THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
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50 YEARS LATER:
BLACK AMERICA SINCE MLK

A SCREENING AND DISCUSSION

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PARTICIPANTS:

Welcome:

CAMILLE BUSETTE
Senior Fellow and Director, Race, Prosperity, and Inclusion Initiative
The Brookings Institution

Remarks:

HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.
Alphonse Fletcher University Professor
Director, Hutchins Center for African and African American Research
Harvard University

Conversation:

CAMILLE BUSETTE, Moderator
Senior Fellow and Director, Race, Prosperity, and Inclusion Initiative
The Brookings Institution

MARC MORIAL
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Urban League

NICOL TURNER-LEE
Fellow, Governance Studies
The Brookings Institution

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. BUSETTE: Good evening, everybody. Good evening. So I'm Camille Busette; I'm the director of the Race, Prosperity, and Inclusion Initiative here at Brookings. And ion behalf of the Hutchins Center and the Brookings Institution overall, it is really a pleasure to welcome you all here this evening. And I also want to welcome our online audience as well.

As we know, on April 4, 1968 Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis. While the bullet he received extinguished a leading light for African American, and for all people globally advocating for civil rights, his legacy has been immortal. Dr. King framed the issues, the discourse, and cultivated the coalitions for civil rights and economic justice that have influenced civil rights advocacy to this day. And he articulated the challenges and the strategies within the vocabulary and imagery of basic human rights, from which so many here and abroad have drawn inspiration in countless struggles for human dignity.

We are marking Dr. King's enduring legacy tonight by screening a short clip from Dr. Henry Louis Gates' updated documentary series, "And Still I Rise: Black America Since MLK". Prior to the screening, Dr. Gates will provide us with some remarks, and after the screening I will be joined by Marc Morial, the CEO and president of the National Urban League, and Dr. Nicol Turner-Lee, a fellow here at the Brookings Institution, for a discussion of the themes highlighted in the screening. After the discussion, you are invited to join us for a reception.

So I want to say it gives me immense pleasure to introduce Dr.

Henry Louis Gates. Dr. Gates is the Alphonse Fletcher university professor and director of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University. Emmy Award winning filmmaker, literary scholar, journalist, cultural critic, and institution builder, Professor Gates has authored or co-authored 21 books and created 15 documentary films, including "Wonders of the African World", "African American Lives", "Faces of America", "Black in Latin America", and "Finding Your Roots". "The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross", which is his six-part PBS documentary series, which he wrote, executive produced, and hosted, earned the Emmy Award for outstanding historical program, long form, as well as a Peabody Award, Alfred I. Dupont-Columbia University Award, and the NAACP Image Award.

Having written for such leading publications as the New Yorker, the New York Times, and Time, Professor Gates now serves as a chairman of TheRoot.com, a daily online magazine he co-founded in 2008. He has also received grant funding to develop "Finding Your Roots: Curriculum to Teach Students," "Science Through Genetics and Genealogy." And in 2012 the "Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Reader," a collection of his writings edited by Abby Wolf, was published. His next film is the four hour documentary series, which we are going see the updated version of today, "And I Still Rise: Black America Since MLK," which aired on PBS in April 2016. And there is a companion book, which he co-authored with Kevin M. Burke, which was published by Harper Collins in 2015. He is the recipient of 55 honorary degrees and numerous prizes.

Professor Gates was a member of the first class awarded Genius

Grant by the MacArthur Foundation in 1981, and in 1998 he became the first African American scholar to be awarded the National Humanities Medal.

He earned is B.A. in English language and literature, summa cum laude from Yale University in 1973, and his MA and Ph.D. in literature from Clear College at the University of Cambridge in 1979. Professor Gates has directed the WEB Institute for African and African American Research, now the Hutchins Center, since arriving at Harvard in 1991. And during his first 15 years on campus he chaired the Department of Afro American Studies as it expanded into the Department of African and African American Studies into a full-fledged doctoral program.

Please join me in giving Dr. Henry Louis Gates a very warm welcome. (Applause)

DR. GATES: Thank you, Camille. Thank you for that very kind introduction. It's an honor to be here with you this evening so close to the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. King.

I want to thank the Brookings Institute for helping to pull this event together so quickly. Camilo Ramirez and Leti Davalos, and our panel moderator, of course, Camille Busette. I want to thank my friend, Glen Hutchins, the Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Brookings, and our panelists, Nicol Turner-Lee, and my old friend, good friend, Marc Morial, whose family tree we're busy tracing for season five of “Finding Your Roots.” And we're going to out you man -- there's all kind of stuff back on your tree. (Laughter) Good thing you're running for office is all I've got to say.

I want to thank WETA, our producing partner whom we love, particularly my friend Sharon Rockefeller, who is the CEO of WETA. Sharon and I met incredibly in Piedmont, West Virginia in 1968, 50 years ago, and we've been dear friends ever since. You all know where Piedmont is, right? If you don't, I'm sorry, you've got to leave. (Laughter) You know, Piedmont is an Irish-Italian paper mill town where I grew up, and it's halfway between Pittsburgh and Washington. And it's on the Potomac and the Alleghany mountains. My family has lived there on both side for 200 years. Now, how about that for family stability? Is that true for anybody else in this room? No, none of you. So the true black experience, as quiet as it's kept, is in the hills of West Virginia, on the Alleghany Mountains, on the Potomac River.

I particularly want to thank Elaine Laughlin, on Sharon's staff, who is here with us this evening, our producers, who are responsible for bringing our series to life, Sabin Streeter, Sacco Gladshow, and the team at art media, and my producing partner, Dillon McGee, co-executive producer, who wishes she could be here tonight. And, of course, we have to thank the funders. You know, I used to think -- Marc, I could never understand why people would stand up and thank the funders before they gave a speech, until I had to raise funds. (Laughter) Then I learned, it's a very important thing to do. I want to thank Bank of America, the Howard and Abby Milstein Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, my friend, Aaron Walker, and his incredible staff of the Ford Foundation, and particularly Ford Foundation's program, Just Films, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, particularly its CEO Pat Harrison, and of

course, Paula Kerger and the incredible team at PBS. And, finally, a special thank you to our founding sponsor, Johnson & Johnson. We are incredibly grateful for their continued support of our work. And I want to thank their staff for making the trip this evening. And that would include Michael Sneed, the Worldwide vice president for global corporate affairs and the chief communication officer, Sarah Colamarino, vice president corporate equity and partnerships, Andrea Higham, senior director of equity programs, Laurel Jackson, director of government affairs, Pam Fischer, head of D&I Strategy, and my favorite name on this list of all, Coltrane Stansbury, the manager of corporate partnerships. Give it up please for our sponsors, particularly Johnson & Johnson. (Applause)

You know, now we have incredible popularity for "Finding Your Roots" and the other documentaries that we do on PBS. But when I first pitched the idea that became "Finding Your Roots," no one even knew if it was possible to do a series -- and particularly at that time the only guests were black people -- to do a series about black people, trace their paper trail back to slavery. And then when the paper trail disappeared, do their DNA to reveal where their ancestors were from in Africa. You know, was that crazy or what? And I went in and pitched Johnson & Johnson, and they looked at each other and they said, you've got a deal. Isn't that amazing? I didn't even know if I could do it myself, I just acted like I could do it myself. (Laughter) But every time I think of J&J I remember that they are our founding sponsor. And then we branched out. They not only sponsor "Finding Your Roots" but all of our African American history

programs. And, in fact, right now, Marc, we're busy doing a new series on reconstruction and the birth of Jim Crow. And someone said to me, why do you want to do that, and I said let's see, ten years of black freedom followed by an outright rollback. What's that sound like? (Laughter) It sound like anything that -- they go, okay, we get it. Thank you.

A few years ago I went to my friend, Ken Chenault -- he's a good friend of Marc Morial's too -- the former CEO of American Express. And I had -- PBS asked me to develop a list of ten possible black history programs. And I asked Ken just about for 45 minutes -- the CEO of American Express guy is really busy, right. And I gave him the list, he looked at it, and he said, some of these are really good but you're missing the most important one, the one that you should do next. I said, what. He said you should do the last 50 years of black history, the story of our time. And I was so stunned at how insightful he was. He said, you know, and to our kids this is ancient history, to you it's your life, it's our life, and we need to tell the story of our time.

So I decided that the conceit for the series would be this, if MLK came back what would you say to him? How would you describe the status and condition of black America? How has the black community changed since he was so brutally assassinated 50 years ago? On the one hand, the tremendous progress that our people have made, but on the other hand, the enormous challenges that far too many of our people still face. How could this be the best of times for some of us and the worst of times for some of us within black America itself?

To begin to answer these questions we made a four-hour series that aired on PBS first two years ago, then we did it again in reaction to the results of the last presidential election. We tried to take a careful look at the last 50 years of black history, the highs, and lows, through the eyes of the people who lived it. So, for me, it was a very personal project.

To frame what would unfold in the late '60s, we started in 1965 when I was a teenager up in Piedmont, West Virginia, watching news of the assassination of Malcolm X in February of that year. And then the brutal beatings of marchers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge on Sunday, March 7, the Watts riots that unfolded between August 11 and August 16 that summer, just five days after President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act. Less than a month after the Watts rebellion ended I Spy debuted on NBC featuring the first black actor to play a lead role on a weekly television drama. And for those of you who are so young in this audience, you can't imagine how important that was historically. Cover of Jet, cover of Ebony -- this was a great moment in black history. We travel through Black Power and Black is Beautiful. Julia and the Flip Wilson Show, Flip Wilson made the cover of Time, first black superstar. Geraldine doing a crossover act, you know, featuring Geraldine. We talk about Afro Sheen ads and Soul Train, the election of Maynard Jackson and Richard Hatcher. Then we go onto the rise of Oprah Winfrey and the genius of the two Michaels, Michael Jackson, and Michael Jordan. The age of Jesse Jackson. You know, a lot of people don't give Jesse the credit he deserves. Without Jesse Jackson's '84 and '88 campaigns there would be no Barack Obama election.

And that's just the truth.

I have to tell you a funny story. I was about to -- it takes a long time to film a subject and then to edit that down to something usable. And I really wanted people to understand Jesse Jackson's historical importance. So we ask him to block off a whole day. And I was leaving my house in Harvard Square and my cell phone rang. And I was leaving to catch a flight to Chicago to spend the day with Jesse. And it was Jesse. I said, oh, my god, because the film crew was all out there. And he always jokingly called me Dr. Gates. He said, Dr. Gates, I see that you've requested eight hours with me, to spend all day. He said I don't spend all day with anybody. (Laughter) You know, I don't spend all day with Anderson Cooper, let alone you. And I said, reverend, I understand that, I understand you're a busy man, Operation Push and carrying on the legacy of Martin Luther King. I said, but, you know, reverend, a lot of people don't realize the importance of your presidential campaign in 1984 and 1988; that really a subtle, thoughtful, historian might even call the '80s the age of Jesse Jackson. And unbeknownst to me his assistant was listening on another line and he said, Miss Jones, clear my day for Dr. Gates. (Laughter)

Then we go onto the Rodney King beatings, of course, and Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas, the growth of the black middle class, and the era of mass incarceration of black men, all the way to the election and re-election of the first black president. And then the rise of Black Lives Matter.

In a sense, this is the story of our generation. And people who were born in the '50s, when the color line in America was not only a fact of life

but the law of the land. And people who came of age in the '60s, when the color line became more permeable, people became members of the first large group of black students to integrate historically white colleges and universities as the first beneficiaries of affirmative action -- people like me -- and who then went on to integrate historically white power structures throughout American society, and who lived to see a black man in the White House, a member of the generation behind ours.

So, on the one hand, it's a story of incredible progress, of the most successful period of African American history by any measure, a period of unprecedented change and enormous hope. But, of course, unfortunately, that's not the whole story. Because at the same time, over these same five decades, far too many black lives have remained trapped in impoverished circumstances, living lives largely devoid of hope, their choices determined by structural inequalities that do much of the same work that old school racism used to do. As my colleague, William Julius Wilson, recently expressed a paradox, that I think would have surprised Dr. King, and I quote, "Although the absolute level of black income is well below that of whites, black nonetheless display the most intra group income inequality in the country." Indeed, one of the most significant changes, he says, in the past several decades is the remarkable gains in income among affluent blacks. When adjusted for inflation to 2016 dollars, the percentage of black Americans at least $75,000 more than doubled between 1975 and 2016 to 24 percent. Those making $100,000 or more quadrupled to 15 percent. In contrast, he says, white Americans saw a less impressive increase

from 13 to 31 percent. On the other hand, Professor Wilson concludes, and I quote, "The percentage of black Americans with income below $15,000 only declined by 6 percentage points, to 20.6 percent between 1975 and 2016."

Well, since 1970, in other words, the size of the black middle class has doubled and the size of the black upper middle class has quadrupled, the child poverty rate in 2010 was 38.2 percent. Today, it hovers somewhere around 34 percent. What was it in 1970 -- just two years after Dr. King was so brutally assassinated -- about 41.5 percent. MLK would be shocked that the child poverty rate is still so high.

And consider these statistics, in 1970 there were about 148,000 black men in prison. By 2014 that number had skyrocketed to about 831,000. As of 2014, black men comprised 6.5 percent of the United States population and 33.9 percent of the prison population. And that's according to the statistics compiled by Mark Mauer. The likelihood that a black man will go to prison at some point in his lifetime is one in three compared to one in seventeen for a white man.

As the brilliant economist Raj Chetty at Stanford recently reported, and I quote, "Twenty-one percent of black men raised at the very bottom were incarcerated according to a snapshot of a single day during the 2010 census." Twenty-one percent of all black men who were at the very bottom were incarcerated. Twenty-five percent of the victims of people killed by the police since 2015 have been black people, twice the percentage of black people in the American population.

And what about wealth accumulation? As the Pew Research Center reported in 2017, in 2016 the median wealth of white households was $171,000. That's ten times the wealth of black households, a larger gap than in the year 2007 and eight times that of Hispanic households, about the same gap as in 2007. And as Raj Chetty's recent report concludes, "A higher percentage of black boys with affluent parents will experience downward mobility than comparable white boys." As the New York Times, summarizing Raj's report, put it bluntly and alarmingly, gaps persisted even when black and white boys grew up in families with the same income, similar family structure, similar education levels, and even similar levels of accumulated wealth.

So, how did this happen, ladies and gentleman? How did we a half century after the apex of Dr. King's civil rights movement, arrive at these class paradoxes? How at the same time we elected a black president twice did protestors have to proclaim through a new civil rights movement that black lives matter? And who among us could have imagined when we were shooting this film initially that a conservative backlash to the Obama presidency, to his policies and fears about the economy and fears about the future, would lead to the election of a president whose stated mission has been, among other things, specifically to roll back many of President Obama's most liberal policies?

These are some of the dilemmas that I think would have shocked Dr. King 50 years after 1968, and which I think our panelists will confront over the course of our discussions this evening.

We re-edited the fourth hour to account for all the events since

President Obama stepped down. PBS aired it on April 3 and April 4. We're going to show you a clip now of the new version of "And Still I Rise: Black America Since MLK".

Thank you very much. (Applause)

(Video playing) (Applause)

MS. BUSETTE: For folks who are standing in the back, there are seats throughout, particularly up front, so please feel free to come and grab a seat.

So I am absolutely thrilled to be joined this evening by Marc Morial, the CEO and president of the National Urban League, and Nicol Turner-Lee, a fellow here at the Brookings Institution. And I wanted to formally introduce them.

So Marc Morial, obviously, is the current CEO and president of the National Urban League. He also served as the mayor of New Orleans from 1994 to 2002. He's been an entrepreneur, a lawyer, professor, legislator, mayor, president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and CEO of the National Urban League, the nation's largest civil rights organization. In a distinguished professional career that has spanned over 25 years, Marc has performed all of these roles with excellence and is one of the most accomplished servant leaders in the nation.

As mayor of New Orleans, Marc was a popular chief executive with a broad multiracial coalition who led New Orleans' 1990s renaissance and left office with a 70 percent approval rating. With vigor and creativity he

passionately attacked his city's vast urban problems. Violent crimes and murders dropped by 60 percent, the unemployment rate was cut in half, and New Orleans' poverty rate fell, according to the 2000 census.

As president and CEO of the National Urban League since 2003, he has been the primary catalyst for an era of change, a transformation for the early 100 year old civil rights organization. His energetic and skilled leadership has expanded the League's work around an empowerment agenda, which is redefining civil rights in the 21st century with a renewed emphasis on closing the economic gaps between whites and blacks, as well as rich and poor Americans.

His creativity has led to initiatives such as the Urban Youth Empowerment program to assist young adults in securing sustainable jobs and entrepreneurship centers in five cities to help the growth of small businesses. Also, Marc created the National Urban League Empowerment Fund, which has pumped almost $200 million into urban impact businesses, including minority businesses, through both debt and equity investments.

A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in economics and African American studies, he also holds a law degree from the Georgetown University Law Center here in Washington, DC, as well as honorary degrees from Xavier University, Wilberforce University, and the University of South Carolina Upstate.

I want to also introduce my colleague, Nicol Turner-Lee. Dr. Nicol Turner-Lee is a fellow at the Brookings Institution's Center for Technology and Innovation, and a contributor to TechTank. At the Center for Technology and

Innovation Dr. Turner-Lee researches public policy designed to enable equitable access to technology across the U.S. and to harness its power to create change in communities across the world.

Dr. Turner-Lee's research also explores global and domestic broadband deployment, regulatory and internet governance issues. She is also an expert on the intersection of race, wealth, and technology within the context of civic engagement, criminal justice, and economic development.

She came to Brookings from the Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving equal opportunity and civil rights in the mass media, telecommunications, and broadband industries, where she served as a vice president and chief research and policy officer. In this role, she led the design and implementation of their research policy and advocacy agendas.

And, prior to joining MMTC, Dr. Turner-Lee was vice president and the first director of the Media and Technology Institute of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, the nation's leading think tank on issues related to African Americans and other people of color. In this role she led the technology research agenda that was focused on advancing digital, equity, and inclusion for historically disadvantaged populations.

Dr. Turner-Lee graduated from Colgate University magna cum laude and has an MA and Ph.D. in sociology from Northwestern University.

So, please, let's welcome both of them. (Applause)

So, I just want to preface this by saying that I am going to ask our

panelists actually two questions and then with the remaining time I'm going to try to open it up to Q & A. But I have already chatted with both of them and one of the things that I want them to reflect on, coming from very different perspectives, is we are in a context now -- this is where we've had a black President for eight years, where we continue to see the legacies of structural racism and inequality, where we now understand very clearly the dimensions of psychological racism, where we now know, as Dr. Gates pointed out, that black boys and their treatment and their futures are central to where this country stands in terms of economic participation and social participation. We now have been lucky to have witnessed a moment where folks have stood up and said black lives matter. But at the same time we are still seeing the Stephon Clarks of the world, and we are still seeing people being thrown out of Starbucks just for being black.

So I just want to preface this question, noting as Dr. Gates has, that we have experienced both progress and we're seeing a lot of the same stuff that we've seen before. So I want us to reflect on, in that context, what are the strategies that have been successful in the civil rights agenda and advocacy, and what are the strategies that have not served us well? And what are the strategies that we should be employing in this kind of post Charlottesville world where people do not feel any compunction about marching with tiki torches without masks.

So I'm going to ask each of you to reflect on that, and I'd like to start first with Marc.

MR. MORIAL: Well, let me just say a great thanks to Brookings,

to you, Dr. Gates, these two brilliant scholars I'm between up here, for all of their incredible work, and certainly to all of you.

Dr. Gates sort of, you know, he mentioned this in what we saw. Why should we be surprised American history is once again repeating itself? The reconstruction period and important years of progress, black political progress, black economic progress. We had 22 black members of congress, we had a black governor in Louisiana, two black lieutenant governors, African American members of the United States senate from 1868 to really 1900. And then all of a sudden during that period of time there was this massive resistance. We went from Abraham Lincoln to Andrew Johnson. And progress took place and then there was a period where massive resistance took hold. The right to vote was stripped, the right to own property, the American system of apartheid, which is what segregation was, took hold.

Then we had a movement, which recorded its first victory on May 17, 1954, with the Brown v. Board of Education decision. And then Montgomery in a period of 13 years from '54 -- really 14 years -- to '68, we had a Voting Rights Act, we had a Civil Rights Act, we had a Fair Housing Law, we had a war on poverty, we had tremendous, if you will, social and economic change that formulated in the country as a result of a movement that took place. And then we had the Richard Nixon-George Wallace victory of 1968, where between the two of them they captured over 50 percent of the vote, and there was a period of resistance, resistance to bussing, political talk of repealing the Civil Rights Act, there were Constitutional challenges in the Courts to the Civil Rights Act and the

Voting Rights Act in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. And we had a period of, if you will, resistance.

And then you had the Reagan era where you had resistance finding itself into the legitimacy of White House and national public policies. Then we had the Obama years, which punctuated a tremendous victory, and now the resistance that we see. We are seeing, if you will, a repeat in American history.

I'll give you some political analogies. 1968 election, the only way Richard Nixon won that election was because of George Wallace. Without George Wallace he would not have won that election because those Southern States that George Wallace carried would have gone to Hubert Humphrey, a three-way race. In 2016 -- 2016 -- Donald Trump would not have won if Jill Stein was not on the ballot. Would not have won if Jill Stein -- period, do the math, the arithmetic is simple. These analogies, these ballot box arithmetic, these ballot box -- we've got to acknowledge that these presidential elections -- some people said it didn't matter who won in 2016. I'll tell you, hell yeah, you know now it matters. (Laughter) Because every single day there's another public policy, there's another announcement. Forget the drama on TV, I'm watching what's coming out of the Departments, I'm watching the guidances that are being repealed, I'm watching the Executive Orders that are being signed, the legitimate public policy, if you will, backlashes that are taking place.

I have been, and continue to be, a strong believer in every strategic tactic necessary. Protesting is crucial and important, but alone is not

going to bring about change, the 1950s and '60s included. Protests along with crucial litigation that was challenging by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, while King was marching, Thurgood and his allies were in Court. Protest counts, litigation counts. Elections matter. Don't just look at the presidential elections, look at the significant changes. I was a mayor of a city, my father was a mayor of a city. You look at the cities of Atlanta, New Orleans, and you can look at the changes that took place as a result of political progress in those cities. Not perfect, not perfect -- I'm not going to suggest that that eliminated problems.

So I think every single reasonable strategy has to be employed. Coalition building makes a difference. The struggle for progress needs allies, need alliances, always allies and alliances have made a difference in bringing about progress, whether it was in abolition, whether it was in civil rights. Don't forget that in 2008 Barack Obama carried a majority of the white vote in 12 states -- in 12 states in that election. Alliances are crucial and important.

So when we think about where we are today, it requires a multiplicity of efforts, all hands on deck, all, if you will, tactics and strategies that are reasonable, that are necessary, and that make sense. That's what history demonstrates. Sometimes these strategies are not perfectly coordinated. Sometimes it's not like a beautiful orchestra of music. Many times it looks messy, and many times within, if you will, within all of those that are doing work, there are debates about what tactics and strategies work. I've sat in many seats. I was an anti apartheid protestor in the 1980s, right, I was an activist lawyer bringing civil rights lawsuits. Wore that hat too. I was a person that chose

elected office and served in a legislative body and then as Mayor of New Orleans. Then I'm here leading a national civil rights -- I've worn many hats because I believe that every reasonable tactic and strategy has to be employed in this movement, not only for civil rights, but for justice and freedom and for a vision of an America that is for all people.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you, Marc. Nicol?

DR. TURNER-LEE: God, Marc. (Laughter)

MR. MORIAL: It started with a question.

MS. BUSETTE: I know you could go on.

DR. TURNER-LEE: I know. Well, I have the pleasure. He's one of my mentors.

MR. MORIAL: Thank you.

DR. TURNER-LEE: Marc has been with me since my career in Washington before.

As Camille said, I spend most of my time doing technology, but I actually have civil rights roots because I'm a sociologist. And in the aspiration as a sociologist you're always looking for what is sort of at the heart of situations that reflect upon disparity. And so I've committed my life's work to that and here at Brookings continue to have that conversation in technology and when other things come up.

I'm going to shift it a little bit because I was a baby when Martin Luther King died. I wasn't even born. I mean I'm trying not to tell you my age, but I'm getting close (laughter) by kind of sharing what month I was born after he

died. But, you know, part of what I remember about that experience, and I sort of want to take what Marc talked about and the good points that he brought up, but just reflect on where we are today.

I mean my dissertation was about me. It was about a child that grew up in the '60s -- '68 to be exact -- who did not march, who had not protested, but I was a beneficiary of the civil rights movement. My parents had went to historically black colleges, they were the first to go to school. Here I come along, I wanted to go to Howard. My daddy said no, you've got to go to Colgate because I marched for you to go to Colgate versus Howard. I was that person who had lived on the coattails of the civil rights movement. I didn't have to suffer, because at that time I didn't understand what suffering meant. I lived in a black community in New Rochelle, New York, a black street. You know, down the street were black neighbors who were employed, the local barbershop, Rubie Dee and Ossie Davis lived on our street at some point. We were like high cotton black middle class folks because the community which it was structure, it gave us hope, it gave us authenticity, it gave us power. We didn't have to leave our community to do certain things when I grew up. My neighborhood school, Mayflower School, everybody we actually knew each other, went to the same church, and if you got in trouble Miss Williams had a paddle about this big, and it was okay for her to spank you in school, because guess what, she knew your mom.

When I left Mayflower (inaudible), I was transferred via bus to a new school. And I think when I did my dissertation on the plight of the black

middle class post-civil rights, sort of unfolded I think a lot of what we see in the documentary, thank to another one of my favorites, Dr. Gates, but also, you know, what Marc is talking about. We're seeing black people under siege; that moment of optimism, of hope, of communities that were collectively together. My mother is one of 15. We didn't have class differences because, you know, my cousin may have lived in the projects, but they still came to the cookouts. There was not that distinction between who we were because being black was a beautiful thing, and it still is.

But along the way, as Marc said, in that land in which I lived, where I was very much protected, reality set in. When I went to Colgate I became a fighter for apartheid. Maya Angelou came to Colgate, Stokely Carmichael came to Colgate, people who I'd read about came to Colgate. In a school of 3000 only 85 people of color, plural, about 15 African American students. It was probably one of the most horrific parts of my life that committed me toward social justice. Because what I saw was this inequality of being that person who lived in this neighborhood where everybody enjoyed each other, where there was no explanation for who we were.

Fast forward, as a mother now of two, as Marc said -- and I'll talk about strategy in a minute -- I live in a community where my kids are under siege. I sent my son just the other day to Starbucks to wait for his tutor and I had to give him money because I wasn't sure what was going to happen. This is now 2018. I lived through the effects of segregation, along with many of my friends, who ended up at Princeton and Harvard, who hit a glass ceiling -- and my dissertation

was about the glass ceiling that the black middle class met and the fact that when we were growing up we were told to go to a good school, live in a good neighborhood, find a nice partner, because social mobility was ours. But later we found out that's not the truth.

And I think what Marc is really speaking of is this entrenched reminder of what it means to be black. We are 50 years beyond the assassination of Martin Luther King, less than one year of Charlottesville, less than two days of Starbucks, and maybe one week, if we go back and look at the stuff I do, one week of people of color being manipulated by the Russians. Playing upon the vulnerability of race relations in this society. These are serious issues that are so obscured today -- I mean, Camille, to you point the strategies become much more complicated and sophisticated. The challenges that we have to play and the challenges that we're up against and the strategies that we have to employ are different strategies. They're not necessarily only protesting. What we saw in the last week is people exercise the value of their dollar to say that they were going to go someplace else. Problem was, we didn't have no place to go and put our money that was in the black community. Again, a product of integration and the desegregation of institutions.

We have schools. You know, my son in particular, I made the choice to put him in public school knowing the statistics of putting an African American boy in public school. I'm here to tell you that I'm still going through everything that I read about, but I'm determined to not have him become that statistic. But, again, I still have to deal with that, that sort of that Chetty report,

right. Regardless of the ceilings that I've broken personally, and people around me, we still have to deal with the fact that I cannot transfer wealth because of the wealth gaps that exist, the silver spoon that I did not get. I got education, that is supposed to be the point that breaks the trajectory of poverty, which we all should support, but I still inherited my blackness.

I want to end on here, because I know I can't talk as long as Marc, I don't have that privilege. (Laughter) Although you in my place now, right? (Laughter)

MR. MORIAL: It's your house.

MS. TURNER-LEE: But what I was going to say about that, I mean I think part of the challenge we have today, Camille, to your problem when you talk about strategies, I think Marc is completely right. We have to continue to employ strategies that worked in the past. Voting rights and the preservation of voting rights, even though the worst case of voter suppression came through Russian interference. Just trying to tell you. Because we couldn't even identify that was happening to us. That wasn't something we could take to the Supreme Court. But we have to continue traditional strategies of what worked before. It's working with Black Lives Matter, and more coalitions around gun reform. We're actually seeing that catalyst where people actually are still getting out there. John Lewis says we're still getting out there and ruining our shoes to make sure that people hear us.

At the same time, I think it's really important for us to understand that explicit racism and discrimination no longer comes seen. It's unconscious. I

could talk about it in terms of black Ph.D.s. We still suffer in the black Ph.D.'s. Less than five percent of us actually get a degree. We are seeing this upward trajectory of black women, for example, in education with educational opportunities, but that still suggests that we have more to do. We have to change the paradigm of what unconscious bias actually does to us. Carter G. Woodson said, if they don't create the back door, are you going to create it for yourself? That's essentially what many of us are doing, because we've not yet seen the impact of unconscious bias.

My colleague, Andre Perry, and we talk all the time about paradigm shifting. Instead of looking at the glass half empty let's look at it half full. Let's stop painting these portraits of black men who are incarcerated and let's talk about the number of young men from Morgan State that actually get engineering degrees. That's a shift of the paradigm of the black experience.

And then I also think it's important that we look at our economic wealth. We have trillion dollar capacity as African Americans, as consumers. We can decide, as African Americans, where to spend our dollar. We can shut down businesses. I was telling somebody Starbucks to me was reminiscent of the Woolworth counter. Waiting while black happened in the '60s, waiting while black happened just a couple of days ago. But we can make that decision to take our dollars elsewhere.

And I would say the last thing, what I focused more on, is we've got to get access to new tools. Technology is the driver for recreating the narrative of the 21st century. If you are no on line you're not in the conversation.

To date there are 11 percent of Americans who are off line, disproportionately people of color, people who are disabled, poor, less literate, older Americans. Those 11 percent sit in this space called digital invisibility. And that digital invisibility creates this pathway where they're excluded from what we saw. Michael Harrington talked about the other America when he talked about the war on poverty, about people being under counted. I'd say the new war on poverty is against the digitally disconnected who cannot engage in civil society, cannot find a job, cannot get the healthcare, simply because they lack access to technology. So I would say there we've got to level the playing field to ensure that they have access.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you.

MS. TURNER-LEE: You got me all choked up. (Applause)

MS. BUSETTE: So I'm going to ask one more question and then I'm going to open it up for a very short Q&A. The second question is around a topic that Nicole just raised, which is that we know that the economy is certainly increasingly digital and knowledge and tech driven. And so my question is, what do you think are the most effective ways for positioning African Americans economically and financially to claim their space in this new economy?

So we're going to start with you, Nicol. And I am going to be kind of vicious on the time.

MS. TURNER-LEE: Okay. I know, I won't do my sermon. (Laughter) People who know me know that I can go on for a long time on technology, so I promise I won't get on my soapbox.

So I think you're right. I think the key thing is that when I look at the technology space we've actually gone into this disruptive age where it's not only affecting what used to be give a person a computer, make sure they have internet -- it's not a binary conversation anymore. Technology has become so sophisticated that you sit within the ecosystem of getting things done. How many people in here order an Uber? Just raise your hand. How many people use Air BNB? Raise your hand. How many people go on social media? Raise your hand. How many of you use the dating sites? Okay, I'm not going to push you to (laughter) -- I'm going to keep you after, I'm not going to call you out, right. But I say all that say imagine if you're disconnected, your life is blind, you're disadvantaged.

And so, Camille, to your point, recognizing that there's the consumer side in terms of how am I consuming technology products that help me with my learning and engage me, but then there's this really scary side of it, which is if I don't have access to technology I cannot work.

MS. BUSETTE: Exactly.

MS. TURNER-LEE: I cannot engage the economy in a way where it creates efficiency. When I take an Uber from her to Capitol Hill, it costs me $6. When I take a taxi, it costs me $20. If I'm a single African American woman, of which I am, who is of low resources, that $20 just took food off of my table. And so the deeper that people go into technology and efficiency, and as we move into -- some of my work is on artificial intelligence, algorithmic bias -- we all are the product, but when poor people and black people are not part of the sweet in the

ecology of information, they become the product that is bypassed. Uber doesn't come to their neighborhood, jobs don't enter into their community, the skill set, -- there is a cost of digital exclusion.

So, I think, Camille, to your point, we've got to figure out ways to move people as consumers of technology to producers of the technology, which I think why Marc and NUL have been very, very adamant -- and Reverend Jackson -- around how do we get more diversity into these companies so that we ensure that we have people who are pulling people up versus, you know, basically putting us under a microscope as part of the data that fuels the new economy.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you, Nicol.

MR. MORIAL: So, let me just give you all a little highlight. So our entire State of Black America Report, which will be released -- you're a contributor -- on May 8 is dedicated to the digital revolution. And we are going to release a digital equality index, which is going to measure the disparities. And I'll give you a little tease. African Americans over index as users, owners, and consumers of these devices, a handheld, mobile -- I call it computer. African Americans seriously under index when it comes to jobs in the tech sector writ large; very low numbers, four and a half percent of all jobs. The trick and the challenge and the work is in what you said, which is for people of color, particularly African Americans and Latinos, to become producers, owners, participants in the largesse, in the wealth, and in the opportunity that the tech sector is creating.

The new tech sector, which are the new companies that we all know, the Facebooks, the Googles, and the Amazons, are far behind the diversity revolution, far behind the diversity revolution. Many of these companies, just within the last 12 months or so, have added African Americans to their boards. Very few of them have had long standing chief diversity officers or meaningful relationships with African American institutions, educational, civic, and civil rights institutions. So we are going to challenge them, if you will. Now, what is interesting though is that many of what people might call the old tech companies, the broadband service providers, right, like Comcast, AT&T, and Verizon, some of them have the most diverse boards, some of them have long standing commitments to diversity that puts them far ahead when you index their numbers to these new tech companies. This is the frontier. I am not simply interested in people in my community being consumers. We have to be the producers, we have to be the owners. If tech is going to cause jobs to disappear, then we have to ensure that the jobs that are going to be created are going to be jobs with whom and with which African Americans and other people of color have meaningful and real access to.

We have, and we produce -- North Carolina A&T, Xavier University, to name two, and many others -- are producing African Americans with backgrounds in sciences. Is there a pipeline? There's a pipeline. Is it what it ought to be? No, it's not what it ought to be, but there's a pipeline of people. And then tech does not just create tech jobs, tech companies hire lawyers, payroll specialists, finance experts, marketing experts, sales people. They're like

any other enterprise. So these numbers in these companies are not just driven by tech jobs, traditional tech jobs. It's a larger conversation.

So we're going to have that conversation. This year's State of Black America Report will be released on May the 8th. We are going to tape a television show that's going to appear on May 30 on TV1, we're going to release an on line report. We've got 50 authors, including the dynamic Nicol Turner-Lee, that we're going to feature, who will be writing on all of these subjects. We're going to focus on not only the digital divide, but where is the digital opportunity, where is -- this revolution isn't going to be televised, but it is going to be on line. (Laughter) (Applause)

MS. BUSETTE: All right. So we unfortunately do not have a lot of time for Q&A. I'm going to take two questions. Let me first preface this by saying they need to be questions (laughter) and they need to be succinct. Thank you.

So I'm going to take this gentleman over here and the person way in the back with the white sleeve and the black sweater. So way back there. So, right here, this gentleman here. So we're going to take the two questions and then we'll answer.

SPEAKER: I will try to be succinct. So I'm going to frame it first. This is an essay I read a while ago called "The End of the Black American Narrative."

MS. BUSETTE: We can't hear you.

SPEAKER: There's an essay I read a while ago called "The End of the Black American Narrative." It basically made the point that as a matter of

political praxis it becomes increasingly difficult to have a narrative of -- he used the language of victimology -- but to have a politics based on grievance for black Americans in the face of all the successes of Obama and Oprah, and if you will. Whether it was right or wrong, it's difficult to make that case.

Now, I used that to frame it because you made the point about coalitions and the importance of that as a strategy. And one of the things a lot of my friends say or tell me is that with the current political climate it's alienating to a lot of would-be allies because they feel like they can't engage with this tone, they feel like they're shut out, et cetera, et cetera. And so how do you I guess suggest reconciling the truth of the matter that a lot of progress comes with discomfort, with the fact that some of that discomfort may be alienating would-be allies that you need to build coalitions, to get votes, to get things done.

MR. MORIAL: Let me address this.

MS. BUSETTE: Let's take both questions first and then we can go. So way in the back there. Thank you.

MR. CUNNINGHAM: Bill Cunningham. This is going to be a little rough -- just want to warn you.

MS. BUSETTE: That's okay.

MR. CUNNINGHAM: You guys missed Black Lives Matter, you missed MeToo also. And I'm talking Urban League, I'm talking NAACP, I'm talking Operation Push. Part of the reason why you missed them was because for this demographic those organizations don't have a lot of authenticity. And what I mean by that is if you look at the partnerships that say Urban League did

Wells Fargo in the years leading up to the crisis that resulted in a 61 percent decline in African American wealth, that might have led the people in this demographic that I'm talking about to figure out that they needed to create their own institutions.

So what's your strategy going forward to address some of those type of disconnects?

MR. MORIAL: Let me just address this, just because somebody contributes to us, just like somebody contributes to a university, it doesn't dictate what their scholars do. So if you contribute to us it doesn't dictate our public policy. That's what you have to be clear and understand.

The second thing, over here, I just want to address this. See that grievance victimology conversation, that's Fox News alternative right rhetoric. That somehow because we raise issues of concern we're playing the victim; because we assert challenges to American society, that we're in the grievance class. I reject wholeheartedly that terminology because it's another spinmeister initiative, right, we're going to spin what they're doing to discredit them.

I'll say this about your question around coalition building, you know, we have to build coalitions with people who are sincerely interested, sincerely interested and honest in addressing the challenges that America faces. I understand that that does not include everyone. And some people may choose to stand on the side and I can't do anything about it and I'm not going to worry about it.

I just want to address this, because this is what the brother in the

back doesn't know, there is a conversation between the National Urban League, the NAACP, and the National Action Network and Black Lives Matter and their leadership. Just because you don't see it, doesn't mean that it happens. We can't let everybody peep every strategy. (Laughter) And you need to understand that that's always been the case and will continue to be the case. And I welcome the fact that young people in a generation want to embrace their own initiatives and their own institutions. I don't see it as a challenge, right, because I still have 20,000 volunteers, including 12,000 that are under the age of 40 in our young professionals, if you will, auxiliary group. So that's really the point. I'm not going to play in to them against us. What I'm going to do is say we will work because we're all animated by addressing the same issues and the same problems, although we may take different approaches at different times.

MS. BUSETTE: So wait --

MS. TURNER-LEE: No, let me --

MS. BUSETTE: Let's hear -- sorry.

MR. MORIAL: You had a question, I answered to it.

MS. BUSETTE: Sir, wait -- sir -- sir -- let me --

MR. CUNNINGHAM: -- understand what my point was.

MS. BUSETTE: Sir -- sir --

MS. TURNER-LEE: Right, let me --

MR. MORIAL: No redirect.

MS. BUSETTE: Sir, you can take --

MS. TURNER-LEE: So let me respond.

MS. BUSETTE: No, sir, you can take that -- you can continue the conversation afterwards. Okay.

MS. TURNER-LEE: So if I can actually respond. So I'll respond to both actually. So let me respond first to the grievance piece. I think that anyone who says that they don't want to work together to win the 2020 presidential election is actually living a fantasy. We all need each other to actually take back the White House in 2020. So this whole grievance philosophy, we really have to revisit that. If we're fighting each other -- as sociologists we basically have set ourselves up for failure and I don't think that that's the way that we're actually seeing it. So we really need to look critically. I, like Marc, reject that, because I think there is the opportunity of flipping the apple cart to say what is it that all of us want together.

I know for a fact when I woke up the next day I didn't feel too good and the person across the aisle from me in the office didn't feel too good, and the person at my church didn't feel too good, and the cashier at the local restaurant didn't feel too good. So I think we actually got a whole lot of people who don't feel too good; that we need to move past a grievance mentality to actually mobilize. The key to taking back political power comes with voter mobilization. And I think I'm seeing a lot more energy. What we saw actually in Alabama and other places, we're actually seeing people come out. Doug Jones won because of African American women and men, but he also won because of millennials. And so until we start to see that those coalitions are already forming, we're going to miss it when it comes up to this new election.

To the gentleman back there, I actually just want to respond -- and I don't work for a civil rights organization. I'm very supportive of civil rights organizations, I try to when I can pay my dues. But what I was going to say about that is I think that that also plays into the stigma of what happened post civil rights. I was recently listening to John Lewis and Juanita Abernathy give a conversation about after Martin Luther King's death. And one of the things that they said is when Martin died people didn't know what to do. And I think what we're feeding into now is a sense of we still don't know what to do. And that has less to do with well, this organization who's more traditionally based does X, versus the Black Lives Matter kids that did this. Let me tell you one thing, there's a difference in methodology. I say with Black Lives Matter, they may use a hashtag whereas traditional civil rights movement folks use other mobilization strategies, they shut down counters, et cetera.

But we did see some progress with Black Lives Matter in changing the criminal justice system. We did see a voice actually rise up when it comes to protest, using technology to leverage. You cannot pit either one against each other because we need both. Black Lives Matter has shown up at National Urban League functions when things have gone wrong, National Urban League has show up other places. That's the evidence of what we're actually seeing. Just recently we saw that with the march for our lives. It wasn't just a white gun reform movement, it was a movement where people actually came out of different cultures. But there's a challenge -- and just kind of going back to the gentleman and the MeToo movement -- there's a challenge where we begin to

prioritize certain movements over others. That's a sociology of dysfunction, when we say that this movement is better. When MeToo came out, I was me first, I wasn't MeToo. I had already been harassed by several people before that movement came out. Nobody heard me. And it's the experiences of the oppressed that often don't get played out in popular culture or in media.

So I would just tell the gentleman in the back, we have to be careful about the language in which create division, and areas where we don't see opportunities to collaborate. And it works both ways. We need to educate young people on what it means to take it past Twitter, the same way members of congress need to bring in Black Lives Matter to see what they could actually do to show them how to move policy. It's not one or the other.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you. Thank you very much. Please join me in thanking both of these fabulous panelists. (Applause)

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