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WEBINAR

WHY DENOUNCING WHITE SUPREMACY CREATES
SAFETY SECURITY AND RACIAL EQUITY

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. TURNER LEE: Good afternoon everyone. I say welcome to another excellent conversation hosted by our very own Brookings Institution. And I'm particularly excited about this conversation in just a moment after I've had the pleasure of introducing our guest.

But I'm also excited because I know many of you know me as the technology lady. Yes, I am the senior fellow here as well is the director of the Center for Technology Innovation. But in my spare time leading up to that role, I'm a sociologist. And in fact, I did my dissertation research at Northwestern on the Black political experience and leading up to events around collective memory around African-Americans when it came to issues around white supremacy and post reconstruction efforts as well as to today.

So if you sift through my Brookings expert page, you would also find out that in my spare time, when it does show up, that is very important for me to talk about issues related to race and racism in this country, in addition to what are we going to do about it. So there have been several pieces I've written about the Kerner Commission and perhaps reinvigorating a tool for racial equity that can put in place some policies that can address some of the structural and systemic inequalities quelling from today's exhibition of white supremacy.

I'm also a person who is a color if you've not realized that who has a lived experience daily of what it means to live within a state where white supremacist ideology in the structures that are actually emboldened by them actually exist. And whether that is being denied entrance into a restaurant with my children, or suddenly being slighted, or a person moving away from me because of whatever fear they have of Black women, it happens. So I think it's important, particularly now, because we are in an environment where that political motivation exists to sort of summons the white supremacists in ways that we've seen before.

And I really am interested in talking about this today with these esteemed guests, because this is not new. This is not a new walk around the corner. In fact, it's a re-examination of prior history that has actually shaped the foundation of where we are today. But today, the difference is that there are greater implications and consequences.

And so I am joined today by four people that I admire, respect and in many respects, in my old New York charm, love them to death when it comes to talking about real substantive issues that we can actually affect change.

Joining us today is the President and CEO of the Brookings Institute, General John Allen. I'm so glad that he found it on his calendar as well as in his commitment that you all have seen exhibited in his heart to talk about this issue.

I also have with me, Vice President of Government Studies and the Former Director of CPI, my boss, Darrell West, who also speaks about this in a prior to last one, Turning Point that he co-opted with John Allen on tribalization in America. As so I'm happy to hear his perspective because he gives an honest portrayal of what it's like to be White in America in many respects.

Dr. Fred Harris, who is a non-resident fellow here at Brookings happens also be a former colleague of mine as I was finishing my dissertation many, many years ago, and he's also the author of the book, "The Price of the Ticket" that can mount around the time of Obama's first election, but he is a political scientist that's actually delved into this issue. He is also the dean of Columbia Social Sciences Department.

And last but certainly not least, somebody who I've been stalking, somebody who I have been so happy that she said yes, and somebody that we actually have a mutual connection through my colleague, Rashawn Rae, Dr. Keisha Blain, who is associate professor of history at the University of Pittsburgh and a 2021 fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights and Policy at Harvard University. She has too many books for me to name, but you better go and read all of them. She has a new one coming out. But she really focuses on Black nationalism as well as the African Diaspora.

Thank you all for joining me. And we're going to jump right into this conversation so we have somewhat time for Q&A. If you are following this dialogue on Twitter, please use the hashtag, combat hate, combat hate. And if you have questions, please send them to events@Brookings.edu, [events @Brookings.edu](https://twitter.com/EventsBrookings).

So Dr. Blake, I will start with you. Okay. I want to really do some level study on why we are here. And I think I was sharing with you that I read over the weekend, an article. And I don't want to

get it wrong, because people know I can paraphrase to death. This article was from the Southern Poverty Law Center. And the authors wrote, white supremacy has created the conditions we're protesting now. White nationalism seeks to exploit those conditions.

And walk us through, historically, why this distinction is so critical now as with the about all the recent events, particularly what the president said in summoning his white supremacist supporters that people still can't get over. But talk to us about why that's an important distinction to make in terms of white supremacy and where we are now.

DR. BLAIN: Well, first Nicol, thank you so much for the invitation and it's wonderful to be part of this conversation. You know, I certainly appreciate and I understand the context of the quote. But I would actually push back and say that I don't want to dwell so much on distinctions between white nationalism and white supremacy because I think, fundamentally, white nationalism ultimately is an expression of white supremacy. And fundamentally white nationalists and embrace white supremacy.

And whereas I know some people will try to emphasize or perhaps overemphasize the distinctions between the two, I think we have to recognize that the fundamental problem here is, one, certainly ideology. But with ideology, practice that comes down to this belief in racial superiority, this belief that people of color, not non-white groups in the U.S., certainly within a global context, are simply inferior, and as a result are not supposed to have full access and certainly not supposed to experience equality in any context and in any institution.

So here's where I would say that we really need to talk about white supremacy and its roots within the US context to acknowledge that the entire -- the United Nations was -- you know, not the United Nations, I'm sorry. The United States was founded on the premise of white supremacy. And you see that even as we think through the Constitution. So that is the first thing to knowledge because we certainly want to talk about dismantling it.

But it's truly difficult, not impossible, but difficult to dismantle a system that ultimately shaped the founding of the nation. And so this is why today we are still talking about this concern, we are still talking about these groups. And more than 100 years ago we would be talking about other groups. We certainly would be talking about the KKK within the context of reconstruction and onward. Today we

have now so many new groups to add to the dialogue, but fundamentally, the problem is white supremacy to its core.

MS. TURNER LEE: You know, that is so interesting because I think as a sociologist, that I pretty much think of it to, that this has actually formed society. And you aren't too far off in terms of equating white supremacy and colonization, but that's another topic for another panel right.

And that -- but I want to go to you Darrell, because you wrote a book prior to this most recent one on these divided politics in the sense of tribalism that in many respects, and you tell a story about your own family, comes from this rootedness of people's, you know, about understanding of their origins and foundation.

And you also suggest in that book that has implications for the politics of the future if not now in terms of how we interact with each other. Tell us a little bit more sort of going from Dr. Blain said in terms of this is not something new, it's historically rooted. If the fundamental premise for our upbringings, how that panned out in terms of your own experience as well as your book.

MR. WEST: Well, thank you, Nicol. As you just mentioned, I do have a personal angle on this topic. You mentioned the book I wrote last year entitled "Divided Politics," which analyzes the growth of political polarization and extremism in America. But it also is a family memoir because I grew up in rural Ohio in an area that was very conservative. My grandfather was a member of the KKK. My two sisters are Christian fundamentalists who love Donald Trump. My brother is liberal and hates Trump. So family reunions always are very exciting.

But in part, I wrote the book to understand my own background and to try and come to grips with it. So in seeking to understand white supremacy, it does not mean that I excuse it because there clearly is no excuse for that and we must condemn it. But condemning it does not eliminate it. So to get rid of white supremacy, I argue in that book that we have to understand why some white people feel this way and how we can reduce the number who want to oppress others.

So in the book, I emphasized four different factors. One, the changing demographics of America. We know just from the demographic projections, by 2044, if you add up the number of African-Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, it's going to constitute a majority. This is upsetting to some whites

and leads to some of the very bad behaviors that we are seeing right now. They feel threatened by that shift and they are fighting it as hard as they can. So that's one of the reasons we see voter suppression, the violence, outright racism, and other activities designed to slow down the impact of those demographic changes.

Secondly, I talk about income equality and the loss of economic opportunity. So we are in a period of very high income inequality in this country and the decline of the American dream. And when people are suffering economically, if you look at this historically, they look for scapegoats. And it's always people who are different from themselves who get blamed for people's own poor economic opportunities.

Third is the geographic disparities in the United States. Our Metro colleagues did a study years ago which they found 15 percent of American counties generate 64 percent of our GDP. As so basically most of our economic activity is taking place on the East Coast, the West Coast, and a few metropolitan areas in between. Most of America is being left behind. And those people are very upset.

And then the last factor I emphasize is just the impact of technology on encouraging extremists, especially social media platforms. Because through social media and other digital tools, it is easy to find other like-minded individuals, even if the views of these people are out of the mainstream. Like in each community there might be a relatively small number of people who have views completely outside of the mainstream. You go online, those people are a click away. And the small number of people in your local community can be hundreds, thousands, or millions of people online and it's easy to find them. So technology eliminates the limits of geography on social mobilization and I think this is a contributing factor.

So if we are serious about addressing racism and white supremacy, we have to deal with each of these factors just in terms of the racism, the income inequality, the geographic disparities, and the way that technology is encouraging extremism.

MS. TURNER LEE: And this is actually great, right? Because it's sort of now, as I wanted to do with this panel -- thank you all so much so far -- it's sort of following this trend, this thread, right, of how we actually got here.

Before I go to John who I know can speak about some of the technological impact as well as sort of this forced congregation, Fred, but I want to go to you real quick, right because we saw, in addition to the history, in addition to the fears essentially that Darrell's outlining of why we see emboldens white supremacists, we also saw political leadership that had no problem whatsoever not denouncing white supremacists. That whole stand down and stand back comment, you know, it really hit a nerve with many people across the country who heard just previously in Charlottesville that these were very nice people despite a woman being plowed down and the racism that emerged over the choosing of Confederate flags.

Before you got on the call, I was saying to Dr. Blain, I was saying and now, we're seeing same person sort of want to take away the 1690 project and deem that as unpatriotic. I know this is not new. So I want you to sort of speak to our viewers first and foremost around the fact that the use by political leaders to sort of embolden white supremacy actions is not necessarily new in politics, but also maybe suggest how those stoked fears also contribute to a little bit more unrest going back to what we are so far.

I know you have a lot to say on this, but we can't hear you. This is what happens when I take people's breath away as well as their voice. We did hear a minute ago --

MR. HARRIS: I'm on the line. I'm so sorry.

MS. TURNER LEE: I know you were just caught up in the moment. I got it. It's what I do.

MR. HARRIS: Very extra -- very much hoping to get a jump in in this conversation. Thanks so much, as I was trying to say before, Nicol, for putting this together.

As you know I'm a political scientist whose work is very much formed by history. And so key moments for me are the periods of reconstruction or basically the fall of Reconstruction, of the civil rights movement and what follows. And as you mentioned my last book, "The Election of Barack Obama" which was also a huge moment in African-American progress. And we can talk about how substantive that was and how symbolic it was.

But these sort of three moments in history really point to sort of what happens when there

is progress or reform for African-Americans as there was during reconstruction where African-American men got the right to vote where there was a much more legal -- opportunities for African-Americans to gain civil rights and how it all unraveled, unraveled through three political institutions; Congress, the Supreme Court, as well as other sort of political institutions that came into force like the executive branch, the presidency.

And so what we are seeing is a repeat of this. I think often times we see progress in the United States as a steady march, as linear, and not cyclical. And I think we're caught up another cycle. So the period we are in now is very much reminiscent of a dark period on the onset of the fall of reconstruction and the experiences of African-Americans during the height of Jim Crow during much of the 20th century where politicians were actually inciting violence.

I mean, one example I can give you, I can give you many thousands, is sort of the South Carolina Governor and later U.S. Senator, Benjamin Tillman, who was known more famously as Pitchfork Ben Tillman, a man who really just spewed hate against African-Americans and bragged on the floor the U.S. Senate how he undermined Black voters or used the use of the shotgun to suppress voters at the polls. Many hundreds of African-Americans, thousands perhaps, were killed in political violence during the fall of reconstruction.

And so I think there are two key things that we see in these various periods of reforms and then retrenchment is the kind of rhetoric that is used during Reconstruction that gave legitimacy to clan organizations and militias who attacked African-Americans, especially those who asserted their rights. But this happened, this violence happened alongside the erosion of laws of protection, particularly around voting rights.

So then we have sort of states using grandfather clauses, other means, meaning that you could only vote if your grandfather was able to vote prior to the Civil War, which excluded African-Americans. And also other sort of measures of legal voter suppression. So it's a combination of those things, the legal aspects, and the violence, that we are seeing now.

You have to keep in mind as part of what's going around voting rights is as a consequence of what happened in 2013 is was the Supreme Court's decision around Shelby County vs.

Holder. So a lot of these sort of shenanigans, a lot of these -- the erosion of voting rights, the movement of voting polls, all these changes in voting laws and practices, in certain states in the South would have had to go through preclearance, through the Justice Department where the federal court.

So now we have the unraveling of all this. So again, the combination of political violence or the threat of political violence in combination in changes in voting laws. It's really kind of brought on the onset of white supremacist practices that I think will be detrimental in the months to come.

MS. TURNER LEE: I mean, I agree with you. I think when I was watching that debate and heard that statement I was reminiscent of those times where the civil rights movement, there were governors who could -- said put the fire hoses on, bring out the dogs. We saw that. But this continued normalization of violence is what disturbs me, particularly around race.

And John, I want to switch you and I want to thank you because I know your time is busy, to actually join this discussion because I think you've been talking about this in your own ways and your own writings as well. This normalization of white supremacist violence to the point that we start with the president's remarks and just recently we end up with the Michigan governor being kidnapped almost, right? And these brutal narratives of how they were going to attack her from some of the very same groups that are now also, going back to what you should talked about are using the premise of ideology as a way to just sort of reinforce whiteness essentially in society and pinpointing these governors, north being another one was one way of that.

Speak to us a little bit about when we speak about what Fred said in this normalization how we should be thinking about these attacks going forward from these white supremacist groups who feel a lot more permission to be violent and vocal.

GENERAL ALLEN: Sure. Fred's points and Dr. Blain's points, Keisha's points were I thought very good. I come from the -- I come at this subject from many, many years of counterterrorism activity where I've had the opportunity to learn how terror networks are created. They are created through often a systematic radicalization of a population. This is the radicalization is both sides of the same coin. One is of white privilege and the second is the potential encroachment upon that white privilege by the empowerment of other segments of the society, the Black segment of society. Two sides of the same

coin.

And that has created a centuries long, but in particular in the post-Civil War period, an almost birth moment, radicalization of elements of the white American population, which in many respects systematically were intended to deny Black Americans and other elements of our society from their human rights, their national rights, and their human rights. So I know a lot about radicalization and I know I elements within radicalized societies can become extremist and how then extremists can become organized ultimately to become violent groups.

And that's what we have seen here. We have seen in essence, almost a subliminal radicalization of large segments of the white population, which makes a very -- creates a very fertile ground for recruitment into extremist organizations from which then, in these extremist organizations, you begin to see violent, white supremacist, terror groups for all intents and purposes. They are terror groups.

So the Klan, for example, is a direct lineal descendent of the defeated members of the Confederate Army and they are not anything other than that. Let's make sure we are all clear here. The Confederate Army was a military institution based on the premise of preserving a society that had achieved whatever wealth and independence that had based on a slave economy and the subjugation of millions of human beings. When that army was defeated by the North, elements of the Army went into the Klan and the Klan that exists today is a direct lineal descendent of that army.

So there is a military component, a military identity with the Klan that is un-ignorable and undeniable. They are not the only ones, but the ideology of the Klan shoots through all of these other organizations.

And then we got the neo-Nazis and they find themselves in an alliance together. So we have a radicalized population from which then extremists emerge and they become violent, white supremacist organizations. And what I've discovered, and my background specifically dealt with the FARC in Bolivia with the radicalized elements in the population of Bosnia, with Al Qaeda in Iraq, the Taliban, and Al Qaeda in Iraq, in Afghanistan and then the Islamic state. All of these elements at the same commonality, which is that a radicalized population produce a violent military militia type element.

So let's take a step back and reimagine the plot that was just broken up by the FBI of the potential for the kidnapping of Governor Witmer and ultimately Governor Northam in Virginia. How do you think we would've reacted if it was determined that they weren't white supremacist, they were the Islamic state? We had active plotting by cells of the Islamic states to kidnap and ultimately torture and execute at least Governor Witmer and potentially Governor Northam if they could've gotten their hands on him. We would've been in a national frenzy right now.

Yet, the same uproar in the same outrage that we should feel as Americans isn't being directed at the reality that these groups intended to violently kidnap the governors of two American states and ultimately administer to them white justice.

Now here's my point. In the world I lived in for many, many years which dealt with terrorism overseas, we had some -- multiple tools that were available to us, not least of which was the foreign terrorist designation. And in a recent study which I did for the Department of Homeland Security in the context of the Homeland Security Advisory Council, one of the recommendations -- and the study was about ending targeted violence against faith communities, a part of which was the Black Christian community that has suffered so terribly from these groups in the burnings of their churches et cetera.

One of the recommendations we made is that the United States now needs to think seriously in the context of these groups creating a domestic terror designation, because we've reached that point. They are armed. They are violent. They are networked. And many of them believe they have been given permission by the president of the United States to act this way.

And as long as we are willing to see them in a manner differently than we might have perceived and reacted to the Islamic state, taking prisoner two American governors and torturing, and executing them, then we've got a lot of work to do. And I -- believe me, I get the idea that this is difficult because you got to thread the needle between freedom of speech and to domestic terror. But I'm telling you, I think we could make the case that there are behaviors, there is rhetoric, and there is action that can be taken by these groups that can be very clearly articulated as the actions of terror and domestic terrorists and we should begin to think about how we have laws that deal with that.

MS. TURNER LEE: Yeah.

GENERAL ALLEN: If we make that kind of activity illegal, we are going to have to deal with it in an open, public sense and have disagreements of opinion about whether white supremacists should be armed with a AR 15s then AK-47s and the central lobby of the state capital arguing with the police about whether their presence should be there or not. As always, we are having this debate, we can't get our hands around this. We've got to begin to think about dealing with armed white violent supremacists ultimately as a terrorist organization.

MS. TURNER LEE: That's right. That's right.

GENERAL ALLEN: white supremacists, in whatever form they have taken, whether they been wearing a Klan hood or they are neo-Nazis, they've killed far more Americans than any jihadist group could ever have hoped to. And I'm talking about that sweep of American history. What the Klan has done to the Black community of the United States and the numbers of them who have been taken, and tortured, and murdered in the context of the lynching, and our unwillingness to have law ultimately ending that practice, making it a federal crime to be involved either in the plotting of or the execution of lynching, this just proves the fundamental difference that we as a people haven't come to total grips with reality of white supremacy. And until we do that, there is not going to be the true equity in our system and in our society that we must have.

MS. TURNER LEE: That's right.

GENERAL ALLEN: And this is from having fought terrorists around the world in several different wars. These people are no different.

MS. TURNER LEE: That's right. That's right.

GENERAL ALLEN: The enemy walks among us. And until we treat them as such, a large segment of our population will remain terrorized and ultimately disenfranchised because of this.

MS. TURNER LEE: That's right. Well John, I have a question for you, but I want to turn it over to Dr. Blain and Dr. Harris if he wants to jump in. John, when I listen to you, was intriguing about what you are saying in the context of this conversation in US white supremacy is that you mentioned that if that had been an Israeli -- a Jihad --

GENERAL ALLEN: Get this right, please.

MS. TURNER LEE: Right, jihada, right, jihad style, excuse me on that, that we would have condoned the violence, right, because it would have been seen as extremism. But if it would've been a Black man or Black woman, I don't think we would've come different from our assumptions because you know, running counter to this is the same type of police violence of Black men and women, right?

So Dr. Blain, I will go to you first, I mean, part of the challenge of white supremacy is sort of like this tension, right, that exist between how we even got here in the first place. I don't know if you are kind of following me because my thoughts are -- this wasn't part of my question, but John actually had me thinking about this.

As we are approaching white supremacy, we are also re-creating structures, and in many respects reinforcing it in other facets of life. You know, the targeting Black man by police, the fact that there is systemic inequalities, the over criminalization of populations of color. How do we handle these two messages together so that we can denounce white supremacy in its fullest form, I guess?

DR. BLAIN: While I think as you were speaking, Nicol, and also as John was speaking earlier, I was thinking immediately about the work of Ida B. Wells because especially because even though we -- you know, within today's context, we talk about police violence, police killings. And a lot of people feel very uncomfortable when I make the statement that, of course, these are ultimately, modern-day lynchings. I mean, that's what they are. And some people quibble with that because as we often do with terminology, we try to parse out the differences and the fact that ultimately one is a public spectacle, although I would argue how is police killings not a public spectacle especially within the context of what we witnessed this past spring with the killing of George Floyd, for example.

But I thought about Ida B. Wells within this context because part of what she was trying to -- well, certainly within the context of the Black community, part of what she was trying to do was declare that we certainly needed anti-lynching laws, which of course, as you know, we've been fighting for long time and only recently managed to see some kind of progress in the federal level. And there is still work to be done.

And for her, it was about not simply waiting. Yes, she was calling for laws and policies,

but not simply waiting for those lost be passed, but trying at a grassroots level, as an individual, you know certainly backed by all these organizations like the NAACP, but even at an individual level to confront white supremacy. And I thought about her investigative work within the national context, her travels abroad, her campaign in Britain in the 1890s to shed light on the problem.

So, there is so much to unpack. But I think fundamentally as we're talking about the challenges of white supremacy, for me, we can draw these -- we can draw these clear connections to the 19th century. We can draw these connections to the 20th century and look at how these activists in these complex confronted white supremacy. And I do think they provide a model for how we need confront in the modern context.

MS. TURNER LEE: Fred, and then I'll go to Darrell and his question.

MR. HARRIS: Yeah, I absolutely agree. Ida B. Wells is a great example, but as Dr. Blain knows, particularly from her work, there are various ideological strategies and traditions that evolved in moments like there's that I think are very important. I think it's interesting. You always -- political scientist always get pushback on this because I'm not really a historian, but I practice being a historian in the academy, right?

So, it's sometimes hard to draw parallels and there is some pushback on that in the academy. But I mean, it's interesting to me in these periods we have sort of the state, the American state, sort of questioning the legitimacy of African-American citizenship. And from that, as we saw on the class of reconstruction and the disappointments of Black communities that came from that, you had these sentiments of these -- these nationalist sentiments operating in very different ways from sort of Booker T. Washington's focus on economic development, some echoes or participation in immigration to West Africa to the Caribbean.

And so of course it's not exactly like that now, but we see the sentiments perking up in particular ways. For instance, sort of these Black athletes who have been signed up at the big programs, athletic programs, are making decisions now to go to historical Black colleges. Again, sort of expressions of what could argue as national sentiments, but in another context. So, African-Americans have different ways of dealing with this.

Activist means, sort of our looking within and building institutions. Within the 20th century there were all the buy Black campaigns. Those campaigns are reemerging supporting Black businesses. Again, you see these in moments of retrenchment.

And so, I think part of it is the survival is what B. Franklin Fraser talked about at the turn of the century sort of describing sort of the nation building or nation within a nation as he would call it where there is a building of Black universities and colleges, Black banks, Black businesses because of the exclusion or the attacks from the outside of society. And I think that is happening in a different way and a different expression of the 21st century, but I think it is happening.

MS. TURNER LEE: Yeah. And I want to bring that up because of that we've got -- and John, you sort of laid this out for us, right? We've got this burning desires to find ways to really quell these injustices that have affected our world, our society.

At the same token, I as a sociologist, I got into a meeting, the work around the middle passage of women who would throw their babies in the water just to ensure that they did not grow up as slaves. And I think about in the police shootings the type of resiliency myself as a parent I've had to exercise in telling my son how to act in front of the police.

I mean, this goes back to Darrell, I want to talk about this tribalization because it's almost like to America. There is this extremism that we have to deal with which John talked about. There is resiliency and resistance happening, but in the middle wall Americans, right? And I'm just really curious having not grown up in Ohio on a farm with KKK relatives, like what are extremists seeking when it comes to government and to society. And that could happen from the KKK uncle to the general person in rural America or parts of the society that just feel left out. What are they seeking?

MR. WEST: I think Keisha, Fred, and John have all nailed it just in terms of the way they describe the problem. I mean, what these extremist groups of trying to do is to perpetuate their own dominance. There is a very interesting book that came out a couple years ago by Robert Johnson titled, "The End of white Christian America." And what he says in that book, is that for much of American history, white Christians set the tone for the country. They wrote the Constitution. They said the early laws. They developed the institutional arrangements that we still have today. And so much of what

happened basically they were the people who were in charge. That influence is now coming to an end. Loss of power is destabilizing for the dominant group. And they undertake legal, political, economic, and extralegal efforts to ensure the power.

Now, I think this is a losing proposition on their part, in part due to the demographic changes that I have mentioned before. I think when we move ahead 15 to 20 years from now, the whole conversation is going to be different because the country is different. The demography is going to be different. The nature of political power is going to be different.

The problem we face is this transition period. Like literally the next 10 years of going to be a difficult time just because -- and you can look at many of the contemporary fights over race, immigration, and voting rights. They are all centering on these basic issues of power; who has it, who wants it, and how we handle transfer of power. I mean, that's really the essence of what I think is going on.

MS. TURNER LEE: Yeah, what about -- we're getting a lot of questions. Lenny is starting to flood the chat box with questions. John, I want to come to you, right? We are at this tipping point. Add on to what Darrell said and then give us some guidance before we go to questions. What do we do about it? How do we start on policies and programs?

GENERAL ALLEN: Yeah, you have to deal with the entire sequence simultaneously. And the first part of that sequence is dealing with the armed white -- violent white extremist. You got to deal with them and there are legal remedies to that, which sadly, may require violence in the other direction.

But remember what I said, violent white extremists aren't born, they are made. And they are made from populations that have been radicalized. And so the matter for us -- you aren't going to solve this problem overnight. Now for 200 years we've not made any effort really dissolve it in the context of the totality of a population.

But the continuing efforts by the media, by education initiatives, the matters associated with reconciliation, et cetera, we've got to deal with the issues that radicalized populations to believe this propaganda of a superiority of the white race, which on the other side of the same coin requires that that

superiority be sustained by suppressing opportunity of the Black race and other races and ethnic groups. That's a long term, educational process.

In the meantime, we have to deal through policy and law with the emergence of extremists and deal very explicitly with the emergence of white terrorists, for all intents and purposes. Like I said, as I watch this unfold, I see the recruiting processes. I see the use of social media. I see the conversations occurring in social media.

In fact, I've got a conversation this afternoon about using artificial intelligence to glean trends of social conversation between these groups becomes an intelligent source. I see that social media has given the opportunities for these groups to both network for recruiting purposes and network between the groups which is what they were doing in these kidnap plots, to have greater reach than we could've imagined before. So, we have to be thinking about policies associated with what the social media platforms can be used for and get both the private sector who owns the platforms, and policy and legal recourse into the game to preclude those from being the organizing components for the mass movement of these organizations.

Plus, we are also now seeing increasingly, and this is the concern that we have, of these groups beginning to establish communications and deep relationships with terrorists around the world to include the neo-Nazis and the white supremacist that we see have arisen of late in Europe. So, we have transnational connections. We have domestic, cross interstate connections. And much of that is associated with social media. So we got to do with the connectivity that is afforded to them by social media, we have to deal with the inherent radicalization of the populations that spur the emergence of an extremist element, and then from that extremist element, the recruiting of those into white, violent terrorist, domestic terrorist organizations. We have to deal with all of that simultaneously.

It's not, I think as one of our panelists said, it's not linear. It has to be simultaneously -- simultaneous. And it can't be sequential. We can't deal with one and then deal with another. We have to go after all of it simultaneously. And it can be done. It can be done. It's just a matter of having the right kind of national leadership in position to set the example or at least not to set the negative example that seems to have power so much of the ideology that was the abroad and within the country today.

MS. TURNER LEE: No, and I love that. And actually, going back to our work at Brookings, and partly the work that I do on AI, we have to sort of look at this algorithmic amplification which actually allows for the ranking of search and the power related to these types of affinity groups that allow them to sort of usurping co-opt the voices of others on these platforms.

That's another panel, John, I think we need to do. Go ahead Fred.

MR. HARRIS: Yeah, I just want to jump in. I think it's something extremely important that both John and Darrell mention, particularly Darrell, about looking toward the future; how long are we going to be in this funk based on demographic change. I think a place to look of -- a disturbingly place to look in terms of history and looking from another perspective outside the United States, is what happened in South Africa during the transition from white rule to sort of a democracy, a multiracial democracy and the violence that took place within that transition.

It was a shorter period, but there were terrorism involved, kidnapping, threats, intimidations at the polls. So, part of this is not just about demography. Demography is a part of our demographic change. It's demographic change linked to political power and other spheres of power within a society. And so, I'm wondering if there is anything that we can learn from that experience to prevent what could be a really combustible situation in the United States in the years to come.

MS. TURNER LEE: I mean, that to me is so brilliant in terms of the analogy. I mean, when I was in college apartheid was a big issue and there was a lot of people who were killed as a result of that. I think what you're suggesting, Dr. Harris, is there had to be a period of civil unrest to get to a point where we had some fracturing of parts of the society in South Africa that allowed for Black equity, which is so interesting. I think it's such a poignant point.

I want to get to Q&A.

But why do that, yes, go ahead John.

GENERAL ALLEN: (Inaudible) on this point. I think putting what he just said in different context, which I think what he just said is really important. But studying strategies for reconciliation in post (inaudible) society is essential for us to have strategies for moving forward as a full society. And I think South Africa went through it. Timor went through it; many countries.

I just spent many months in Afghanistan, spent years in the Middle East. Almost all of those societies have had a strategy in one form or another. And some of those societies have been quite successful in reconciling reconciliation without an inherent social upheaval of violent terrorism and continued terror that could often accompany the post-conflict societies trying to find an equilibrium. So, it's really incumbent upon us to try to study these examples of post-conflict reconciliation where we can view -- extract the best practices and apply to ourselves as we go forward.

MS. TURNER LEE: Yeah, it reminds me of King and his work toward nonviolence and what he studied in terms of India.

So, Darrell, please, I'm going to have you take us out before we go to questions. And there's lots of questions, everybody. Lots and lots of questions. Follow us at combat hate on Twitter events@Brookings.edu and I'll try to get in as many questions as possible.

So, Keisha and Darrell we had the Carter commission. When Lyndon B. Johnson's all this stuff breaking down, he decided we are going to go in and look at the systemic roots of what's causing this; house inequalities, discrimination in terms of employment, the burning of cities. Are we on the brink -- and I will start with you Darrell -- but a Carter commission reincarnated under a potential new administration?

MR. WEST: Well, it's interesting. I think both Fred and John mentioned South Africa. I mean, one of the elements in that transition was a truth and reconciliation commission where they tried to come to grips with what had happened, the uses, the oppression, the racism that took place there and figure out a path forward.

I mean, when I think about this I kind of think added at two different levels. There is the policy levels of the changes that we would need to undertake in order to ease this transition, and that involves tax policy, attrition policy, healthcare policy, kind of a number of different things there. But then there is also these extralegal issues of the violence, the domestic terrorism, the hate groups. And as John has pointed out in the report that he wrote for the Department of Homeland Security lays out a number of things we need to do to address that part of it separately from getting at the root causes, addressing the policy aspects.

Like having -- you know, he mentioned the foreign terrorist designation. Do we need something like that for hate groups that would then enable more reporting so we have better information on what is taking place? As strong law enforcement? A better training of law enforcement? So, I think we need to think of it at both the policy level as well as how to handle the violent side of what is taking place.

MS. TURNER LEE: Kaisha?

DR. BLAIN: So I would just quickly add -- you know, I certainly do think we are at a moment where it would be useful for us to do something similar in terms of the Carter Commission because it certainly is fitting considering all that we have experienced even within just the context of 2020 and the uprisings. At the same time, I'm also thinking about the fact that the Carter commission fundamentally got it right, which is to show that the blame truly had to be placed squarely on the shoulders of white America and specifically that racism was the problem.

Yet, we've known this. We've known this since 1967 and didn't necessarily do anything about it. So as much as I'm all about doing these studies and I think these reports are valuable, I think we just need to make sure that we are not just doing it for the sake of doing it in order to reinforce what we already know. I think the key is now to actually take it seriously and to figure out a strategy moving forward. So, for the sake of time, that's all I will say on that.

MS. TURNER LEE: I've got a great question. I'm sorry. Go ahead, Fred.

MR. HARRIS: I will absolutely agree on them. We already know what the problems are. I mean, just looking back again, I'm very historically minded on these issues. You know, there is a huge report that came out of Chicago after the 1990 race riots, just huge. Fast-forward after the Rodney King incident, another, I think it was called the Christopher Report came out. Not much concrete policymaking and implementation came out of those.

And so, we keep having these commission reports. We concrete policy and we need places like Brookings to give us some policy ideas about what works and what doesn't work. And so I don't think commissions can do that for us. We need policy innovation around these issues.

MS. TURNER LEE: Yeah. Yes.

MR. HARRIS: And so that's what I want to sort of propose as we look forward.

MS. TURNER LEE: And I -- just a point to Brookings, we all here for it and ready to take this on because it is so fundamental to our democracy. I do have a question from Robert, and I think it's something we should talk about because we have talked about the most extreme forms of racism in terms of white supremacist groups. But what about white guilt as an impediment to reconciliation?

So Robert asked, is the notion of white guilt and impediment to some of these issues, because we talked about some of the structural pieces, but we haven't talked about the African-American men and women. Just recently a white woman threw a dog, a puppy, at a Black man in the park, you know, calling the police at a Starbucks. How should we address that in terms of policy?

Keisha, I will go to you. Is there a policy solution for addressing that type of white guilt?

DR. BLAIN: Well, I think as you mentioned the examples, the few examples, especially I think the one concerning the park where a white woman called the police on the birdwatcher and made a very serious and false accusation, and just knowing what we know about with interactions with the police, it's not a stretch to say that in doing that this individual ultimately placed the Black man's life at risk. He truly could have lost his life simply because of this phone call.

And one response is simply making sure that there are laws in place that simply discourage this kind of activity, which is to say that if you do call the police and you make a false charge against someone and you claim that someone has threatened you or done something to you and you use the fact that they are a person of color to bolster your case, that you will in fact face some serious consequences, quite serious, that you won't be interested in taking that kind of approach. So that's just at a -- that's just one quick example of the way that we can combat these kinds of actions. And clearly this is a small example within a larger -- you know, within a larger discussion of white supremacy. But that's just one quick thing that comes to mind.

MS. TURNER LEE: That's right. Anybody else?

MR. HARRIS: And Nicol, if I could just add a quick footnote to what Keisha said, which I think is exactly right, technology might actually be part of the solution. I mean, technology creates a lot of problems, but on these incidents, people are taking out their cell phones and capturing it on video. The

video then is played on television and it's actually raising people's consciousness. So, I view that as an encouraging way in which crowdsourcing this problem can help become part of the solution.

I mean, think of some of the killings and murders that have taken place that were caught on video. What if they had not been caught on video? Would people have been as outraged? The answer unfortunately, is probably no. Those like between some of the things that Keisha was talking about and the way the tech can help us, that may be a winning formula.

MS. TURNER LEE: John, I've got a question I want to throw you from William. Recent psychological and cognitive research suggests that denouncing or criticizing that phenomena such as white supremacist views reinforces rather than undermines them. What is your response on that? Are we reinforcing their behavior or are we undermining their behavior by criticizing with announcing?

GENERAL ALLEN: Well, I'm at a disadvantage because I haven't read the research. So, I will take it at face value. But I will just go back to what I said before. We have to criticize that behavior. As responsible citizens, we should take no other position. But again, the behavior is a function of a sequence of causal factors that has delivered us ultimately to a group of people who believe in their cause so much that they are willing to take up arms and act as terrorists against a segment of the American population. We will only solve that through education and through taking the steps that are necessary to reduce the radicalization of a population that believes that they must retain and preserve their privilege in a way that inherently disadvantages another segment of society.

So, you just – I always had a problem with this counter violent extremism strategy because of our strategy begins when we encounter violent extremism, you're too late. We should be dealing with what creates an extremist, not just a violent extremist, what creates an extremist and ultimately what creates the radicalizing factors that permits extremism to take root in a segment of the society. We had to do with all of that.

I don't know how we can responsibly not criticize violent white extremist. There is a body of research out there that says we do we reinforce their cause or expand their numbers. I would have to question that. My own experience with terrorist groups has been, you got to deal with the terrorist group that is committed and intent upon doing violence upon elements of the society.

So, in Iraq, it was on both on the curves. In Afghanistan, it was whatever tribe it was against another try. We had to do with violence because it was in her face. But we can only do with violence. We had to go upstream, determine what the causal factors were ultimately in that violence, and begin to address those. And you address those amongst the use, you address and the economy, you just that in the leadership and governance.

Look, I talked about reconciliation. Anywhere where reconciliation in a post complex society has ever worked, it came from powerful, assertive, mortally guided values-based leadership. And where is not succeeded, it's generally where leadership has failed. So, when we find ourselves surrounded by leaders who are committed to reconciliation, some part of which is about administrating justice, but some part is about compassion and forgiveness – I mean, that's part of truth and reconciliation.

We can only go forward with the right kind of leadership and a program of reconciliation that touches all segments of the population. It can't just be focused on the gun toting white extremists.

MS. TURNER LEE: Yeah, I totally agree with that. I think for that person too, you have to call about. If you don't pull it out, you are, as someone said, silently complacent –

GENERAL ALLEN: Of course.

MS. TURNER LEE: With what is actually happening with society. And we've never gotten part of this country with silent complacency, right? If you have –

GENERAL ALLEN: No, it would get you killed.

MS. TURNER LEE: Yeah, it will. It will. And that's – that has happened is that many communities of color what we have allowed things to happen to us over periods of time.

I mean, that brings me to another question. I will go to the whole group and then I got one question one a in with. So, if you will keep your comments brief year. What do white allies do to influence policy to address systemic racism and equality? What can white allies do – this comes from – to address systemic racism and other inequalities?

MR. HARRIS: They can do what Malcolm X. told them to do when he was asked by a young white woman about what is it that the white community could do for Black reparation and he told

them you need to go back and tell your brothers, your sisters, your mother, your aunts, your uncles, about anti-Black racism. And so not only can they contribute to the movement itself, but they can also be a part of a consciousness-raising in their own families and within their own communities. And so, I think perhaps that's one of the most important contributions that they could make to change.

MS. TURNER LEE: And Keisha, are we seeing that with Black Lives Matter in the fact that we are seeing coalitions of people out marching in support of the reforms of policing?

DR. BLAIN: I think so. And especially this year a particular. I think we've seen the significance of white allies. And I'm thinking about just various examples including Portland and how white allies physically place their bodies on the line in order to support the work of that activist. And I would just quickly say too, especially as elections are approaching the, what can white allies do? They can vote in the careful manner because I reflect on the fact that a significant number of white women voted for Trump. And here we are talking about Trump and some of his discourse and how it has inflamed a lot of this conversation and emboldened white supremacists. Well, guess what? Vote carefully. If you are truly an ally, even though there might be various reasons why you would want to leverage um, maybe you should think twice.

MS. TURNER LEE: You're right. You're right, exactly. Darrell, I will just do – because there are so many questions I'm not going to get to it. If you have questions, I'm so sorry. Please continue the conversation on combat hate and we will deftly respond to you as we do this work, but I just want to wrap up on two final comments from Darrell and John.

Darrell, I will go you. Are you having Thanksgiving at home with your family this year? Because I know you write this piece on what to avoid at the dinner table. Will these conversations actually come up this year?

MR. WES: Yeah, that was one of my most widely read pieces, something I wrote right before Thanksgiving. Like how to talk about politics, race, and other issues and divided families because it turns out there are a lot of divided families. It's like Fred's advice in terms of talking about it within your families.

And what I have found, when people view this as an abstract issue, it's also possible to

crack. If you personalize the issue and bring it down to the individuals they know or situations they confront, it's easier for people to think about these issues and actually have reasonable conversations about it.

MS. TURNER LEE: And we are coming up against an election. This is still a big issue that is sitting on the table. Your opinion going forward? We can't be silent anymore, right?

GENERAL ALLEN: No, we can't. And this issue about what do allies do, allies of got to leave. And they got to see that leadership comes in many different forms. First of all, you have to live your commitment. You got to liberal commitment. You can't be ambiguous on this matter.

And second, wherever you can, you have to leave from the front as attempting or – and being an agent for change. You've got to live the reality and the commitment changed. And if you're not doing that, you might be a spectator. You might even be a cheerleader. But if we really want change, you've got to lead in that process. And that's what I would say to white allies. You got to be prepared to live that change and believe that change. And if you're not, you're just a spectator.

MS. TURNER LEE: That's right. And what I would say to all the people that are watching who are from the African Diaspora, Black Americans from all over the world, I would you say keep fighting and keep staying courageous because as we fight white supremacy as it was stated, it has to be called out. Your lived experiences matter. And that's why Black lives matter in many respects. If you don't agree with the movement, at the end of the day, all Black lives do matter. And that level of resistance still historically has been there because we are still here and we still will be here. If not – and we will be hearing more numbers. So just get ready.

With that being said, I want to thank everybody for being in this conversation. I've been watching the twitter. Yes, as my friend Joe Miller said, this is probably the conversation of the year. If you weren't here, you missed it. We will have this up on streaming for you to tell other people.

We are going to continue to invest in these kind of conversations because we care. And as we go forward, we continue through all of our work to have some semblance of how we get to a more systemically equal world. With that being the case, thank everybody for joining us on the panel. I appreciate all of you giving you one hour of time. To those of you that listen to us, I can't help but say

this. I've got a book coming out next quarter, next year, as well as we've got a great podcast coming out at tech tanks. On that text, we are actually hitting many of the questions that you all brought up. So, thank you again and we will see you soon.

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