

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

WHY BLACK AMERICA NEEDS A TECH NEW DEAL

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P R O C E E D I N G S

DR. TURNER LEE: Hello, everybody. Welcome to Brookings' first webinar, and my first webinar, that I'm hosting this new year. I'm Dr. Nicol Turner Lee, I'm a senior fellow in Governance Studies, and I am the director of our Center for Technology Innovation, here at Brookings.

I'm excited about today, for a couple of reasons. I've got some really great panelist, that have decided to join me at the start of the year, on a topic that I'm quite interested in, that I will be releasing a blog around it, tomorrow. Which is around the, for a Tech New Deal in America, to get people back to work and have the means for economic recovery.

I'm also excited about the fact, that we're talking about what happens if we do not create this Tech New Deal, to really reinvigorate the type of employment -- economic recovery that we need for communities of color, particularly Black American. I would be remiss, also, to suggest that I am not so excited, as we start this webinar, on what's happening around us, as we're talking about this issue. The reason we need to have this conversation, my friends, is not just because of what has happened in Georgia yesterday, but the fact that as we are debating this conversation this afternoon, that there are folks that are out there, that are debating the legitimacy of an election, and I would be remiss, as a Brookings scholar, not to acknowledge just what that means, to essentially try to disenfranchise millions of African Americans and Latinos, who voted within this national election.

So I want to place that out there because I think it's very important, as we talk about this kind of a Tech new Deal. Let me just say one thing, before I introduce our panelists, and why the Tech New Deal is that important to me. When Franklin Delano Roosevelt faced the Great Depression, and the stock market had crashed, at that time, in the 30's, basically what he was dealing with was trying to be courageous enough to figure out a way to get us out, and in getting us out, he came up with a variety of programs, some of which we know today, Social Security, unemployment insurance, etc., but all those served as drivers to actually bring people back to what was the existing economy, or the emerging economy of the future, getting people back to work, and ensure they had the work of protection.

But as part of that, which is why this webinar is entitled "The Tech New Deal for Black America," in particular, I don't necessarily present that as only for Black America, I want you to be clear,

but there were coalitions that were built during that time, under Franklin Delano Roosevelt, where people of color, Black and Latinos also benefitted in coalition with white.

And so, as we think about what this looks like, it's no secret that technology is driving the way that we live, learn and earn, but we now need a strategy, that combines infrastructure development, adoption and utilization, worker retraining, and workforce development in new technological careers, as well as our ability to embrace the fact that tech is the new normal. And, what that means going forward, all of the things we have done in these last 10 months, we need to reinvigorate the economy, to welcome start up, to ensure that we have procurements, where business, particularly those that are minority owned, have opportunity, and we are able to benefit from the type of advantages, that technology has provided to us.

That's why I call it a New Deal for tech, and I'm excited again, that we'll introduce that tomorrow, but I'm even more excited to share this concept with all of you, who are watching us today, with a group of people, who I think bring different prospective, on why it's important not just to close the little divide, but to really think about this, as the next stage of economic recovery, alongside everything we're gonna need to do with the pandemic, healthcare, employment education, this is equally important that we leverage these assets that we have, to get people back to work.

So, that's my feeling, and I'm sticking to it, and again, I want to be sensitive to what happening around us, as we have this conversation. So, every once in awhile, you might hear one of the panelists, sort of vent, that's okay, because guess what? We within the context of reality, and if we don't talk about it, those people who are trying to get to the Capitol Building, definitely aren't going to hear it. So, we need ensure that we can be having these conversations.

So, today, I am joined by, I just cannot tell you how pleased I am to have a Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist of the state of Michigan. I was on a panel with him. I'm an avid watcher of him, on CNN when he says stuff, he's always in that nice backdrop of space. I'm sitting in my bedroom and you can't see the bed, but I want to introduce him, and thank him for joining us today, because I think he comes with a particular unique quality. Not just as an elected official, but also someone who has a tech background.

Next to him, and I'm not sure what order I'm going in, but what you can see is my dear friend Jamal Simmons. You've seen him on CBS, he's a news contributor. He's former co-chair of the Internet Innovation Alliance. In addition to that, he has worked on several campaigns, and he knows what it's like to actually be part of the conversation, to communicate the next wave of methodic opportunity.

Charlyn Stanberry, I would say a lot about this young woman, but she is somebody who - if you don't know her, you need to know her. She's the chief of staff of the Office of Congresswoman Yvette Clarke, Democrat out of New York. She's also a person who has a background deeply set in telecom policy, that I consider to be mentee in many respects, because she gets it, and, so, she is going to precure from a federal perspective.

Joshua Edman, he is our person from Detroit, in fact there are three people from the state of Michigan, in some way or form. But Joshua is director of digital inclusion (inaudible), Detroit, Michigan. If you don't know him, you also need to know, but you probably know him, as well as what you Charlyn, because both of them are working diligently to close the digital divide.

And, last and always certainly not least, I'm happy to be in the company of another doctor, Dr. Fallon Wilson, who is the founder of Black Tech Futures Research Institute, that focuses on the startup community. She's also the new incoming vice president of policy, for the Multi -- MMC. I used to work there, and I'm all jacked up on the name, but look it up. With that in mind, thank you for actually having all of our panelists, and I want to jump right into the conversation.

Lieutenant Governor, I'm gonna to start with you. First and foremost, I want to start with whatever you have to say about what's going on. But really what I also want to focus on, is the Tech New Deal idea. Is, why are we talking about it this now, and where have we come in these last 10 months, to make this issue of getting people, economic recovery, in addition to skilled, are now useable? Why is this the forefront?

LT GOV GILCHRIST: So, Doctor, first of all, thank you for pulling us all together, and thank you for having this conversation, and it is always the right time to have this conversation, especially with the madness that is happening, and we are experiencing, like, euphoria on both ends here, right? There's the euphoria of this historic democratic participation, that really put -- put a bookend on the year

2020, and that we've seen in the state of Georgia, here to kick off 2021.

So, in that political participation, the political mobilization of voters of color, makes a difference. Is electoral decisive, in America, in the South, and every place that we choose to present it, and for me, as someone who, you know, spent the second part of my career, after being a software engineer, being a community organizer, I find that inspiring, and always find it inspiring.

At the same time, I am disheartened, I guess, by what I see as -- as the sort of blow back, to the blow back of that. When you're seeing people who are rising up to try to, not only suppress, but outright oppress, and fight against the voices of people who are speaking up, and you're seeing the very physical manifestation of that, in Washington and in State Houses across the country. People are even threatening to do that, here, in the state of Michigan, in our capital of Lansing. But nevertheless, we press forward, and I want to, I think, ground this conversation in a framing, that I think will help us think about this in the right way.

We talk about, how we can -- we talk about crating opportunity. We're talking about crating connections to facilitate people rising to fulfill the potential that we know that they have, and I want us to think about this, in terms of opening things up, not merely closing things down. One of the things I've never liked about the conversation around the "digital divide" is like it's something that we have to eliminate.

Like, I'm a creator, like, I think, we need to be talking about creating pathways to possibility and to connection, and to opportunity, because I think, if we are in a creative mind, say the generative mind say. We will come up with more ideas. We will build more relationships. We will imagine new partnerships. We will craft policy. That is imaginative, and I think, that is where we need to be, in this conversation, because what I've seen this year, as a statewide leader, who has had to respond to a once in 100-year pandemic. In Michigan, we had a once in 500-year flooding event, in mid-Michigan. We've seen these International calls for racial justice. We've seen that we need more people with more ideas, to fill more seats, at more tables, to make more things happen, and the only way we get to more, is by more connection. And, so, certainly technology, you know, one of the ways you can think about technology, as the great connection, not only connecting people to the internet, to broadband, or

whatever, but technology create -- connects people to the possibility that they can do more, then they could do, if they didn't have this tool.

And, so, I wanted us to think about this, is how can we open up, connect, and create opportunity and possibility, and if we're doing that, that will create more chance for us. For economic recovery and opportunity for the Black community and the (inaudible), that have been hardest hit by this pandemic. For the poor people who are already on the margins of our economy, who are really, sort of, left hanging, especially in the beginning. But as we look forward, as we find more ways provide direct economic support in the lead to people.

As we find more ways to connect more households, to the internet, that can connect them to the opportunities and education, health, wealth building, and all the other things. Let's be in that kind of mindset, and I think, that's how we are going to be able to move forward, in the most productive way.

DR. TURNER LEE: And I think that's such a great opening, to this conversation, right? Because it sort of shifts us from focusing on what the present is, and thinks about, how we get out of this, right? I mean we, like you said, it's about the connection that we need to make, you know, not just on digital, but the fact that we've been distance from each other, because of this horrible pandemic.

Just a quick reminder, also for folks. Please send questions, to events@brookings.edu, if you have any questions. Joshua, I want to turn to you, I mean, because you said, as we understand about four miles with the Lieutenant Governor is sitting right now, near Detroit, but you're also leading this Digital Inclusion Initiative. And as we begin to frame out what this looks like, going forward, to codify this as policy, as a new deal of some sort. What are you hearing from the ground? Like are we -- here's a note I was doing this, we were told, people really didn't want to get online.

So, we had to deal with this relevant, but are we hearing those kinds of things in the work that you do, and please also, share what you're doing under your initiative as well.

MR. EDMAN: Absolutely, and following Lieutenant Governor, I mean, come on, he said everything that I was going to say, but like way better, but you know, when we're looking on the ground, obviously, me being the director of digital inclusion, in Detroit, that took a lot of imagination. Because on

the ground, many of your directors of digital inclusion, or anyone who is doing this work, in the municipal framework, we don't have, really, any funding to do much of anything. Coronavirus funding, that's responsive, which is great, but we're not really armed with things that allow us to be proactive in these discussions, and to get in front of a group of residents, or get in front of a city, or look a mayor, dead in their eye, and say, "Hey, we need to bridge this digital divide," and they're going to say, "Well how? With what money? With what resources?" And, so, that was a lot of the pressure that came about, when I took the role initially, however, what we have been able to do, is really look at creating a centralized brand, which is Connect 313, and underneath that brand, we're running several different campaigns, if you will. So, on one hand, we're talking about education, and, you know, earlier this year, thanks to a number of actors, we were able to raise \$23 million, and get 51,000 students connected to the internet.

So, it's, like, okay, great. But in addition to that, what are we doing for seniors? What are we doing for veterans? What are we doing for everybody else? And, so, when we hear the conversation that are happening in Washington, I think great. But us on the ground, specifically as we talk to residents, it's not enough. We need to do significantly more, and, so we've been able to employ the work of celebrities, who actually have been able to make Cameo's on behalf of Connect 313, which has been great.

We did have video, earlier in 2020, with Aquaman and Jason Momoa, and him speaking about the digital divide, him speaking about Connect 313, but really our whole movement around Connect 313, was looking at Black people specifically, in a city that is 85% Black, so obviously. But looking at that and what -- what cultural components that we take, as it relates to technology. Because so many people make the wrong assumption, around bridging the digital divide, specifically in communities of color.

They'll lead with things like, low income, and if you know Black people, we're not going to listen to that dog whistle. If I went, oh, we're low income, we want the low income or the poor people internet, that's not how we're wired. And, so this is just something, when on the ground, we try to connect through and through. He's like, how to do something bold? How do you do something where, you got pride to be a part of this, people want to be connected, for these -- a variety of reasons, for which I don't have all the time to go into, but those are the type of things, that again, when we're looking at Connect

313, and what I'm looking at on the ground, in other cities, that has to happen. There needs to be the director of digital inclusion, in every city in America, and that person needs to be empowered at the mayor's level, and if they are not empowered, there's not much that can happen, and truth be told, they are losing, and that means that the Black people in those communities are losing twice as much as their - if they were in another community.

So, that's just something where, when we're looking at the city of Detroit, we're looking at Connect 313, we said it before, that should be the national motto, and I honestly believe, that a city that has 85% Black, we're talking about a Tech New Deal, then that -- that conversation has to intersect directly into Detroit.

DR. TURNER LEE: You know, I think that's so interesting too, and I don't want to date myself, cause there are some people who are watching, that know me very well. So, you better not tweet my age. But, when you say a director of digital inclusion, years ago, we used to say that as well, and, so, it almost like we're revisiting the same things, because we're not institutionalizing, while we need to position broadband within communities, for economic development. And, I think we're going to give back to that, because that's just one of the things I'm trying to drive home. I'm working on a book on this. The challenge is, is like you said, we keep places old models on folks that have already been stripped of the type of enfranchises that they need to be participative.

And, Jamal, you and I have gone around the circle, right? Because part of the reason why we find, that we probably need to speak in the language of a Tech New Deal, is that we have broken universal service, right? That has not been able to reach the number of people that we need to reach, or we have universal service programs that focus on just one part of the country, like rural, more extensively, than urban and rural.

Speak to me for a minute, in terms of this challenge of basic connections, and from a federal perspective, where we should be, really attacking, you know, the bullseye, to sort of make this become part of our language?

MR. SIMMONS: Okay, you'd think, after 2,500 Zooms, over the course of the last 10 months, I would know how to do this.

When you said going around circle, I think that's a euphemism for going around the sun, cause we're probably the oldest people on this panel, certainly I am. So, you know, I think about this, from this perspective, that the number of kids, we're talking about this earlier. I'm from Detroit, also, Josh, lives nearby where I grew up. Which is a low-income neighborhood, in the city of Detroit. Now think about the kids, who grew up in neighborhoods, like the one that I grew up in. Who are struggling right now, to be connected to school, in the mist of this pandemic, and some -- and halfway quarantined, and they're trying to do homework, but they're doing it on -- on a cell phone, and -- instead of on a laptop, like I am, or another kind of device.

So, you go back, you look at the numbers. The FCC says there are about 21 million people who lack broadband access. Broadband now, says, that's really like 41 million, and if you think about households that have kids, I think 25% of household, between the age of 16 and 17, don't have -- don't have broadband access. Don't have regular broadband access at home, and then if you live below \$30,000 a year, in your household, that number goes from 15% -- I'm sorry, of households with school educated, it's 15% to 35% if you have less than \$30,000 a year, versus a household of \$75,000 a year, where only 6% of the people don't have access.

So, we have an income problem. We have a location problem, rural, and in some urban places. We have a demographic problem, cause it effects Black and Hispanic kids, more than it does other kids. And, so the question is, when we start trying to attach these problems, and I like where Garlin, well the, Lieutenant Governor Gilchrist started with this. We've got to be in a creative kind of mindset, you know, a few years ago, I started to try to address this problem, myself, with a project, that we did, called Crate, and what we did, we did a launch in Detroit, I think, four, five years ago. We took -- we went to a neighborhood. We dropped in the shipping crate. Inside that shipping crate, we had everything somebody would need to create. So, we had like a little area, to kind of hangout. We had some tables, that people could work on. We got Microsoft to donate the use of some tablets. We put Wi-Fi in it, and we had kids from the neighborhood, on the Eastside of Detroit, come over. They did their homework. Parents were doing their billing, and you know, talking to vendors they needed to talk too, using the internet.

So, you saw the need for this kind of thing, inside a neighborhood, and so, we should all be in a space, where we're not just thinking about what's missing, we're thinking about what we can add. Some of that's going to be from the government. Some of it's not going to be from the government, it's going to be from private industry. And, trying to get private industry to do his part.

And, I'll close with this. You know, we're thinking right now, about Vice-president Biden, who is making a bunch of appointments, and getting people into the Cabinet agencies. One of the historic groundbreaking agencies, he's thinking about changing, is the Department of Defense. He's looking at putting an African American name Lloyd Auston, a former general, in as DOD secretary. He'd be the first African American defense secretary. The Department of Defense just in one -- this is just one small program. They spend about \$31 million in STEM grants, of National Defense Education Programs.

Imagine if you up that number, if you doubled that number? If the Department of Defense does \$360 billion of procurement, about \$150 to \$140 billion of that, are things that are not ships, planes, rockets, right? There's -- there are service contracts, that people need. There are lawyers, there are accountants, there are advertising agencies. When I used to work for Kelly Kilpatrick, who was on the Appropriations Committee, in the House, we were focused on getting African American advertisers, who could, you know, do these commercials for Army of One, or Be All You Could Be, talking to all these young kids, but you found that there were no Black advertising agencies making these ads, talking to these kids.

So, I say all that to say, if we could get the 4% of African Ameri – 4% of federal contracts that go to African Americans. If you get that number up to 6% or 7%, you could get billions of dollars, into Black communities, and you have young kids, who now can get jobs, at some of these small and medium size companies. You could have people, who know, they could actually start one of these, on their own, and, you know, we think about getting young people animated around this. They're not just thinking about, you know, how they could go get a job some place.

The young people I know, they want to create too. They want to floss; they want to own stuff. They want to be out here, and be the one who are, you know, out front, you know, selling what their product is. We got to give them a pathway, and an objective for them to accomplish the goals they

already have inside their bodies and mind.

DR. TURNER LEE: You know, I think, that is such a great point, I mean, you've actually brought up a couple of points that I'm gonna return too. I mean, one is, we do have to think about how we actually create these networks, in ways that people can become makers, right? Because right now, as it's been mentioned, were sort of dealing with the digital divide on the passage side, which I think is important, because we have to close that -- those disparities. That digital invisibility is actually not helping us, to create the more perfect union, that we need to accelerate in the business world.

Of the second thing of what your saying is, we have to focus on our workforce, and I'm gonna come back to some of the -- more of the details of the Tech New Deal, that I was referring too. But Charlyn I want to turn to you. You know part of this conversation with Jamal, sort of insinuated is, is that we need to pay attention to the next generation of the workforce, and honestly, we need to pay attention to the people who are not working today, and the role that they can play.

Your member is very much active in The Smart Cities Caucus. She's been a huge person within pro-technology. How do we begin to look at workforce development? Because, again, when Roosevelt did this, it was a multiple component of his new deal. Worker protection was really important, but workforce, really was at the core of that. What do we need to be doing as well, in terms of the workforce areas, to ensure that people of color, Black people, are benefitting from these new jobs?

MS. STANBERRY: Absolutely. So, thank you Dr. Nicol Turner Lee, who happens to be my mentor. Just so that everybody knows that. Workforce development is key. I remember, I was just talking to my mother. She just retired recently, after so many years, working at Southern Bell, Bell South, Baby Bell, AT&T, and she was telling me, at that time, that was the job to get, right? That was the job that had good wages, you had attention, plus you're in telecom and tech, which is just an innovative industry to be in, right?

So, now what we're seeing is, you know, on a federal level, tech isn't as regulated. So, it's a very innovated and a very creative industry that we're in right now, and a lot of our millennials and Gen Zers are just running with that. They're creating these new ideas, and they can just come up with a concept. Get money. I know Dr. Fallon is going to talk about it, right?

And, then can just -- they'll be entrepreneurs. Some will become angel investors, so, when it comes to workforce development, I think it's been key with Congresswoman Clarke, and particularly, especially with the Congressional Black Caucus, because that is the next wave of how we're going to be able to, not only support the next set of generation, that we have going on, but also, it's the way for us to get into these industries, in which we're not as represented.

So, for example, Congresswoman Clarke is a co-chair of the Smart Cities Caucus. We've made it a point to make it a bi-partisan caucus. So, we had Congresswoman Susan Brooks, as our co-chair. Before, it was Congressman Darryl Issa. And the reason for that is, we wanted to focus on issues from a bi-partisan basis, to where when we have bills that come up, we're going to make sure that it's getting passed in Congress. That there aren't any grid locks.

So, with the Smart Cities Caucus, workforce development is one of our pillars, and for example, we had a bill called the Tower Infrastructure Development Act, and that Act specifically asks for the FCC to create an advisory committee to talk about 5G, to talk about the next generation of broadband, next generation of TV, and what can we do in regards to building a workforce in these particular communities that look like us? These underrepresented communities. So, what can we do to make investments for HBCU's? What can we do to make investments for MSI, Minority Service Institutions, or HIS, Hispanic Serving Institutions?

What can we do to make investments in these tribal lands, when it comes to workforce development? When it comes to building out towers? When it comes to building out anything that's needed when it -- in 5G, because this is the 21st century workforce, and we need to make sure that we are a step ahead, and that we're not a step behind, and that we're not -- we're being proactive, and not reactive. So, what you're gonna see, in this 117th Congress, is you're gonna see the CBC, the CHC, which is the Hispanic Caucus. You're gonna see TAPAC, you're gonna see all of them join together, when it comes to marginalized committees, and making sure that, when there is 5G deployment, that are students, that our children are not left out, in regards to these workforce development opportunities, that are going to help them in the future and help build their families.

DR. TURNER LEE: Wow. Yeah, I'm going to -- Fallon, I'm going to get to you, Dr.

Wilson, from the Multicultural Media Telecom and Internet Counsel, Maurita would kill me if I said it wrong, so I had to correct myself, but, Lieutenant Governor, I want to jump to you, really quickly though, because this is what Charlyn is talking about, and where we are, so far, in the conversation, and, again, for those of you who are listening, send questions to events@brookings.edu. We're going to retweet the heck out of this panel. #TechNewDeal is the hashtag, #TechNewDeal.

Lieutenant Governor, you're listening to all this, right, and we're putting these pieces together. The workforce side, I gotta ask you your opinion on that because I think that these new jobs are livable wage scale jobs, jobs in 5G are paying good money, but yet there's no occupational code for them, people don't know the skill that are needed to actually work on these tower projects. Why is this an integral part of actually getting people back to work?

LT GOV GILCHRIST: Well, when you're talking about workforce, I think you need to think about the pipeline. What can set a person on a path to choose to pursue a career or choose to start a business in a particular industry? And so, in Michigan, we've tried to think about pipeline. I mean, we put into place an initiative, in 2019, called SixtyBy30. We want every person in Michigan to have a post-high school degree or professional credential before the year 2030, 60% of adults, and so, in order to do that, we need to widen the pathways to those credentials, and part of that is recognizing that as industry evolves, the way that we approach credentialing must evolve, as well. So, we actually have put, you know, have put a program on the ground to do this, we started something called the Michigan Reconnect Program, that will provide a tuition-free pathway to any credential or any adult in the state of Michigan, any and every adult in the state of Michigan can do that, tuition-free, it's a state investment in this. (inaudible) Program, that we started this year, is the only one in the country that's using CARES Act dollars to literally pay for college degrees for people who've been on the frontlines, working during the pandemic, and the reason that I say that and mention it in this context is because people of color are overrepresented in those frontline workers, and certainly in the state of Michigan, I think that's true nationally, as well.

Now, we have a pathway for people to sort of go there and pursue those professions. Now, the next step is we have also issued a challenge to industry, a challenge to employers, a challenge

to the innovators, to say you need to be transparent about what it takes to contribute to this industry, to contribute to the success of your company, and work with us, and work with educational institutions to define what those pathways are. If we need to create new licenses, we need to create new credentials, we need to create new programs, well, let's go forward and do that, and you're seeing it on every -- in everything from -- I mean, look, before I even took office, I actually worked with Wayne County Community College, which is the county that -- where Detroit is, to lay the foundation for our credentialing program for professionals to work on Lidar technology for autonomous vehicles, and so, again, there's the -- but there was no -- there's no, like, professional certification for being a Lidar technician, or at least there wasn't, in Michigan, but now we're working to create that.

So, we will need to do that for people who are servicing 5G small cell infrastructure, for people who are servicing all of these different last-mile projects, for people who are going to service, you know, our interstellar providers, you know, where we have a lot -- we have a lot of different types of work to be done, and there are people who are hungry to learn how to do it, people who are hungry to create the types of businesses that will be able to flourish there because they can go employ Michiganders across the board on this. So, I'm excited about the opportunity that this opened up, and so, we need to attack this from all angles, a regulatory perspective, a licensing perspective, an education and inspiration perspective, and if we do those things, then we have pathways to opportunity.

DR. TURNER LEE: You know, I love that because, of recent, I've been in these conversations around credentialing, right, because we used to think that you had to be an engineer or have a Ph.D. or be a scientist, but, really, you know, again, going back to this idea of this panel, which is around this New Deal, the idea is that these are jobs that we're going to need, the same way we're going to build the roadways for our cars, we need to build this information superhighway, and we need to make sure that there are programs, much like Charlyn said, where the government helps with credentialing and skilling and apprenticeships to actually offset our need to actually get people up to speed, but I want to say this, you know, obviously, as we talk about the New Deal for America, it's not just about trying to figure out ways to sort of put people into certain boxes. We do have folks that are out there creating the same tools and products and services that we have been sustaining us for the last few months.

I just read on LinkedIn, and I'll turn to you, Dr. Wilson, about two young African American guys who now have a grocery store app, that is actually gaining high traction just by recognizing that people are no longer going to grocery stores. You come out of a community of ecology building when it comes to Black tech startups. I would love to hear, what is the call that we need to make to the federal government and to private sector to get more money to those innovators, who are also going to be part of our economic recovery?

DR. WILSON: Oh, I so want to answer the question about higher ed because I'm a former professor --

DR. TURNER LEE: Oh, go ahead.

DR. WILSON: -- but, no, can I just put a little point --

DR. TURNER LEE: Yeah, of course.

DR. WILSON: -- a little point on it, and just say that you're right, all of these jobs are up and coming, but one thing we know about the data and the research, first generation Black college students major in low-earning but socially impactful majors, and they go into those careers. So, whatever type of higher ed training (inaudible) we need to do, it needs to be from a social impact perspective, and it should be from a social justice lens. Even when we look at the data across race and ask students why do you do STEM, why do you do computer science, oh, I do it -- non-people of color would say I want to be the next Mark Zuckerberg, I want to be disruptive, I want to have, like, I want to build a billion-dollar unicorn business. African American and Latino students say I want to help my community, and so, as we think about, like, entrée and entrance, student driven interest and learning, I'm sorry, I'm such a researcher and professor in this way, you have to frame it in a way that people really want to do their jobs. I may not want to go attach a pole to a cable in order to get internet into the homes, but if you told me it was going to have impact on my community, and my grandmother will be able to see her granddaughter, who she misses so desperately, in Houston, then maybe I would go into it, and so, it's not just about having the jobs, it's how we frame them and also recognizing that peoples' interest drives their ability to learn. So, I'm going to put that right there.

To your question about --

MR. SIMMONS: Can I --?

DR. WILSON: -- tech startups and all of --

MR. SIMMONS: Dr. Fallon? Dr. Fallon --?

DR. WILSON: Go ahead, I'm sorry.

MR. SIMMONS: -- can I just put a -- can I just have --?

DR. TURNER LEE: Yeah, yeah.

MR. SIMMONS: -- hop on this for a second? Because I don't want you to let it go. This thing that you're talking about is incredibly important. I think a lot about this aspiration. I mean, those of us who are further along in our lives, it's hard to put their mindset back --

DR. WILSON: (overtalking) really young.

MR. SIMMONS: But it's hard to put your mind back to where your mind back to where you were when you were 15, 16, 17, 20 years old --

DR. WILSON: Right.

MR. SIMMONS: -- and it was all about aspiration, and what you wanted to be, and how you wanted to grow and develop, and whatever it was, and so, I always think about, like, if you told somebody they were going to get a job filling sandbags, and, like, you can get this great job, you can make \$10 an hour filling sandbags, don't you want to go do it? Like, who wants to go do -- no one wants to go fill sandbags outside in the hot sun. That sounds horrible --

DR. WILSON: Right.

MR. SIMMONS: -- but if you told somebody you could go build the Hoover Dam, which is the biggest national, you know, natural, man-made structure in North America, you'd be a part of history, people will be looking at this from outer space, you can go get a job building the Hoover Dam.

DR. WILSON: Right.

MR. SIMMONS: Now, that sounds interesting. Now, when you get there, your first job might be filling sandbags, right, but you're going to learn something that's going to contribute to something bigger than --

DR. WILSON: Right.

MR. SIMMONS: -- just your own individual place, and I think when we're talking about this with people, we have to be thinking like this, we have to be thinking about the big idea that we can animate people, and innovate them, and make them want to participate. So, I was just glad you brought that up.

DR. WILSON: No, no, and I -- and I love -- oh.

DR. TURNER LEE: No, no (overtalking). Okay, go ahead, go on (inaudible) and Jamal because I want you to jump into this Black tech piece. Jamal, what you're talking about is so important because, again, going to back to Roosevelt, it was all about the Tennessee Valley Authority, it was about putting together something that was going to have an impact the rest of our lives, and that's something we need to do with tech. We're not passive consumers of technology, we're actually -- you know, we have ideas (audio skip) innovate, so, that's -- that was my two cents, I'm sorry, Fallon, you know, moderating. I won't do it again. Go ahead.

DR. WILSON: Oh, no, no, no. Oh, no, no, no. It's all good. Girl, this is your show, we are just happy to be able to talk about community and Blackness and greatness, but to your point, the key here, once again, is that students are telling you that they want to have social impact, they want to change lives, and when I think about the emerging field of public interest technology, and Joshua and I had a great conversation about that, we need to begin thinking about the credentialing processes for that, as we begin to give more people, like you and I, even though you've already been in government, as an example, into these new jobs at the municipal level, where Joshua is, or at this national level now I find myself at, right, and trying to begin developing the networks of people to do this work, right, because let's also be clear, the reason why we have certain middle class is because we had government jobs, and if there's going to be a need between government and this new world of technology, and our students are saying to us, and even our former non-traditional students, that's a growing body, right, are saying that they want to understand and impact this world of tech, and I'm not a technologist by training, I'm a researcher, but I learn everything I can in order to translate this world, and so, that's an alternative tech pathway, and that's some of my research, too, but to Nicol's point of tech startups, as we well know that, by April 2020, the Federal Reserve in New York said that we had about 40% of Black businesses go

under, I said 40% in April.

We are in, now, January 2021, and we are thankful for the PPP and the CARES Act dollars, but we need way more, moving forward, and, of course, the question will be capital. Of course, we need debt free capital. We need patient capital. We need flexible capital. We need -- and I'm going to say what a friend of mine said, we just need free money with no strings attached, no interest. I know, I see you, Lieutenant Governor, but I believe you said imagination, so, I'm giving you all of my imagination right now.

LT GOV GILCHRIST: Hey. Hey, nah, that facial expression was one good because I -- listen, I'm not an economist, but I do know that when people have money, stuff typically works better.

MS. STANBERRY: Really?

LT GOV GILCHRIST: So, like, I hear you. I mean, like --

DR. WILSON: Okay, but, see, but the big piece for me -- so, you said -- I love that you started with imagination. For me, the larger thing is, yes, the capital is immediate, we all know this, we just don't want to give the money, but why not support on the ground what the Kauffman Foundation calls shadow to the (inaudible) my research, supporting tech entrepreneurship support organizations. These are the organizations that are located within cities that have -- were founded by former founders of color, right, in order to navigate how to get capital to businesses, tech businesses in their cities, right, but what I love about them even more so is that they become anchor cornerstone ecosystem building organizations for technology.

So, and Joshua know this because he works at the municipal level, that if you have, like, a organization, like Code Fever, in Miami, NOLAvate, in New Orleans, MORTAR, in Cincinnati, Black in Tech Nashville, in Nashville, these organizations are helping Black founders, but they're also the front line, when it comes to anything about innovation and STEM in a city. Let's be very clear, our non-people of color tend to not to go look very easily to find us to talk about these amazing things, and they immediately go to business and to (inaudible) helping tech businesses, and so, across the country, we have at least 200 of these organizations, locally, right, who are -- some of them are part of Black Tech Futures Research Institute, which is the work that I do, and are trying to figure out how to build an

innovation culture. How do you sustain an innovation Black tech liberatory culture in a municipality and not at the national level? Joshua, I'm throwing that to you.

DR. TURNER LEE: No, and, you know, I like this conversation so far, so, I want to kind of couch this because we have an audience now, who is listening to this, and, again, for those of you that are watching, when I put out this blog, you know, I'm talking about a Tech New Deal for all of America, but it's particularly important, again, as we saw in the 1930s, to bring in people who have been disenfranchised, who have been under skilled, into this new economy. That's where I think the aspirations of future economic growth comes from, but it's honestly going to help the type of reconciliation that we need in this country.

We all have to be in it to make this work, to get out of this pandemic, and what's interesting to me, and I'll throw it out to anybody right now, I mean, who do we need to be talking to? Because, obviously, these kinds of connections have to be made in a very coherent, you know, transparent, and ecological way, right, where you can say we need money for infrastructure for this reason, we need to ensure that people who are building that infrastructure are trained, we need to make sure that we also set out some capital, potentially from the federal government, to have people chip in where needed to create jobs within their own community. I don't know who wants to take this one, but who should we be talking to, outside of President-elect Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris?

MS. STANBERRY: I'm going to let Josh take it.

MR. EDMONDS: I did unmute myself, and I think that we're all going to have a different person because, obviously, we should be talking to a lot of different people, but my -- and I'm not shielded away from this, and I do chair an appointment at the FCC, but, yup, this is -- listen, I'm thinking of the FCC on this one, specifically, and I know that this a conversation that's been happening on, on the Hill, around our definition of broadband, but me revisiting that is just something that -- it just has to happen because as we're talking about jobs, you know, 25.3 of that doesn't really afford creatives the opportunity to really become the content producers that they can be, and so, if I'm looking at Black people specifically, as content creators, that's across all platforms, whether that's TikTok, Instagram, I don't know all of them, so that's just where I'm going to stop, those are the cases where, if we're looking at how we

define highspeed internet in America, I really think that we are doing ourselves a disservice by looking at this provider language in a way that we're just going to be taking in content, opposed to uploading it, opposed to actually pushing the needle and creating solid revenue streams.

We see how much YouTubers make, we know that, it's a ridiculous amount of money, and so, specifically, when we looked at last year, right around the time of the pandemic, right -- in March, when it first started, that's when Chairman Pai, at the time, had implemented a Keep America Connected Pledge. That was, you know, great, glad, glad we got to see it, but as soon as he did that, I remember Comcast improving their speed because last year for their program, or in 2018 for their program for internet essentials, it was 15.3. As soon as that Keep America Connected Pledge came online, it went to 25.3, that is highspeed internet, that's the standard. The FCC has the power to move that standard up, and I think your other providers are, then, going to respond accordingly, and so, this is just something more for me, I'm quote -- I'm saying FCC. Now, that's not the only people, but that's where I would like to see that because, on the ground, in Detroit, that would mean the world for us, to be able to point to and say, hey, instead of having one low-cost internet provider, now we're looking at highspeed internet in a completely different way, and now we're actually able to get in front of people and say that, look, you want to become that next person, or this next whatever, culture creator, influence, or whatever, we are now removing those barriers, specifically from an infrastructure standpoint.

DR. TURNER LEE: Perfect. Okay, who else are we talking to? Okay, go ahead, Jamal will go next.

MR. SIMMONS: Can I -- can I get on just -- just to peg? Our friend, Kim Tignor, who started something called Creative Control, since you brought this up, Josh Edmonds, and people seem to know that they go to Creative Control, and you're just creating product, you need to protect the thing that you're creating, and she has a lot of resources for people, so, as you're doing all this creativity online, somebody's coming in, culture vulturing, and taking your stuff, and selling it behind your back, then you can't get the money for it.

DR. TURNER LEE: So, Jamal, I need to put that in my blog. I'll put a sentence in there, if you're going to create it, protect it. So, Kim Tignor --

MR. EDMONDS: Exactly.

DR. TURNER LEE: -- Creative Control, you are completely right. Go ahead. Who are we talking to? Charlyn, do you want to jump in?

MS. STANBERRY: Talk to me, no. I would definitely say that utilizing members of Congress, since we're talking about, you know, for marginalized communities, particularly Black communities, definitely Congressional Black Caucus. Congressional Black Caucus, we have a Tech Diversity Working Group. My boss, she's co-chair of Smart Cities Caucus. There's also a Tech Accountability Caucus, but the other thing I just kind of want to discuss is we always need witnesses for hearings. We need people, we need stories, right? We need stories that come from on the ground, what's happening, you know, actual people.

So, I think definitely talking to members of Congress and being able to provide those stories helps. It helps them when we have these hearings to discuss what's -- what -- how much money we're going to give to the FCC, right, when it comes to what -- how much money we're going to invest in particular pipeline programs and education, pipeline programs and apprenticeships. So, I definitely will say members of Congress because members of Congress kind of serve as a convener for all different types of groups, including our civil rights groups, including our consumer groups, including our regular technology companies. They can bring anybody to the table.

DR. TURNER LEE: That's right. And it's important --

LT GOV GILCHRIST: So, I -- I'm --

DR. TURNER LEE: Okay, go ahead, go ahead with --

LT GOV GILCHRIST: -- I wanted to -- I'm going to take a risk and mix a couple of metaphors because I was watching the Lion King with my twins last night. So, there's a very cyclical, almost sort of circle of life, nation, too, I think, when we think about, and the second metaphor, as a former basketball player, like, we all have a role to play here, like everybody on the court has a job to do, and so, I think if we think about this in terms of we have three levels of government represented on this panel, and then we have researchers, advocates, and practitioners represented on this panel, as well, but everybody has something that they need to do.

So, if you think about it, like, at the federal government level, what's the federal government's job? The federal government is where all the money is, first of all, but also the federal government has the power, as Josh said, to set standard and definition, to set broad direction, and so, one of the things that we all need to do is make sure the federal government is doing that in a responsible, and equitable, and just way. At the state level, our responsibility is, then, to channel those federal resources to make sure that there are equitable, and well-structured, and accessible conduits for those resources, then, to flow, in an accountable way, to local institutions. And then, at the municipal level, the job is to listen to people who are being served on the ground, and then to design program that will meet their needs, demand, circumstances, and be responsive, and then the folks who are participating in those, they are, then, the creators of those stories that, then, get fed back to other levels of government, so, get fed back to Congress, or the Feds, or the FCC, or whatever it is, and that cycle continues.

So, I think if we think about the role that we all can play at every level, I think that'll help us understand that we do need to talk to everyone, and we just need to make sure that we're having the right conversation with people at the right level.

DR. TURNER LEE: That's right.

DR. WILSON: And I would also add, I'm just going to jump in super quick, on one level, we need to be talking to the National Chamber of U.S. Commerce's, of those who -- the Chambers, they need to know because they're creating economic community development plans for their citizens, for their municipalities, and also Smart City plans.

DR. TURNER LEE: Yes, yes.

DR. WILSON: We've got to get a hand on that because most of them, number one, are often centered around the construction of product, and IOT products, and information in making government great, but not -- many of them do not have human capital attributes to think about. How do you really have a Smart Citizen and a Smart Community, beyond the technology in the infrastructure question?

And then, secondly, because I always will say, no matter what panel I am on, if we're

talking specifically about African American people, we have to talk about faith communities, and we have to talk about Black churches. Ask me why. We have a translation problem. I believe the FCC has a translation problem. I think that they do great regulatory work, but you ask my cousin, my grandmother, my auntie, and they are across various class dimensions, what does the FCC do, just like is that a news channel (inaudible), and I'm like, mm, kind of, sure. I think it really is talking and getting with our community stakeholders and our faith communities to translate this world because they translate death, life, hope, all of these esoteric concepts, to try to make people to be better.

I can't see why they can't translate interoperability, telecommunications, and be able to have a more nuanced conversation because I agree with you, Lieutenant Governor, about the levels, but the power's always on the people, and if the people are not educated, and the people cannot translate, if people don't understand, it will always be a beltway politics of national inclusion, and not thinking about the people who really we design these institutions to help.

DR. TURNER LEE: Yeah, and I want to jump into this question because it's -- this is now, I think, going to where I wanted this conversation to go, from Madeline. You know, part of -- Fallon, you just hit it, I mean, part of the challenge is translating these programs to everyday people, but also making the connection, and somebody said it earlier, that we're not talking about digital access for the purpose of consumption only. So, Madeline says, well, what best practices do we need to employ to incorporate workforce development into digital inclusion and literacy work, right, so it's not separated, and how do we transition that knowledge into good-paying jobs that set people up for successful careers? Because I think that was part of the simpleness of 1933, it was like, go build a bridge, a dam, and a road, and now, we're talking about go build a interoperable system, a pole fiber. So, what needs to be done to ensure that we're bringing these roads together? Anybody want to answer that?

DR. WILSON: I think you have to take an ecosystem approach to it. I think part of the challenge of why we have had the digital divide, the digital gap, and we all -- we all have all these names, tech disparities, racial tech disparities, digital inclusion, tech inclusion, it's because we have not been able to tell a concise story on how all of these various systems intersect, intersectionality, right, and create compounded, what Kapor Center calls leaky tech pipelines for Black people to advance in this world. In

particular, the work that I do around Black tech ecosystems is -- tries to really get a story on how does K-12 affects post-secondary, affects how you get in and retain tech companies, how you decide to leave a tech company to start your own tech business, and what are the government policies and issues that shape it, and how it creates either opportunity or compounded oppression, and I think the reason why we like to talk about it episodically or in silos is because people don't want to fund the whole system.

Everybody wants to be -- have their special program, that many of our platforms and ISPs give, which I'm very thankful for them (inaudible), but having a more cut -- I have to say that, I work for MMTC, now, and so, it -- but there really is -- the challenge is having a combined narrative, enforcing people to listen because everybody wants to talk about computer science, episodically. When Obama was talking about CS for all, everybody was about CS for all. When we were talking about CONNECT Host, everybody was talking about connecting housing, but there's never an enduring conversation on how the beginning of the pipeline and broadband access is that foundation, affects all other ways of how we get tech innovators, influencers on TikTok, and how we get people at the top levels of our tech companies, and also, side note, how we hold them accountable for how they use our data and our information, which you can't get unless you tell an integrated ecosystem story of racial tech disparities.

DR. TURNER LEE: Right. So, now, in -- oh, go ahead, Lieutenant Governor.

LT GOV GILCHRIST: Yeah, I think -- I think that, in addition to that, I mean, something that was in your question was this question of literacy, and I think when we're talking about translation and things like that, you're talking about creating fluency with the concepts, right, and in Michigan, so, one of the things -- we've tried to look at this question of sort of broadband access, really, with three -- as three legs to a stool. One of them is literal access, that's infrastructure, one of them is affordability, which is, you know, access so people can afford it, which is very simple, and then third is that literacy component, which says that because without that literacy, you know, having an asset that you can afford, but that you are not able to fully embrace through the lack of understanding, or experience, or whatever, means that you don't take full advantage of it --

DR. TURNER LEE: Right.

LT GOV GILCHRIST: -- and so, we need to position -- so, we need to invest in solutions

that address that gap in literacy, as well, and so, that's what gets to some of the stuff that Dr. Wilson was talking about, in terms of, you know, how -- what kinds of people and institutions are we leaning on to be able to do that translation work because, yeah, because, like you said, making death make sense is a hell of a lot more complicated than broadband make sense, right?

DR. WILSON: Right.

LT GOV GILCHRIST: Well, so, but for whatever reason, we don't believe that people's expertise and ability to do that, to handle those complicated concepts, like translates over here, for some reason, and that, the reasons we don't accept that are wrapped up in all sorts of racial prejudice that will - - we'd have a whole another panel discussion about, but I think we need to embrace and take on these challenges of literacy with the same Ferber that we do access and affordability, and I think that will help in this ecosystem approach.

MR. SIMMONS: So, I like what Dr. --

DR. TURNER LEE: Yes. Go ahead, Jamal.

MR. SIMMONS: -- what Dr. Wilson said about this strategy and us getting focused on, like, broad -- not just everybody focusing a little piece, but, like, the strategy, and part of that is, you know, I think one of the things we've learned in this pandemic is that these tools that, in many ways, are also complicating our lives by broadcasting falsities and bad things, but they are also -- I don't know how we would have survived the last year, right, the last 10 months, without things, like, you know, Zoom, and Facebook, and all the things that have allowed us to stay connected. Now, for people who have to get up and go to work every day, they're frontline workers, they can't stay home and have a conversation like this in their houses, they have to be out in the midst of this virus, but for the rest of us, we've been able to stay sane, as much as we can, right, and stay involved and employed, in many ways, because of these tools, but the question is how do we access -- how do we get everybody else access?

So, you know, we talk a lot about, you know, rising tides, lift out boats, I think that's not necessarily true. We do have to raise the tide, the tides have to raise because we're seeing, as an economy, as a country, there is places where we're falling behind, as an entire aggregated society. So, we've got to raise the tide, but we also have to power some boats, right? We've got to -- some of these

boats need to have extra power, so that they can catch up to the rest of the boats, you know, and make sure that we're not leaving people behind, and there's no way -- I think about it like this, I don't know anybody who has been more creative than poor people and people who need resources because you have to be. Like from your mama, who can figure out -- me and my wife were talking about how we were growing up, and our moms used to, you know, find random pieces of vegetables and food, and put it together, and you'd have, like, this stew that you could eat, and you thought it was pretty good. You didn't realize it was, like, a bunch of leftover scraps, but it was good, and so, what you want is you want to have innovative people have access to tools to create innovative product, and then have the financing to grow and get onto that ladder, and the history of American capitalism, when it grows and it's well, is that you have somebody who didn't necessarily create it, but figures out how to assemble it the right way, right? Like, Henry Ford didn't create the car, or he didn't create the assembly line, he just figured out how to put it -- put those things together the right way. Puffy didn't know how to make music. He just figured out how to bring music, and artists, and all this stuff together to it make the right way. So, we've got to find a way to get those people the right way, get them the financing and technical assistance to be able to grow, and get those companies out into the world, and then make sure other people know they exist, and they get the chance to do the same things. So, I -- raise the tide and then power the boats.

MR. EDMONDS: So --

DR. TURNER LEE: Actually -- yep, go ahead.

MR. EDMONDS: -- well, the -- what I'm definitely going to add to this because I -- the ecosystem approach, specifically from a best practice standpoint, I think that there are a lot of communities who are definitely building some type of ecosystem, and it's not really conveying the investment capital that they need. The investment capital isn't just investments from -- I'm not even talking about from an angel investing standpoint, I'm literally saying federal government intervention that is worthy enough to be able to get the investments that we need. So, from a, I guess, frontline digital equity standpoint, there's always been this huge elephant in the room around data, we all know it. The American Community surveys what all of us use, but it's not enough, we know it's not enough, the federal government knows it's not enough. That's how they're able to classify us as an underserved city, not

deserving of any of the \$16 billion that the FCC allocated to rural America.

I'll digress on that point, but realistically, when we're looking at a best practice standpoint, yes, on the data piece, but also on that total ecosystem coordination approach, so, when Dr. Fallon mentioned the faith community, absolutely. Like, that is when we began looking at the hearts of these communities. It still rests with that faith community. I might not attend, I'm a son of a minister, like I said, I might not go, but I already know when I hear these things of where I need, I know, and so, these are the type of things that we all still share, specifically when reviewing, I'm looking at, and I'm going to give credit to the Lieutenant Governor on this, specifically around the state's Racial Disparities Taskforce and the Coronavirus.

So, Michigan, obviously, we have a very pronounced rate, specifically Black people in Detroit, and when we began looking at that Racial Disparities Taskforce, one of the things that we were able to do within (inaudible) is get \$4 million allocated to connecting our seniors. That still lives under (inaudible). So, earlier, you heard me make mention of us getting all the tablets and devices to the high school students, those connected futures. Now, we're talking about connecting seniors.

All of these things are best practices rooted in our data and rooted in this total ecosystem activation approach, where we are locking arms and we're making a unified case. Detroit cannot be the anomaly there. We need all these communities working together, in tandem, with the respected levels of governance. That is the -- that's the community of practice that needs to happen at scale, and if that does not happen, we do not get the resource allocated anywhere that's in an effective way.

DR. TURNER LEE: That's right.

DR. WILSON: And you're really talking about --

LT GOV GILCHRIST: Just to say -- just to say -- just it, just because I want to highlight that, Joshua, as you mentioned that, because that's what I was talking about earlier, in terms of looking at what happens at every role. So, that \$4 million Rapid Response Initiative Grant, that Josh is talking about to Connect 313, so that was Federal CARES Act dollars funneled through a process that was established by the Michigan Coronavirus Taskforce on Racial Disparities, which I chair, we set up a Rapid Response Initiative to respond to helping address some of the social determinants of health that have made

communities of color more vulnerable to public health challenges, which then, in turn, led to resources funneled to this local program to help address a broad need in the community. So, I think that's -- that is a literal example of what I was describing earlier, in sort of thinking about the roles that we can play to try to optimize resources.

DR. TURNER LEE: Okay. Charlyn, did you want to jump in?

MS. STANBERRY: Yeah, I just wanted to add something because I'm thinking back to my childhood, and how I learned about technology or telecom, and it was through the Urban League, right? It was through different types of programs. I think I was a McKnight Achiever, right, and then I remember being at the Urban League, my father being there, my mother being there. I think that we also need to think about these trusted organizations that are within our communities. Dr. Fallon Wilson talked about churches. Churches definitely also need to think about our fraternities and our sororities, about Urban League, NAACP, National Action Network. There are a lot of organizations that have chapters on the ground, that are trusted sources to teach our communities, and to expose our kids, and to expose our parents, and expose our seniors to utilization of technology, but also how do you become creators of it also.

DR. TURNER LEE: Yeah.

DR. WILSON: And to that last point, just a quick example --

DR. TURNER LEE: Yep.

DR. WILSON: -- the reason why we should be focusing on those types of organizations, I love what Michigan is doing, Detroit's shout out to the North was Midwest, y'all are Midwest, but Southern states and Southern cities, where you're not the majority of African Americans in the -- you have 20% or 12%, trying to do this work is very challenging, right, when you have an Assembly and a State Legislator that doesn't look like you, or you have -- or you don't have a Lieutenant Governor that is about equity and about visionary things, and so, we're -- how do you get the money for equity, and where does it -- where should they flow, when you give the monies to states, right? They need to flow through those organizations. They are the ones that can help people, like me, in Nashville, right?

It took me eight months to raise \$200,000, or the last seven months, to do a citywide

digital inclusion assessment, so that Black and Brown people could tell me how they felt, think, experience technology, in order to pair that, hopefully, with broadband maps, so we can talk about that later, so that we can have a more robust story on what Black and Brown people are experiencing in a Southern city, where they're not the majority, in order -- so, one day, we can raise \$35 million, or they could actually give us \$35 million, so the second stimulus job, right, that's coming down, but it doesn't work like that for all cities, and it goes back to Black power and Black institutions.

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

MR. SIMMONS: I wanted to do one more thing before we go, Nicol. There was -- you asked, at the very beginning, who we should -- who should we be talking to, or what can we do, in terms of the federal government? I just wanted to highlight this because, a couple years ago, the General Accounting Office, the GAO, put out a report, saying that, although, that there have been this expansion in federal contract with tech companies and tech workers, that in some minorities, particularly Latinos and Asians, Black work -- there was no expansion in Black workers, no expansion in women, inside the federal tech workforces. So, the companies that the government contracted with tech companies, those tech companies did not hire more African Americans and more women to work in. So, one of the things this report recommended is that the Labor Department and the Federal Office of Contract Compliance would set goals and standards about hiring and making sure that they were expanding their workforce, they had six recommendations, people can look it up, but there is a GAO report, and so, if you get -- I bet you that in the Trump -- that this was under the end of the Obama administration --

DR. TURNER LEE: Yep.

MR. SIMMONS: -- that in the Trump administration, they did not focus on this, this was not a priority. So, I think, as people are engaging around this with the Biden administration, some questions around how they're contracting, what'll the workforces look like in the companies they're contracting with, and, you know, whether or not they can set some standards and tracking to make sure they're growing people of color inside those workforces.

DR. TURNER LEE: So, I got to stop us for a minute because we're running out of time, but I -- first and foremost, let me just summarize what I heard and then just sort of pivot us out of here.

You know, obviously, we started this conversation on the fact that this country is hurting right now. I'm going to close with just some final comments on what's happening, as we actually talk right now, but, for the most part, we've got to get people back to work, and I think what you've heard from all the panelists is that we have populations, particularly communities of color, that we need to place in positions to not just be aspirational, in terms of goals, but to find a way to codify this, to (inaudible) these goals, so that we establish policies and programs, like a New Deal, that will actually bring a variety of folks back to the workplace, and ensure that they're part of the creation of this new economy.

With that being the case, just the things I think you heard today are things you'll see in my blog tomorrow. Obviously, it starts with what universal service reform looks like in this country. It's very important that we go back, and we modernize that to be much more bracing of all the folks that exist, that need this type of help. It also points to what we do locally to support digital inclusion projects at the local level, like in the city of Detroit, where there are ambassadors that are out there, who need additional funding and the right types of public-private partnerships to make this work. In addition to that, we need workforce development training, apprenticeships, credentialing, pipeline, intentional pipeline mapping, that will help us actually move forward, and the third thing I think we heard today is we need self-determination of our -- in entrepreneurs, as well as individual people in the communities that are looking for a way to get involved, but they need access to capital, they need access to procurement from federal governments, and state governments, and municipality, but now also need some diversity and inclusion goals in existing companies.

My friends, when I said that the New Deal was a great model, of course, it didn't work as well as we thought it would, and, of course, it had a lot of intervention, in terms of government wanting to create all these new agencies. Going forward, we need something because we have too many people that are not going to benefit as producers in the new digital economy, and I think, overall, as we wrap this up, and I would be remiss if I didn't say this because those of you who follow me often know that I'm this type of person, we need common vision and common language, and I think the Lieutenant Governor and other people on this panel would agree, what is happening right now, at the State Capitol, is beyond something that we should be experiencing in the 21st century. It should be beyond our intelligence to

have to tell our kids what's happening, with regards to the destruction of democracy, and it should be beyond our morals and values, in American society, to experience this, but we have to get people back to work, and get them back to a healthy state to rebuild our economy, and fortunately, has been said by this panel, as I wrap up, tech has become one of those drivers. So, stop placing us at the 10th part of the marker, and make us part of the cure, and the remedy to actually be part of the economy. The private sector has done it, but maybe with a little bit of government attention, we actually may be able to bolster the type of connectivity we -- that people in America have.

I'm writing a book. It's coming out this year, finally, on the digital divide, digital invisible -- digitally invisible, how the internet is creating the new underclass. Please follow us at our podcast, at TechTank, at the Center for Technology Innovation, and I want to say to all of you, please be safe out there. Right now, we've got to be safe, we've got to make sure we pray, and we've got to make sure we get out of this with some solutions that are going to allow us to look at this memory and say we are back to some level of normalcy. Thank you very much. I'm Nicol Turner Lee from the Brookings Institution. Thank you, everybody, too.

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