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WEBINAR

BREAKING THE CYCLE:
OVERCOMING CHALLENGES FACED BY BLACK BOYS AND MEN

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. REEVES: Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us. My name is Richard Reeves. I'm a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. I'm delighted so many of you have joined us today for this important event on "Breaking the Cycle: Overcoming Challenges Faced by Black Boys and Men".

Some of you may know that today, November 19th is International Men's Day. This is a day that sometimes becomes the butt of many jokes and with good reason. Sometimes it's described as, as opposed to the other 364 days of the year, which aren't they all days for men. So this issue of whether or not it's appropriate to focus on boys and men is one that remains an important one. One area I think is beyond dispute, which is that when we look at the particular experience for certain men, there is an argument as policymakers and as (inaudible) to looking at the experience of those boys and of those men, and in particularly true with the experience of Black boys and men. In a few minutes, you're going to be hearing from a moderator today and my colleague, Camille Busette. Camille runs our Race, Prosperity, and Inclusion Initiative at Brooking, and from the onset of that initiative, Camille made it clear that one of her focuses is going to be on Black boys and men, of boys and men of color because of the specific disadvantages that they may face, particularly in a U.S. country. Today also marks the launch of some new work out of the Center of Children and Family (inaudible) on the issues faced by boys and men with a particular focus on boys and men of color and boys and men from a less advantaged background.

And so thinking about the ways in which race and gender and class and struggles, they all intersect with each other in order to kind of create different patterns of opportunity, different patterns of inequity that's really at the center of the conversation that I hope we're going to have today. So it's in that spirit that the hashtag today is the #InternationalMensDay, so please so kind of put all your questions in as we go through. I'm going to speak just over a few minutes and highlight some work which was just published at Brookings. It's really put some facts on the ground, which can animate our discussion going forward and then we're going to go into a panel discussion with some exceptional colleagues as well as Camille to discuss that work. I also want to thank a couple of my colleagues at my own center, Sarah Nzau and Ember Smith, who have helped kind of pull this together as well as those who are helping to

put this event together for you behind the scenes, and Trevor and Harold who are kind of helping all of these wheels turn even if you can't see them. So thanks to you, too, for making this possible.

The trouble with sharing facts, which I'm about to do when we're comparing outcomes in terms of education, labor market participation, and so on across different demographic groups is to understand the concepts in which we should see those classes. I think there's a couple of dangers when we share these kinds of empirical findings. The first danger is that there can sometimes be an assumption that we're always going to use a particular group as the benchmark against which everybody else should be judged. So everything is against white men, so wages will always be compared to the wages of white men. Educational outcomes, marriage rate, you name it -- and there's an implicit bias in there towards what could be seen as what's the norm, rather than recognizing the pluralism and diversity of the kinds of life spans that people may have. I think that's an important concern, but at the same time I would argue at least, it is also important to know what those facts are, even if you have to be very careful about the way that we sometimes interpret them.

The second danger with sharing this kind of empirical data is that it can lead to what some would think of as like a deficit based mindset. It's always like what's going wrong, what's the problem, where are the obstacles, where is the bad news -- and it can become kind of very bad news story rather than focusing on the kind of positive aspect of kind of a much more asset based approach. Again, my own view is that when we tend to think of that certainly, policies and programs, as we will over the next hour or so, is that we should have absolutely the kind of, what can we learn from what worked rather than that constant limit. What we don't want to do is to turn a hardheaded look at real inequities into a kind of lament. Instead, it should be an animated process. It should be instead a call to run rather than a call to despair, and it's in that spirit that I'm going to just share a few facts with you today. And please, this is a very brief version of it, but please do check it out on the Brookings site today as well as the work of my colleagues, Camille, Rashawn, that I draw on quite heavily in this work.

So I'm going to share my screen with you now and if someone can just give me a nod that it's coming up okay. You can see it, thank you. And I'm just going to show a few of these key facts.

So the first thing to do is to think about education, where a lot of inequalities in some ways kind of both are expressed by and exacerbated by education difficulty. I should say that throughout these few slides I'm going to share, the comparison groups here are going to be Black men, Black women, white men, and white women. Needless to say, there are many, many, other groups of society and the full data are available, but just for the purposes of sharpening this conversation, I'm kind of focused on that kind of full demographic group. So we can see specifically how these kind of different interactions between race and gender kind of play out across Black men and women.

So what you'll see in these slides is the race gap in many areas, but also how that race gap kind of differs or a more nuance. So here it's kind of straightforward. You'll see this gradient quite a lot as we go here. We can focus for example on the middle of a bachelor's degree. This is the proportion of young Americans, so in their late 20s, 25 to 29. You have different levels of educational attainment, so you can see that they're often very different gaps of significant gaps here by race. So it's really a big part of the story here. But then as you move up the education distribution, you can also see gaps breaking up by gender. So at master's degree level, for example, where of course you see many, many, much lower -- you actually see Black women roughly getting the same number of master's degrees as white men and many less than white women, and Black men being significantly less likely to do so. But you can see a very big race gap at bachelor's degree level, for example. So you see again, right at the outset here, we can see the differences that are kind of playing out in terms of education.

This is a space that draws on opportunity insights led by Raj Chetty. And this got a lot of attention when it was published, released in a New York Times accompanying piece. And what this piece did was it looked at those who were raised in the poorest households, relatively speaking, more than 20%, and then where they ended up as adults themselves, but interestingly focusing on individual income. And so what you're seeing here is the outcomes for those of different demographic groups, conditioned on having been raised in these low income households, but as individuals, as adults. And what you can see is that the chances of Black men, so there were Black boys growing up in poor households, remaining in this quintile as adults themselves measured by individual income is 38%, 7%

rising to the top. You see then followed by white women, 30% top and 20% for Black women. So the story here of actually this upward mobility story, at least out of poverty, you can see there were similar levels in terms of going all the way to the top, differed quite significantly, not only by race, but also by gender as measured by individual income. It's a very important carryout at the individual income point, that's why I'm highlighting it. Because this does not translate, it's important to say, into higher levels of household income, necessarily, for Black women because there are differences in the chances to merge incomes within a household and also because to the extent that marriage is taking place within racial categories, the relatively weak economic performance of Black men has a significant impact on the household income of Black women. So they're separated in this chart, but of course we can't treat them separately in real life. But it does show this very, very stark difference in the upward mobility chances of Black boys in particular.

So the looking at the well-known earning's chart, which is long-term looking at earnings and this is the full-time workers both hourly and non-hourly in dollars since '79 and you know, the big part of the story here of course is the one that we know well, which is that white men are out-earning pretty much everybody else in the labor market. We know that. But there's a couple of things to point out here, which is that you see much slower growth for Black men than for white men. You've seen quite significant growth for Black women, but not as fast as for white women. And in fact, white women have overtaken Black men, and so white women are now earning nontrivial amount more than Black men, having overtaken them at some point in the 1990s. And so again, I think what we're seeing here is there is much slower growth for Black men and Black women, but the result of that has been to really pull out the incomes, the earnings of white women in particular, while white men still do well. And if you remember the loss chart, if you then think about how these incomes may or may not be combined, that has a pretty big impact on household economic inequality as well.

One labor market story, I know of market stories, there's this Black man here, we're just comparing with just Black men and white men because there's been such a big fear in overall labor force participation among women and the Black women have always had pretty high levels of labor force

participation by comparison to other groups. So this just shows you what we already know, which is that there's been a drop in labor force participation among men in general, but if anything, that's focusing somewhat sharp among Black men and that there remains a very significant gap between them.

This is more recent data that Amber and Sarah have kind of pulled together from CPS, which I see just a very kind of snapshot look at what's happened to these different -- these four different groups during the COVID pandemic, and you can sort of see the sort of starting point here in terms of the unemployment rate. So here, we're looking at the unemployment rate, and you're seeing well established fact is that whatever the unemployment rate, it's always twice as high for Black Americans than it is for white Americans, both men and women. And so you're seeing here that that's kind of before we came into COVID. COVID hit, so there's a massive increase in unemployment of course for everybody, and then it starts to come down again. But interestingly, it comes down much faster for white men and white women than it does for Black men and Black women, so this stickiness of the labor market effects of COVID is absolutely not race blind, and you're seeing that right here. This is one point where it is worth pointing out that, that trend is even sharper for Hispanic Americans if they were on the chart as well.

Life expectancy is a very good measure of any number of aggregate effects, economic, social, and health. So it's used very often as a kind of proxy for quality of life. It's well known, women live longer than men. That's true in every country in the world. There's a gender gap in life expectancy, but also what we're seeing is a quite significant gap in -- by race as well and so it is true that women live longer than men, and that's true for Black women and white women, but white women do somewhat better than Black women and both do significantly better than men. But interestingly, white men really outperform, if I can use that phrase, Black men in terms of life expectancy on a couple of measures. And here, I think it is important to think hard about the measures of life expectancy.

Very often, life expectancy measures at just one step, and sometimes they're at different ages. And so what this chart shows you is what is the life expectancy at birth, and then what is the life expectancy conditional on reaching age 65? And the reason we've done it that way is actually to kind of tease out two different effects. So you can see that there is this gap in life expectancy, and here I'm

focusing particularly on the difference in Black men and white men. I think it's going to -- I think that's really where the action is in this chart, and then kind of in particular, just seeing these gaps here at birth. And so you're seeing a really significant gap between the chances of -- the life expectancies of Black men and white men, but a lot of that is explained by the differential chances of getting to age 65. So long story short, a big part, the reason why the life expectancy of Black men is so is because they're so much more likely to die younger than other groups. And that speaks to a very, very specific inequality that is not shared by other groups. If you look at the difference between white men, Black women, white women -- yes there are differences, but you really don't see this sharp distinction unless you look at the life expectancy for Black men conditioned on not making it to 65.

Work that I've done with Sarah Reber and Tiffany Ford, whose research analysists at the Ruben Center and our center, age adjusts the death rate from COVID. I've been banging this drum for a long time now, so I'll bang it a little bit more, which is so many of the COVID death rates that you're likely reading in the press do not adjust the age properly. If you adjust the age properly, then you'd see very, very stark race differences in the death rate risks from COVID-19, and especially for Black men and then followed by Black women, so that is a very, very striking difference that we see there. And then last, perhaps best known, but not least, and in some ways, it kind of predict the aggregation and expression of what's his earning inequalities, of course is because the issue of incarceration and the hugely different risks that Black men in the United States, it's a cultural state anyway. The gray wastes of the American cultural state to use kind of anti-cultural disparity. It's really, those gray wastes are dominated by Black men. Again, we kind of know this, but the important way to sharpen the point is to look as we do here at what proportion of those in the present population are in these different groups, Black men, white men, Black women, and white women, and then what proportion of the overall adult population is accounted for by those groups, too. So this is a way of seeing the extent to which certain groups are over or underrepresented in the prison population given the share of the population that they account for.

What's very striking about this is less, I think, the gender story, which is well known, that whilst there are obviously women who are in prison, the vast majority of those who are imprisoned are

men, but actually the proportion of prisoners who are white men is not that different to the proportion of the population who are white men. And so the overrepresentation story is all overhead in terms of Black men, and I'll just say that's something that kind of both reflects and kind of predicts all kinds of other inequalities. And so I'll stop sharing my slides at that point and just conclude by saying, I think this is the kind of evidence that should lead us to think hard about what the facts are that we need to confront as we think about policy, specifically for Black boys and Black men. I think we have to think not only about not just about racism, anti-Black racism, and not only about anti-Black racism but anti kind of particular groups of the Black population, and in particular Black boys and men. The work that Camille led as I was (inaudible) on social capital in Charlotte described an aggressive disinvestment in Charlotte Mecklenburg in Black boys. That's an example of this challenge we face, and to me this speaks to the need for an intersectional approach, intersectionality and properly, it's all about the need to think about the different kinds of patents of inequality. And I think when it comes to the issues of race in particular and the specific experience of Black boys and men, thinking intersectionally is not a luxury. It's absolutely a necessity and it leads us to actually some more complex conclusions than some of the general narratives around inequality might lead us to. But there's lots of reasons to hope, but I think before we can be hopeful, especially as we end this new moment, transition of government, etc., a moment of profound racial reckoning, then I think it is a good time also for us to take this kind of specifically gendered lens of the way we look at racial inequity and the rest. With that, I'll stop and I'll hand it to my colleague, Camille Busette, that I've mentioned before is the director of the Race, Prosperity, and Inclusion Initiative and the senior fellow in Governance Studies here at Brookings. So Camille, over to you.

MS. BUSETTE: Well, thank you. Richard, that was a fantastic summation I think, of all the data that we have seen that shows the disproportionate impacts of racism on Black men in America. And I think as everybody can tell, you know, we have been in a crisis for a long time and I just want to applaud you Richard, for years of focus on Black men and on the condition of Black men. And I think we are now, as you mentioned, at a point particularly with the change in the administration, of having an opportunity to really understand how to address the dynamics that you, you know, that are implicated in

the data that you shared with us. So we're going to move into a panel discussion and we're going to be joined by two colleagues. I'm going to introduce Dr. Sean Joe, who's the Benjamin E. Youngdahl professor of Social Development and the director of the Race and Opportunity Lab at Washington University in St. Louis, and then of course my colleague, Dr. Rashawn Ray, who's a David Rubenstein fellow here in the Governance Studies program at Brookings and is also a professor of Sociology and the director of the Lab for Applied Social Science Research at the University of Maryland College Park. So welcome, gentleman. Great to have you both here.

I wanted to start off our discussion delving a little bit more deeply. You know, both of you are sociologists and have really worked on what the various distinctions are between Black men and Black women, and this intersectionality that Richard is talking about. And so I wanted to spend a little bit of time explaining to our audience why we want to focus on Black men in particular and what is unique about their situation in the U.S. apart from the descriptive statistics that we just saw that Richard provided. And Richard, of course you will be a part of this discussion. So I'm going to start with Rashawn and then move on to Sean and then Richard, on that topic.

MR. RAY: Well Camille, thank you. It's always just great to be with you. Richard, great job with giving an overview of what is really going on, and then Sean, I really look forward to your comments as well. Camille, I think the bottom line is that when Richard mentioned intersectionality and an intersectionality framework, which does have its lineage and its roots in Black feminism. It's important to note the way that it can be applied to different groups, particularly when we highlight Black men. And part of what people have to understand is that we can't simply look at race in a vacuum, nor can we simply look at gender in a vacuum. Instead, what has to happen is that race and gender, because we all have race, gender, and class identifies as well as sexual identities, that they come together to not simply be additive, but they end up being multiplicative. And part of what that means is that you can have people in the same exact setting, and they have divergently different experiences in the exact same setting, like neighborhoods, for example. So a lot of work that I've looked at has looked at what are the different experiences of people when they are in predominantly white versus predominantly Black, and

then racially integrated neighborhoods.

And one thing that collectively this work highlights, is the role that structural conditions play in people's lives. Segregation, and we kind of continue that. We currently have a 21st century redlining in effect. I mean, during COVID, if people didn't realize that beforehand, they definitely do now as it relates to the outcomes that Richard just highlighted with the COVID disparities. It's not simply about Black people being two to three times more likely to die from COVID, but it is also the impact that it's having on Black men acutely. And part of what that has to do with is the type of jobs that Black men tend to be in or the fact that Black men aren't even in the labor force to begin with.

But one thing we know about employment is that Black men are overrepresented in the bottom 15 occupations, meaning occupations that have the best salary, that have kind of the best opportunities for growth, also come with the best resources, the least exposure to certain types of toxins and other sorts of things, they are overrepresented in the worst 15 occupations for men, and they are underrepresented in the top 15 occupations for men. This partly has to do with income, but it also has to do with the available jobs that are embedded in local neighborhoods that then spills over into healthcare. We know that people's healthcare is still intrinsically tied to their employment, and if you're less likely to be employed or if you're more likely to be underemployed, part of what that means is that your healthcare is going to also suffer, not just when it comes to healthcare utilization, but also healthcare access.

And the final thing I'll say on this point is when we start talking about policing and criminalization, because that's one of the big things to highlight. That's one of the spaces were, we see some of the most disparities between Black men and other groups including white men. There are a few structural components that people need to bear in mind. The first big one deals with exposure to policing. We know that Black men live in neighborhoods that are over policed and underserved, so part of what that means is they are overly profiled, but then when they need assistance, that 911 response slower or sends police when they actually need ambulatory services or mental health specialists.

Part of what this has led to is two quick things. First, that Black people are 3.5 times more likely than whites to be killed by police when they're not attacking or have a weapon. Every one out

of 1000 Black men can expect to die due to police violence in their lifetime. And some of the work that I've done with some of Sean's colleagues, Dr. Hedy Lee and Dr. Keon Gilbert, and others, part of what this collective research has shown is the impact that policing has particularly around drugs. We have to be very clear that the 1986 Drug Bill, people always harp on the 1994 Crime Bill, but the 1986 Drug Bill underrated, created disparate outcomes for Black men versus other groups, even when we control for the likelihood of being stopped, being frisked, and being arrested, research overwhelmingly shows that Black men are less likely to be doing something criminal at the time that they're stopped. But because so many of them are being stopped repeatedly, it increases the likelihood that they might end up being arrested for something.

MS. BUSETTE: Okay, well that was very sobering. Thank you very much, Rashawn, and certainly a lot, a wealth of information for us to delve into as we continue this discussion. Sean, I wanted to get your thoughts on why you think being a Black man in America is a unique situation.

MR. JOE: Interesting enough, I just want to thank you all. I think this is a very important conversation. I'm happy to be a part of this, so I thank you all. You know, I thought where to begin, and I appreciate where Rashawn has framed this. So I want to go back a little bit. You know, August Wilson playwright has once said that Black men are the commodity of flesh and muscle, which has lost its value in American marketplace. Like we're a leftover of history. The idea there is that Black males are any viable age male who are not engaged in American economic system and fully getting the experience where they're able to achieve the American dream. If you don't have these males engaged, your whole ecosystem is impacted. So one of the main things to understand here is that our urban centers in particularly feel this, that if Black male economic mobility is not part of their strategy, they will always be limited in their growth. They'll always be limited in their social situation, circumstances, health, and they'll be strapped with a lot of the social ills that we see today.

So the Black male experience is directly, always been directly tied to the urban center experience and the American experience. So it matters how well this population is doing. So I just wanted to make that point. What the other thing that's very unique, and I think the intersectionality brings

this out, is that in this American cast system, right, this system of structure that deems one group higher than the other, that looks at skin color and all these characteristics to then be able to pigeon hole, to control, and to direct that cast system, as Isabel Wilkerson says, that level of a system then dehumanizes Black male labor, does not engage them, or even value it.

So what we're stuck with right now is that one of the things I look at is premature death. One of my areas of expertise is suicide. And it really gets to the point at this, is that Black males die younger than Black females, right? They both have super exposure to some of the same threats. In fact, Black females have a triple threat of marginalization, right? But still in almost every age group, Black males account for 60% to 80% to 90% of all suicides. So they're not having the same experience with the American society, and it really points to that very different experience. Even Black children, who are under the age of 12 who now have higher rates of suicide than white children, breathe that in for a second, they also have higher rates, males have higher rates of suicide. So again, the experience in America has always been very gendered. It's always treated Black males in a more marginalized or dehumanizing way, and that has consequences for the things that Richard is highlighting in the data that he presents, but also has consequences for the ability for our urban centers and for the nation to truly have a very more robust economic health and robust social health in our country. So those are some of the differences.

MS. BUSETTE: Great. Thank you very much. Richard, do you want to add to that?

MR. REEVES: Yes, I'd love to. It was great to hear those perspectives. Thank you. Just to think about this from a horribly abstract point of view to start with. If you just look at the data and you have to kind of like, this is philosophers talk about a veil of ignorance, so you have to decide where you're going to be in the society without knowing who you're going to be, right? If you knew -- let's say you knew one thing about yourself and you knew that you were going to be male, right? And then the next is going to be what race are you going to be, right? So say you don't have any choice about your gender but then, and this is a kind of crazy thought from, you can choose your race, if you're white and what you're measuring is those sort of outcomes you know, in some form of experience, pretty clear

which way you'd go. It's not so clear if you're Black. It seems to be perfectly probable, but based on the descriptive basis that's there, if you knew your race but you got to choose your gender, it is not quite clear to me just on a purely kind of full experiment rational way, that you would go male. And I think what that speaks to is this point about intersectional. We talk about institutional racism, I mean, increasingly about institutional sexism. But the way I interpret the data, but also just some of the broader politics of it is that Black men in America face institutional sexism. They also face institutional racism, but they face institutional sexism in the education system, in the labor market, in the criminal justice system. And by that, what I mean is that because they're Black, they're treated differently as men. And so we've got to think about it, and it's the combination of institutional racism, institutional sexism, and to be able to say that Black men face institutional sexism, right? That they are treated differently than a Black woman would be under those same -- because that's a difficult thing to get our heads around, but very important in this debate, I think, but we're able to do that.

And that last thing is this, how we think about the notion of the patriarchy. We have this idea of patriarchy now, which I think has become a little bit too simplistic and it's just kind of men dominating women. But actually, historically the definition of patriarchy is being about a certain group of men, particularly a small group of men, dominating everybody else including the men. And so patriarchy is not a men over women, at least it wasn't. It's actually a kind of, a group of men to have a particularly privileged position who dominate everybody else. And I think that actually we need to start thinking about the idea of patriarchy in a much more racialized way, too, if we're going to make progress.

MS. BUSETTE: Excellent points. Excellent points. Thank you all for that. Now, I want to talk a little bit about the -- all of the facts and statistics and experiences that we've been discussing here and really focus now on the longitudinal picture. And what I mean by that is you know, as Richard showed in many of his charts for literally decades, there has been a huge gap between the outcomes of Black men and others, and those gaps have rarely narrowed and often increased over time. And that is happening at the -- simultaneously with lots and lots of programmatic approaches and monies and programs that seek to really focus on advancing the fortunes of Black boys and Black men. And so now

what I want you to do, and you know, of course, most recent of which and probably most renowned of which is My Brother's Keeper, but they're just lots and lots of programs like that. So, what I want us now to do is think a little bit and talk a little bit more critically about you know, given where we know Black men stand in this society, the kind of sexism and racism that they are dealing with, why -- what are the kinds of approaches that we think will actually yield advances? And why is it that this plethora of programs and attention over decades has not really narrowed the gap in outcomes and in some cases, we see an increase in that gap? So I'm going to start with you, Sean, then move on to Richard, and then Rashawn.

MR. JOE: Thank you. Excellent point, Camille. So let me highlight a few things, and Richard, I want to go back to what you were saying. So I do, and I think many people would understand this, that there is a sexism related to men in terms of -- we have a cultural norm around males. One, males, you cannot ask for help. Males, and in case if you need help, we have a problem if you need help. Like, we have very few policies that say if men need help, and even men with children what would we do to support them? We say you have to go get a job. We don't care how you get it. We don't care how much it is, but we're not here to support you. And those sort of things are experienced by Black males as well, and in fact, you know, if you look at particularly child custodies related issues, these men are disproportionately less likely to get their voices heard, less likely to be able to make an argument for their children, less likely to have their children and have time with their children, and particularly even though Black men are more likely in noncustodial situations want to be involved with their children's lives and spend more time in their children's lives than white males. But that brings up the point that being male in our society has always had that stigma and those different set of straight jacket expectations that limit our ability to help them, but also limit their ability to ask for help when they need help, psychologically, and even economically. So that has an impact on us.

But let me go back to your bigger question. Part of the challenge with a lot of this work is first of all, how it's experienced in our urban cores, and that's where most of my work as a social worker, that's where I get in. We say, how does a person fit into their environment, and for us to understand how to make that environment better and for them to yield better outcomes. So take St. Louis where most of

my work is happening. All of these things happen or are experienced in a home-grown way, whether it's Baltimore, New York where I grew up, or St. Louis or Chicago, they're experienced in a very home grown way, which means those regions create the level of Black male outcomes that they experience, so thus, the solutions have to be thought about in a home grown way. Two, you have to be longitudinal. A lot of what we've been dealing with over the last 50, 80 years, is about progress, not transformational change. So we've had smaller groups of successes that we can highlight. Key programs, alright, but we have never fully cultivated an interest in Black boys and young men. Let me say boys, because nobody wants to talk about them as children, just men. But anyway, we'll get back to that. I think Rashawn understands that point too, that we have to focus now on a longitudinal strategy.

These five-year, four-year, expecting to change what this country has done in over hundreds of years, we want to change in five years and with dollars that amount to 5 million and 2 million. This is something that all in the region must get on board on and then invest. This takes time. So at St. Louis, we went from, in 1980 where Black males 18 to 29 earned about 30,000 dollars a year, median personal income. You know what they earn now? About 11,000 a year. So over 40 years, things have gotten worse. The reason it's getting worse is because -- and that doesn't mean innovative things are not happening on the ground. We have excellent different initiatives, community-based organizations, strategies, My Brother's Keeper which is what I would run out here. None of those things will make a difference in terms of population level outcomes if you don't try to be intentional about bringing about population change. What does that mean? You change the systems that help them to heal and grow. That includes schools. You have to do a better job at how those systems are functioned and how do you support innovation in those systems. Then you must have the capacity as a region to be able to guide that work strategically and then to do data driven specific investment in terms of things that work.

It's like a region -- it's like having a chamber of commerce around Black male economic development. If you don't put the systems in place, you are getting exactly what the system is designed to do. So right now, our outcomes are what we are designed to do, and there's no way to wish ourselves out of it. We must be as intentional in policy, structure, and the use of information.

MS. BUSSETTE: Thanks, Sean. Richard?

MR. REEVES: I think it's a great and very challenging question, Camille. And I would answer it by saying that the reason why many of the programs and investments haven't worked as well as we would have liked thus far is because this is a much deeper issue. This is something that I think really is quire embedded in our culture and other institutions. And I think that if I could say it, you know, if I had to simplify horribly, it is because Black boys and Black men are isolated in American society. And I'm using that as a verb, not just as an adjective. They are actually isolated because Black boys and Black men are seen as threatening by predominantly white institutions, even if those institutions have many women in them, like education institutions. There is something very specific about the way that institutions look at Black boys and Black men. And the danger is that even as we have -- we drive towards more racial equality and racial justice, lots of institutions will actually be much more comfortable embracing Black women than they will embracing Black men because Black men are seen as much more threatening at a very, very deep level. And so of course, there's lots of things we can do as far as the quality of wealth distribution and investments in the right kind of education tracks and so on, but as even the work you led Camille in Charlotte recently kind of showed, the number of men, the Black men, it's a certain number of people that Black men say they can turn to if they want. And so this issue of kind of just being specifically isolated from the institutions of support, and that can only rest I think on this culmination of racism and sexism that Black boys and men uniquely face. I'm saying that deliberately, uniquely face in American society. And until we can make some moves around that, this institutional rejection of Black boys and men, then I think all the money in the world won't actually solve the problem.

MS. BUSETTE: Okay, thank you, Richard. Rashawn?

MR. RAY: Yes, I'll just double down on these great points. When we look at what it means to be included in social life, working, participating in civic activities, research documents and Keon Gilbert mentions this a lot, that 1.5 million Black men are missing from social life. They're not in employment, they don't have anything going on with healthcare, and this is even including the fact -- like there's some things that we don't always focus on that people don't expect. For example, Black men

actually have a higher likelihood of joining the military, right, showing their favorability toward service. Black men are also more likely, and I think Sean and Richard alluded to this, they are also more likely to participate in the household as fathers relative to white men. They are more, when they have kids under five, they are more likely to bathe them, they are more likely to feed them, they are more likely to spend time with them. When they have teenagers whether custodial or noncustodial, they are more likely to do homework with them, pick them up, take them to things. These are statistics that people don't readily focus on. So we have to ask ourselves, how does a group of people who participate in the role that we expect them to with all of the social services and judicial challenges that we heard earlier, the fact that when Black men go to court to try to get custody or make arrangements for their children, the barriers put in place are extreme. They are astronomical. Just one example, I did not want to give a pop culture reference, but I think it's relevant here. Chris Rock, who I think most people know, comedian, wealthy, lives in New York. He said that when he was going to get shared custody for his children, he said he purchased a home a mile down the road from the house that he was currently paying for where his children and ex-wife were living. And he said the judge railed him like where is the house? Do you have a bed in the home? How do we know that you're going to be on time to pick them up? And he was like, what? These are the questions? This is where we're starting at? And so the logic oftentimes becomes that men don't get custody of their kids because they don't have the money or the resources. When you are actually in custodial court, you see different things playing out. Now, being fair, we know that women are much more likely to do the second shift, do the caregiving, and that sort of thing. That's definitely true and everyone needs to know that on International Men's Day. That's part of why this day happens. But we have to realize the racial disparities.

Part of what we're hearing is that we have to take a life course, comprehensive, and corrective approach. Part of the corrective approach means that we have to realize that if we only start with programs from here to the future, we have things that have happened in the past that we haven't corrected for that we've been hearing about. Part of taking the comprehensive approach means you can't only focus on healthcare or the economy or neighborhoods. You have to focus on them all collectively.

And part of thinking about the life course is that there are challenges that Black boys face that elderly Black men may or may not face, but then experience new challenges older in life, particularly around coping, particularly as it relates to healthcare utilization. So it's a couple of things I want to mention.

First, Sean mentioned some great programs. In St. Louis, there is a Black barber shop study there that's phenomenal. There's one in Maryland. There's several around the country that are simply phenomenal to meet people where they are. That's one thing. We also know that there are other sorts of programs, for example, like reentry programs. I think that is a really big space that needs to be filled. One thing that's happened is there is currently bipartisan support for helping people reenter society as returning citizens. There is bipartisan support for it. We have, you know, we're building a working group out to focus on these particular issues. The reason why that's significant is because there are investments at the federal, state, and local level to deal with this. However, we have to ensure that there are employment opportunities and that people can get trained. One thing that Richard mentioned, when I was -- that -- he mentioned about certain occupations, health and education. These two occupations have a lot of vacancies, but Black men are the least likely group to be in t hose spaces. And a lot of it does have to do with criminalization and threat, the fact that people are literally worried about Black men taking care of them and also of teaching their children. This is something cultural that we really have to get past because what research documents is that Black teachers and Black healthcare providers, particularly Black men as role models, helped to almost singlehandedly alter some of the outcomes that we're talking about. And so we really need to focus on reentry programs. We need to focus on employment, and we also need to double down on entrepreneurship programs and investments in local communities.

MS. BUSETTE: Great. Thank you all. I mean all three of you have just you know, offered some really interesting observations and some proposals. What I want to turn to now is thinking through the origins or the genesis of the kinds of outcomes that we're seeing, and part of it has to do with this deep-seated distrust of Black men, and part of it has to do with an actual, a very deliberate sort of isolation of Black boys and Black men in society. So given all that, I want to ask you two related

questions. The first is, what are the best types of public policies that we could be pursuing that might change these outcomes over time? And number two, I want to celebrate Black men, Black men in my life as my colleagues and my family members, etc. How can we involve Black men themselves in creating and championing these public policies? So I am going to start with Rashawn, then I'm going to move to Sean, and then Richard.

MR. RAY: Camille, you have the best questions. These are loaded questions. I was hoping to go last again.

MS. BUSETTE: (laughter) No rest.

MR. RAY: So when I think about the public policies, I try to highlight a couple. I think the biggest thing is about not just representation, but inclusion. People have been hearing a lot about diversity, equity, and inclusion. It's not simply about being included. It's also -- I mean it's not simply about equity, it's also about inclusion. Who is sitting at the table to make the decisions? John Lewis always talked about this, him and Shirley Chisholm, about how it's not about just being at the table after you get there, but it's having the ability to actually purchase the groceries and then help prepare the meal that goes on the table. If we use that symbolism to think about policy, that's where the gaps have been, that for too long people have been making decisions about Black people and Black men without having our input at the table, and that is something that I think in this next administration, in the Biden-Harris administration, based on transition picks and other decisions that have been made, that's going to be front and center and that's going to be comprehensive throughout their administration.

I'm going to double down again on focusing on criminal justice reform, because I think when we look at -- Now there are huge disparities in mortality. There are huge disparities in education. But when we look at incarceration, that's one of the places where we see the starkest disparity, particularly even between Black men and white men, and we can trace its origins. Like people know that it has to do with the Drug Bill in 1986. People know that it has to do with the Crime Bill in 1994 and mass incarceration. So given that we have bipartisan support there, I think it's a lot of momentum to double down on vocational and technical training for the occupations where there are gaps. We talked about

education. We talked about healthcare. We could even look at tech jobs. This is the wave of the future, and Black men are far behind in being trained for these types of occupations. And so part of that means that when people are in prison, when people are incarcerated, also when Black males get put in diversion programs, their diversion programs should include vocational, tech, and healthcare training to prepare them for occupations. And then more importantly, it's not just preparing them for occupations -- we need to set up a pipeline that gets them into those occupations, that literally provides funding to create occupations specifically for them as the corrective of the past.

And then finally when it comes to celebrating them, I mean look, I think that there are so many things that Black people and in this case, Black men, overcome every single day that people don't readily know. Personally, one thing that I'll say is when a lot of the stuff that's happened in 2020 and over the years since I have you know, studied these issues, and I have conversations with colleagues and oftentimes white male colleagues. And I make a statement to them about the role that racism plays and what it means to overcome that. I say you know, oftentimes I will have conversations with the people who collect my trash and the men, mostly Black men who collect my trash, take water to them and other things out the house. Why do I do that? Well, I hope I think I'm just a nice person, but it's also deeper than that. It's also the fact that I realize that my life is linked more to theirs than it is to my colleagues in the offices next door to me. And I think that when people have overcome things, it becomes so normative that we make assumptions to not celebrate that. And there are so many people like a person who I've studied and worked with, Chris Robinson, who is a returning citizen who is now a single father taking care of his daughter and who has worked at the same place for 20 years. He's just wanting to live his life, but you know the unfortunate reality? He's stopped by police every month of his life. In the past 10 years, he's been stopped over 100 times. So part of the celebration actually, is the fact that Black men have been able to overcome continuous forms of systemic racism and still be able to put a smile on their face when they look at their kids, when they walk into work to see their colleagues, and they still try to go to the polls. They still try to take care of themselves, and we don't celebrate those small things enough because the structural elements that try to prevent them from doing that literally create barriers to their happiness and

it's something we need to celebrate, and we don't talk about it enough.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you, Rashawn. Sean?

MR. JOE: I'm just going to pick up. So, our approach is a home-grown strategy is what really needs to happen where you're doing this over 10 to 20 years, that you have to create the will to value Black males and invest in Black male boys to young men, and you have to prioritize those age groups that I think we often don't spend a lot of time valuing, that's those between the ages of 12 to 29. And those are the age groups that's often represented in some of the data that Richard has presented. So once you move towards cultivating that level of will and put it in the context of some data, I think I just pulled from Richard and your team, that as the American middle class is now more diverse, right, that it used to be 84% or 80 something percent white, now it's 50 something percent white. It raises a question. Did the pie increase and are we sharing more? Because at the root of all of that is the fear, the fear that feeds the dehumanizing system that we've been talking about and structures that doesn't allow all of us to benefit from what America has to offer and marginalizes Black male economic mobility. I think it is a focus on economic mobility, but in order to do that, it gives you a very clear outcome and you have to help them heal from their trauma, from their experiences, grow, match it to the skills, the skillsets they need to have, pay them a livable wage. That means I think jobs as the central linchpin to this. A job that provides for themselves and their families. If you don't do those things, then you're back here decades after decades with the same conversation. So I think one, you cultivate the interest, the will, showing people that you're not disconnected.

COVID reminded us that you're not disconnected. If you live in that very wealthy part of Ladue, Missouri that we know, but you're only you know less than two miles away from other areas that you, you know, are Black areas, you're tied together. So we make the argument that the economic and social health of every region is dependent on what happens with Black males. The ability to attract companies to your region is dependent on what's happening with Black males. So if we invest upfront over time and personalize the support as Black males go from adolescents to young adulthood, that investment, you will reap way beyond what you think you're investing, and you have to move forward with

those sort of strategies. Population level, we know it's only 60,000 in St. Louis. You got to know what your population level, the size of your population, and what's necessary to move them. This is no longer a piece meal strategy that will produce transformational change. Otherwise, you'll get progress, which is not bad, but I'm looking for transformation.

MS. BUSETTE: Great. Thank you very much, Sean. Richard?

MR. REEVES: Well, I think the first thing I would say is something very boring, which is knowing more just in terms of data. I think the influence of some of the work from Raj Chetty on mobility has been hugely influential. I spent a lot -- one of the reasons I'm interested in this work is because I'm very interested in the issue intergenerational mobility. Not so great in the U.S. Turns out not too bad for white, and actually allowing for a certain amount of time not too bad for recent immigrants. Why is it so bad? It's because it's very bad for Black Americans. It turns out it's particularly bad for Black boys. And so, it's one of these things that at every degree of magnification, you come to realize that the issue of mobility is intergeneration questions. It's highly racialized, but it's also bad. And I think it's no exaggeration to say that if we're serious about improving overall mobility in the U.S., we can't do that unless we improve outcomes for Black boys, period. We just can't. It's actually mathematically impossible, I believe, to seriously change that.

So what does that mean? I led this whole list of things that I just want to underline everything we've heard. But I love this idea of being much more intentional about Black men and Black boys into particular professions, especially the caring professions. Also like on the heal jobs in place of the stem ones, and you know, health education, administration, and so on. And I think it's a strong case for scholarships and incentives to get many more Black men and Black male teachers. Rashawn's already said this. I think this is huge. The only other thing probably is worth saying, and I think it spills on Sean's point, that it turns out the boys are much more sensitive to their environment growing up than girls are on average. Their family environment, but also the place, right, the structure of neighborhoods, the opportunities in neighborhoods, right? There's this old saying in psychology between all kids and dandelions, right? All kids need lots of care to grow and dandelions grow everywhere. And it turns out

that boys are a bit more (inaudible). They actually are more sensitive to economic instability, social instability, concentrated poverty. Those all have a disproportionate effect on boys, and because so many of those boys are Black in those areas of concentrated poverty, what that means is an effective play space in policy turns out to be I believe, very important for improving the outcomes for Black boys. And so I'd focus on that and obviously education, especially community policies. But to do a lot of the heavy lifting for us where the quite dropout rate after a year of community college are very striking in typical Black boys, and meanwhile, the for-profit sector and a huge drop in many votes have spoken very badly. And so that postsecondary transition, I think really, as some of the charts that I think showed, that's really where you see a lot of these gaps kind of opening up. It's between those ages of like 15 and 21. It's like that -- that's where a lot of children get derailed and especially Black boys. If you can't get that bit right, then it's going to be a struggle on every other stage of the life cycle.

MS. BUSETTE: Okay, great. Thank you very much, Richard. So we have about six minutes left in the program and I'm going to do a couple of things. First is, we've had a number of questions that have come through and many of them have been already answered as part of the conversation, but there are a couple that haven't been and so I'm going to just pose those here. So the first is a question around mentoring. And I'm going to paraphrase this, but essentially, the question is about what are some of the best practices for mentoring and for all, you know, in general, but particularly for Black boys, and what are some of the outcomes that we see when we see good practices, the best practices applied there? That's number one. And then number two is a question around reparations and the role of reparations, policies, or programs, or approaches in addressing some of the outcomes that Richard set out at the beginning and that all of us have elucidated throughout this conversation. So I'm going to throw it open. Anybody can answer. Just unmute yourself and then after that, I have one final question for each of you in the lightening round and then we'll be done. So whoever wants to go. Rashawn.

MR. RAY: I'll just quickly say on the two points. On the mentoring part, I'm pretty sure Sean has a lot to say about this, too. But some of the work I've done on mentoring suggests that you

need four qualities that mentors have to be positive, academic is the second. That doesn't always mean they have to have gotten a Ph.D. or whatever, but that they consider academics to be important. So positive academic, accessible, invisible. So oftentimes, the accessibility part is one of the things that's lacking, is that Black boys see someone who's successful, but they can't readily touch them and hold onto them. Part of that goes back to the structural conditions we talked in segregation, it's one of the things that I call the Black brain drain. For oftentimes for Black people to be successful, I really don't think people realize how bad and deleterious certain neighborhoods are, like some of the ones that Sean was talking about at the Delmar Divide in St. Louis, or in North Memphis where I happen to go to college, or the west side of Baltimore that in order to do certain things you have to leave those spaces. So that's the first thing, the four components.

When it comes to reparations, Andre Perry and I have done a lot of work on this. Sandy Darity and others have done a lot of work on this. What I've come to the conclusion about is that the only way to deal with systemic racism in America is for reparations to happen, is to provide restitution for the centuries of the way the systemic racism has operated in our country, and I think that potentially definitely in the House of Representatives in 2021 or 2022, I would expect for something to be passed, if not sooner. And then, of course that would mean in the Senate. But HR40 as well as Barbara Lee's Truth and Reconciliation Bill are definitely gaining momentum.

MS. BUSETTE: Great. Thanks Rashawn. Richard or Sean. Okay, Sean go ahead.

MR. JOE: So in terms of mentoring, good work out there, mentors and national organizations, the fraternities do a lot of things, Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri, Boys and Girls Club, great things. However, there has to be a shift. Some still enter mentoring as saviors and I say, you're not going to be saviors. I'm a Christian. I believe there's only one savior. But you have to move toward sponsorship, and that's the thing with Black boys. Put your reputation and social network on the life to sponsor them into opportunities. And I think if you don't take that tact, then you wouldn't have the right mentoring ecosystem. And then third, you must provide I think innovate policy block grant type strategies for community innovations around some of these key pivotal resources, whether it's

mentoring, whether it's schools, whether it's how to do better personal safety strategies that better impact Black males, right? You have to shift that lens. So I just want to make that point.

MS. BUSETTE: Great, thanks Sean. And Richard did you want to?

MR. REEVES: I'll pause and let -- because I want to hear your other question as well and then maybe I'll have my own.

MS. BUSETTE: Okay, so my question is: the Biden administration has called you. What is the one policy they need to pursue to improve things for Black boys and Black men in the U.S. during their term? Richard?

MR. REEVES: I'm only allowed one, right, so I have to do criminal justice reform. But if I was allowed to, I would definitely go for place based policy next and just while I'm speaking because I may run out of time, reparations, particularly I think at a local level I think is where the action is going to be. And the only thing I'd add to the pool on mentoring, which I think is implicit in what Rashawn is saying, is durable, last thing. I think the evidence is the mentors who come and go actually can be actually harmful. And so there is -- there has to be a lasting and long-term relationship. That would be my own.

MS. BUSETTE: Okay, great. Thanks. Sean?

MR. JOE: Place based strategy that focuses on changing the opportunity zone structure, meaning that these opportunity zone grants, they're benefitting developers but don't really facilitate opportunity structures in the region. They have to facilitate a better opportunity structure and we can study that, measure that, and help to guide that.

MS. BUSETTE: Great. Excellent, thank you. Rashawn?

MR. RAY: Ditto. I'm not going to take up any time. The criminal justice part, Sean nailed how we need to think about opportunity zones. They don't need to gentrify neighborhoods. They need to restore neighborhoods and invest in neighborhoods, and that' really what we need to see.

MS. BUSETTE: Great.

MR. REEVES: Can I give one example. I want to check if I'm right about this, of a small

policy change. If I'm correct, it is the case that if you are convicted of a drug related crime, you're ineligible for Pell grants?

MS. BUSETTE: That's correct.

MR. REEVES: Right. What are we thinking at that point? What was -- I know the history of that, but it's like if you could design one policy that was actually intended to punish a particular group of people who most need postsecondary education, what you do is you say, well okay, you got a drug crime so no Pell grant for you. So someone had one tiny addition to that, we'll have to revert that stupid policy. They can do that on day one.

MS. BUSETTE: Great. Excellent. Well we are going to have to leave it there. This has been a fantastic discussion. As all good discussions, there's so much more to say. I want to thank Richard very much for all his work in profiling some of these outcomes. Sean, for joining us and of course, Rashawn for your excellent contributions as well. Thank you all for listening and with that, we'll say goodbye and join us again for another Brookings event later in the week. Take care.

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