

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

A NATION AT A DEMOGRAPHIC CROSSROAD:
RISING DIVERSITY, YOUTHFUL ACTIVISM,
AND THE 2020 ELECTION

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. FREY: Good morning and welcome to our event, the Nation's Demographic Crossroad, which we're entering rising diversity, youthful activism, and the 2020 election. I want to thank -- I'm Bill Frey. I'm with the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, the senior fellow here. I want to thank the Metropolitan Policy Program and Brookings Institution Press for organizing this event and I also want to thank all of the esteemed panelists that we're going to be hearing from in the next minutes. We're going to be talking about the changing demography in the United States, especially the rising diversity as it affects the 2020 election, and we're going to spend a special focus on the younger generation, particularly millennials and gen Z-ers. You know, this was going to be a contentious and interesting election anyway, but the last two months have made this very different. A whole nation has been more energized and had their consciousness raised over racial inequality, over differences on economics and other kinds of opportunities in a way that we've never seen before. There are protests all over the country. They're all kinds of activities all over the country and they especially involve younger people, people in millennials and the generation Z. They're the most generation in the United States and they're the ones that are going to be hit hardest by the pandemic, which will tend to amplify these inequalities in the years going ahead and that's why their political involvement will be so important. I'm pleased today to be joined by several panelists -- Can you hear me? Can you hear me? Good. I'm pleased to be -- I'm pleased to be joined by several panelists who are heavily engaged in organizing and understanding what's going on, on the ground. They're going to be heavily involved over the next several months. They're from the NAACP, they're from Voto Latino, they're from -- and they're from other organizations that are important. And so we're going to be talking with them later. That's going to be the, you know, energized part of this -- of this discussion. But I'm going to start out by doing a demographic overview of what's going on in the United States by looking at a PowerPoint here, which we're going to try to get up. We sort of try to understand what's going on, the underlying demographics that are going on in the United States with a special emphasis on the younger generation. By the way, if you have questions that you would like to answer in the last -- we're going to answer questions in the last part of this event, please

email events@brookings.edu or you can Twitter us at #diversityexplosion. See the name of the book up there on the -- on the PowerPoint slide. This is a book that I'm going to start talking about. See, this is from Brookings Press and one of the major themes of this book is that we're now at a pivotal part -- pivotal point in the United States with respect to our changing demography. We're moving from a largely White baby-boomer dominated culture in the last half of the 20th century until -- onto a mostly diversified America in this century. It's raised all kinds of issues, all kinds of important concerns, and especially in these last several weeks people are coming to realize we have to deal seriously with racial issues and racial inequality in the United States. To what degree is this going to affect politics in the coming several months and the 2020 election is what we're going to discuss today. But I'm going to start talking a little bit about the underlying demographics and okay -- and we're going to talk about three things. First, we're going to talk about the diversity demographics from 2016 election, then we're going to talk a little bit about how the mid-terms have changed the picture a little bit, especially among the youth population, and finally, I'm going to talk a little bit about youthful diversity and how that's changed and what it's going to be for the 2020 election. Let's look at this first slide, and what this tells us is that over the next 45 years we're going to become much more racially diverse. The Asian population, the Hispanic population will more than double. The two or more race population will triple, and they'll be a growth in the Black population and the American Indian and Alaskan Native population. They'll be a slight projected decline over this period in the White population. And why is that? Well, it's because Whites are older. There are more deaths than births even today within the White population and many White children are going to be part of interracial marriages. Their children will be mixed race and those people will go into the two or more race generation. And so we're becoming much more racially diverse than we were before and that's going to continue. But the important thing to understand is this diversity is much more accentuated among the younger population. You see on this chart going from the younger population over to the older population of the racial ethnic makeup, today millennials are the oldest millennial at age 39, and if you look at those first four bars there, people between 0 and age 39, they are much more racially diverse than the rest of the population. On the other hand, baby-boomers are now between age 56 and 74. They're

wstill fairly White compared to the rest of the population. Now, this has made an impact on social -- this discourse, social politics and other ways because the older population, surveys have shown from here and other places that they're less likely to be accepting of the new racial diversity that we've had in the United States for the last 10 or 20 years. And it shows up in their politics and some of the issues they support or don't support, and we've seen this in the last couple of presidential elections where the candidates, especially the current president, have made this sort of an underlying issue the way he's trying to discuss the changing diversity, which is in -- with his issues on immigration and so forth. So we're becoming more diverse from the bottom of the aging structure upward. We're also becoming more diverse from the melting pot areas of the country inward. This map shows for all the counties in the United States, which race or ethnic group is overrepresented or I should say highly represented compared to the nation as a whole. And you can see in the south, there's a large number of counties where African-Americans are highly represented and that's increasing because for the last several decades there's a lot of Black migration back to the south to states like Texas and Georgia and North Carolina and Florida. In the other parts of the country you see overrepresentation or high representation of Latinos, of Asians, of American Indians, Alaska Natives. There's a big swab of the country that looks like it's pretty white, but those counties are pretty small, only about 30% of the population lives in those places and a lot of those populations are shrinking. So we're becoming very diverse not only from the younger ages upward, but from our major urban areas inward. Now I want to say how this is impacting politics. What we're seeing here is the eligible voter racial profile in 2004 on the left to 2016. Those are the presidential elections of George W. Bush, two presidents -- up to 220 -- two presidential elections of Obama and then of course, Trump. And then we have 2020. So we see the White share of the eligible voter population is higher than for the population as a whole, but it's largely because the younger part of the population, the under age 18 population is not ready to vote, are the most diverse. Still, the eligible voter population is becoming more racially diverse over time and the reason this is important is if you look at the voting patterns of different racial groups, here we see over the last four presidential elections, again George W. Bush, two Obama elections and then Trump, the democrat minus republican voter margins for

each racial -- major racial group. Now, just a note about what this is. The voter margin is positive if they voted democrat, it's negative if they voted republican, and you see the big takeaway from this is the White population has voted for the -- for the republican candidate for each of the last four presidential elections. In fact, this has been the case for every presidential election going back to 1968, so that's likely to occur again, and even though those numbers look somewhat smaller than they do for the racial -- the other racial groups voting democrat, they're applied to a very large White population. What's really important to at is the very strong democratic support among African-Americans and it's extremely high for the two elections of Barack Obama. Margins of '91 at 87%. Underlying this is also a big voter turnout among minorities, people of color during those two particular elections, so the Barack Obama election really brought out the minority populations, especially the Black population and especially the younger Black population, very high level of turnout for younger Blacks in 2008, and that's what helped move things along. Of course, Hillary Clinton, although she won the popular vote in 2016, she lost the presidency because she lost the electoral college and some of that had to do with the lower turnout and lower support even though it was pretty strong among Blacks and Hispanics and Asians. This is probably the most important chart to focus on though, given our discussion today. And this looks at the voter margins, again democrat minus republican, for four different age groups. There is the under 18, the 18 to 29 group, 30 to 44 group, 45 to 64, and 65 and over. Focus on the right part of this chart, those four like clump of four bars there, and what you'll see is that in 2016, 2016 election, the under 45 population voted strongly democratic, the over 45 population voted strongly republican. And again, this kind of generational divide that I talked about earlier. But if you look at the other two clumps of bars, the middle one are just the minority population, people of color. They're all lumped together there. For every age group they voted strongly democratic, but especially the under age 45 age group. And even though on the left you see the age margins for the White population and they're all republican, their least strong for the younger age and for the 18 to 29 population is stronger for the people over age 45. So you can see there's a very sharp generational difference here and it really matters not only who turns out to vote, but how they vote. This kind of chart looked exactly the same for the 2012 election and the 2008 election.

For the last three presidential elections the under 45 population voted strongly democrat. The over 45 population voted strongly republican. This is going -- I'm going to go over this quickly, but this shows the red and blue state makeup of the George Bush election and the two Obama elections. And what I just wanted to show you is that on the left hand side, the George Bush election, he won all of the south red states, all of the great plain states, all of the mountain west states, which is a typical republican pattern up until that time, the democrats in postal areas, New England and some of the Midwest industrial states. But in both 2008 and in 2012 as a result of the increased diversity and the bigger turnout of younger minorities and older minorities in those states, Obama was able to take states like Virginia, Florida, Nevada, Colorado and New Mexico and in 2008, North Carolina. These are very important, and I think this is bringing the democratic party more into other parts of the country as the diversity has moved into other parts of the country. Of course in 2016, Trump won those key Midwest states of Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin and was able to take the electoral college. Now I want to talk just a few seconds about the mid-term, the 2018 mid-term, which as you know was a very good election for the democrats. They put over the Congress and more importantly in the Congress, they have a lot of young people in the Congress. It's a much more diverse freshman class, so younger freshman class and one that has more women in it than its had before. And a lot of that has had to do with the voting of the younger population. If you'll look for example at the margins by age, again, democrat positive, republican negative there, between the presidential election in 2016 and the house election in 2018, you can see that those two younger age groups, the 18 to 29 and the 30 to 44, voted much more strongly democratic in the House of Representative elections than they did in 2016 presidential election. In addition on this next slide they turned out a lot more, just look at the turnout rates in the 2018 house election and the 2014 house election. Now the 2014 house election is more comparable because it's a mid-term election in terms of turnout. Look at the huge gains among Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. Hispanics and Asians had the bigger increase in turnout during those elections, and again, these that are 18 to 29-year-olds made a big difference in a lot of the elections in 2018 at the house level and the electoral election. So this is a good sign in terms of how youth movement is going to be going along. Now let's go to the

2020 year. And here's a chart that shows the share of eligible voters in 2020 that are in each generation. And what you can see, there's about the same share of voters who are millennials and gen Z-ers as there are baby-boomers and people older than baby-boomers. This gives that younger generation, people under age 40, a much bigger say in what's going on assuming they can turn out in the same way they've done in say, 2018 or 2008. It's also of course a very racially ethnic diverse generation. Gen Z-ers and millennials much more racially diverse than the older generation that we can see here. And when you look at it at the state level, this map shows of the under age 40 population what percent of them are racial minorities. And in 9 states, the under age 40 population, there are more people of color than there are people who just identify as White. And importantly for those -- for this election are the states of Arizona and Florida, Texas and Georgia. Those were states where the millennial and the gen Z population are very diverse and of course as we know, they're the people who vote most strongly democratic in the past so it's important to see where they're going. I have one little slide here to show the comparison between the under age 40 population and racial profile and overall racial profile of eligible voters in the states of Arizona and Georgia and Texas, and you can see that it makes a real difference where in Arizona 44% of young eligible voters are Latinos. In Georgia 36% are Blacks and also a large number of Blacks and Latinos in Texas. So what we're -- what we're looking at in this next election is a big opportunity for this younger generation to make a statement, especially given the kinds of issues that they're talking about. Will they make that difference? Well, the people that we're going to be hearing from for the rest of this panel are going to tell us about that because they're on the front lines. And I'm going to introduce right now NPR's Juana Summers, who is going to be able to make us a good discussion with the people that we have from these different organizations. I look forward to being part of this and I'm happy to pass the baton over to Juana.

MS. SUMMERS: Thanks so much, Bill, and thank you so much to Brookings for having me to join this conversation. I'm really excited to learn right along with y'all and these are folks that I work with a lot and might be republicans, democrats and (inaudible). So I want to take a minute and introduce our panel. Bill, of course will be staying with us for this discussion, too. Carolyn DeWitt is the president

and executive director of Rock the Vote. Wisdom Cole is the national organizing manager for the NAACP Youth and College Division, and Brianna Carmen is the director of Organizing and Partnerships for Voto Latino. Again, if y'all are watching this and you have questions, we would love to include them. You can email those to events@brookings.edu or you can tweet at us, and that's using the hashtag #diversityexplosion. So we're going to just get right into it. We want to keep this super conversational, so feel -- some of the panel feel free to jump in if you hear something that's next to your work and what you're doing, but Carolyn, I want to start with you for this first part. We talked ahead of this conversation. You told us that you see a historical problem with how we have talked about young voters. Tell our audience what you mean by that and what Rock the Vote is doing to change that conversation.

MS. DEWITT: Yes, so, well thank you to Brookings, Bill, and Juana, and esteemed colleagues here doing the hard work on the ground, Brianna and Wisdom, good to see you guys again. The -- what I think there's a lot of times a misnomer and what is not really talked about is that young voters are new voters, and that is the large reason why they do not vote at the same rates as older voters. They're completely unfamiliar with the process. They're doing this for the first or second time. In a lot of places, and we'll talk about this probably in our conversation, their active -- their active effort to try to keep them from the process. And it is an archaic process, particularly when you consider what their day-to-day life looks like otherwise. And so a huge part of what Rock the Vote and others in the space do is simply education, walking them through the process step-by-step. I mean, things like the registration process, requesting an absentee ballot, and it is getting harder as we've seen with the record turnout in 2018, we've noticed several different efforts in states to particularly target young voters and try and hinder their participation.

MS. SUMMERS: Wisdom, I actually wanted to ask you about this because you wrote this (inaudible) that I think everybody should read, and you talk about this problem really passionately of youth voter access. Tell us what -- what we're talking about there and what the work you guys are doing to make sure that young voters have that access looks like.

MR. COLE: Yes, thank you for that question. So youthful access pressing for this

upcoming election is going to be very, very critical. We're thinking about youth turnout. We're thinking about young people's access to polls, as Carolyn talked about, their education. What we're seeing particularly around our young people is they're asking for advocacy work, and so we work with some students out of Howard University who actually are asking for two-day absentee ballots, since we're actually working on a bill that they're going to be pushing forward. Because if we can get Amazon packages in two days, we should be able to get absentee ballots in two days as well. And what we saw from the primary election, particularly in New York and other states is that folks were getting the absentee ballots weeks after the election. And so we're going to make sure that there is actually people advocating for us to ensure that we have access to the polls as much as possible. This year being a COVID year as well, we also want to make sure that young people are aware of how they can vote from home and actually what are those resources necessary to do that. And so I think that for our young people, they want to see action, right? We know that our young people are issue-based voters with a grip on our young Black voters, right? We're not going to turn them out just by saying, "Go vote, go vote", but saying that, "Hey, these are issues that are critical to the voting rights fight" and we need to make sure that we have advocates who are on the front line and people who are elected leaders who are actually going to make sure they have our concerns in mind and heart.

MS. SUMMERS: Brianna, I know that Voto Latino in the most recent weeks has seen an explosion of the number of voters, of new voters that you've been able to register, and I also know that when I've been reporting on these issues and I've talked with advocates in this space, there's been a concern that there's been this historic disinvestment in making sure that Latino voters who are largely a young population (inaudible), that they're not -- they're people who haven't historically engaged in getting them registered. I'm wondering if you can talk to us a little bit about what your workers look like and why you all think you've seen such an increase in the number of voters beginning to register this year?

MS. CARMEN: Definitely, so Voto Latino started 15 years ago as a voter registration organization and we do the bulk of our work online. So it's been really the silver lining during -- you know, this crisis that as far as our voter registration and what that looks like, it didn't take a huge shift for us to

still be able to connect with our communities. We do face challenges there were different states do have different access to online voter registration. Some states, like a city in Texas right now, they're pretty hostile towards it. Other states, you can easily you know, type in your information, get all set, we're living in 2020, which is exciting. And so we've seen a ton of people registering to vote. We've registered over 220,000 this year. And really, a spike last month with registering over 90,000 people in just one month, which is insane. And we sought -- coincide with a lot of protests that were going on, a lot of people you know, really wanting to take direct action in their community, the civic engagement, this idea of you know, protesting and also getting registered to vote to be able to see action on that spectrum where you're turning out with your friends, you know, talking about challenges in your community and you also want to make sure that you're investing in long term action. So, at Voto Latino, we're really looking at engaging folks in both of those ways making sure that they're registered to vote, talking about advocacy, trying to make voting a little bit easier and more accessible for folks in giving them tools and education so that way they can be you know, determinants of their future.

MS. SUMMERS: I know that we can probably have an entire analog conversation about the impact that COVID has had on all of the work that we do, but it strikes me that there are some inherent challenges there when you're talking about his young gener -- this young diverse generation that you all are working to reach in different ways. I wonder if we can just briefly touch on the pandemic and how it's changing the work and the impacts that you see on this generation, their civic engagement and voting.

MR. COLE: So I think on top of the normal voter suppression that we see for young people, young Black people, a lot of the states that have -- have been having a lot of issues around even just making sure folks are registered, what we're seeing is that you know, there's a lack of apathy and understanding for ensuring that the actual election is safe and secure, right? I know that a lot of people have been advocating to make sure that we have a fully funded vote by mail system, which we definitely need to make sure we have, but we also recognize the mail system is not enough and that folks need to be able to turn out on November 3rd and actually vote in person. And so what are the safety measures or

the PPE that's going to be in place to make sure that everybody's able to vote? Right? We know that right now the election isn't fully funded and a lot of people in this period of time are saying "Black lives matter, Black lives matter", and we hear a lot of corporations who are donating money and saying, "Black lives matter", but if we're going to say Black lives matter, we gotta say Black votes matter, too. And so we've got to make sure that you know, corporations are saying this, that Congress is fully funded in the election, and making sure that we are giving everybody access to be able to vote at any part, because this COVID year has definitely shown us that it's going to be a wild November.

MS. CARMEN: Yes, I think --

MS. SUMMERS: Go ahead, Brianna.

MS. CARMEN: At Voto Latino, so we actually teamed up with Rock the Vote and NAACP earlier this year. I believe it was in May, for this whole day of action and advocacy with other -- dozens of other organizations to really push our network and our audiences to reach out to their members of Congress and let them know that you know election protection and election monitorization is important. We also talked about not having enough money for vote by mail. We are also thinking about you know, poll workers, ensuring that people in the polls are representative of the communities that are voting so that way there's not intimidation there. We're able to have people who can verify that the processes are actually in line with the law and that people are able to go out and vote, you know, safely. Our team did a poll earlier and we saw that 3 in 4 voters are afraid of getting COVID. They think they might catch something when they're going out to vote, so how do we ensure that it's not creating a barrier? Our communities are educated, maybe we're pushing them to vote by mail, hopefully getting funding for that or pushing them towards early vote so that way people don't have to choose between you know, voting for their future or you know, thinking about their health.

MS. DEWITT: I think there are, I was going to say, the coronavirus has kind of had two impacts. In the early stages of shelter in place we saw a lot of young people -- just not so -- people in general, this is not unique to young people, but people just weren't focused on the election, right? They were focused on healthcare, their jobs, their health. For students in particular, millions of students moved

off college campuses during the primary season, so their ability to actually (inaudible) was very disturbed. Obviously, the events in June had a huge impact on awakening and refocusing on the election, and so a lot of us are kind of focused -- are really gearing our programming to carry that on through the election in helping make sure there is education about okay, we -- we need to be in the streets now, yes, but we also need to be carrying that forward to elect leaders who are going to help implement that change. And so, again, coming back to it, it is a lot more education than even in normal election years that we have to do. Every generation is told they're the problem generation, but every youth generation turns out at lower rates. This election is going to be harder to navigate because the processes are changing. I mean the processes are changing. They're not even normal, so even their parents who might be walking them through the steps are kind of navigating this for the first time, too. So it's a lot of education that we have to do this year.

MS. SUMMERS: Wisdom, I see you nodding your head and I know in that op ad that we talked about before, you talked explicitly about the need for Black political leaders, Black policy leaders. So I wonder if there's anything you want to add there.

MR. COLE: Yes, no I think that what we want to see along with education is we want to see candidates who look like us, who come from our communities. Just like Brianna was talking about in terms of like poll workers, right? Black students are more often to turn out if they know that they're going to be other Black students working at the polls. If I know that my homie's going to be working the polls from you know, 7 to 10 or whatever time they're going to be working there, I definitely want to show up and show out because my vote matters and I know that I care about this person. And so we want to make sure we are instilling different metrics like that or different opportunities where young people can also be leaders in their communities. And so that's not just only being leaders in this election, but leaders in running for elected positions. And so when we think about young Black people in our democracy, it's not just about giving them a seat at the table, but actually giving them access to power, right? Oftentimes, people are given performative roles. They're saying, "Hey, you know, we want you to be here, we want to hear your voice", but not giving them actual decision making power to actually change

the course of our future and determine our own destinies.

MS. SUMMERS: We had a couple of questions ahead of time and one of them, and I'm going to telescope it a little bit because some of these touched on the same themes, but specifically about gen Z, our youngest generation. And folks were asking how we are able to leverage the way that this generation, which is so self-mobilized and is being mobilized, how do we engage them? How to do we mobilize them? And I'd be curious for any of you guys who want to touch on that.

MS. DEWITT: Yes, so much of you know, young -- especially younger millennials and gen Z, their lives are online. They you know -- and it's easy for you know older folks to think, oh it's online, it doesn't really matter, but for them online is so real. And so Circle out of Tufts University did some amazing research coming out of the 2018 election that really showed that online activism translated into offline activism into voting. And so there is a reinforcement that happened online. So, so much of the education and mobilizing and even the tactics and platforms that young activists are using are just you know, they're foreign to quite frankly a lot of the political and traditional outreach methods that a lot of groups are you know, older groups are using who are used to -- to organizing older voters. And so that's what we're definitely seeing is mobilizing through digital platforms and social media.

MS. CARMEN: And at Voto Latino, so I know you asked earlier Juana about how things have shifted given COVID. For us, we really began the year thinking, you know, we would do events and activations in communities. Quickly around mid-March we realized that we're not going to be doing anything in person for at least a year. And so for us, we really, you know, seen that information that leaned into this digital model of digital organizing online activations, creating a community for people to come to where they still feel like they're able to you know, connect, make friends online, get that engagement that you normally would if you were doing you know, voter registration in person, but also be able to do it from you know, from a safe spot. Maybe you're engaging online from your couch, texting voters, asking them to reach out to three friends, get those three friends registered to vote. Texting folks who you know, might have questions about requesting your ballot, reminding them that different states have different deadlines, asking them if they return their ballot, and making sure that they go out to the

poles. So for us, it's been a lot of you know, texting, digital organizing, the idea that anyone anywhere can volunteer and I think this socially distance world has just made that you know, play out even more true and it's really exciting to see that shift in this you know, organizing community and really focusing in on online organizing as well.

MR. COLE: I think Brianna hit the nail on the head with the idea of creating a digital community, right? You can have digital programming. You can do digital events, but are you actually fostering and building a community that is moving towards the elections? Right? So, this summer during June, we had a Black civics summer course and literally just off of hype alone and clout alone, we had over 3000 people register for the course. We had anywhere between 200 to 700 people on each course. But it was not just us having the course and giving the information about the essentials of Black civics. It was the fact that people created their own group meetings. They had their own study groups. They had their own study partners. They had their own study buddies, people to be a part of this course and continually work together to improve the knowledge to prepare for November. And so in addition to that, you know, we're seeing in terms of SMS, right? This past two weeks, we sent out 1.8 million SMS messages, but it wasn't just the message sending, it was the young people coming together to have SMS power hours where they would play some music and talk about you know, what's going on in today's society? What issues are most important to them for the election? And send all those messages together. And so I think having a community that is sustained through relationships, through understanding who we are, understanding where we come from, and building those bonds through this COVID period, right, where a lot of this is being you know IG lives, there have been Twitter chats, there have been Twitter storms. It's been different ways that people have engaged digitally, right? It's how we're coming together where even after this COVID reality, people that I may have never met in person, I have deep meaningful relationships because we worked in the struggle together.

MS. SUMMERS: Bill, we got a data question that I'd like to throw your way.

MR. FREY: Oh, no. (laughter)

MS. SUMMERS: Someone -- (laughter) So I'm going to paraphrase this a little bit since

it's a long one, but this person asked, whether we are still measuring the right things. They point out that younger minority voters, younger voters of color are significantly more progressive than their older counterparts if you look at the most recent democratic primary. So the question they're asking, is ethnicity as much as a factor that we should look at or should we be talking about young progressives as opposed to young people of color? I'm curious what your take is there from your research.

MR. FREY: Yes, no, I think that's a very good question because you know, whether it's people of color or even people who are not people of color, they come in very different ways. It depends who their parents are, it depends what part of the country they're living in, and you know, I think that's, that's quite significant. I know that you know, there's a lot written about can the democratic candidates pick up the gen Z-ers and the millennials because they're not progressive enough, whereas maybe their older generations, their parents and so forth are more -- more on board even within communities of color. And you know, I think your question of whether those separations occur within those younger generations is also important. You know, most of the polling you see is just from a national poll, from a state poll, and it's not so much by sort of geography, say urban versus rural or different regions of the country. And I think that will make a difference among even gen Z-ers and millennials of color, is just how strongly they're going to be able to be on the progressive side of things. It's pretty clear that you know, the number of gen Z-ers and millennials of any racial group, especially people of color, is pretty strongly democratic. The question is are they going to be energized enough to go out to vote? Are those issues going to be so important to them that they're going to make that case, do all these nice things these folks are talking about, you know, take advantage of those opportunities on the web or you know understanding what's going on in their local community and what they need to do to vote? Do they kind of feel that strongly to do it? And I think that's really the challenge, you know, to make sure you know, maybe they don't like the president. Maybe they don't like what's going on in the country, but are they going to be so energized to go out and vote? And we saw that in -- in New York in its most recent election and in the congressional election. A long time democratic, Angle got -- got defeated in the primary and -- and I think that -- that can happen in certain places. But it's important I think, not just for

you folks, but for the democratic operatives to reach out to those different groups of millennials and gen Z-ers to make sure they understand what they're looking for.

MS. DEWITT: Juana, I actually want to build on that a little bit if I can. I think the question isn't just are they going to be motivated to vote, which I do think is you know, I don't think the top of the ticket is going to be a motivator for young people this election, but I would also say that are -- are they going to be able to overcome the barriers that are before them this election? Particularly, when we think about the research in diversity explosion where the demographic are particularly changing in places like Arizona, Texas, Georgia, Florida. There is a correlation of where these voter suppression tactics are happening and where there are lives that are really challenging, and I'll let it up to individuals to determine you know, is there a causation there of an older generation that does not want to see the power of a younger more diverse generation really flourish? So, I think that, that is a part of the conversation as well.

MS. SUMMERS: That actually ties into the next thing I was going to ask about, Carolyn. Someone else raised a question about voter suppression and do we have a sense or do any of you all have a sense of the scale at which we could see young voters impacted by potential voter suppression? I'm wondering if you would all kind of talk. I know you all do some of this work, about what -- what your organizations and others are doing to ensure that these young voters, as they age into the system, are able to have equitable access to vote?

MR. COLE: I know we're definitely seeing that in the state of Georgia, right? If you look at the primaries there, people were in line until midnight and then people started getting policed at the polls. And so in this summer that's been very hot, a lot of issues of police brutality, we're seeing young voters being faced even at the polls being policed as well. And so what does it mean for us to really advocate to want to see an increase in polling locations. I know some of the student organizers that I've been working with in Texas have been talking about polling locations on their campus being closed. I know in North Carolina there are students who are going back to campus in a couple of weeks and they're talking about you know, are we going to be able to have polling locations available for students even though students are living on classes, but classes are online? Right? So making sure that we are

having relationships with campus administrators, having relationships with local elected leaders to make sure that we have these things set up necessary for November or for whatever early voting structures that we're putting in place, because I think really in this moment in time, the young people, I know with the NAACP and young Black people across the country, I think we're just fed up and we're saying, you know, "Enough is enough". We're saying that we're done dying, right? We're done dying in our cars. We're done dying in the streets. We're done dying in our homes and we're not going to be policed in -- at the polls. And so we need to make sure we have structures in place and that comes from having relationships with the people who are in power.

MS. CARMEN: Well, added to that, we're you know, just point blank, voter suppression is real. It's -- we see it occur in a lot of the southern states that you mentioned. It's nefarious and it's also strategic where you know, Wisdom was talking about Georgia where we saw in 2018 clear signs of voter suppression, everything from malfunctioning machines to lesser polling locations in districts and communities of color so people have to wait in line, which you know, ends up people have to go to work. Maybe they were able only to take off lunch. Maybe they have to go pick up their kids. Maybe they work blue collar jobs or jobs without traditional hours, so the 7 to 7 time doesn't work for them. And then we also see states like you know Texas where a couple of years ago they faced a lawsuit and actually lost where they were kicking people off of the polling records because they were previously individuals who were not citizens. These folks you know were related and nationalized. My grandma was actually kicked off of the polls, but it's because she was a citizen -- she was not a citizen. She had got in, you know gone through the process. There was a record of her at DPS where she was not a citizen. She was rated and nationalized at the party of process, but the folks in charge saw you know, there's record of her not being a citizen years ago, she must be an illegal voter, so she was kicked off of the polls. So it's a lot of strategic things that happen, whether it's you know Texas kicking people off the polls, Wisconsin changing you know voting laws going from you know the Supreme Court to the governor back and forth the same day as the election is going on. So we're definitely keeping an eye on voter suppression and really one way to combat it is you know just education and informing voters of their rights.

MS. DEWITT: Yes, I was going to back that up. I think this is not -- you know this is a multi-prong approach that we're going to have to have and it's gonna have -- it's going to be different in each state. A big part of it is empowering people, education and empowering them to know their rights so when they show up, if it is a poll worker who's telling them you need an ID to vote, that they know actually what the process is so they can be an advocate for themselves, call the Election Protection Hotline. But again, that's also why we need young people as poll workers who are educated who can also advocate for other young people. But you know, in -- since 2010, we've seen several states pass ID restrictions that are specifically targeted to young people and low income -- you know individuals from low income backgrounds. I mean, in Texas, it's easier to vote with a gun license than it is to actually vote with a public student ID. And this is the second presidential election. Well, Rock the Vote tracks about a dozen voting policies that impact young people's access to the ballot. The reality is states can be changing their policies right now because we don't have the protections of VVRA in Shelby County or Shelby County holder. We -- this is the second presidential election and so there is no preclearance that states have to go through. And so there really is a free reign for bad actors to implement policies that impact voters.

MS. SUMMERS: I've gotten some really interesting questions through email, one of which I realize many haven't talked about. There's someone who's asking about what is happening with regards to this diversification in terms of rural America? So if anybody has any thoughts there that has worked with there timely?

MR. FREY: Sure, I can say something. You know, it is moving to rural America. There's no question about it. There are parts of the country where it's much more evident, for the essential part of California, other parts of the Mountain West where that's moving. Any state that's getting a lot of new racial minorities, Hispanics particularly, also to some degree Asians, much of that is going to rural America. In fact, you know, the parts of rural America that are only growing are growing largely because of Latinos and for, to some degree Asians and Blacks. Other parts of rural America that are largely White are usually declining in population because the younger people are leaving there. So, you know, it's not all of rural America that's becoming more racially diverse, but a good part of it and especially, and I think

in some of the key states that are growing rapidly. I always think of sort of swing states just as being slow growing swing states and fast growing swing states. And the fast growing swing states are states like you know, North Carolina or Georgia or to some degree Texas, which is almost a swing state and Arizona. They're growing rapidly and all parts of those states are gaining people and a good number of those people are racial minorities. So I think it's important to pay attention to those rural areas, not just to the urban areas.

MR. COLE: You know, I would definitely agree and I'm definitely seeing a growth in youth activism in rural America. And not saying this is anything new, right? We can take it back all the way to the Students Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and looking at people like Bob Moses (phonetic) who was registering sharecroppers in rural America because you know their votes also mattered, too, and they were Black and they needed to express their opinions on what was going on and how money was moving in their community. But today, you know, we're seeing folks in like Oklahoma who are advocating against hair and headwear discrimination and actually working to pass legislation in their school communities as well as their districts and actually working to push things like the Crown Act in their whole state. And so I think that in rural America, it's not necessarily an awakening, but maybe a resurgence of youth activism because we are seeing a more diverse population grow out there.

MS. DEWITT: Yes, I think there's this -- two things. One, I think there's this idea that rural America is just White people, quite frankly, and that's a misnomer, right? You have rural White, predominantly White communities and you have rural communities that are predominantly bipod. The -- one of the things that I think Bill's book actually does really well too, is highlights kind of the idea that views are shaped by personal experiences. So, particularly for young people in a diverse community, you -- their experiences are going to be very different than older voters, but even more so if you are a young white person you are more likely to have a friend, whether that friend is in your community or whether they're in their digital community, who's experiencing something. And so you have more, especially with social media and more exposure to things that you normally would have been geographically cut off from and it would have been easier to remain ignorant on a lot of these issues, you're seeing a lot of

breakthrough on that. And so, that would be the other -- the other point I'd make.

MS. SUMMERS: The other question we are getting is whether the panelists can speak a little bit about the importance of voting at all levels, not just national elections, and whether you all think that there's a need for more education about the impact of local level voting?

MS. CARMEN: There is always a need for more education. I cannot stress that enough. There's not a level of we'll have enough education. But I think we'll see this in 2020 and in Arcola, our team, we saw that. There was less enthusiasm this time of year for the 2020 presidential candidate than there was for the 2016 presidential candidate. And local down ballot racism initiatives are going to be what is driving people to come out. What you've seen, you know during this entire crisis, is leadership at all levels and being able to assess whether your local leadership, your city officials, your mayor, people who you can relate to and directly identify with, you know, are they opening restaurants? Are they closing down bars in my community? Are they allowing for access to health care? Are they getting our city, our town, our locality the needs and the resources that it deserves during this time? We'll be able to start seeing that direct relationship between you know, people who are on the ballot and who are you know, standing up for our community, especially during these challenging times, and people actually turning out to vote for them, whether that's a positive or a negative for that candidate.

MR. COLE: Yes, I think these local elections, and the way I usually talk about it with my young people, that these local elections affect our day-to-day lives, right? You know, these national elections, they usually take some time. They usually are a process. They're usually you know back and forth. But these local elections can change your life in an instant, right? You know, if you have people who have been affected by mass incarceration system, who have been affected by (inaudible) that's connected directly to who's elected as your DA. And so we're seeing our young people even advocate for that. I know in the state of California, there are young people who are advocating to make sure that there's affirmative action on the ballot ensuring that Black people have the opportunity to be able to go to universities. We see that in other places folks are advocating to ensure that there are quality public education, right? We recognize that we're about to enter into this fall semester and each state, each city,

each community is doing something different. Some people are saying half the kids are going to come in on Monday, the other half are coming in on Tuesday and then school's off Thursday through Friday. Some people are coming in on select days. Some people are not coming in at all. Some people are leaving after Thanksgiving and not coming back until New Year. So with this new COVID reality and thinking in particular on education, right, folks need to be able to advocate and vote on issues to determine that so that Black students or young students or young people can have the resources necessary to be educated properly, right? Just because we have COVID doesn't mean that folks are lacking education or going to go into a new generation where folks didn't receive the same education or better education that we did. And so we definitely need to stress young people getting out there and I think that goes back to that point of even seeing young people run for elected official positions.

MS. DEWITT: Yes, I think we've seen a lot of going off what Wisdom was saying, over the last few years you've actually seen an increase of young people really paying attention to their community leaders and who makes decisions on what on -- on the issues that young people really care about right now. We saw in 2017, youth turn out in the Philly DA race increase by 279% among young people, which resulted -- yes, 279% increase in youth voter turnout in that election. So it is -- it is about education around who impacts the issues and then making sure that they know when the election is, what the process is to participate in those. And we saw that not just in Philly, but in other cities like Chicago as well. So --

MS. SUMMERS: The spectrum for me that was kind of a bigger picture or theoretical question, I think, someone asked how the demographic trends that we're seeing even looking past the 2020 elections, could potentially impact a debate about the continuing validity of the electoral college? And they asked specifically are these, I think they're talking about the trends here, aren't they likely to exacerbate the inequalities?

MR. FREY: Yes, I'll take a stab. But starting that, I mean, I think where they're going of course, is that a lot of smaller states have a lot more representation than they might want to in the electoral college, and they tend to also be you know whiter in less diverse states despite the fact that

diversity is moving all across the country. So I think that -- that's absolutely true. I also though think that the diversity boom that we've been having in this country for the last couple of decades and will absolutely continue by any kind of projection, irrespective of whether there's more immigration, less immigration, no immigration, we're going to become a much more racially diverse country all around. And so that you know, those states now that we think of as whiter states, will eventually you know, part of the electoral college depends on you know the census reapportionment, so those states will lose representatives in a decade by decade basis. They start losing people. If they want to get in people, they're going to be people of color. And so yes, it will have some impact, but I'm optimistic in the sense that diversity is a good thing for this country and the fact that we're going to have more of it in the future in all parts of the country is going to be good for our democracy. And all of this voter suppression, it's important for the next election. It's important for the election after that. But I always -- as a demographer I always say that you can't push back the walls of demographic change. And we look at in this country, we're going to have a more diverse country all around, and as more millennials who are now age 39 and in 10 years are going to be age 49, have much more role in business and in government and all over the place, and it is a very diverse generation as well as the ones following it. Those kinds of issues they they're -- they see as important are going to be much more front and center all over the country.

MS. SUMMERS: I'll make sure nobody else wanted to weight in on that one.

MS. DEWITT: Yes, I can. There are certainly, well I can talk about the kind of current efforts that are there. Certainly, the national though, in our state compacts that several states have -- have passed. So there is energy, even from some of those less populates states to actually recognize that maybe we need to rethink our system a little bit. So -- and that has gotten a decent amount of traction in the last couple of years and then of course we had the Supreme Court case a couple of weeks ago, I think it was, on the decision about delegates as well.

MS. CARMEN: This is really interesting, you know, this year, this presidential primary cycle, to see there actually become a conversation where you know, we're talking about Iowa, which has less than 10% of its population that are -- that identify as Latin and contrasted with huge states with

millions in populations of you know California, Texas, where the communities feel like they both are essentially watered down and less important. You have 3 to 5 people for every you know, that goes towards the electoral college in California and Texas compared to you know a state like North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming. So it's really great to see this conversation come up where we're talking about you know, systems that have been in place and challenging the systems to you know, actually double check is this another barrier for communities of color towards voting and is this you know a contributor or actually something that makes our elections less fair and less equitable? So I think we wouldn't have that conversation if there wasn't this changing shift in demographics.

MR. COLE: Exactly. I think people are just becoming more hyperaware of it, right? It's just that, this past summer in our Black civics summer course, we studied every you know elected position in the country and recognizing that there is actually a lack of consistency around folks' term limits, around how many times people can run for elections. It's very, very complex and I think that's strategic, right? It's strategic to keep people out. But folks are saying that you know, enough is enough. That we're wanting to understand this so that we can master it and then we need to make sure that we are advocating to change that so future generations don't have to go through the same issues that we went through.

MS. DEWITT: I think that what this is also highlighting and the fact that we're having a national conversation that's an accepted debate around this also brings up the fact that you know, democracy is not a state. It is a process, and what I think that this generation is really going to be looking at is do the systems that we have in place really serve the goals that the founding principles were on, right? And then -- and the population that we are you know, are the people -- is the government of the people by the people and for the people? And you know, looking at things like rank choice voting. Looking at participatory budgeting and other systems that make up our government and how it works and whether or not it is really representative and how we can improve it.

MS. SUMMERS: I've gotten at least one question that's specifically about the presidential race and I kind of want to talk about that in a very targeted way. I think over the last few

weeks we've seen a lot of conversation from both sides of the aisle that have focused a lot on suburban voters, seniors. Not as much conversation from either side of the aisle about young voters. So a question that I have frequently as a journalist is what's at stake if candidates, and not just the former Vice-President and President Trump, but candidates on the ballot, if young voters, the populations that we all are talking (inaudible), if people aren't spending money and time on them, what are we at risk of losing?

MS. DEWITT: A representative government first. (laughter) I mean, I mean, young people comprise, you know Bill's slides showed between the voting eligible gen Z and millennials, we comprise 37% of the electorate. And so if young people aren't showing up to vote, that is a huge part of our country that is not going to be represented in our government. And so it is up to and has been frankly, up to organizations like Voto Latino, like Rock the Vote, like NAACP, to largely reach out to young voters because so many parties and candidates actually rely on the voter (inaudible) and past voting history and outreach to young voters. And so no one's talking to them except for nonprofits like ours, which is incredibly important for -- for the work that we all do and for candidates to make sure that -- that we're reaching out and targeting them.

MS. CARMEN: We know that there's a real need for us to engage the young gen Z millennials or it's definitely the reason why you know, Rock the Vote, Voto Latino, NAACP even cause and vision exists. We know that you know, for the Latin X community, less than half of folks are actually reached out to by a candidate or by a party, and it's definitely this vicious cycle where, you know, folks who are making these decisions don't think that communities of color, young people from communities of color are voting, so they are left out of outreach. We're not counting their votes. They're not you know, spending money on them, and it just continues cycle after cycle. So for us, I think it's definitely you know, makes it so important for us to reach out to these communities who are first-time and new voters, to get them registered, you know, provide the education and ensure that they are part of this process because then you see you know, legislation that doesn't look like you, House by representatives who don't look like you and who aren't for you, contrasted to amazingly when we saw in 2018 that were highlighted earlier this year where 2018, the freshman class was the most diverse that we have seen in the House of

Representative. We saw the election of you know, individuals like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who was elected by young voters who looked and are represented by her district. So I think you know, there's definitely a challenge there that we can either determine what our communities look by having a voice and a say in who gets elected or we just continuously get left out of the conversation and it has really dire consequences for years to come.

MR. COLE: I think we're at risk of really losing our democracy, right? If young people aren't voting, if young people of color are not voting, that is not a democracy, right? That is not representative of a larger living block in America, okay? If we get the largest voting block, largest in Black America and not including us, not including us in that conversation, then that's not America, right? That's a -- that's a farce, right? And so I think it also eliminates the idea of actually crafting a -- a more beautiful reality with some of the key issues that we want to see highlighted in our future, right? I think oftentimes that folks haven't been given the opportunity to really dream of a future for America where we, you know, are defunding the police, where we see an end to mass incarceration, or we see an end to student loan debt, where we see an end to unbalance and police brutality in our communities, right? If we're not (inaudible), we're not enabling them, and we're missing their values and their key metrics. I think what the best thing about young people of color is that we are the best (inaudible) right? We hear what people say. We hear the promises that folks are making, and we keep them to the tee. We say, "Hey, this is what you promised back then when you were talking to us and wanting our votes. This is what we want to make you follow through when we elect you." Right? And recognizing that as young people we have witnessed the hijacking of elections. We've seen corrupt politicians over and over again, and so for us to really get back engaged in the system in this year, in this time, in this COVID reality, means so much to us that we must see the process through and we make sure that we open this process to all young people.

MS. SUMMERS: Guys, we'll let Wisdom have the last word and we are going to leave it there. Thank you so much to all of the panelists who joined today, Carolyn, Brianna, Wisdom and Bill. We have been so thrilled to have this conversation. Hope that everyone who is watching follows all of

these folks and their organizations online. I know I learn a lot from them every time I talk to them and thank you to Brookings for letting me be a part of this incredible conversation.

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