm glad to share with the PBS community thanks to the generous support of Bank of America, Johnson & Johnson, and Sharon Rockefeller at WETA. Thanks to PBS for giving me a national platform. And thanks for my buddy, Glenn Hutchins, for opening the doors of Brookings and to all of you for coming. I'd like you to see a few clips and then we're going to have our panel discussion led by none other than Charlayne Hunter-Gault.

Thank you very much. (Applause)

(Film clips shown; applause)

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Well, first of all, let me also thank all of you for being here. I've been a part of this what I'm now calling movement, following Skip Gates around with his wonderful documentaries and something that I'll talk about at the end, what I think it really represents.

But in the meantime, I want to have our panel talk about what they think it represents by going back, as we just went, on part of the excerpts from the series. And we're going to do a sort of then and now kind of thing for a few minutes and see where it takes us.

So I'm happy to see all of you. Thank you so much. I didn't have anything to put my questions in, so I picked up the hotel menu. (Laughter) Breakfast, lunch.

SPEAKER: Really good.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Dinner. So I'm thinking this is going to be dessert before dinner. (Laughter)

Okay. You know, I love that first part with James Brown singing "I'm Black and I'm Proud." Now, I've known the congresswoman a long time, before she was a congresswoman, when, in fact, she had an afro.

CONGRESSWOMAN NORTON: What do you think I have now? (Laughter)

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: And it's not like the one you had. But what's the newest TV show that's about you?

CONGRESSWOMAN NORTON: *Good Girls Revolt*.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Yeah, the actress who plays Eleanor has an afro like the one she used to have, if you're interested. It's not like this one.

But, Eleanor, tell me about it. Was it unmitigated blackness, to borrow a phrase? See, you weren't on the last panel I did, so I stole that, but now I have to acknowledge that I got it from you. But was it unmitigated blackness that you experienced wearing your afro?

CONGRESSWOMAN NORTON: I would say when I first got my afro, and as I say this let me be clear that black women feel free to wear their hair any way now, but when I was a kid growing up and when I got my afro there was only one way to wear your hair. So you've got to come to grips with what it meant to be one of the first people in your neighborhood, even your husband didn't know that you were going to get your hair cut that day.

To reverse essentially 400 years of who you were supposed to be by making a statement about who you are today, so it was certainly unmitigated. It was in your face. It was we're ready, and that was the important thing, we're ready. Now y'all get ready, too. Not y'all are ready and we'll try to follow you.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Michael Eric Dyson, it's a little hard for me to imagine you have an afro at this point, but you probably had one at one point, right? What did it mean to you?

MR. DYSON: I had a Michael Jackson afro, you know, the big, bushy 'fro. I don't know why it's hard for you to imagine that. (Laughter)

But it meant that we were re-kinking our hair to reclaim our blackness, and it comes full circle. You see Solange, "A Seat at the Table" says don't touch my hair because the follicular fidelity of black hair, the way in which it stayed where it was put.

When people were talking about “good hair,” what’s good hair? That obeys you when you tell it to stay. (Laughter)

And so that afro was important because I had good, yellow Negro hair. And I was warned, if you get an afro, you will lose your curls. But I was deeply in love with Angela Davis and in the future with Pam Grier, so those two leading ladies lit my path toward a kind of reclaimed blackness, and that afro was extremely important. It allowed me to identify with the masses of black people. I had a dashiki and a kontiki that I put around my neck, and I felt that I was ready for the revolution, the revolution of consciousness, the revolution of understanding that was as a black people could forge connections and build links that would allow us to narrate our own story through our bodies.

Our bodies were, as the Bible said, living epistles. And so our hair was telling a story. And I was proud to participate in that revolution and to join my hair with the hair of others to make a difference.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Well, James Peterson, you seemed to in the little clip we saw not be totally in love with the notion of unmitigated blackness.

MR. PETERSON: Yeah.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Tell me a little bit about that. And you’re much too young to have worn an afro.

MR. PETERSON: I had an afro a couple years ago. You can check it on TV.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Yeah, right. But we’re going to come around again. Yeah, right. But why did you hesitate on the phrase “unmitigated blackness?”

MR. PETERSON: So props, Professor Gates, for all your work, but one of the things, you know, I’m a literary scholar and I really studied under Professor Gates in certain ways. And there have been great debates about essentializing blackness and really complicated discussions about what happens when you reduce blackness to a set

of phenotypical or visual characteristics. And so I've come up in that way.

And Professor Gates could reproduce these debates for your better than I can, but really complicated, theoretical debates about not reducing blackness to its sort of constitutive elements and thinking about the complexities of it always. And so it's a great question to ask because I'm hesitating in that moment because I'm trying to give folks a sense of -- and when you sit for these documentaries, you're sitting for hours answering questions. Right?

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Tell me about it. (Laughter)

MR. PETERSON: Right. You're sitting for hours answering questions and really trying to give folks a sense of the impact that James Brown on young folks, on folks of my generation. And so we didn't really capture all the complexities of James Brown dealing with his identity. The way we engaged James Brown really as the site of authenticity at the core of hip-hop esthetic production. And for like inner city folks, I'm from Newark, New Jersey, that's just a really powerful and empowering thing.

And so I wanted to -- I really just wanted to say unmitigated, right, but I mitigated myself understanding, you know, my sort of ideal sort of listener here is Professor Gates. And he would challenge me a little bit on trying to reduce blackness to any sort of simple set of characteristics. So that was the hesitation there.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Well, Dayna, you, too, are too young to have gone through what Eleanor went through and what I went through. But when you look back at that period and when you examine it, what comes to your mind?

MS. MATTHEW: The parallels. The parallels with what we are doing today. Right? Because the afro movement back then is very similar to the natural hair movement today, right? And so Professor Gates does a fabulous job of saying we've come so far, but yet we have so far to go. Right? How do we end up here where we have to march in the street and say Black Lives Matter? Why is that even a statement that I have to make about myself? Why do I have to have a natural hair movement

today? What has not changed?

So the parallels between how I felt -- yes, I was very young, very young -- at the time and how I feel today, right, when I have to do a repeat of the same expression, the same reclamation of my body, the same expression of my value, it feels very parallel.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: So are you saying what goes around, comes around, or something like that?

MS. MATTHEW: It appears that it does.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Or déjà-vu all over again?

MS. MATTHEW: I would say it's different in some ways, but so much the same in other ways that are really quite troubling.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Now, my good buddy here, I guess I better be a little bit careful because I don't think there was ever a time you could have had an afro. (Laughter)

MR. REEVES: How well you know me already.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: And also, you are of a different generation, as well. But you lived in another country. Does any of this have any resonance for you?

MR. REEVES: That's a great question.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: I get paid for it. (Laughter)

MR. REEVES: I'm honestly sitting here as a Brooking scholar with lots of charts and kind of figures and data to hide behind, but I was born after the civil rights movement in a different country and I've clearly always been white. So why am I here? Because the work I do at Brookings has led me to believe that the idea that actually in the end that race was going to be substituted by class and that (inaudible) equality followed by liberalization of attitudes and economic growth would basically, although it would take time, would kind of get us there. And it feels to me just looking at the data that this has been a stalled century in terms of the median black economic experience and, to some

extent, that's been hidden by the exceptional and very moving election of Barack Obama.

And so I work on mobility here in the U.S., and I see that the kids who are born poor, the black kids who are born poor, half of them are still poor as adults, whereas only half the white kids who are born poor, as adults. Black kids who are born into the middle class are twice as likely to fall down as white kids who are born into the middle class intergenerationally. And so you see the -- and so if you just work in the field and look at the figures, and it's been slow for me to get to this, there's an unavoidable fact that the material differences between the experience of poor black Americans and white Americans is unavoidable.

And I know think, particularly in light of the election and what's happening --

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: We're going to get to that in a minute.

MR. REEVES: Okay.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Hold on, not yet. Hold on because there's a lot to chew on there.

MR. REEVES: I shouldn't have even opened that up probably.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: And I hope we have time to do it. But I just want to stay in the past for another minute or two and ask you, James, you know, what is the equivalent of the Black is Beautiful thing that we saw then that we see today? Because you go deep into rap and rap music. Is that the equivalent of Black is Beautiful today or what?

MR. PETERSON: You know, when I think about -- you know, I think of Black is Beautiful as kind of an ideological concept that really did animate my youth. Right? My parents were really big on embracing it. And I think what's happened is, is that that concept was so dense for the black community that it really has great tentacles throughout black popular culture right now. So I would count Black Lives Matter as an extension of that. I would certainly count certain aspects of hip-hop culture as an

extension of that. I would count for the natural hair movement as an extension of that. I mean, there are certainly things that we can look at in the contemporary black popular cultural moment and trace its roots back to that simple sort of esthetic statement.

And so when you think about "A Seat at the Table" or you think about the kind of music that Kendrick Lamar makes and you see people sort of reflecting on like the size of their nose or contemplating like what sort of is this sort of existential angst of being black in this society, anybody who has a black daughter in the 21st century knows that even though we've sort of come through Black is Beautiful and we wear natural hair, the challenges around esthetic ideals for young women of color are still in place.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: But I watched you not long ago do a YouTube thing, I don't know how old it was, but it seemed very current to me, you called it "All Black Everything: Bringing Back Black," or "Bringing Black Back." I'm black, this is my blog. (Laughter) And you said that what rap is doing today is forcing us to rethink how race relations operate in the 21st century, but it challenges us. And you talk about the nuances of the moment.

Now, some of it got a little academic for me, but that was essentially how I saw it. Can you break it down for us?

MR. PETERSON: Yeah. I mean, so when Professor Gates talks about his early genealogy and he says, you know, my grandparents were colored, my parents were Negro, and I'm black, I'm applauding that. Right? Because for me, blackness for us now in the 21st century is a really, really important identifier. Not to dismiss African-Americanness, but black is a really important identifier.

Now, what hip-hop has done is pushed blackness as an identity category to the foreground. And the reason why that's important is because when you look at blackness in the 21st century, one of the challenges for us within the black community is to embrace the diversity within the black community. Right? So this seems a little bit strange to some folks, but sometimes like the African-American identity within blackness

sort of functions hegemonically. I don't want to be academic here --

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Please don't. (Laughter)

MR. PETERSON: -- but it sort of elides other identities within the black community. So we need to bring black back, right, in order to capture some of the diversity within the black experience. And so hip-hop does that sort of inherently because it emerges out of this sort of black Diaspora moment. You have folks from all throughout the Caribbean, you have Latino folks, you have black folks from different regions, all contributing to the sort of developments of hip-hop culture. And all the esthetics of it, all the cultural products of it sort of reflect that diverse blackness. And so that's part of what I'm trying to get back to.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Michael Eric Dyson, does that have an impact in the larger society? Because -- no, go ahead.

MR. DYSON: Yeah. Well, of course, because the society wants to be black except for the burden of it, as Greg Tate would say. I want to be black like Justin Timberlake until it comes to pay the tax of blackness. When you sound like a black person, the sonic blackness is the appropriation of that blackness to articulate a powerful American identity, but when the penalty is imposed there is a retreat back into the privilege of whiteness. So blackness has metastasized across the body politic.

Blackness is what it means to be an American. You cannot think about what it means to be an American without thinking about black folk, whether it's Beyoncé or her husband Jay Z, whether it's the president presently for the next few days of the United States of America and his wife and their children. They have redefined domesticity in black America, in America.

When you think about the fact that Toni Morrison is still living and breathing among us, arguably the greatest writer that we've produced in the context of our struggle in America.

So yeah, that blackness has metastasized, so to speak, spread out. And

when you think about hip-hop culture that Professor Peterson has brilliantly spoken about, that hip-hop culture was denigrated among African-American people while it was being simultaneously embraced by the dominant culture. I was there, I know. Turn that damn music down.

"Elvis was a hero to most, but he never meant shit to me. Straight-up racist, the sucker was simple and plain. Motherfuck him and John Wayne." (Laughter)

So when you've got Chuck D saying that and black people are like, oh, my god, turn that stuff down. And now all those people who desire a political sensibility within hip-hop denied it when it was at its political height. But some engaging entrepreneur white brothers and sisters saw this as a means to not only commercialize and commodify black consciousness and imagination, but to figure out a way to allow these young black artists to express themselves. And so hip-hip is a powerful paradigm of that.

Think about all of the ideas that have come out as a result of that. Professor Peterson mentioned Kendrick Lamar. Kendrick Lamar, Beyoncé, Common's new album, Alicia Keys are leading a revival and a renaissance of blackness in our time in ways that harken back to the '60s, where the height of black artistic expression by these young artists who have now become politicized. And as a result of that, the dominant world sees that blackness and gets afraid of it at the same time. I know we're going to talk about it later.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Yeah, we are.

MR. DYSON: But this election was a referendum on blackness.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Okay. That's your position and we'll discuss it. (Laughter)

MR. DYSON: I ain't speaking for nobody else but me.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: But also, Eleanor, at that time black feminism and Hollywood's portrayal of blacks in film, we saw a little bit of that a few minutes ago.

How do you assess the impact of the Black and Proud movement opening the way for black feminism? And how different was it from white feminism?

CONGRESSWOMAN NORTON: Well, feminism, when feminism arose in the 1960s, it was different for women of every kind because women had never thought of themselves, at least white women, as a particularly disadvantaged group. As far as black women were concerned, the overlap between the women's movement and the civil rights movement caused some confusion.

Black people were trying to get their arms around what it meant to bring change in this country and here come a large group, a much larger group, who are not necessarily black, in fact, were white, who were trying to do the same thing. And it really took some leadership on the part of some black women, and they ought to be understood, who understood they were both black and women.

MR. PETERSON: At the same time.

CONGRESSWOMAN NORTON: People like Shirley Chisholm.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: That was the name coming (inaudible).

CONGRESSWOMAN NORTON: Like Dorothy Height. It took that kind of leadership to engage this confusion, to understand this confusion, to deal with this confusion within the community. You know, I'm proud, though I was not in Congress at the time, that the Congressional Black Caucus was among the first to understand, Shirley Chisholm helped them along, to understand you had to speak for black women and for women before most others did.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Yeah, that's what I was going to ask you. Pardon me, but did that twain ever meet, the black feminists and the white feminists?

CONGRESSWOMAN NORTON: Of course they met, you know, but it was very difficult. Look, again, you know, when a straight-out civil rights activist and a leader of the women's movement like Gloria Steinem, this gorgeous white woman, you know, comes forward and talks about feminism, she is still the very best. But it is very

hard for black women to identify with her initially.

So what you've got to do is to separate out the beginnings, late '60s, two huge, the most important movements in the 20th century arise at the same time. And then they say, you all sort it out. It took real leadership for that sorting out to occur.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Dayna, let me ask you, you know, there was that period where there were a lot of black things on television and then it all seemed to go away. And we just had Oscars so white and the Emmys got a little bit better. What happened to that movement? And also, do you see it coming back with things like *Blackish* and some of the other things that are on television now? What happened then and do you see more diversity now?

MS. MATTHEW: So I'm going to lift up black women for a moment because we are, yes, coming back, but we have not lost our way. From the time that you were talking about, Representative, when the two movements appeared to meet, till early November, the election, we voted as a bloc and we voted our interest and the country's interest, even though others were confused. Right? And I mean that. I really mean that because we have not lost our way and we continue to produce television and music and uphold families and try to keep this country on track. (Applause)

Thank you. We didn't get confused. So to the extent that it's coming back, yes, I believe that we will, black womamhood will lead the way. We're doing it in television. We're doing it in movies. We're doing it in journalism.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Shonda Rhimes owns Thursday night.

MS. MATTHEW: Exactly, owns Thursday night and continues to put it out front. So I want to say you're welcome, right? (Laughter)

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: So do you see progress on television? Because every time I turn on the television now there seems to be another African-American show or people in commercials. Is it happening?

MR. PETERSON: I just want to be careful here because I feel like the

reconstruction-redemption model is sort of like the black American dialectic, right? We're always sort of coming back and forth.

And, you know, critical race theorists for a long time, way before I came into the academy, were saying this, that we have to be careful about the seductiveness of incremental progress. I think all of us are learning that as a very tough lesson right now. We have to be very, very careful about that and also black exceptionalism, which is another thing I was talking about. So sometimes black exceptionalism obscures the challenges that we have to look forward to, and the challenges and the work that we still have to do. Imani Perry is great on this in More Beautiful and More Terrible.

Black women are killing it on those scholarships, as well, right?

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Yes, we are.

MR. PETERSON: And so I think that model is something we should be really suspicious of, which is, you know, of course there's going to be incremental progress. You'll see black folks pop up on TV. There will be a Shonda Rhimes. But we can't allow exceptional success to obscure the work that still has to be done. And, unfortunately, we've been lulled into that sleep.

And this is the reason why certain pockets of radicalism are cropping up amongst young people today because they've already peaked the sort of limitations of incremental progress. It's no disrespect to civil rights at all, right? It's no disrespect to like the legislative process. It's just an understanding of the reconstruction-redemption model. We make progress and the forces of white supremacy and institutional racism fight back very, very, very, very harshly and very, very difficult. And so it's a double-bind in some ways.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Right. Well, let's turn that page now and look at what William Julius Wilson said in our little excerpt there, because he said that the civil rights movement had no impact on the black poor. And in Florida, where I live part of the year, when friends of mine were canvassing during this last election campaign, there

were blacks in, you know, lower income neighborhoods saying they weren't going to vote because nothing good had happened to them, for them in the past eight years.

So I'd like to go now to you, Richard, because you alluded earlier to something that William Julius Wilson also said. I mean, Skip talked about how, you know, for the first time we've got a strong black middle class. We have even Skip Gates in the upper class. (Laughter) No?

So what are we looking at here when we look at "the black community?" How does it divide.

MR. REEVES: Yeah. I noticed you didn't ask me about television, which was probably wise. Although with teenage kids, I would talk about *Luke Cage*, for example, which I think is just --

SPEAKER: Unmitigated blackness.

MR. REEVES: Yes, and a fabulous series. So I was very struck by the figures that Skip had about the increase in the size of the black middle class and the black upper middle class. And it is actually useful in some ways to have a kind of outsider perspective on this. This is where it is useful not to come from here because it changes your reference point.

I find the same in the discussions about segregation. People will say, look, racial segregation's come down. Well, it could only come down, right, from where it started.

SPEAKER: That's right. That's exactly right.

MR. REEVES: And by comparison to where I come from, London, black neighborhoods are still three times as segregated as they are in the U.K. and elsewhere. Similarly, yes, the black middle class and upper middle class grew. It could only grow. So my immediate question to social scientists, well, what was the base? Right?

And so I do think one of the things I really liked about this is the intersection of class and race. And to be very clear about it, the danger that there is

enough black success and enough people break through that it does allow a story to be told not only, well, look, things look pretty good. There's a lot of black people on TV. And look, there's even one in the White House now. And then you look at the data and you think but hold on a second, you've basically seen a stalled century in terms of actual material progress.

And so in some ways, it's a kind of worst of all worlds in terms of radical change because enough happens for whites to be able to convince themselves, as half do now, that discrimination against whites is as big a problem as discrimination against blacks.

SPEAKER: Right. How about that?

MR. REEVES: Because you've got this public perception which is so far away from the reality.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: You know, back in 1968, when the cities exploded all around the nation, President Johnson appointed a commission, the shorthand for it was the Kerner Commission. And its conclusion was that this nation was moving in two separate directions: one white and prospering, one black and poor. But what I'm hearing in the data that you're talking about is there's a white and prospering, there's a black and prospering to a certain extent maybe, and then there's a poor that isn't really a permanent underclass that we're looking at? You.

MR. REEVES: Well, I'll speak. I mentioned the upward mobility figures. We also see from recent work by Raj Chetty and others that one of the best predictors of an area that doesn't have upward mobility is how many black people live there? So the predominantly black areas have much less upward mobility. And you can see from longitudinal data, you can see from Pat Sharkey at NYU the incredible proportion of black kids who live in a high poverty area just as their parents did. He calls it the inheritance of the ghetto. It's his phrase, not mine.

And so I see hugely structural, semi-permanent factors at work for a

huge majority, huge numbers of black Americans, which his belied by the apparent success of a few. And I think your point is, you know, never mistake the exception for the rule. But I fear that recent trends make me think that that is kind of what's happening, and that feels like a dangerous moment to me.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: So Michael Eric Dyson, you know, we were all -- and I can't speak for every single person in this room, but the fact that you're here probably means you felt the same way I did about Barack Obama's election. So are those people in Florida saying what they are saying? And why is Richard citing the stats he's talking about when we thought we were using the phrase "post racial America?" What happened? Some of us.

MR. DYSON: Well, Obama never used it, let's be sure about that. In his second book, *The Audacity of Hope*, he said one black guy in the Senate does not betoken a post racial America. So to his credit, he resisted that notion from the very beginning.

But look, America thought we had been there and done black. When we got the first black president, we thought all the stuff was solved in a kind of magical wave of the wand; that now that one black family is living in public housing -- (Laughter) -- we can dismiss all of the other black people who have to live in public housing of a different sort. And I think that the permanent underclass, when you talk about Professor William Julius Wilson, who talks about, in part, the permanent underclass, you had a shift from manufacturing to service industries, you had the global export of capital, you had the demobilization of African-American and Latino people with infrastructures of transportation that used to go -- not go out to the suburbs, now that white brothers and sisters have moved back to the cities and gentrified them. Look at this city you're living in right now or those who are here. And now the poor people have been pushed out to the suburbs and exurbs.

And so the narrative you have running is that white America elected

twice a black president. Most white Americans never voted for Barack Obama. The white Americans who were against him got outvoted twice.

And so what you saw was the perception of an extraordinary figure, like a Barack Obama, being representative in a way that he wasn't quite representative. Because the data that Brother Reeves speaks about suggests that we have been dealing with a kind of Dickens like the best of times, the worst of times, but the masses of black people have been stuck in a kind of cycle of poverty that situates itself generation after generation. And as a result of that, even when we talk about the angst of the working poor and the working class, notice we don't talk about the black and Latino poor people. We're talking about dominant white brothers and sisters.

And understandably, for them Barack Obama did not represent the kind of be-all and end-all. He represented the very thing that they were opposed to. The perception that black people were getting things they didn't deserve, that Affirmative Action that Skip Gates speaks about without qualification, right, speaks about the necessity for that, which is quite unusual even in this day and age because Affirmative Action to some people means, oh, I'm getting in some people who don't deserve it.

Michael Jordan couldn't play in a league where the first black ballplayer, Earl Lloyd, just died this year. Now, Michael Jordan ain't nobody's example of inferiority when it comes to basketball, despite the great Boston Celtics and Bill Russell and Bob Cousy. Bob Cousy and Larry Bird ain't had nothing on Michael Jordan. (Laughter)

So the reality is Affirmative Action simply says we're going to let a Charlayne Hunter-Gault, a legendary journalist, we're going to permit her to bless us. Black people always have to beg America to allow us to come in to bless you. And so Affirmative Action says give us the entrée into this. It doesn't mean that every black person is extraordinary and talented, but most white folk aren't either. The mediocrity of whiteness has become normalized and black people have to be -- no disrespect -- and black people -- right? (Laughter) All of y'all are exceptional white people. You're

exceptional white people. (Laughter)

But the --

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Can I stop you before you dig yourself into a deeper hole? (Laughter)

MR. DYSON: Oh, no, I'm a preacher. I resurrect people, too.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Yeah. (Laughter)

MR. DYSON: So what's interesting -- no, my next book is on whiteness. I'm there. So I think that Affirmative Action is critical. The masses of black people have been demobilized. And I think what we have to do in this country is to face the fact that there is a huge crisis and a gulf between the have-gots and the have-nots. And the African-American people who are doing well, are doing extraordinarily well, but the masses of black people have not been doing as well.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: And let me ask you this question. You know, I looked at the data, too, and there are a lot of poor white people --

MR. DYSON: Yes.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: -- as well as there are a lot of poor black people.

MR. DYSON: Right.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Now, a lot of that has to do with industrialization and technological changes. How is it that they don't see, and we just saw this in the election, how is it they don't see that they have the same problem? Let me get somebody else to speak on that. Would you like to --

MR. PETERSON: Yeah. I mean, well, the first thing I would say to those folks in Florida is please vote locally.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: They didn't.

MR. PETERSON: Right? They need to vote locally, as well. I don't think you should get so caught up in the --

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Can you come down and tell them that?

MR. PETERSON: I have some relatives down there. But I don't understand how this was absent from the conversation. I think sometimes it's just easier to talk to people in socioeconomic pain through the rhetoric of hate. But the reality is that unless we're going to, like, destroy a whole bunch of machines and roll back technological advancement, there's no way to recuperate from the post-industrial economy. That's whether you're black, white, or whatever.

Like, when you see the images of the South Bronx, I'm so glad that's in the film so people can see because that's the canary in the mine. Right? That's even before Flint. That's even before -- I mean, when you see that kind of residential destruction as a consequence of the post-industrial economy, you can get a sense of where the nation is headed.

But for those of us on the left, I don't think we've done a good enough job of communicating. Because, yes, trade agreements are problematic and they have certain kinds of deleterious consequences economically, but this is a machine economy. Are we going to, like, roll -- we can roll back racial rights and you could roll back *Roe v. Wade*, are you going to roll back technological advancement? Are you going to somehow unbuild the machines that are doing the work in some of these communities?

So I don't think we've struck the right chord with communicating about these sort of post-industrial economy and really even beyond it, the service industries. Just where we are economically has not been effectively communicated.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Richard, I'd like you to comment on that. And also, you said something I think is very important. You said people aren't talking about it. And I think a lot of that has to do with my own profession, which I thin has to be held account for what has happened in this country in the last -- well, I won't go there yet.

So can you comment on that?

MR. REEVES: I think that this is about a loss of relative status, particularly for white men and modestly educated white men. And I'm going to quote

Dayna, who said at an event here, equality always feels like a loss to the people who were previously unfairly ahead. And I'm not suggesting for a moment that that sort of painful transition is necessarily easy, but I think when we look at what's happening, it's not actually poor whites who propelled Trump to the presidency, even though they voted for him. It was actually middle income.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Middle income.

MR. REEVES: And I think as we kind of look at that, I think this point about defining whiteness, you know, I've been reading a lot of James Baldwin at the moment, and I discovered I became American a month ago, but I also feel, and one of my kids said this to me, he said I feel like I've also become white by coming to America. James Baldwin says nobody was white before they came to America. It took generations and a vast amount of coercion before this became a white country.

And so actually, to the extent that whiteness has been defined against, in opposition to, and in a superior position to the apparent -- and I stress apparent -- rise of Latinos and black Americans has threatened the automatic status that went to white men, even those of modest skills. They feel that's gone and that's threatening them.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Eleanor, do you think that? I mean, because people talked about white fear during this campaign. Do you think that's at work in how people are reacting?

CONGRESSWOMAN NORTON: Yeah, and I think a lot of it doesn't have to do with black people at all. It has to do with globalization. It has to do with the loss of automatic rise in status for white men.

This conversation, like so many other conversations, really tends to merge civil rights or rights and economic matters. The civil rights movement was not an economic movement. People have the right to go to school in the same schools in this town, for example, to eat in the same places. Now we're into -- and yet, throughout this conversation we've been talking about blackness and poverty as if those merge. The

civil rights movement tried. Affirmative Action, for example, had a lot to do with economic mobility.

The fact is that when it gets down to economic mobility and 2016 and the recent election, you are talking about Western society and you're talking about societies in Europe and in the United States where the dominant populations automatically got better. And in a global economy it turns out that other people, non-white people, have gotten better somewhat. And if you look at the globalization picture, that is not a zero-sum game, but it appears that way if you are a white man in America or in Europe. And if ever there was a time when you needed truly great leadership and don't have it, this is the time. somebody needs to explain that to Americans of every race.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Okay, so I want everybody to comment on that, if you want to, but do it briefly because I have about five more questions and five minutes to ask them.

MS. MATTHEW: So I just want to jump in for a second because something that you said really -- it puts me in mind of a silver lining that we would not expect to identify. It's a little perverse in this way.

One of the things that I think we're going to learn in the next four years is that race still matters and racism still matters. Right? That word that we don't like to talk about, right? Because we're not merging anymore an economic fix with a racial or ethnic fix.

We have to look at the fact, and I always quote this statistic, right, infant mortality is twice as high for blacks as it is for whites around this world, in this country especially. Right? You don't fix that by educating black women and you don't fix it by increasing our income. We stay in a position of losing our children almost twice as often as whites who are uneducated, not even a high school education, and below the poverty level. Right?

Race as race matters, right?

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Oh, you said “race matters.” That’s my series of public television.

MS. MATTHEW: And that’s why I said it.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Thank you.

MS. MATTHEW: That’s exactly why I said it.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: That was a great point, though.

MS. MATTHEW: When you look at middle class, what we have talked about is middle class African Americans, middle class African Americans are still more likely to live in poor neighborhoods than whites are and more likely to live in segregated neighborhoods than whites are. Right? So unless we talk about race and racism and what it’s doing, and we must do that now, right?

So if there’s a silver lining to be had, we are going to have to talk about racism again. We are going to have to repair and address racism again.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Okay, real quick, though. When you say “we,” who is that?

MS. MATTHEW: You know, it’s like my brother-in-law, he kept talking about they this, they that. And it was very conspiratorial. And I said, well, who is this “they” you keep talking about? And he says, well, if you have to ask me that, they’ve gotten to you. (Laughter)

So I want to know -- I was looking for a nice way to say it. I’m shaking my head.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: So I want to know who is --

MS. MATTHEW: You think they are coming to help us?

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Who is your “we?” Who is “we?”

MS. MATTHEW: Yeah. So the reason there’s a natural hair movement, the reason that there’s a hip-hop movement, the reason that we are killing it in academics and in music, it’s because we black people, first of all, have to know who we are and

speak for ourselves.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Okay.

MS. MATTHEW: Now, I will say that one of the facts that does not escape me is that we are here at Brookings. Right? And so we have allies that we did not have before. We have accomplished something in the past 50 years. So we have more tools at our disposal. Right? But I believe the movement has to be internal.

MR. DYSON: Yeah, in terms of the --

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Hang on just one second because they're giving me the sharp eye over here. I'll get to you in one second, but this is where I want to go and I hope -- I'm going to let you say whatever you have to say, but I'd like you to incorporate what I'm about to ask you about. Because I want to talk about hope for tomorrow because DeRay Mckesson, who's been arrested as many times as John Lewis was hit in the head during the civil rights movement, and yet both of them are still hopeful. So that's sort of where I want to go.

Now, you can say whatever you want to say, but get the hope.

MR. DYSON: I'm a preacher. I'm going to get into the hope.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: All right, okay.

MR. DYSON: But we've got to go through hell first. (Laughter) So what's interesting is that --

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: But make it brief, darling.

MR. DYSON: Hell is real hot and it's brief.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Okay.

MR. DYSON: So for me, I think that when we talk about -- if we're going to be honest about the conversation, poor white people have been sold a bill of goods. They've been told what's keeping you down is the blacks. Look at my blacks over here. (Laughter)

So what's interesting is that blacks have been demonized as the source

and you've heard the brilliant analysis here that the de-industrialization, post industrialization, shift from manufacturing to service industries, the way in which black people have been criminalized, white people have been sold a good who are poor, who have more in common with other poor black people and Latino people than they have with anybody else, but they've been sold a bill of goods that it's the boogeyman over here who's hurting you.

So now when we say this is a referendum on class, it's not. The average voter for Trump makes $72,000.

MR. PETERSON: That's some crazy stuff.

MR. DYSON: So that means there's a manipulation of that poverty and what Dubois called the "wages of whiteness," the psychic wages of whiteness. At least I'm not a Negro.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Exactly.

MR. DYSON: So in that case, I think poor white people -- class hurts, but race makes class hurt more.

Hopefulness? Look, hope is a deep and profound virtue. Optimism is a shallow virtue. Reinhold Niebuhr talked about that. I think we have hope and we have the hope of telling the truth to the dominant culture to say, look, whiteness is not working for you either. Whiteness is not working for anybody in America, so let's kill whiteness and reinvent Americanness and American identity. Because the moment white people stop being white, America becomes a great nation. (Applause)

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Eleanor Holmes Norton, tell me about hope. And in closing, in your closing statement about hope, not that it's going to do any good, but what is your advice to the incoming president in terms of doing something about all of this? (Laughter) In 10 seconds or less.

CONGRESSWOMAN NORTON: Look, having grown up in a city that was segregated, having been in the civil rights movement and the women's movement,

and now in the do-nothing Congress, which has now been captured by people who want to do a lot to people, and especially in the city I represent, the greatest -- the worst reaction we could have to the new administration is hopelessness, and yet I see that all around me. If it doesn't raise the fight in you to see Jeff Sessions appointed attorney general of the United States, then you are brain dead.

So the notion of hope is a kind of passive emotion that I have never had. It is the fight emotion, it seems to me, that ought to spring from you when you see and hear the emergence of a now quite outspoken white movement, where they're essentially making the same arguments we made in terms of equality now in terms of sheer whiteness.

So if you're feeling hopeless, you got the wrong emotion going for you. (Laughter)

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Very quickly, Michael.

MR. DYSON: Look, Donald Trump, if it turns out to be true that he is the president -- and he is (Laughter) -- then --

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Get over it.

MR. DYSON: Yeah, right.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: You're still holding out.

MR. DYSON: Yeah, right. Get that damn recount going. (Laughter)

So the thing is, is that, look, the hope is that Donald Trump turns out to be what people said he was, that he's not really "a right wing ideologue." The problem is he's drawing people around him who are. You've got an avowed white nationalist as his chief strategist. You've got Jeff Sessions, who's problematic.

So what we have to do is do what Howard Thurman said. Howard Thurman, the great black mystic said, refuse to reduce your life to the event of your experience right now. Our slave foreparents, he said, look forward to a day they couldn't even imagine, but they imagined it anyhow.

So what we have to do is to say -- my pastor said we have already come to what we've come through, what we've come to. We've been there before. This is not the first time. We can overcome. We have to remember what we did before. And when we do that, we don't give in to hopelessness. We challenge this with every fiber of our being. (Applause)

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Thank you. Dayna?

MS. MATTHEW: Yeah, I'm definitely going to continue the fight motif. Sherrilyn Ifill gave a speech and she was sitting at Thurgood Marshall's desk and she said like you did, we have been here before. And every time that we have fought in unity, we have won. So it's like we get a reset and do-over.

I look at this film and I am inspired when I see how far we have come and what odds we overcame. And I feel like I can do it again. Right? I look at this film and I look at the new resources that are at our disposal, that weren't at our disposal before, and I know that the bar has moved.

I know that racism has changed. It has morphed. It is no longer just segregation. It is implicit and unconscious and unintentional, all kinds of things that are complicated. But look at what's happening up here. The resources are up to the task.

And so I would say we've been here before and we will do it again, but we will do it better. We'll take more people with us. We won't make the mistakes that we made before. But I feel ready for the fight. Thank you. (Applause)

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: And don't forget the other part of the question, the advice to the president as it relates to black people.

MR. PETERSON: Yeah, my advice to President-elect Trump is --

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Watch your back.

SPEAKER: Yeah, be careful, seriously.

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Be careful.

MR. PETERSON: My advice to President-elect --

MR. PETERSON: And that's not a threat. It's just --

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: Oh, not a physical threat.

MR. PETERSON: No, just be careful of over-thinking the world that you think that you think you're inheriting, right? You have to be much clearer on the world that you're actually entering into. You can surround yourself with a bunch of sort of myopic people who are going to tell you what you want to hear or pander to who you think got you into that office, but you really have to understand the terrain of the world. And I think he got that in his first encounter with President Obama in that first meeting.

I mean, I agree with the panel here. You know, a lot of young people are really upset and distraught out of this. I've had more young people cry in my office hours this week than I did during 9-11, and I taught class on the day of 9-11. And so this is a tremendously traumatic thing for them, but I tell them two things.

Number one, remember how you felt on 11-9. Like remember how you felt when you first saw this result. Remember that feeling, embrace it. You know why? Because that's how I feel every day when I wake up. I feel that way every day when I wake up. The anguish that you feel, the dissonance from society, the sort of anguish about people of color, women, and the trans folks and all the folks who are vulnerable, that's how I feel every day when I wake up. So remember how you felt on that day and you got to carry that with you.

And the second thing I say is, look, now you can't leave. Right? All this talk, people want to leave, they want to go to another -- are you crazy? Where are you going to go? Where are you going to go?

Listen, listen, my ancestors built this country. They built that White House. They built the roads. They built the bridges. They literally built it. We're not going anywhere. Right? We're not going anywhere.

So I'm hopeful that folks can be empathetic about how they felt on that day, right, and carry that with them forward as we continue to do the work that we got to

do. (Applause)

SPEAKER: Oh, Canada.

MR. REEVES: Follow up, thanks. (Laughter) Half the school children in the U.S. now are white. The election was about race. It was about other things, too, but the education gap among whites, different years entirely, if you control for the racial aptitudes of the whites. So I think if you kind of look at it statistically, and this is a very short quote, again from Baldwin, his letter to his nephew on the (inaudible) great. He said, “The danger in the minds of most white Americans is the loss of their identity. The black man has functioned in the white man’s world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar, and as he moves out of his place, Heaven and Earth are shaken out of their foundations.”

If we think that -- and here I think I can authentically speak as someone who’s both a new American and white, white racism has to be fought by whites. And so I think that’s a huge responsibility among whites not to sort of run silent and think it is somehow the responsibility of black and Latino Americans to fight white racism. (Applause)

MS. HUNTER-GAULT: I just want to thank all of you and I want to close by saying that I’m hopeful, not least because I was talking to a group of students just the day after the election. And they were expressing angst and anxiety and fear. And I told them what we shared at Gwen Ifill’s funeral the other day.

She great up in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, as did I. And we were taught that our history is our armor. And that is why I share that with the young people and that is why I readily agree to do anything Skip Gates asked me to do in relationship to this series. Because this series is a part of our armor and it’s armor for black people, it’s armor for white people. Because our fight was not a fight by black people alone. White people died for us. And so it’s a fight for all of us.

I agree with you on the fact that white people talk to white people. Sure, but this is job for all of us and we have our armor and we can march forward till victory is

won. Thank you. (Applause)

MS. ROCKEFELLER: Thank you very much, Glenn, and everyone at Brookings for generously hosting this evening. The conversation, as always with Skip, has been stimulating and it's a great example of the fact that both of our missions, Public Broadcasting and Brookings, really align on evenings like tonight.

WETA is the flagship station in Washington, D.C. And as such, we have a very special civic responsibility to the nation to explain what is happening in Washington. And for those of us who have been around forever, it's hard for us to understand and yet we really understand how especially younger people are taking current events as a shock to their system. They haven't lived as long as we have and through as many battles as we have, so it's all new to them. And their naiveté sometimes is refreshing and energizing. But now it's not helping them as a coping mechanism.

So through the *PBS NewsHour*, through *Washington Week*, and through partnering with other filmmakers, we're trying to explain not only America's history, but our present. So tonight's conversation, film, and panel have underscored the timeliness, of course, of this amazing project created by Skip as if he knew what was going to happen. The timing was impeccable, as always.

I've long admired Skip's scholarship and leadership as a public intellectual, because that is who he is. He's a filmmaker, a thought leader. He always expands our understanding of where we are with race in America.

So thank you, panelists, very much for coming. We appreciate all of your insights. It was especially electric tonight, we really appreciate that.

And I want to tell our audience that I hope that you will watch Part 2 tomorrow night at 8:00 on WETA 26. So if you missed Part 1, you can watch it now on PBS.org/BlackAmerica. The series will also be re-broadcast, the entire series, all four hours, on Sunday, November 27th, stating at 2:00. So as the relatives leave, you shut the door quietly and enjoy the next four hours all for yourselves.

I'm happy to announce that by the end of November this series will have aired 4,000 separate times in broadcasts through public broadcasting stations all across the country. That's just in this month. (Applause)

So thank you for a wonderful evening and please now enjoy the reception right outside. Thank you. (Applause)

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CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

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