THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

HOW WE RISE:
HOW SOCIAL NETWORKS IN CHARLOTTE IMPACT ECONOMIC MOBILITY

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**Introduction:**

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**Discussion of Research and Community Engagement:**

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**Presentation of Results:**

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**Panel Discussion:**

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Chief of Equity & Accountability Officer, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. BUSETTE: Good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for joining us for this event today, "How We Rise: How Social Networks Impact Economic Mobility" in Charlotte, North Carolina. I'm Camille Busette and I'm a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, a public policy research organization based in Washington, D.C.

I want to start by explaining what this project is and why we did it, but before doing that I also want to express the Brookings Institution's deep gratitude for the funding support of the Gambrell Foundation. The Gambrell Foundation took a leap of faith funding a really novel research project and not knowing how it might look. And funders don't typically leap into the dark. And we are extraordinary appreciative of their confidence in and support for this work.

I also want to recognize Brian Collier of the Foundation for the Carolinas for his collaboration. And I also want to thank the numerous partners and the residents of Charlotte who made this work a success.

So, now, why did we do this study and what did we do. As many residents of Charlotte know, Charlotte has a reputation of being an excellent place to live and to work. And pre-COVID-19 Charlotte could boast a vibrant and growing economy. In stark contrast to that reputation, Charlotte has also been assessed as one of the worst cities in the U.S. for economic mobility. And economic mobility means the chance that a poor child will end up doing economically better than his or her parents. Charlotte does not score well on that indicator.

So how can both the reputation of being a vibrant economy and a low mobility city be true at the same time? This is what we wanted to delve into. As we prepared to do the project, what we knew is that different residents in Charlotte were having different experiences of prosperity. And so, we wanted to understand why that might be happening. We had been working with an informal group of Charlotte leaders on social capital and we though they were onto something interesting in trying to focus on social capital. The only challenge for working on social capital is that we really did not know what social relationships in Charlotte looked like and how those social relationships were linked to economic opportunity.

So, this where the research becomes very pioneering. There is no data on this. And so,

we had to collect the data ourselves and we had to design a research project for which there are no others like it. And this is why we are especially appreciative of the support we received from the Gambrell Foundation.

To understand this picture of opportunity in Charlotte we decided to focus on social relationships in Charlotte and to interview residents of Charlotte on who they turn to for information, resources, networking, and support when trying to find a job, secure educational opportunities, or find housing. We also asked about their social networks for childcare and healthcare and during COVID-19, but today we are only discussing the social networks and access to jobs, education, and housing.

We worked with a mostly Charlotte-based team, both for research analysis and for recruiting participants. And I will quickly mention those team members now, Dr. Tonya Farrow-Chestnut, our research consultant, Karen Sutton and George Metz, our community liaisons, our team of interviewers, which included Cindy Solorzano, Faustina Bello-Ogunu, Laurie Garo, Camille Hughes, Jacqueline Weatherly, A.C. Watkins, Ed Conrad, and Debbie Strumsky. We were supported in marketing by Denise Cooper, in web and graphic design by Ithan Payne, in photography by Korey Townsend, and we had a team here at Brookings also supporting the project management, research, administration, and communication through the project.

It takes a phenomenal team like this to pull off this type of project.

So, our question was what do social networks in Charlotte look like and how are they linked to job, education, and housing opportunities. In a few minutes my colleague here at Brookings, Richard Reeves, and I will discuss the results. But before that I want to turn things over to Dr. Farrow-Chestnut to explain how the group of people we interviewed compares to the overall demographic picture of Charlotte, and then to Karen Sutton and George Metz to explain how we recruited participants, both before COVID-19 and then during the pandemic. After that, Richard Reeves and I will share the results. And following that we will have a panel discussion with four excellent panelists. And then following that we will have question and answer from the audience.

I'm going to turn it over now to Dr. Farrow-Chestnut.

DR. FARROW-CHESTNUT: Hello and thank you so much, Camille. Welcome everyone. We're so glad that you are participating in our release event. I will talk a little bit about our sampling

strategy and some preliminary findings related to that.

An early and important decision of the "How We Rise" Charlotte research project process was the development of strategies for sampling and data collection. So, it was very important that we understood early on what our sampling strategy would be. In description field study, such as this, the study population is defined and then observations are made on a segment of that population or representative sample from the Charlotte community.

In the "How We Rise" study, the sample was defined by the geographic area, the Charlotte metropolitan region, and specific sociodemographic characteristics. A representative sample technique was used where residents from the Charlotte metropolitan region were recruited and selected based on the following criteria: age, gender, race and ethnicity, income, length of residency — at least six months having lived in the Charlotte metro region — and residential zip code. We developed a community engagement and a robust recruitment strategy — which George will discuss in few moments — to invite participants who live in the Charlotte metropolitan region until those subgroups within the sample matched census group rates. So, we compared the participants to the U.S. census in 2017. So, we used that data. So, we also used the census data to calculate the age, sex specific, and race and ethnicity rates, for example.

The "How We Rise" Charlotte study utilized an online scheduling event program, online recruitment strategies, and online screening process as a part of its recruitment efforts. A screening tool, or a pre-survey, was also developed as a strategy to maximize sample variation, which permitted sampling to continue until the representation targets were reached. In this study, the sampling frame consisted of residents that responded to the outreach efforts and met the inclusion criteria.

The central issue in sample design is representativeness. While a larger sample size reduces the likelihood of sampling errors and increases the likelihood that the sample accuracy reflects the target population, the Charlotte sample was considered representative. The sampling unit was the ego or the participant in the study. Any inferences from the sample, therefore, refer only to the defined population from which the sample was selected.

We completed a total of 216 interviews. After removing interviews with about 60 percent missing responses, the final study sample represented 177 participants, which were included in the

analysis. Of the residents who participated in the study, 60 percent were women as compared to 50 percent, the total percentage of women who lived in Charlotte. Approximately 42 percent of the participants were male compared to 47 percent who lived in Charlotte. The study attracted slightly more younger women, age 21-39, than men in older age groups, compared to the total represented in Charlotte.

The distribution of income among study participants was close to the distribution of income in Charlotte. Over 50 percent of the participants earned between $35,000-$75,000 annually. The racial composition mirrored the percentage of racial composition in Charlotte among Hispanics, as 13 percent, non-Hispanic whites, 45 percent, and non-Hispanic Blacks, which are 35 percent.

As with any research endeavor, developing a valid sampling scheme and generating high response rates were an important objective of the project.

Thank you, and I will see you again during the question and answer segment of our presentation. Now, my colleague, George, will provide an overview of our community engagement strategy.

MR. METZ: Thank you, Dr. Farrow-Chestnut, and good afternoon. I'm going to share briefly about the strategy and philosophy we employed in engaging the Charlotte community with the "How We Rise" project.

Our primary objectives were to build and establish trust, share information, assure value, and exchange value. First, we had to build and establish trust. We were asking community members to sit down and open their lives to us, share their personal stories. It was important to establish some level of trust so that community members were comfortable participating. The next objective was to share information. Most people were aware of our 50 out of 50 economic mobility ranking, but we needed to help them understand the focus on social networks and our approach to uncovering data through this project. They needed to know who would they be speaking to, what types of questions they would be asked, and how the information from the interview would be used. Next, we had to assure value. So much attention comes from being ranked last, so we wanted to ensure that people didn't receive this as just another thing.

To be effective, we had to capture voices from every segment of the community and be

sure everyone saw the value of their participation. An affluent community member might wonder, where is my place in this conversation about poverty, but we understood that economic mobility impacts us all. From the community member who aspires to a higher socioeconomic status, to those who lead our cities' business and economic development. It was important to hear from everyone, so we made sure that our messaging reiterated this.

Finally, we wanted to give community members an opportunity to exchange value. Contribution was always the thing. We had to create spaces and platforms that allowed ideas to be exchanged. Understanding that our communities are segregated in many ways, we identified common themes that would resonate across groups and make room for conversations to emerge.

Now, I'm going to hand it over to Karen Sutton, my colleague, to discuss how we met these objectives in our community engagements.

MS. SUTTON: Thank you, George. Again, my name is Karen Sutton. Good afternoon, everyone.

Now that you heard a little about our community engagement strategy, I'm going to tell you about our engagement efforts, pre-COVID and post-COVID, as we were only able to have a few in person recruiting events prior to. We held our first community meeting at the Beatties Ford Road Regional Library in February of this year. We followed up with a community meeting at Myers Park High School. We also attended a JobEx Charlotte job fair in an effort to recruit interview leads.

Once all in person events were canceled due to COVID-19 concerns, we were fortunate enough to partner with our brand and marketing director, Denise Dickson-Cooper, to quickly pivot and focus on planning and executing on hosting virtual events and utilizing social media platforms. We were able to conduct 14 live interviews via Instagram and zoom webinars with social media influencers, such as Barry White, Jr. and Ohavia Phillips, radio personalities, such as Tone X and Francene Marie, Norsan Media and community organizations, such as For Charlotte, Foundation for Girls, and My Brother's Keeper. This was done in an effort to reach targeted groups, such as Black males and Black females, members of the Latinx community, white males and white females, and members of the Asian and Indian communities as well.

We also ran print ads in affluent neighborhoods to reach high income earners and ensure

that we were reaching a wide range of diverse participants based on age, race, gender, and zip codes for a truly representative sample of Charlotte's population.

With all of these efforts, we were able to successfully garner great interest in the "How We Rise" project and provide an ample number of participants for our research team to interview about their social networks here in Charlotte.

We will be happy to answer any questions that you may have for us later about our efforts, but now I'm going to turn it over to Camille and Richard to discuss some of the findings from this project with you.

Thank you.

MS. BUSETTE: Great. Thanks, Karen and George and Tonya. I want to just reiterate again how much participation we got and how happy we are with the representativeness of the sample.

So, again, to remind you, the questions that we wanted to answer were what do social networks look like in Charlotte and how are they linked to job, educational, and housing opportunities.

So probably the most important finding was that social networks in Charlotte are strongly homogenized across demographic categories. So, what that means is people who hang out with people who look like them. This was especially true by race. In fact, it was incredibly stark by race here in Charlotte. We found that Black respondents have largely Black networks. Most strikingly, most whites have networks composed only of other whites. Because that was a main finding, we then had to ask, okay, so if networks are really racially homogeneous in Charlotte, do each of those racial networks — are they — do they compare well with one another when we talk about access to jobs, educational opportunities, and housing opportunities. So, within each network are those — essentially the networks, essentially as strong as one another.

So what this meant is that information and resources associated with social networks largely flow within racial groups rather than between racial groups in Charlotte. And this reflects, we believe, in part the high levels of residential — that's housing — and educational segregation in the city.

So the character of social networks in Charlotte does vary a bit by race and gender. Whites see the greatest advantages, white men benefit from the richest pool of social capital with a large, broad, and strong set of connections that include multiple professional contacts, family members, and

personal associates. The networks of white women are not quite as valuable as those white men, though white women did report good access to financial support.

Richard?

MR. REEVES: Thanks, Camille.

Building on Camille's points, I think the distinction between the breadth and the diversity and the depth of networks really emerge very strongly from this research. So, as Camille has mentioned, there were some very big race gaps that we saw in terms of the separation of the networks, but also the nature of those networks. So there is not only less networking across racial categories, but we found that Black women, and especially Black men, have less social capital overall. Black women have larger social networks than Black men, with kind of more people in their networks for support and so on. But, as Camille has mentioned, those are not as strong as for whites. Interestingly, for both Black women and Black men, access to financial support. So that distinction between the nature of the networks is hugely important too. But really perhaps the starkest finding of all is the weakness of the social networks of Black men in Charlotte and by contrast what we saw for white men in Charlotte. In fact, Black men typically rely on just one person for tangible support when exploring employment, educational, and housing opportunities.

We also found that networks of Latinos are small and relatively narrow. And in that case particularly reliant on family members too. We were able to distinguish between different kinds of networks too. Overall Hispanic women actually were the least networked, but as I say this, very stark finding was the Black men were kind of relying on average on one.

MS. BUSETTE: Great. And then we also found — we looked a lot at — so when we asked people who was in their networks, you know, they reported parents, friends, professional contacts — a whole range of folks. And what we found when we looked at each of those contacts and the strength of each of those contacts is that there were actually differences again by race. So a very important finding here was that whites reported a pretty high level of assistance from parents, particularly financial support in relation to housing opportunities. We also found that Blacks receive only modest financial support and then only from their mothers and none from their fathers. So this is relative to job, educational, and housing opportunities.

Similarly, Latinos did not generally report assistance from parents. One of the important findings here, or inferences here, is that, you know, we're all familiar with the racial wealth gap nationally and it's very similar in Charlotte. And I think what we're seeing here also aligns with that racial wealth gap, which is that particularly in the housing area and access to housing opportunities, white families actually pass wealth down and Black families and Latino families do not do that. And we know from other studies that have been done here in Charlotte, particularly on the racial wealth gap, that often Black and Latino families have negative assets, negative net worth. So they just simply do not have the assets to bequeath to the next generation.

We also found that fathers played an important role in supporting whites, but that role was much smaller for Latinos and the fathers were not able to provide real support to either Black men or Black women. And now here we are again talking about access to job, housing, and educational opportunities.

We also looked at income, because, you know, it's important to see how networks function depending on where you are in the income scale. And so when we looked at those net worths we found that middle income residents had the broadest networks. So they had, you know, a range of professional contacts, familial contacts, friends in that network. And certainly, that was much broader than those of affluent or poorer residents, both of which had kind of smaller networks. But here there's a really important difference. Higher income residents had fewer people in their networks, but those contacts were really highly reliable for information, advice, networking, and for providing references. So at the very top of the economic ladder in Charlotte, social networks are small, but they are very, very strong.

Richard?

MR. REEVES: Just to underline this intergenerational point, I think it's worth reminding everybody that the research that, Camille, you referred to earlier from Raj Chetty and his team, was intergenerational. And so this cascading of wealth that you see down the generations and the ability to ask for support upwards, you know, to ask your parents for help of one kind or another are very stark differences. And, in fact, there's even some indication in the research that for Black families in particular it was somewhat more likely that they would be helping their fathers than the other way around, that they

would be particularly in need of help. And so sometimes you almost see kind of reverse intergenerational help. Help is going upwards.

Now, of course you want to see both, but this financial thing was very important. And I think as we see the demographics changing and whites getting older, then we're going to see more of this cascade of wealth that you've referred to.

When we look by income — and of course much of the social mobility literature is focused on income and how it intersects with race — what we find is that in terms of breadth of networks it was middle class folks in Charlotte who have had the broadest networks. As you've said already, the difference is the issue is that at the top of the economic ladder the social networks are smaller and quite significantly stronger. And so there's this issue about strength of networks, reliability of networks too.

And the only thing I would say before we perhaps switch over to kind of the policy implications, I'll say two things. One is please look at the report itself where all of these networks are really beautifully illustrated and shown in very I think innovative and graphical ways. The other thing I would say is that the way in which these soft inequalities, these — the soft infrastructure of inequality and inequality around things like networks and power and so on intersect with the hard inequalities that we see in institutions. And so what we also looked at was where networks were formed. And the team was able to get some good information on not only the kinds of networks that people had, but where those networks had been formed. And, unsurprisingly perhaps, most of those networks were formed — the ones outside of families were formed either in educational institutions or in labor market institutions and jobs, you know, through people you learn with or people that you earn with.

And what that really shows is the connection between institutional settings and access to social capital, which means that the soft and hard infrastructures of inequality end up overlapping very strongly. It means that exclusion from institutions very often also brings with it inclusion from the opportunities to form the networks that can become malleable. In that sense, hard inequality meets soft inequality. And then, of course, it becomes a kind of vicious circle.

And it's I think evident from this research that these sharp divides in social capital and social networks are a contributing factor to Charlotte's relative under performance in terms of upward mobility. That despite the prosperity and the potential for plenty there is in Charlotte, that that's not

distributed in a way that is promoting upward mobility and that one of the distributional mechanisms is the social networks that this research really gets into. And the role of intergenerational networks is perhaps a very stark illustration of that. Sort of within and between generations you're seeing these very, very stark gaps in the access to mobility enhancing social networks with Charlotte in particular.

But, of course, just to pivot towards policy, those gaps don't appear out of thin air. I think it's clear from now the institutions, and specifically policy choices leading to institutional differences, make a difference. In other words, gaps in social capital or networks do not emerge out of thin air, they are not acts of God, they're not natural random events. They result to quite a significant extent from specific policy choices in terms of housing, in terms of education, in terms of criminal justice, policing policy. And so those kind of hard inequalities that we see in institutions actually are the result of deliberate and intentional policy actions that have resulted in very many kinds of inequality, some of which are easier to measure than others. One of the harder ones to measure is the one in this report, which is these social network inequalities. But we should be under no illusions that those also result from intentional policy choices that lead to the segregation of all kinds of markets and institutions and, in turn, in social networks. And I think those policy choices are what we need to think about now.

Handing it back to you, Camille.

MS. BUSETTE: Sure, absolutely.

So I want to talk a little bit about some of those policy choices that Richard mentioned here. We did delve into history of Charlotte housing, also looked a lot at public school data, going back pretty far in both cases, both housing data and public school data. And just to sum up what we found, you know, Charlotte's neighborhoods are strongly segregated by race. And probably those of you who live in Charlotte are aware of that. But what's interesting is that unlike most cities, Charlotte has seen no decline in the level of housing segregation in recent years. So that has remained constant.

We also, as I mentioned, looked at public school records in Charlotte for CM and despite, you know, a range of policy shifts that have been happening at least for the last two decades, public schools in Charlotte are incredibly segregated by race. The segregation of Black and white elementary school students has in fact been rising over recent decades. So, again, we're seeing those kinds of patterns.

We looked at school climate records. What we found there was that Black boys are much more likely to be excluded from school than their white peers. In 2012, for instance, we looked at state data there. Black boys in CMS accounted for over 20,000 short-term suspensions compared to 2,600 for white boys. So almost a 10 time — you know, a tenfold difference to the disadvantage of Black boys.

We also looked at some other statistics. Incarceration for Charlotte, Black men faced much higher rates of incarceration in Charlotte than whites and white men. They are almost 10 times more likely to be incarcerated than their white counterparts. And when we looked at employment, Black male unemployment rates were also twice that of white men.

So when Richard talks about these institutions, these hard institutions, when we looked at this history of these institutions under the current statistics, what we saw was that in fact this kind of racial segregation of — a racial segregation that leads to really devastating results, particularly for Black men, but, you know, for Black and Latinos more generally, is very much the picture here in Charlotte.

I want to talk a little bit about these trends that we looked at, these policy trends. So, you know, when you look at housing choices or housing statistics, educational statistics, the achievement gap, school climate data, all of those trends, as Richard said before, do not just happen. They are really part of specific policy choices made for — you know, policy choices that might have been avoided. So they're actually part of a pattern of policy choices, either avoided or made. And to a large extent, we think that the social networks of Charlotte reflect and reinforce inequities that we saw in housing, education, employment, and criminal justice.

And we really wanted to focus, you know, attention in this report on the multiple injustices faced by Black males. And we concluded, based on the data that we reviewed, that in Charlotte there's not only an under investment in Black boys, but an aggressive disinvestment in Black boys. And so when we think about this picture of social networks, there are clearly groups that aren't very advantaged from a social network perspective. There are clearly groups that are sort of in the middle. But Black boys and Black men are very, very clearly at the bottom.

And so what I want to do now, while we think about moving forward, is not so much to be dwelling on the results as they are. I think it's important to be informed by these results, but we also want

to think about how do we change public policies in such a way that we can actually change these social networks and change the relationships of social networks, economic opportunities in Charlotte.

So, obviously, we're based in Washington, D.C., we don't think it's our place to prescribe for Charlotte residents what they need to do. We think that is something that is really part of a conversation among all groups of Charlotte residents. But what we do want to say is that there do appear to be three commitments that have to be made in order to change the picture of social networks that we saw here.

The very first is that Charlotte's civic, business, and political leaders and Charlotte's residents have to candidly engage with the racial dynamics of this city. We do have to acknowledge the racial dynamics and we do have to own them. Secondly, we need to work collaboratively across racial lines to identify who is accountable for equity goals and equity outcomes in Charlotte. Third, we also need to identify and execute on policy areas where the greatest racial equity gains can be achieved over the next three to five years.

So these are our initial thoughts. And with that I'm going to turn things over to Richard for our panel discussion.

MR. REEVES: Thank you. And we're going to bring on a galaxy of panelists to respond to some of these findings. I'll just, as we're doing that, underline a couple of points that Camille posed there.

One is just to say that the term "aggressive disinvestment" is not one that is used lightly in a Brookings report. And so the analysis that there is in Charlotte aggressive disinvestment in Black boys in particular is not a sentence that appeared without a great deal of thought on the part of the team. And so if nothing else lands, really hope that that does, and I think the evidence pointed that way.

And the second point I think to make is that one of the ideas about the role of social networks in relation to these inequalities is that somehow social networks can help to overcome these hard inequalities. Okay, yes, we've got educational segregation, we've got housing segregation, but we'll form these bridging social networks and mentoring networks that will overcome those. And so, in other words, I think there has been a danger in policy circles on seeing social capital as a way to bring about equity without tackling some of these harder questions about power and institutions and segregation. It's

almost as if it could kind of get around those hard issues. And the findings of this report suggest that is emphatically not the case and that they're so closely aligned that far from being a way to avoid those hard conversations, the social capital division force them upon us. There is no way to avoid them.

So, with that, I'm just going to very briefly welcome our amazing panel just to respond briefly to these findings. There's much more to say here, but I'm very pleased to welcome here — and Camille staying with use — Janeen Bryant, Director of Operations at CREED, Kyle King, Founder and CEO of the SHINE Institute, Ohavia Phillips, who is host of the — do I say OH Show? I've never quite got that right, Ohavia.

MS. PHILLIPS: Yeah, The OH Show.

MR. REEVES: OH Show. I know, I — oh, I can't say it properly. And then Frank Barnes. A thrill, Frank, that you're here, as Chief of Equity and Accountability Officer for CMS, for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

And I think it's fair to say that you're all warriors for equity in the Charlotte space. And so I'd kind of just love to get your initial thoughts as to kind of what stood out to you from what you've heard or read so far about the report. What kind of — how do we think about racial equity now through this social capital lens and, you know, what, if anything, can we do about that.

And so why don't we start with you, Janeen, if you don't mind, and then I'll go to you, Kyle, and then you, Ohavia, and then last but not least, Frank? If we can just go to — just give us your kind of initial reactions. How did you feel reading all of this and how do we think about race and what do we do?

Janeen?

MS. BRYANT: I probably shouldn't be the one to start, but thank you, Richard. I'm so happy to be with this panel today and delighted that we are having this conversation.

I can say that I'm so glad that you raised the point around the aggressive disinvestment. I was aggressively unsurprised by these findings because at this point we know that Charlotte has been studied backward, forwards, and upwards and down around these findings for social mobility. And I think this gives us an opportunity really to think about what are we going to do now, like what are we catalyzed to do now. And so I decided to start this conversation really thinking about what this is compelling to do,

act, and change about our approach to social mobility and building social capital and networks.

MR. REEVES: Right. Thank you. We're definitely going to come back to that, and I hope that's roughly how you would start us off.

Kyle, your initial thoughts?

MR. KING: Yes, I would say that I'm not disappointed, nor am I surprised, because I think we have unrealistic expectations as a community. When we think about holistically someone that gets a DUI, they get in the car and they have unrealistic expectations on the destination that they get to. So as a community, when we look at the DUI approach, we have to first define equity before we can begin to put plans in place for the overall community. We have to understand what social capital really means and how these social networks, or the lack thereof, communication between social networks, how that's affecting all communities that are being served in the community of Charlotte. And then we also have to be able to implement different things where the end user is actually a part of that conversation. I think there's a demographic of people that are in power, like you said earlier, Richard, that are not considering the end user that these policies that these people and that these different plans are going to affect. So I'm not disappointed nor surprised, but I'm eager to be a part of the change that we're going to make.

MR. REEVES: Great. Thank you.

Ohavia?

MS. PHILLIPS: Absolutely, Richard. Thank you all so much to Brookings and all involved for allowing me to be here.

Honestly, when we talk the results, I'm not surprised, right. There has been a long-standing complaint here in Charlotte about how people operate in different silos regarding race in industries. And even with my experience working in media, there have been multiple reports surrounding a lot of what you all have found in the finding, right.

But here is what Kyle said that I absolutely want to chime in on. We have to fair and accurately define what equity is, which is the quality being fair and impartial. So let's just talk facts, Richard, right. In education, we are far from being, you know, equal and we're far from being impartial. There was a study by the NC Justice Center of Education and Law that said that Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Schools would need to reassign 55 percent of its students in order to offer that ability for students to have equal access to education and also what their counterparts are getting at other schools, right.

And even when we talk jobs, there are a lack of access of jobs nearby, transportation. And many people who want to work are literally isolated from their centers of employment. And, honestly, I can go on and on, right. These are things that are equally accessible to all who are watching for us to tap in and see what the problem really is, okay.

So let's just talk facts. What would be need to make this happen is we would honestly have to progress from all of these problematic statistics into more progressive strategies. But that will require us defining many of the lines that have been blurred from policy that you and Dr. Busette touched on, and being honest and open in acknowledging all of these long-standing complaints and turning many of those complaints into policy changes and action.

So I'm so honored to be on this panel to discuss many of these findings, but also how we can really move a lot this energy into action.

Thank you so much, Richard. I appreciate it.

MR. REEVES: Thank you. We're going to be coming back to the action bit too.

And, Camille, if you want to weigh in after you've heard from Frank, please do. But I want to get into some of kind of the so whats around this too. And I think this issue about — I think one of the points Camille really emphasized was this need to kind of candidly engage with this stuff, right, and get some real hard — you know, the more hard facts. But then the question is, you know, what are the hard decisions that follow from the hard facts.

Frank, somewhat in the hot seat in some ways given that you're a pioneer of moving CMS to more of an equity focus, but you know better than anybody else the challenges there are of moving towards a more integrated and more equitable Charlotte and the role of education in that.

What were your initial reactions?

MR. BARNES: Richard, thank you for having me on the panel. I'm glad to be here and I'm excited about the study and the focus of the study.

What I thought was particularly eye catching, if you will — I won't say alarming, but eye catching — is the notion of looking at social capital and social networks and talking about racial isolation,

that information and resources were flowing within races as opposed to between races. Right now Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, as the large districts across the country are teaching students remotely, and what we saw happen overnight because of the pandemic is you talk about something like the digital divide — or really what I want to talk about is digital inclusion — is the idea something that was seen as a private luxury really became a basic utility, which is connectivity. And so we're talking about remote education around isolation. People have introduced us to the notions of digital red lining and the ideas of bandwidth capacity in targeted neighborhoods, let alone home connectivity. And these kinds of home connectivity are showing up in the educational experience, but it connects to everything, like telehealth, it connects to everything like the ability to apply for jobs or to apply for unemployment benefits if you've been caught up economically by the pandemic.

So I think the whole idea of isolation, though not mutually exclusive from kind of the pernicious or intentional efforts over time of institutions, this idea that we saw really talk about through immigration, whether it be the great migration or immigration from other shores, is the idea of nesting with individuals for cultural security and cultural affirmation are now having fiscal implications when combined with these cumulative institutional impacts.

I thought what you're uncovering with empirical research, based on strong theory, was quite powerful and will fuel our conversation. I think it's a both/and not an either/or.

MR. REEVES: Thanks, Frank.

Camille, I'm going to throw it back to you just momentarily if you like, because if I can summarize, you know, some our respondents were — they would be too polite to say it this way, but they would be saying to us, tell us something we don't know.

What is the value of this kind of research and these kinds of findings in kind of galvanizing change, given that there is this kind of reaction, which is well, that's great, you've spent all this time telling us something that we kind of already knew anecdotally or kind of viscerally. How does it help to kind of move things along to bring this kind of empirical rigors about?

MS. BUSETTE: Yeah, you know, that's such a great question. And I can't say that I was very surprised by the high level results that we saw here. There were a couple of things that I thought were particularly unfortunate and disturbing, particularly having to do with Black boys and just looking at

the way wealth cascaded downwards for white families, but just that cascading didn't exist for Blacks and Latinos. But I would say the value of this study is that, you know, when we think about conversations about race — and this is nationwide, not just, you know, in Charlotte — you know, often when those conversations are held, you know, white respondents or people who are participating in that conversation will often say, you know, well, no, I actually — you know, I do agree Black lives matter or I have Black friends, you know, my son is on the same team as somebody else who is Black or Latino, and so there's a sense that in this world that I inhabit that I do have these connections across race. And I think what we saw is that that is not true. You know, despite protestations to, you know, something different, I think what we saw is that in reality whites in general in Charlotte, to a very fine degree, do not associate with Blacks. And when we're talking about, you know, access to opportunities, economic opportunities, it's particularly stark. And the same things for Blacks. Blacks don't have a lot of whites in their networks, and Latinos have, you know, very few whites in their networks as well.

So, you know, what we uncovered in fact is we basically just took the bed covers off and we saw, you know, a lot of bed bugs, which is basically people are not, you know, really — they're not really sharing social capital and resources across racial groups in Charlotte.

MR. REEVES: I think it just stops people from taking the exception and imagining that that's the rule. What the —

MS. BUSETTE: Right.

MR. REEVES: Kind of what the rule — I want to dig in on this particular issue of the racial divide. And maybe I'd particularly like to invite you all to think about the disinvestment in Black boys and kind of what — because, for me anyway, the sort of finding that kind of Black men in Charlotte who've really only had one person that they could rely on, both the breadth and the strength of their networks was striking. And I think it's also important to say that one of the reasons we know that is because of the huge effort the research team went to, to recruit Black men for this study, which was incredibly difficult. And most studies don't get that data because it's incredibly hard to recruit enough Black men to get data on Black men, right. And so it is to the team's huge credit that we're actually able to say that. And so that in and of itself, of course, is a finding, the fact that it's so hard to recruit Black men. And then you get this data on Black men, which shows just how — talk about isolation. And then

you see the numbers that Camille cited.

Let's dig in and say was anyone surprised about that? And kind of what are the implications of that?

Kyle, if you don't mind, I'm going to start with you on this kind of issue about this specific issue facing Black boys and men in Charlotte. Did any of that surprise you? And what do we do about that? What does it tell us and what do we do about that?

MR. KING: I think it definitely brings it to the forefront of our minds, but we have to realize that this isn't a policy problem. Coming from the educational field, this is a people problem. Policies aren't, you know, disproportionately suspending students, they're not kicking them out of schools, people are. The wrong teachers, the lack thereof of training for our teachers within our school systems to be able to know how to work with certain demographics, being able to understand different cultural norms, being able to understand different values so that we can matriculate these students as a part of the educational process to the best outcome for these students, versus the best outcomes of what we expect these students want. I think we have to — we can't transition away from these students getting incarcerated in the juvenile system until we effectively, as community leaders, create another system that actually has these students in mind and what they want to do. Why don't we have music programs in these schools? Why don't we have certain programs that actually fit the needs of these students and actually fit the needs and the interest of these different students as well?

When we talk about the social networks and Blacks having — a part of the conversation earlier was the strength of contacts. I personally believe that Black people have the right contacts because we as people are focusing in survival mode instead of advancement. So Black people in these communities that are disenfranchised and underserved, they want contacts that help them survive to make ends meet, whereas our white counterparts have more so contacts that help them advance as a part of life. So when the expectations are different, we're speaking different languages, so now the policies can't connect or can't communicate to both of these different demographics. So the communication with never make it between because we have to understand within.

MR. REEVES: Just fascinating, this kind of networking is one of those horrible made up verbs that people use in professional context to kind of move up. But I think this issue, the use of

networks for kind of survival and the use of networks for advancement is a very important one. It's actually very hard to get at that, even with data like this. Is to kind of — is that a network? Because you're desperate for money to kind of put food on the table, or is it financial advice on where to put your 401K or kind of whatever it is, so it's hard. So I think that's a really good distinction.

Frank, I do want to kind of come to you on this because obviously schools are being mentioned again. And I'm always aware in these debates that schools are very often in the firing line, and so it's important to kind of get your voice in here. But there are, particularly around Black boys, some very disturbing numbers in CMS, and you yourself published those numbers on an annual basis, so it's not like you're trying to run away from them.

How do you think about those numbers and what could we be doing better on that front?

MR. BARNES: I think there's a lot that we could do better over time. Since the data that Camille's addressed, we've been seeing a decline in the suspension of students in the aggregate. What we've been grappling with is not the overall suspensions, but disproportionality in suspensions, that Black boys —and I want to say Black girls, although that's a different conversation, though not mutually exclusive — Black boys and Black girls disproportionally make up the number and percent of students who are suspended based on their number and percent of the overall Charlotte-Mecklenburg student body. There is not isolated case, but it's present here.

I do want to continue to go back to this idea, which is shoring up our schools as we're still in the legacy of Brown and Swann, and even Leandro here in Charlotte, is the idea of institutional transformation and social isolation. The idea that what we're talking about — and I love what Kyle said around policies, but also people — I wish I could have just channeled what he said. It was brilliant. But that our policies aren't requiring these suspensions, it's the culture and climate of our schools and how we as individuals, not just white educators, we as educators of color also, respond to our Black boys and their behavior. And it's our individual response to their behavior, some (inaudible) response to the school climate that they encounter that then they exhibit behaviors that require an adult response.

We're also diversifying our responses. What we've seen over the last three years is that we've increased the number of alternatives to out of school suspensions. That when you look at overall incidents that we have, what we're actually seeing now, that 50 percent of our responses to incidents

aren't actually out of school suspensions, it's an alternative to an out of school suspension. So we're making progress. But this idea of isolation was so not alarming, but just grabs your attention. Because when talk about here — particularly in Charlotte, when we ended busing, even against the district's ask – – against the district's act and assertion of where we were in the integration process, we focused on integration but not social inclusion. So you and I, Richard, can have a relationship, we can be colleagues, we can be acquaintances, but do our networks blend? Are we being shared across a network that shares information and resources, or do we have an interpersonal relationship where we're starting to see each other's humanity, but yet we're still disconnected though living in the same space and being collegial every day.

So we need to have a conversation about institutional transformation, which I think we're working on at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools — we have not arrived. But the idea of isolation, though not mutually exclusive, these are two different beasts which are attacking our community and it's victimizing all of us. We're just all having different experiences of that kind of victimization.

MR. REEVES: I think this question of like the — and really trying to get at this in the research — this idea of kind of relationships through which power and resources and opportunity follow, right. This is not my friend is or I know or this is like a relationship that really carries some weight, a relationship through which stuff flows reciprocally ideally, right. And so it's these power sharing relationships. And so there's a very, very different thing between sort of knowing and sharing and particularly seeing it as this kind of synapse through which power shows.

Ohavia, I want you to come in next if specifically you have anything about the intersection of what we see for Black boys and men in particular. But just any reaction so far to that kind of particular point about the way that these inequalities are racialized.

MS. PHILLIPS: Absolutely, Richard. Thank you so much.

I mean, honestly, as the oldest of five, with three of my siblings begin brothers, it was definitely shocking, disheartening, but at the same time it's like, okay, once again here we go, right. And I'm so glad that both Frank and Kyle brought up that it is personal, it's the people thing and not a policy thing. At the end of the day our educators have to ask themselves the tough questions, right. So what are some assumptions that they have about their students and the upbringings and experiences, but also

what are some of the assumptions you have and the bias that you have, the neutralities that you have. I think a lot of times too, per industry, what we see is we kind of remain in a safe zone where it's like, okay, I'm just showing up to work. And in this case, especially amid a pandemic, it's just showing up in this moment for what we need and then we log off, but there's still a great work to be done after logging off.

And so what I'm very excited about, particularly with the study surrounding our Black boys. And just the lack of access that they have, and also, you now, we're not surprised by what we hear all the time surrounding the pipelines to prison, even though they're not in school anymore, is just at what point do we take a lot of these disproportionate facts and turn it into strategies to make it better for them?

So I really think, honestly in my humble opinion, Richard, it comes down for all of these people, and not even just in education. Again, different industries really acknowledging those assumptions and the bias and the neutrality. It just so happens that we're discussing education, but it's everywhere. And inclusively and especially when we discuss jobs and equal opportunity and equity.

MR. REEVES: Absolutely. And you see it —

MS. BUSETTE: Hey, Richard?

MR. REEVES: — for Black boys across the piece. Camille, yeah?

MS. BUSETTE: I just wanted to jump in really, really quickly here just on this topic of Black boys and Black men in Charlotte.

So one of the things that I think is important as we talk about this isolation, is that when people form — what we found is when people form social networks they do so in school and at work essentially. And when you pull, you know, people out of school, particularly as adolescents, which is where most of the suspensions happen, right, you pull them out of school or out of a classroom, you then impede their ability to form these networks. Again, if people are incarcerated they're obviously not part of the employment sector and therefore cannot form those networks.

So I think, you know, it's important to think about when we think about alternatives to suspension, et cetera, but it's also important to think about network formation and those important places where those happen and those institutions in which those happen and how we can make sure that Black men, Black boys are actually in these institutions, in school, and seen as part of the student body — normal, you know, functioning members of the student body, are part of the employment scene in

Charlotte, and have access to these networks as well.

I also just want to make sure that as our audience is listening that they know that we are really looking forward to the question and answer session. Viewers can submit questions for speakers by emailing **Events@Brookings.edu** or via Twitter at @BrookingsGov or by using #HowWeRise.

MR. REEVES: Great. And we have a few coming in already, which is great.

And, Janeen, how do you think about this intersection of kind of race and gender, or anything you've heard, you know, so far?

MS. BRYANT: Yeah, thank you so much. Hopefully you haven't been paying too much attention to my facial expressions.

But I want to push into some of the comments that we're making because I think it's actually really dangerous for us to totally divorce policy from this conversation. I think it's a dangerous step to take. And so I want to be clear. And I know that wasn't exactly how you contextualized it, Kyle and Frank, but I do want to be clear that, you know, policy is going to only have teeth by the way in which people lean into it or which they implement it. However, our policy — we can't have a conversation that's decontextualized from history and power. And we haven't defined power in this conversation.

And so because we have embedded in our policy making, in our laws and our legislation — take the 13th Amendment for example, let's drill down to Charlotte, let's take suspensions, out of school suspensions especially, for example, we can see how the policy actually is embedding and reinforcing our assumptions and biases. Even as how we're having this conversation. As I'm listening, I can see that we are having this conversation decontextualized from kind of a longer history of how Black boys and men's bodies need to policed in the long imagination of America.

And so we're not operating in some kind of silo in which we're talking about Black boys right now. Like can they just stand up and take control of their agency and life. Yes, they can, yes, we do want to talk about individual agency. Let's not divorce that from historical contextualization of where Black men fit into the American imagination and psyche and what real tactical strategies — and we're talking about real red lining, we're talking about real exclusion from the GI Bill, we're talking about real exclusion from education, we're talking about real exclusion and redirection into incarceration pipelines. These are very real and very — not easily tracked, but we now have enough data so that we can track

them.

And so I think it's really important that as we're having these conversations that we define power and equity, to Kyle's point, that we contextualize this through not just history, but how power is leveraged through these networks, and that we begin to think about what's the end verse of that, right. Because what we have done in Charlotte really well is we've embedded power systemically in our grant making processes, in our reports. We see the biases embedded in how we shine the light on what we're looking at. So when I hear conversations about fathers and I hear conversations around family, I think to myself, hmm, how is this decontextualized from the history of systemic exclusion of generational wealth into access to wealth and building through house ownership, right.

So we have to start like making sure that we are nuancing this, because I would hate for us to say like oh, like these are the decisions that our individual teachers are making. Yes, they are, and a lot of our teachers are biased, however, let's make sure that we extend that so that we have some context.

MR. REEVES: Thank you for saying that, Janeen. We're going to hear — I think a lot of people will share your concern that we don't make this a question of interpersonal relationships when it's institutional in its form. I think we're, however, in this very interesting space where we're looking at the way in which institutional and structural inequalities impact on relational architectures as well, and vice versa, right. So it's the interaction between this kind of interpersonal and institutional forms of inequity —

MS. BRYANT: Yes.

MR. REEVES: — that is so vividly showing up h ere.

MS. BRYANT: I think the word architecture is fundamental to this conversation because we're actually going to have to build something new. And so those interpersonal relationships, I think now we finally have the data to back up that those interpersonal relationships have been kind of the unseen architecture, the unseen foundation of how we were leveraging wealth building strategies.

MR. REEVES: But it is not a way to —

MS. BRYANT: (Inaudible) that.

MR. REEVES: But it's not a way to avoid change.

Okay, Ohavia, I'm going to come — I should go around to everybody now because I just

want to move onto solutions. I think Janeen said that (inaudible).

Ohavia, you've talked, I think a couple of times now about what are our strategies. Let's use this language of architecture of kind of like how do we kind of change our architecture in such a way that power could flow from more equitable relationships in Charlotte.

MS. PHILLIPS: Yeah, absolutely, Richard.

So that hand was like the hand up — it's like the church hand of boom, there it goes right there. That's pretty much what I was doing, Richard, is that boom. But when we talk architecture, I really, really admire Janeen for how she was like let's lean on that a little bit more and strategies that we can honestly come up with.

So it's expanding infrastructure, right, and it's the digital connectivity. And I'm so glad that Mr. Frank hinted at that. It's the connectivity, and it's beyond the illusions and many of the things that we make about like 5G and all that. It's making sure that people at the bare minimum are able to connect the things that they need. And I know — personally, I live here in Matthews and it has been such a struggle to ensure that I have the connection that I need even to make sure that I made this call, right. And I'm not the only one, but this is also just Matthews, right. We're not dealing with greater Charlotte. It's just a ton of things that we have to discuss.

But, honestly, the finger wag was more like boom, there it is. I didn't want to add anything. It's just like let's move toward strategy, because that's one of my favorite topics to handle.

MR. REEVES: Say one thing about that. I want to bring Kyle in, but say one thing about strategy before we move on.

MS. PHILLIPS: Yes. So when we start —

MR. REEVES: Start describing your strategy.

MS. PHILLIPS: Yeah, okay. So for me a strategy would definitely be starting with our youth, right. So I work a lot with the youth here in Charlotte, a lot in the nonprofit space, and I feel like let's talk about asking them what they need. You know, it's so funny, like one of my really, really, really good colleagues is on this call, her name is Karen Sutton and we discussed this with communities and schools. It's like instead of us assuming what students in these households need, ask them, hey, what is missing and how can we help you, how can we show up for you. I think a lot of times what many studies

miss when we discuss a lot of the statistics and things that come out, is did you ask the kids, did you ask the parents, right. And so I know we deal a lot with the parents because they oversee their child, of course, but like let's start asking kids, how can we make this experience easier, how can we make it more palatable, all these things that are important. Again, just to give them some leeway.

So I think for me personally it's talking to the youth directly, incorporating them in much of this study, as well as their parents, and just showing up for what they need and when they need it.

MR. REEVES: This issue of participation.

MS. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

MR. REEVES: And what their (inaudible) reaction research is something that we've been thinking about a lot in terms of the next stage actually.

But, Kyle, I wanted to bring you in on this point as well.

MR. KING: Yes, of course. You know, our overall premise of this conversation is education, jobs, and housing. And our overall goal is to be able to create cross community collaboration and connectivity, as we're continuing to hear. And I'm a strategist at heart, so I created a strategy just as we were sitting here.

Our first step is being able to maximize long-term sustainability funding and planning. A lot of what we're seeing in terms of where the money is flowing in this city is one to two year funding plans for different nonprofit organizations or businesses. We need longer-term funding plans, three to five, five to seven years out to be able to sustain our actual communities.

The second step is when we think about housing and gentrification that is happening, and the developments in these different areas, we have to minimize the level of displacement and create transitional plans for these people that are being displaced from their homes to be able to afford the new homes. If we look at the median salary or the median household, average household is $300,000. That person that has that $150,000 house paid off that's being displaced will not be able to afford the new current house that they're being moved to.

MR. REEVES: Median house price? You —

MR. KING: Exactly. So they won't be able to afford that. So what plans or what transitional programs are we implementing as leaders in this community to be able to help these people

move and transition into where they are best fit and comfortable.

And then our third step is to being able to more effectively measure the leaders in our positions. I have a model that you hire slow and fire fast. If our school leaders aren't performing, they need to be displaced. If our people in city council are not performing, they need to be out of office. If our people in these leadership positions are not effectively impacting the community of Charlotte, then there needs to be other people in place and other systems in place to be able to, like Ohavia said, expand our infrastructure.

So maximize our overall long-term sustainability plans, minimize displacement while being able to provide transitional plans, and then also have a more sustainable approach to measuring the leaders that are in these places. And that's what I believe are strategies that we can implement right now.

MR. REEVES: Okay. Frank, I'm going to come to you at this point because this is stuff you're living and breathing. Trying to make institutional change happen is — you know, I'm well aware that it's kind of easier to say this stuff than to do it. You know, local politics sometimes isn't always very helpful, for example. And there are many, many headwinds that you're going into.

Talk a little bit about how to take this kind of vision — I think this vision of genuine equity, real accountability, and taking this research, taking these numbers and really using it to propel some action. How do you react to those sorts of opportunities that you've heard so far?

MR. BARNES: Well, part of it has to be the stance of our public sector institutions. And as I mentioned earlier, if you look at decisions like Brown, Swann, Leandro, what they've established is that some public institutions, public schools, have done harm in some communities. And we need to own that and recognize that. Moving from there, that we've done harm, is we need to build partnerships, but recognize that I'd personally assert that we don't have just a public school problem, we have a community challenge. And I think when we talk about who's accountable for equity, often times we say the public sector is accountable for what the private sector has fostered. And we need to come across our boundaries, public sector, independent sector, private sector, to talk about how do we have community based solutions.

I believe emphatically that children don't come isolated. Children belong with families,

families are part of neighborhoods, neighborhoods are part of communities. And when you're able to have community wide (inaudible).

I do want to say to something that Janeen said, is I don't think that we at CMS or myself personally are anti policy. But what we do know is that approximately 96 percent of suspensions over at least the last 5 years have been what we would call discretionary suspensions, meaning that no law nor policy requires an adult to make a decision to suspend in school, out of school, or to choose an alternative. So how do we work within that discretion? Is the Black box that I, school leaders, and teacher leaders work in, we all have biases, all of us have biases. The challenge is, is the way we — and that bias is just how we make meaning of the world. But when we try to make up the meaning of the world and that vision has been racialized, and some people have been called less than, aggressive, violent, threat, needing to be policed — and I mean that as both African American educators, Latino and Latina educators, and white educators — and we act on those biases that we used to make meaning of the world and we make decisions, not always with the worst intent, but it has racialized outcomes. And I'm on the other end of the racialized outcome, which is disproportionality. And we need to penetrate that Black box, but we need to have institutional approaches, community wide approaches, and I would say also, but not foremost, interpersonal approaches.

If I'm really concerned about the idea that you could go to school with your white classmates or work with your white colleagues, and what I heard your research say, is that that racial isolation, even for those of us who have progressed because of the things that people have sacrificed for us, still remain racially isolated. And so we have a larger, larger animal to tackle.

And I just want to thank this panel for the things that it said. I think Janeen — and one thing is very brilliant — in her identifying that these things don't take place in a microcosm, they're part of a larger experience in history. And if we don't treat them that way and treat the institutions of policies and behaviors that have come before us, we won't be able to address them here and moving forward. I think that was a brilliant remark and insight.

MR. REEVES: Well, I like the term community challenge. I think that is doing a lot of work for you there, Frank, and you're using it very carefully and very artfully. And I understand why.

And we're going to move onto the next stage of our program, but I do want to kind of

finish. I think what's under — between the lines there, and maybe kind of in the lines of some of the comments that we've had, which is we talked a lot about sharing power and creating opportunity, the flip side of that is breaking up some of the existing power structures. The flip side of that is some people having to give some stuff up. The opposite side of that is some sacrifice is going to have to be required. And I think this point about candidly engaging with this is partly about that too, which is we won't rewire the power dynamics of Charlotte unless we want to tackle some of the existing and entrenched power structures. And that's the bit where the — and that's — you see that in schooling, you see that in housing, you see it in the gap between the rhetoric and reality, you see it in the gap between what people say and what our research shows. And I think it's there that the action is going to be.

So I just want to thank you all. Thank you, Frank, that you, Janeen, thank you, Kyle, thank you, Ohavia, for joining us in this conversations —

MS. PHILLIPS: Thank you.

MR. REEVES: — and for your comments. There will be see much, much, much, much more work to do, but it was a great conversation. We really appreciate it. Thank you.

And, with that, I think we're going to bring back our top team of researchers, the crack team that worked on this and, you know, community engagers.

Camille, you're staying with us, right?

MS. BUSETTE: Actually, all of our panelists are going to stay with us as well.

MR. REEVES: Great.

MS. BUSETTE: And we're just going to add, George, Karen, and Tonya at this point.

MR. REEVES: Fantastic. Ah, that's right. So we're just going to just expand the number of —

MS. BUSETTE: Yes, expand the conversation. We're also getting some questions in from the audience. I don't know if you've been able to take a look at those.

MR. REEVES: I've got a few coming in. I'll start with a couple. And I didn't realize we're going to get to keep everyone. Great.

So obviously I'm not going to be able to give every question to everybody, so I apologize in advance for doing that. But actually one question I thought was quite interesting. Raquel Lynch sent

this in from Goodwill Industries in Southern Piedmont. And she wanted us to reflect on how you navigate social networks — I'm quoting her directly here — how do you navigate social networks as a person of color without sacrificing cultural identity?

And so is this kind of — is the sort of saying that actually, let's just all be the same, all the networks should be the same, let's not network with people like us, let's just kind of somehow imagine it – – do we want kind of post racial social capital? And who wants that? So, in other words, how to access networks of power and how to change those social capital as well. And just kind of give up — you know, how you think about yourself and your own identity.

I'd love any thoughts on that, especially from anyone coming back — Kyle, let's hear from you and then anybody else want to weigh in on this one? Just stick — if anyone wants to stick their hand up. I won't be able to get everyone in, but, Kyle, for that one.

MR. KING: I think that's such a great question, Raquel, so thank you for submitting that question.

So I'll just give a little bit about my experience. So last week I had the opportunity of traveling to Phoenix, Arizona, where I was a part of the genius network mastermind, which is one of the – – number one masterminds in the world. To enter into this mastermind is $25,000 or $100,000. So as a 28 year old, being in the company of people who built $10, $20, and $40 million organizations, there's a lot of me being a Black young man that do I have to shift, you know, how I do business or do I have to shift how I communicate. And one person told me, they said you are here for a reason and we need what you have to offer to this table. Because we've done things and we've created these things with our social networks, but we didn't realize that the youthfulness is — there's innovation in youthfulness, there's innovation in being able to cross-collaborate with other demographics. There's all of these different people, business owners, and educators around the world that were featured in this event, were communicating to me like I was one of their equals. And results is one of the things that we cannot challenge. So one of the different things — we can talk about race, we can talk about demographics, we can talk about education, but results and success and statistics, as we've seen with this report, don't lie.

Raquel, what I would recommend for you to do is continue to be that amazing person that is amazing enough to be engaged in this conversation. And you should never have to sacrifice your

cultural identity. And if you begin to see that you have to sacrifice your cultural identity, I'm sure that's not a table, that's not a room, and that's not a location that you should be a part of.

MR. REEVES: Right. If we can't have solidarity without sameness, we're all in trouble.

I'd love to know if there's anything from the — Janeen, I think you are — from the research team, did this issue come up at all? I'm looking at Karen, George, Tonya, any — Camille, this issue of a kind of tension, right, you know, between being kind of true to yourself and accessing the kind of — if you've got networks of power that are kind of white and rich and kind of exclusive, then accessing them might almost feel like it's asking you to give up something of yourself. Did that come up at all in any of the interviews or any of the research?

MR. BRYANT: Can I speak to this really quickly, because I know the research —

MR. REEVES: Sure. Sure. That gives them a chance to think of an answer as well. Go for it.

MS. BRYANT: I just want to say really quickly, as a person who went to Davidson College, which was profoundly white and a profoundly elitist experience, I think we have to ask questions around assimilationist constructs in any our social engagement. I think they are incredibly prevalent here in Charlotte where you are asked to represent diversity so you can symbolically have a seat at the table, but that is not necessarily correlating into power, access to budget, access to transformation. And so I think like, Raquel — and I know Raquel and I respect her deeply, but I do think that there is tremendous pressure to assimilate to accepted norms, particularly in Charlotte. I want to be really Charlotte specific. I've been in this nonprofit field here for 20 years and I think that it shows up over and over again and it actually reinforces the status quo in a very dangerous way.

And so we're in a particular historical moment that asks us to do what Kyle said, which is to step into our own power and to reclaim and reshape how these dynamics are sitting from the boardroom and from the grassroots. And so we have an opportunity to do that really intentionally. I think the findings in this report are asking us to do that really mindfully and intentionally.

MR. REEVES: Thank you, Janeen.

Anything from any of the research team? And then there's another question from Laura that I want to get into?

Karen —

MS. BUSETTE: Tonya might have some insights into the comments that people made. Tonya was really, you know, looked at almost every single person's responses. So if there's anything in there, she would know.

MR. REEVES: Tonya? Did you say anything, Tonya? You're muted right now actually. Can you just — yeah, we have to unmute ourselves on this new zoom thing. There you go.

DR. FARROW-CHESTNUT: Thank you. Thank you.

Yeah, that's an interesting question around whether or not the participants discussed whether they had to perhaps change who they were in order to access resources. And while that did not come up, they talk quite a bit about issues that they were experiencing presently, what were those problems, what were those really significant issues that they were experiencing. And because of the timing of the research, we received a lot of responses concerning COVID and accessing information and who do they go to access information.

So the responses from the participants were really about real world issues and problems that they were experiencing and what were resources that were available to them to help them address and navigate those issues and problems.

And so one of the challenges we were faced was equipping our interviewers with resources and information to provide to the interviewees or the respondents and also provide those resources on our How We Rise website.

MR. REEVES: Great. Thank you, Tonya. And thank you also for pointing people to the website as well, which we, you know, hope everyone will go to.

Laura Sheppard (phonetic) has asked a question about how this work relates to ongoing efforts in Charlotte and what's already there, which I'll have a go at. But I'm happy for others to weigh in too.

Actually, in one way or another I've been working in Charlotte for many years now and certainly since the findings from the original research from Raj Chetty and Opportunity Insights. And so there has — I think that's a very important question because there is a danger of a kind of multiplicity of efforts. It's like no one would say this, but great, another research report. Great, another task force.

Great, another council. Great, another group. And I can see some reactions, that is in people's minds. And so it was very important to this team to make sure it went with the grain of what was already in Charlotte.

And I'll take Opportunity Insights as an example. That's the team that created the research that put Charlotte 50th out of 50 in the first place, led by Raj Chetty. And Raj came down at a certain point during this process. Opportunity Insights have been working in Charlotte for the last two years and there's a report coming out from Opportunity Insights which shows how much better Charlotte could do if it changed some of its policy. So it's very complimentary to this effort. And actually there are many ways in which this effort connects with them.

What's interesting is the three mail pillars of Opportunity Insights' work have been around housing and education, particularly transition into post secondary education, and social capital. The problem is getting good data on social capital in a specific area with which to try and create any actionable change. And the Opportunity Insights team would be the first to say quite — we don't know. And the measure of social capital that's being used in a lot of data is something like census, you know, filling out census and so on. And they'd be the first to say that's not a great measure of social capital. But getting this kind of network analysis, this kind of depth, is absolutely essential to supporting the efforts of others.

And then of course you've had communities at school, so that's social capital challenge, and many other groups who actually partner with social research committee, including many people on this call, have actually been meeting on a monthly basis to try and kind of coordinate those efforts. So there's been a really intentional effort to try and align this work with the work that's already going on in Charlotte.

I don't know, Camille, whether you wanted to add anything to that or whether you felt I've answered that fully enough.

MS. BUSETTE: No, I think that that answers it fully enough.

I do want to pivot a little bit to a couple of questions that are coming about, okay, how is it that public policy, you know, can help generate social capital, how do we engage people who are most proximate to the issue and building them into our solutions, et cetera. And so the thing I do want to say is

that we hope that this is the start of a frank community conversation among a range of, you know, residents, leaders, in Charlotte. And what follows is actually in the hands of people in Charlotte, right.

So I'm certainly happy to help guide those discussions, but I do think the solutions, the way in which we think about public policy and its relationship to social networks, has to come from people in Charlotte.

MR. REEVES: That actually does relate to another question, which is from Kelly Little, which I think gets to some of this breaking up power structures thing before, which is how do you all suggest engaging the people who are most proximate to the problem and building them into our solutions.

And proximate to the problem is another very nice term, a bit like — what was community challenge, Frank, that you used earlier. Because there is a danger with this kind of conversation that we're sort of preaching to the choir and there's this kind of enthusiastic agreement that radical action is needed, but then actually those who currently are in a position to make some of those changes, if they're not on board with it, then it's all very well, but we'll be having the same conversation five or ten years from now.

Anybody have any thoughts on kind of smart ways to engage those who to some extent might have something to lose because they're currently in the center of power structures? Any thoughts on that?

George, do you want to weigh in on that?

MR. METZ: Yes, I will.

So I think that the proximity to the problem, first I think you have reframe what that means, right.

MR. REEVES: Yes.

MR. METZ: So the reality is that the problem is a Charlotte problem. You know, if you are a citizen of this community, the problem impacts you and affects you. So I think what we have to really get in on is it's both. I agree to the earlier conversation of the policy and the interpersonal relationship. And I love Janeen's language about divorcing, because it is a marriage, right. These two things have to come together. The reality is there have been things that have always divided us, but there's — we have to reframe this thing from an asset base instead of a deficit base.

So, you know, I now speak to this from the perspective of a Black man, a CMS student, a graduate — you know, calls of 2000, Butler, also as a — you know, as just someone who loves the city. You know, you think about it, I've always had this pressure to show up and showing up sometimes — you know, it could feel like assimilation. It could feel like you are pulled to do this and be this in this space. However, what I had to understand is that, man, I have value, substantial value to bring to this space, you know.

And thing is, what are we telling our young people? Are we telling them that you are at risk, that you are this, that you are that? Until we reframe what our narrative is to them, we'll keep getting the same thing over and over and over again. So it goes back to self policy, you know, it goes back to self policy. And that's a byproduct of every other policy that we want to adjust.

So that's all I have to say about that.

MR. REEVES: So that's the challenge isn't it?

MS. SUTTON: Richard?

MR. REEVES: Karen, please go ahead.

MS. SUTTON: Yes, I would just want to add in addition to what George has mentioned, for that person who asked that question, you know, again, what George was speaking about is what we often teach to young people in the community. Social capital is about reciprocity. We teach people that each person has value in the relationship. You have gifts and talents. And so find what those are for you, find an organization that similar to believing in what you believe in and is moving in the direction that you like to move in and do something about. There are great organizations here in Charlotte who have been a part of the work for a while and continue to be a part of it to help us move forward.

But in the words of one of my greatest heroes, John Lewis, when you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you must say something, you must do something. And for me it's all about accountability. One of the recommendations in this report of our findings was that Charlotte as a city come up with maybe racial equity goals. There are organizations that kind of, you know, center in that work. And so someone needs to be held accountable for making sure that those goals are, one, formed and then executed on, in particular when it pertains to jobs and employers here in Charlotte. Their committees, we — now that — with all the racial unrest and things that we have seen here in the United

States lately, the need for diversity, equity, inclusion conversations are coming up more, there are implementation teams that are working on this.

So be a part of that, be a part of the action and the solution. Speak up on those things, keep pushing, keep pressing, until you are getting results.

MR. REEVES: That was —

MS. SUTTON: And find that person in the organization. You know, keep pushing, keep asking questions. Who is that person that we can lean on to hold people accountable for the work that we are trying to do and help us move it forward. All these conversations that we're having, great conversations, great starters, but it's time for action and accountability. And that's what we need more of and more people advocating and speaking up for that.

MR. REEVES: Thank you, Karen. There was a line in what Camille was saying that I wrote down, and it's in the report, it was a reminder of the artfulness of the line work collaboratively across racial lines to identify who is accountable for racial equity goals.

When we say Charlotte should commit to racial equity goals, who does that mean? And how will we know if they've been achieved or not? And what will happen if they have not? Because that's what accountability actually means, it means not just setting goals.

And so there's real bite in that recommendation. If Charlotte took that recommendation real seriously, then we'd get somewhere.

We're right up against time, but I'd just love to give everyone just like one last opportunity to say one — we're right up against, so like one sentence on if you could see one thing change, either as a result of this report or just kind of generally, you want one thing to change. And it can be as radical or as minor as you like, but just something to change, what would it be.

And I'm just going to go around and do this very, very kind of quickly, just in the interest of time.

Frank, I'm going to start with you. One sentence, what would you change?

MR. BARNES: One sentence — I'll get off mute — one sentence is we would change our notion of how we think about race and racism.

MR. REEVES: Change how we think about — Janeen, I'm going to come to you next.

One thing to change, big or small?

MS. BRYANT: Big, reparations, small, full scale equity audit across all systems.

MR. REEVES: Full scale equity audit and reparations. Thank you.

Ohavia?

MS. PHILLIPS: Oh, my goodness. Retweet Janeen and everybody on this panel. But for me, one thing that I would definitely change is how we engage with our youth, particularly our African American and Latinx youth. That always had my heart and I wish that we would engage with them much differently.

So that's one thing.

MR. REEVES: Thank you.

Kyle? It's going to get harder to find something new to say, but I bet you're going to do it.

MR. KING: It's okay. So from a business perspective, the income goes where the impact flows. So one thing that I would want to change is that companies are only supported when they're actually making real time impact within our communities.

MR. REEVES: Thank you.

George, one thing.

MR. METZ: Yes, I think a reframing of the problem, you know. If there's a value to the free market, it is supply and demand. So when demand becomes equity and equality, then it will be time for the supply. And the companies that reach that first, they're going to win in the marketplace.

MR. REEVES: I love the fact that you've gone to the private sector.

Karen?

MS. SUTTON: One thing that I would love to see is for people to recognize the beauty and the power in diverse opinions and perspectives and just realize that we can all rise together in our course to be reckoned with here in Charlotte, to make Charlotte a better place to live and grow for us all.

MR. REEVES: Thank you.

Tonya?

DR. FARROW-CHESTNUT: Well, as a researcher I would encourage —

MR. REEVES: More research, more research. Is that what you —

DR. FARROW-CHESTNUT: Yeah, more research and be data driven on any policy matters. (Laughter)

MR. REEVES: More research required.

Well, that was a great range of answers.

Camille, did you want to chip anything in before I close this out?

MS. BUSETTE: I just want to say thank you very much to everybody who helped us pull off this project. It was an extraordinary effort and I'm very, very proud of the product that we produced.

MR. REEVES: And because she can't say it, I can say it on everybody else's behalf, what a privilege it's been for all of us to be led by Camille in this project, both at the Brookings main campus, but also kind of engaging locally. I can tell you as a Brookings scholar that she set new record and all kinds of barriers, and really forced me to think about how I do my research.

And so whilst we're thanking everybody else, Camille, I also just want to make sure that, you know, to work alongside you on this project — and I think I speak for everybody else — that you've just — you've been a great leader. And so to thank you for those efforts.

And over to Charlotte, we'd like to stay engaged as much as possible, but those eight comments we just got now are a pretty good start. So let's see where we go.

Thank you to everybody, the hundreds of people who are watching, all your questions, more to see, more to do. Thanks again for joining us.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you.

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