

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

MIDDLE CLASS WELL-BEING AT A LOCAL LEVEL:  
WHAT ROLE CAN MAYORS PLAY?

Washington, D.C.

Monday, February 22, 2021

PARTICIPANTS:

**Welcome and Introduction:**

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**Overview of Project:**

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**Moderated Discussion with Mayors:**

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Mayor, Dayton, Ohio

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

GENERAL ALLEN: Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. My name is John Allen and I'm the president of the Brookings Institution. We're so pleased to have you with us today for our event, "Middle Class Well-Being at a Local Level: What Role Can Mayors Play?" Today's event is a third part of the latest event series on "A New Contract with the Middle Class," our new flagship effort from the Brookings Future of the Middle Class Initiative led by our Senior Fellow Richard Reeves.

Indeed, the immense importance of the middle class is best shown in the way in which it acts as the backbone, indeed, the very foundation of America itself. In this way, it's absolutely essential that we improve the quality of life for those in this group and increase the number of people rising to join its ranks. This is the critical mission of our Future of the Middle Class Initiative.

Now over the past 18 months, the initiative has brought several important projects to conclusion time together voices of the middle class, data on how it's doing collectively, and solutions to improve middle class well-being. In fact, earlier this month the initiative launched its Middle Class Monitor, a data-driven interactive showing trends for the middle class over time. Now in a moment we will have the opportunity to hear directly from some of the voices of the middle class and also to listen to Richard concerning the importance of this work.

I also want to acknowledge the significance of this moment in history writ large. Over the past year we've seen the pandemic cause deep disruption in communities across the United States. Lower and middle income individuals have been particularly affected, especially our communities of color. These communities have been faced with difficult, indeed sometimes impossible economic health decisions that affect the livelihoods, the lives of their citizens all across our communities. And though that the vaccine has brought with it some hope for a safer future, often that moment seems bleak and often open is in short supply.

Nevertheless, as science and American leadership are performing their important work and vaccines are becoming more readily available, we are gathered here today to discuss solutions to help the middle class adapt and to thrive at the local level. And later in March we will have a similar conversation with a U.S. senator focused on the federal response.

So in close, we still have a long way to go and implementing change won't be easy. I remain optimistic that through efforts like those featured today, we can find solutions for a better future for the American middle class. So with that in mind, we are truly honored today and I look forward to the commentary and interaction of Mayor Greg Fisher of Louisville, Kentucky, Mayor Nan Whaley of Dayton, Ohio, both in conversation which will be led by Brookings vice president and program director for the Metropolitan Policy Program, Amy Liu. And they will be talking about the work that they are doing in their communities and what lessons and ideas we can apply to other communities around the United States.

So before I turn it over to Richard, let's pause for a moment and listen to what some members of the middle class had to say about the importance of health and relationships in their daily lives, a needed reminder during these difficult times.

(Video played)

GENERAL ALLEN: So thank you again ladies and gentlemen for joining us for this very important session and to the mayors, thank you for joining us as well. So let me turn the floor over please to Brookings senior fellow and director of the Future of the Middle Class Initiative, Richard Reeves, for an overview of this latest project. Richard, over you, please.

MR. REEVES: Thank you. And that me and my welcome and everybody joining us today and General Allen for your leadership of this initiative from the outset. It's been my privilege to leave this work which is now coming to an important crescendo in the work and I believe at an important moment. I'm not going to spend too long here.

I'm really anxious to get out the way and have you hear from the two mayors with graciously given their time. But I want to say a couple of things about our recent work. The first is to say that we have taken different approaches to research here on the basis that there are different kinds of knowledge. You just heard some very powerful voices from the middle class Americans who we interviewed and it is our strong belief and initiative that the value of the kind of knowledge that you get from data analysis and from qualitative work has to become a minute by an equally important kind of knowledge, which is the knowledge that you get from lived experience, from qualitative data, if you like, and to see a real equality in those different approaches.

And so that's driven our work. In the survey you just heard some voices from the American middle class hopes and anxiety survey, which was led by one of my colleagues, Tiffany Ford as well as Bell Sawhill. And then on the other side getting some hard facts on the ground in the middle class monitor that you just heard about which is highly interactive. Please do check it out. All the data is also downloadable. And that's an attempt to provide some hard, objective facts about trends in the quality of life for the middle class. And hard objective facts are even more important today than they had been up until this point.

The five key things that you a little bit about that we organized the work around including the new contract for the middle class, which is really very policy oriented on money, time, health, relationships, and respect. The middle class in the U.S. hasn't seen lower income growth in those above and below them, half as fast on some measures. Feeling a time squeeze, it's interesting that the extent there hasn't been income growth for middle class Americans. It's been largely or arguably almost entirely because of the increase in the hours and wages of women. That's of course a huge and positive social change, one that's being interrupted quite profoundly right now during the pandemic. But nonetheless, it's important first notice of that has come at the cost of additional time pressure on the American middle class and our labor market institutions have not kept up.

Health, hardly needs saying much more about. The pandemic has acted as an x-ray exposing the fractures that existed in the U.S. society along class lines and of course along racial lines too. The value of relationships comes through in all the work that we've done; family relationships, community relationships. It's hard to live well without good quality relationships.

And last but not least, respect, as you heard from one of our interviewees. Self-respect, but also earning the respect of others, that leading a good quality of life cannot just be measured in dollars and cents.

And the last thing I will say before heading over to my colleague Amy Liu who is going to moderate this conversation is that something that's speaking as a new American, I think I can say that the strength and vitality of the American middle class is a global issue. It affects the way we think about global institutions. And because of the size and strength of the U.S., the condition and quality of life of

the American middle class is not something to which the rest of the world can or should be indifferent.

But on the other hand, many of the policy levers many of the initiatives that will most help the middle class do not lie certainly at a global level or indeed a federal level. They are very often at a local level and particularly at a city level. And so the old adage from the environmental movement that we need to think global and act local applies just as much to the issue of improving the quality of life for America's middle class as it does it in environmental policy too. And as for that reason we are delighted to have two the most thoughtful mayors to speak to us today under the moderating influence of my colleague Amy Liu who runs our Metropolitan Policy Program as an expert on inclusive growth in cities.

So Amy, with that, I will head over to you. Thank you, so much.

MS. LIU: Great. Wonderful. Thank you so much, Richard. And I wanted to say congratulations to you and Bell for your new book on the new contract with the middle class and leading this really important initiative. And I'm really grateful that you've decided to feature the important work of mayors.

And as many of you who have joined us today know, these mayors do incredible, nationally significant work. I'm always amazed by this common saying that my friends at the local level often say, which is there is no Republican or Democratic way to pick up the garbage. At one level it is very true. Local leaders achieve a lot because they put community before party.

But I also want to say that mayors do a lot more than pick up the garbage and shovel snow. They are doing the work of a nation. They are solving issues around climate change. They are trying to address issues of public health and economic recovery, job quality, how to adapt to new technologies, and yes, how to ensure we strengthen the economic security of the middle class.

And so we couldn't have two better people join us for this conversation than Mayor Greg Fisher and Mayor Nan Whaley. And I want to ask -- have them join us here on the virtual stage. They are great friends of Brookings. So it's great to see about. I want to make sure you both are unmuted. And they are two really thoughtful leaders.

Mayor Nan Whaley, as you may know, is the mayor of Dayton. And she is in her second term as mayor. And I just learned that she has announced that she is not going to run again, but I know that we

have not seen the last of her and she's going to continue to do great things.

And Mayor Fisher is in the midst of his third term as the mayor of Louisville and already is doing really important work, as he has always done. And you are also looking at the two leaders of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. So that too is a real privilege for all of us. Mayor Fisher is the chair of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and Nan Whaley is the vice chair. And the two of them actually just met with mayors over the winter meeting. I'm sure you have a lot of reflections from that that you can share.

So let's just jump right to it. And I thought what we would do is start with some context first. I want folks to get to know your cities because so much of the future of the middle class and the economic security people feel is shaped by where they live. And both Dayton and Louisville are certainly historically strong manufacturing centers, yet that also comes with enormous strengths that are often overlooked. So I thought maybe each one of you could say a few words about some of the positive attributes or positive trends in your cities.

And I want to turn to Mayor Whaley to start first. I was really, that's actually as a prompt, I was really struck by a comment you made at a recent Brookings event about how right before covid hit in the month of January, February, Dayton was expressing some of its best months, that it's on a great momentum. Can you say more about that and give us some insights about Dayton?

MAYOR WHALEY: Sure, Amy. It's great to be on Brookings and certainly appreciate all the work, particularly around this middle class effort that you all are really pushing and raising the voice on. It's something I've read and very, very pleased that you guys are including us in the conversation.

Yeah, so Dayton is a city that has a much higher GDP of manufacturing than the national average. It's about 18% of our gross domestic product here. And it's really the lifeblood of what we do. We make things in Dayton. It's been really one of the reasons why we really exist going back to when the Erie Canal now was placed in Dayton, moving up and down and moving goods through our communities that we've made. So it's a key part of who we are, which obviously the change in that wage structure has had significant effects in our community over the past two to three decades.

However, what we been doing as well as really transitioning to this advanced manufacturing and advanced technical work that has been really paying dividends in our community. And

yes, before the pandemic, January and February with the strongest years we had had -- months we've had in the history of Dayton. We keep very close track of this in Dayton because our funding source is the income tax.

So when people are working, the city of Dayton is able to provide the services that you talked about like snow removal and trash pickup and police and fire. So those were some of the strong -- those were the strongest months we've ever experienced as we've really been working to transition our economy still to making things but using that high technical aspect in that effort of advanced manufacturing and advanced technology work that we have here in Dayton.

Dayton is also the home to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, which is the largest single-site employer in the state of Ohio. And we affectionately call it -- the Air Force's brain is located in Dayton, Ohio. So most of those tech and research jobs that have really propelled the military forward in our country have started here in Dayton as well. So working to really generate the private sector opportunities off the base is something that is really key for Dayton's growth and effort.

Still Dayton is really poor. It's a poor city. When you talk about the median income for the middle class being \$40,000, the median income for an individual in Dayton is only \$18,600. It's a very poor community. Household wise, \$32,000. So most people in Dayton aren't considered in the middle class. And so a lot of the work that you talk about as how we get folks into the middle class is the work that I'm really excited to continue to talk about in ways that we can generate more wealth for city that in the 1970s was actually that had the third wealthiest middle class in the entire world, which was Dayton. So a real change because of that manufacturing issue.

MS. LIU: That's great. And we will have plenty of time to come back and talk about the state of the middle class and how your families are doing. This turn to Mayor Fisher. Let's talk about what are the big strings and new trends happening in your city.

MAYOR FISHER: Well, thanks Amy and to you and Richard and all of Brookings. Really appreciate being with you and my good friend Nan Whaley from up north of here. We've been able to get through the pandemic economically in not too bad a condition relatively speaking. We are not where we wanted to be, but our main economic development clusters here are advanced manufacturing, wellness

and aging care. We are the biggest hub for that in the country in terms of headquarter cities. And then logistics and e-commerce because the UPS world port is here. So all of those industries, particularly the latter two, have been quite a bit of growth over the past year.

That being said, much like Mayor Whaley said, our city was on a tremendous economic role up to last March when the pandemic just hit and then boom. We've seen a lot of investment in our city, not just on the industrial side, but in our leisure sense as well. We've created a whole tourism industry around bourbon. Amy, you might know a little something about that. We call it Bourbonism, which you know people go to Napa Valley for wine. So we created this tourism industry. We've had 24 new hotels in the last three years alone. So tremendous assets in place.

And of course tourism really dropped off. And while that's not a huge percentage contributor to GDP, it is important in terms of jobs, 80,000 jobs, and about two thirds of those are gone right now. Now we're start to see it slowly pick back up. So we are optimistic about that. But there's just been lots of ups and downs over the last year.

Unfortunately, we had a tragedy in our city with Breonna Taylor that led to a lot of eyes on Louisville. I think absent the tragedy, the loss of her life, which is a huge thing, our work around advancing racial equity is allowing us to mobilize even further in that sense. So I'm optimistic about the future, but this last year has been tough.

MS. LIU: Yeah, it has. It certainly has. And we will have time to just explore a lot more those issues because they are so important to the future of this conversation in the future of our middle class community.

So let's talk about the people. Both of you have already alluded at how much the change in the manufacturing sector has impacted the community. We know nationally that the hollowing out of the manufacturing sector has also led to the hollowing out of good middle class jobs and therefore a lot more -- a lot fewer ladders for opportunity for working families to enter that middle class. So I want to now talk about the people in your community.

Why don't we start this time with Mayor Fisher? How has -- since the pandemic, how are the workers in your community doing? Do you have any examples or stories you want to share about the

impact of the recession on the working person? The average working person in Louisville?

MAYOR FISHER: No, I mean, it's been --

MS. LIU: Oh, and by the way, I think there is a common question here about how this project applies to the middle class issue. I should just say a few words about that. Richard Reeves and his team said at the national level the middle class is -- earns between about \$40,000 to about \$154,000. As Mayor Whaley said, that changes by different regions. But it gives you a sense of what I would call even the working poor, struggling families. Even Brookings Metro has said 40% of families today work but don't make enough to make ends meet. And I do think a lot of our conversations about this project is how do we make work work for more people so there is more security, health, mental health, all the things that Richard talked about the beginning?

So anyway, I didn't mean to interrupt. But I just wanted to provide that context for our listeners. So go ahead Mayor Fisher.

MAYOR FISHER: Okay. No, it's been brutal. And I think like to your major point here Amy, this is a Louisville problem, it's a Dayton problem, it's an America problem. So America has just got to really look at herself and say, "What kind of system have we constructed that's resulting in these type of outcomes that we see?" So while there could be plenty people working, they are struggling just to make ends meet. So in my view, the increase of the minimum wage to a living wage is a crucial part of this whole equation. And there are plenty of countries that have figured out how to make that work within the economy.

But so often what happens in these times of difficulty, the poor people are the ones that just get slammed again and again. And you know, when are we going to learn as a country that we've got to change our system about that? Because this is all intertwined with poor health outcomes, poor education outcomes, issues that affect the crimes in cities. So one of my hopes is that as we reflect on this pandemic, great recession that we say we've got to really change the way our economy is structured here because when you have people that have -- we have scores of people in our city and all over the country that are holding their breath to see if eviction prevention is just going to be pushed out another 60 days so they are not set out because of no fault of their own because of this pandemic. I mean, for the

richest country in the world to have that going on, if we can't take stock in that time, I don't know when we can.

The lines at food banks; we are in pretty good shape here, but they are 50% more than what they've ever been. You see pictures from around the country though, where it's three and four times what it's been. So we've used the dollars that we got from federal government that we have for grants on eviction prevention, small business grants, these types of issues on top of workforce upscaling to try to hold on as we get through this recession. The small businesses that are the fabric of so many of our cities have just been devastated, especially Black and Brown small businesses. So we are pulling every piece we can so they can just survive to get to this thing because it does look like things are getting better with the vaccine on board. Masking protocols are better in place.

So we're feeling good about that as always this pandemic, which we always had to be humble too, doesn't take some type of twist and this has just been some kind of cruel vision that's given us some hope by now. But we are hopeful we are coming out of the pandemic.

MS. LIU: Mayor Whaley, want to add about how your workers are doing? Your families?

MAYOR WHALEY: Right. So as I mentioned before the pandemic for Dayton it was the best two months. But we have a systemic issue in the Dayton region where the wage is just too low, as Greg said. And if you think about it, this discussion around the \$15 an hour wage, which really still keeps you below the middle class numbers, it still is not enough to get in the middle class, that's with this discussion is. And I would just like to point out that if we to 1969 middle -- minimum wage and put it on 2021's number, we're talking like \$22 an hour as the minimum wage from the late 1960s. So we're really out of step here and we're really forcing people to stay not even in the middle class. And I think that's the issue that's going on in our country.

Too often, even before the pandemic we had people in Dayton that were working. The sad joke that I have in Dayton is that there are plenty of jobs. Everybody has two or three of them. That is not attainable. While they are doing that, they're also going to St. Vincent DePaul, they are also going to House of Bread to get food for the children. And I have to ask, is this what our country is about, work and you still have to get some sort of assistance for your children and for your family? And that was

before the pandemic.

So now, like Greg says, what we have on the situation with the pandemic is daily, people worried about getting evicted. We are so grateful for the eviction moratorium and the rental assistance, but the way Washington placed this is they give us like two days' notice on whether or not the deadline -- they play with people's lives for political maneuvers in Washington, D.C. And we've seen that to the pandemic over and over again. And as a mayor, it is very frustrating because these are the folks that are coming to see me at my office or emailing me every day to say, "I can't get unemployment, I can't figure out the system. Who do I call on rental assistance?" They are overwhelmed at rental assistance every single day.

And I think Washington -- you know, I say this a lot and some people get upset about it. They have lost their way around what's going on on the ground. Now I'm excited about this \$1.9 trillion effort for rescue because I think it's the first time it's been really holistic about just the rescue portion of it and we are hopeful that that gets through the Senate. But these are the issues that are coming forward in my community every day. And I know across the country, we talked to mayors, Greg and I do every day. These are the stories of cities all across the country.

But when you started and people were already on the edge, already using those services and then the pandemic happens -- and keep in mind there's two kinds -- that people are experiencing the pandemic in two different ways. The lucky ones like me and my husband get to work from home and be on Zooms constantly and I remind myself even that way that we are lucky. But there are folks in our community that have to go out every single day from the beginning of this pandemic, take care people that aren't their family members, worry about themselves contracting the virus, and coming home and providing that service for our community. And then their wage is not even enough to get them in the middle class. That is a challenge I think that we have for America and the work, if we're really serious about this work, serious about what our community's needs, people need to get paid better.

MAYOR FISHER: And I think Amy, if I can just kind of add on to the back of that if we can.

MS. LIU: What --

MAYOR FISHER: I'm sure I speak for Mayor Whaley and other mayors when I said the majority of the challenges that come through our office or related to poverty, plain and simple. So the cost that that gives to our cities, then when we have to deal with the impact of poverty, is still in our system. Okay. And so when I talk about redoing our system, it's not about making the pie necessarily bigger. It's about splitting it up in a smart way so that we are investing in people whether they are at the bottom of the case shaped recovery, they are in the middle with the middle income, so that we can build that type of skill so that poverty then is lessened in our city. So many middle income people have experience poverty like never before doing this pandemic.

So we are trying to build not just empathy for people in our city but reconfiguring this capitalist system that we have so it works better for everybody. It's not asking for a handout. It's just saying this is not working. And so we need to change how we are investing in people and the results that we get from that in a time were obviously technology and globalism is changing faster than ever. Our systems have to adapt to this new world they simply have not.

MS. LIU: I want to -- I really want to jump to the issue of solutions. You already mentioned the federal minimum wage. I want to get your local stuff. But before we do that, I wanted to just bring up one other dimension of who is middle class. Richard and his team have done a really good job of reminding us that the term middle class has been popularly, been synonymous with white middle class. When we envision the middle class, when we think of who is in the middle class, we think of a white person. And yet the folks in the middle class are much, much more diverse. And in fact, currently at the national level 60% of the middle class are white, which means 40% represent other racial, ethnic groups, Black, Latino, immigrants, Asians, Native Americans, others.

So I'm going to start with Mayor Whaley on this. I would like to hear how you frame the challenge of how we together tackle the issues facing struggling families in our community that do so in a way that's targeted to the disparities and these particular racial disparities that our Black and Latino populations historically experience and yet at the same time recognize that we have also many white struggling families. In fact, something you said I think recently also struck me was that Dayton has high shares of white and Black poor residents. So how do you square this dynamic to bring people together

around solutions?

MAYOR WHALEY: Well, I think that's really the key in this discussion around America frankly. Because what I've found is both parties have a tendency to kind of push this issue away instead of weave it together. I'm a big fan of the work Heather McGee is doing particularly around the race class narrative around public benefit for everyone. And now we talk about that. And I think most mayors frankly are all about public benefit, right? We like to build assets for our community that everyone, white, Black, or Brown, can enjoy. So I think we are really the place where that first work really begins.

I also think it's key that we have to do some real talk too about when the bottom falls out on the middle class. It is Black and Brown folks that are the ones that follow first. And so does and is also because a lot of the work that is being done from the lower edge of the middle class, because it's such a broad spectrum, 40,000 to 50,000, has a lot to do with service delivery.

So I will just give an example. Childcare and other care or places that are incredibly low pay that should be higher pay that actually affect Black women more than any other sector of our economy. Getting that actually -- sometimes that's not even paid work but being considered work that is really important. And then making sure that that wage is a way so they can survive for their family I think are two real keys that will bring both Black and white people, particularly women, out of poverty. That's the kind of work that we need to do to be very specific in it.

Secondly, you see mayors across the country talking about what we can do around evictions. We started the eviction task force in Dayton in 2019 before the pandemic just because we saw just the numbers of families, women with children, that were being kicked out and really affecting, like Greg said, our entire system of making sure kids can read and kids can learn and have a space to really build our future generation here.

What the pandemic is offered as an opportunity for people to really focus on that because it's but a much larger group into this unfortunate situation of eviction. And so that's allowed us as a local to say, okay, we're going to pass ordinances around rent receipts and late fees, and say if you put ordinances to really hold that. Can there be more done on a state and federal level? Absolutely, but I think a lot of this work to really show that is not just Black or Brown people that are being hurt and

affected, that's why people too, is an opportunity to really build the public good.

And I think that's the exciting work frankly, that we -- you know, we recognize that race has been the original sin of this country and our communities. And some of our communities built on racist principles. So how do we do the work to declare that and then and sent way so we come together for everyone to benefit is the strong important work that we have ahead of us.

MS. LIU: Mayor Fisher?

MAYOR FISHER: Well, I think we got the macro issue that I've mentioned before they can be done at the federal level. And we all know that the minimum wage to \$15 an hour is not going to pass in Congress right now. And we got several more shots at that if it doesn't go through with the American rescue package. So think of that is kind of a bigger picture. And to Nan's earlier point, \$15 an hour is what? 30 grand a year. So it is way below what the median is for middle class.

But I want to talk a little bit about workforce and workforce development because that's common whether you're Black, Brown, or white. Incoming know the pandemic, in particular, people need to be embracing a new mindset. The way we used to do work is no longer the way we're going to do work. So what does that mean at the individual level? And are we going to leave that up to everybody to figure out on their own? Or are we going to scale up a national response?

So mayors are really getting behind the relaunching America's workforce act that is a \$15 billion program that was introduced last year. So we could start scaling up our retooling of America's workforce. Our workforce is some at the federal level has been cut 40% over the last decade. So where there's a company, a sports team, a city, our most valuable asset is human capital. It's the people. So if we are not investing in people and pulling a way toward the future with the demand being pulled by her businesses, that's just the basic. And you would do that with any thriving organization. So we got to do that as a country as well.

And interestingly, our investment and workforce is .1% of our GDP. It is less than all industrialized nations except Mexico. Australia invests 24 times the amount that we do in workforce. Ireland, 48 times. So think about how energizing that would be to be part of a robust ecosystem that pointed to the future and you as a citizen get to say, "I need to get on board with this and there's a lot of

ways for me to come on board with this.”

And we saw in the -- with the recovery act with all an unleashing of innovation at the community college level, with credentials, and all the things that lead to middle class jobs. So again, I think this is something I'm hopeful the combination of American Rescue and the CARES Act that we can really push everybody regardless of whether ethnicity or color is into the middle class.

MS. LIU: So Mayor Fisher, lets us stay on this point about what you are doing as a mayor on these topics as we wait for bigger reforms at the federal level. I know that you came into your third term announcing a Future of Work Initiative, just like you were saying. And particularly in terms of how to think about this in the changing tech economy, the rise of AI. Can you say more about what that initiative is and what you think mayors locally are uniquely positioned to do to help them that's how today's workers adapt to the new demands?

MAYOR FISHER: Yeah, mayors are kind of like the translators. Mayors are in the reality business. So we just can't pontificate because we see the challenges and the gaps that we have in all forms of society as a system, if you will. So when we take a look at workforce, we know the real-time gaps that are today. Let's say an advanced manufacturing it's easy to figure out how you fill those. But we've also got a look down the road a couple of years as they were things going so that we can reposition our cities to be more competitive globally.

So our focus on the future work is saying where's data science going. Where is machine learning going? What is artificial intelligence for good? Not just to replace things, but out of we use that to enhance society? And then how do folks that have been traditionally left out of these type of opportunities get on boarded? So we're demonstrating how to do that hundreds of people at a time by focusing on our investments in parts of the community.

And then taking Nan's earlier point that might be working two jobs, still not getting fit on the table, and buying shoes for the baby. But if they -- if we pay them a stipend so that they can actually participate in the programs and they get a starting family supporting wage job in the technology industry, and guess what, they have a career.

And what do most every companies want now? They want more Black and Brown

people in their enterprises. So this is a real win-win especially when we tie it into what company see. So for instance, Humana is headquartered in Louisville. So the work that they're doing around wellness and aging care, they have a massive need for new skills. So we work with them and our educational institutions and an hour underinvest in communities to develop a whole system of taking folks at a low middle class right now and intensely upscale, placement jobs, and off they go now where they've got a shot.

So this can be done. We're doing it. Now the question is, how do you scale it. I can scan it so is not just hundreds at a time in our city, but thousands at a time? 10 thousands? And for our country, millions at a time? And it can be done with intentionality. So again, there is reason for optimism, we've just got to be more intentional about changing our systems.

MS. LIU: And Mayor Whaley, I think I want to stay on this point about what mayors are doing around all the different aspects of the challenges the middle class space. And in the video we saw, we did hear about health and mental health. And I know that you have dealt with lots of different crises during your watch, but one of the most important defining once was the opioid crisis which has enormous impact on families and work. Tell us about the intersection of the opioid crisis to this topic and what were some of the signature things that you did at the local level to address this?

MAYOR WHALEY: Well, clearly Dayton has been early on, like first term, ground zero around opiate addiction issues, really stemming from a lot of people using their bodies their entire life to create value for work and then unseemly doctors and pharmacists that preyed upon that frankly. And so we have done -- I'm really proud of the work that we've done around opiate addiction. Before the pandemic we had cut accidental overdose deaths in half in our community by just being very honest about the situation, focusing around mental health and addiction, and being very open about the situation and providing services from harm reduction sites to efforts that we call -- which actually work now in police reform too around having folks that when an overdose call happens, having trained folks for mental health to come to those calls so that way people could get the services they needed. And then training our police officers in that effort as well. So there's lots of best practices that come out of Dayton around the epidemic.

And frankly, mental health crisis across -- where there's addiction or suicide has been met that septic is also going to bear in our communities around the pandemic. When you have 65 people every single day in our country take their lives at the end of a gun by themselves you know we have mental health and addiction issues that are wreaking havoc in our communities. And people and mayors of course are also grasping with why this is. Is it a social fabric disconnection? Disconnection of hopelessness around opportunities for their community, their families to thrive? All of this falls into this mental health and addiction issue that I'm very passionate about this because of Dayton's history in this work.

We've also done some investment. I'm proud to be with one of maybe two dozen cities in the country to provide high-quality preschool to every single 4-year-old. I think really digging into women -- issues of women and children are really important around the future workforce. And we passed this that's an income tax increase past double-digit by the city of Dayton residents to provide this in 2016.

And the work that they've done to vivid during the pandemic has also been impressive. You know, providing play boxes for every four-year-old in the city so that parents and the children can learn together, really worked to build that fabric of family as we've had to give it around preschool. So I think the investment that we've done around preschool has not only help the children be ready for kindergarten, but we were also really intentional because most preschool programs in my city are actually run by Black women. And so how do we really invest in their businesses and help them? Most women that have gotten into this have gotten into this work because of the love of children, but necessarily may not have had a business plan. So again, providing those services so that they can scale and work to the pandemic as well as raise the quality of our programs, has been something that I'm really proud of where these initiatives can come together.

I think it's really key for us as we think about work and we think about the dignity of work that we have a lot of people in our communities that are working very, very hard and they're getting paid maybe nothing or very low weights. And so until this country deals with that, we are going to have significant issues in our community. And like you said Amy, this is an issue that is for critically I think women. And I think, now the pandemic we're going to have some real issues around women working that

need to be talked about, but particularly women of color and white women across the board. I think it's going to be a very big issue for us.

MS. LIU: Yes. And I think for everyone who is tuning in, you can tell there is no silver bullet for how we bring a much more -- much more security to the middle class or to help people get to the middle class and stay there. So I'm going to keep kind of going to other topics.

And this one is for Mayor Fisher. The other sort of thing we heard in the video that Richard and his team have -- when they interview folks around the country about what matters to them; what they say is respect. And Mayor Whaley, you just talked about dignity of work. But Mayor, you have led on a compassion agenda and being -- having Louisville be a compassionate city. And you've met with the Dalai Lama. How does that -- tell everyone here what that means. Why respect and compassion matters and how does that emerges policy at the local level?

MAYOR FISHER: Thanks for asking that question. That was fascinating to hear that about Richard. Most people aren't thinking about how important -- yes, you have to have money, but if you don't feel respect for yourself and respect from others, you are not feeling whole as a person. So compassion is one of our city values that I brought in 10 years ago along with lifelong learning and health. Compassion just means respect for other citizens so that their full human potential is flourishing.

So think about compassion as an action word. And if you're not flourishing, what is it that we can do to help you flourish? And so the other notion is interdependence. We are all in this together. So it backs up Richard's research that he said as well. So you may not think you have anything in common with the other person that was on the other side of town that doesn't have your same skin color, but we are all connected. And until we see this as a holistic system, we're not going to be able to improve as our cities.

I think diversity is the great strength of every city in our country. And when we figure out how to embrace it, our opportunities are limited. So for compassion for us, we integrated it in a lot of parts of our city. But I will talk about one, and that's compassion based school curriculum with our elementary schools.

So many kids coming from marginalized communities come in with a very low sense of

worth. They don't know how to love themselves or love others. So when you can teach this in elementary school and you teach empathy and teamwork, it opens up the brain so that they can learn more.

So we are at the end of a 5-year study with the University of Virginia on this to see how that improves outcomes in our educational system, because the gaps, the racial gap and educational achievement have been stubborn in our country in terms of lack of improvement. So we are looking for breakthrough ways to improve that. So I compassion based direct them is one way to do that.

The other way we do that, and most recently again, especially with the trauma of the summer of 2020 here around the country and in Louisville as well is with racial justice is to claim racism as a public health crisis so that we have got to jolt our cities and our country so that talking about racism and discrimination and prejudice are comfortable things for people not only to talk about, but to do something about as well. And it's been great because I've received equal criticism from people on the far right that say we don't have discrimination, from people on the far left that say I'm not woke enough. But we have woken up the conversation about race in the community, which is leading to more and more progress in terms of assistance towards our Black and Brown businesses in our community.

Our population is about 24% Black in Louisville. And we are at the national average, which is percentage of owned Black businesses, less than 10% of what they should be. That is a national crisis. Enter we fix these types of things, we're not going to become the equitable, forward-looking cities and country that we need to be. So we are well on the way, but those are some the way that we integrate compassion into our city.

And the Dalai Lama, you mentioned him, he just spoke at our winter meeting about last month up to mayors all around the world about the importance of these universal values of compassion, kindness, and love. And that's where we lead with. Everything else is secondary differences.

MS. LIU: Great. And I -- we have 15 -- were about 13 minutes left. So I do want to invite folks that are watching, if you want to ask any questions, you could send your question through the event page link and we will try to get to them. And I actually have some questions that came from some of the viewers in advance.

And one of the questions actually builds on, Mayor Fisher, what we just said, and also ties to the other aspect that came out in the interviews with workers of families is relationships, that people just want to be part of a community. That part of security is just feeling a sense of belonging, having relationships that support you, having community, social cohesion. And so Mayor Whaley, what are your thoughts about what you have done to build social cohesion this past year or during your entire time -- terms, given all the tumult your community has gone through? And what is the role of community nonprofits in organizations and helping you build that sort of social capital that we need in our communities?

MAYOR WHALEY: Well first let me say that I don't mean to sound like one note somber here. But one of the issues around social cohesion is that if people are working multiple jobs, it is very difficult for them to have time to build relationships in the community. So I think we just have to recognize that that's what happens a lot particularly in our poorer communities, is people are on the edge and so social fabric gets lost in that work. And so that's why again, this is just so very important when you talk about building the whole person. We have stretched this working for to the edge and that's just not feasible due to lack of time. Really, our most important asset that we forget about.

As far as Dayton, Dayton has had a very significant '19 and '20 for our community. And for '19 we had folks from Indiana come over, really kind of a precursor to some of the extremism we've seen today nationally with a Ku Klux Klan group deciding to come over state lines and protest on our Center City. Two days later, experienced two dozen tornadoes that ripped through the community. And then about 90 days later, mass shooting that affected our entertainment area that had nine people killed and about two dozen injured. So quite a bit for a city that normally is pretty quiet and what's going on for us to '19.

And then when you lay the pen to make a '20 on top, it's very -- an interesting time for us, but the pandemic and the civil unrest, because in '19 you have these issues that kind of lay down on Dayton that really built social fabric. As painful as they were, it was a reason for the community to come together and a reason for everyone to pitch in together and help each other. And saw tremendous resilience and grit from our community of really coming together. It was an incredible honor frankly to be

the mayor during I think one of the most difficult year I've ever experience to be a part of that fabric building. And really just great love for this community. I know every mayor is biased, but just incredibly special place.

What happened in '20 was issues of national -- nationally that really pulled -- and globally that pulled our community apart and really were places that don't go out. For your health and safety, say alone. And then of course the civil unrest was -- I am -- we are being treated differently because of the color of our skin, which is true. All of these are ways that really spread people apart.

So trying to remind our community of ways that we are better together. Like we were '19, as difficult as it was, it made this issue important in Dayton as we work to through '20.

And I think I believe grit and resilience are practice traits. They are like muscles in your community. So we have been well practiced in Dayton around this issue. So that has allowed us to do things I think the other communities, because of those painful situations, like you imagine as a family, if you get through it together as a family, your family stronger on the other side. Certainly that happened to Dayton in '19 and has helped us to build some fabric in '20.

I will give one example. We do have declared racism a public health emergency. And our vaccination rates across the country were having a particular issue of getting African-Americans vaccinated. Dayton and Montgomery counties' rate is the best in the state because we've just been putting everything through the equity lens. So with a scarce a resource as vaccinations, we were like, if we can do it here then we can really start the bill the equity across our systems.

So it works when you start everything with equity. It works when you are able to really -- I don't wish any community to go through what we went through in 2019, the building that social fabric and recognize that we are all in this together as been something that I am most proud of my city for.

MS. LIU: Mayor Fisher, do you want to add more about how to create that community cohesion in the time of so much division?

MAYOR FISHER: I think again you hear me talk about intentionality and productivity a lot because a lot of these conversations are stuff that people want to stay away from, especially conversations about race. And we started, after Charlottesville, lots of activities in our city to bring in

people that are ready for that discussion. So we kind of bill from the middle out.

The extremes are the tough spots and we are not really focused on that. We want to describe the middle out and our community. So when you can coalesce around issues around justice and equity an opportunity and teach people, especially the white population, about what the roots of discrimination and in equity are, which many of them do not even understand because we are not taught back, which is a hold of the subject. We should be in our society about the roots of racism and slavery and the impact on our society today is.

A lot of white people want to kind of just deny that it exists. And denial is not a strategy. So we can take the high road and say that the educate and inform. And the lights go off in people's eyes quite a bit. Has been really gratifying to take what times of challenge are, especially on racial equity, and turn that into an opportunity to create a more cohesive and empathetic city that's actually acting against injustice. And it takes time. Nobody is ever happy that is moving fast enough. We will be accused of not being compassionate enough. But all of these are noble goals that we have to be intentional and focused.

I just came from, before this, the announcement of a new indoor football league team in our city that has 19 of 20 of its owners are Black Louisvillians. So a vast majority of Black-owned pro sports franchise. That awesome. We can celebrate that. It's not just a city, it's a country as well. So those are the kind of outcomes that we want to have.

And then to Nan's point, using the pandemic as a rallying point for everybody to -- the virus is a common enemy that we're going to move through. It's also given us an opportunity to talk about the difference in lifespan between the average Black Louisvillian and white Louisvillian. It's the same as all of America. About 10 years last life expectancy for your average by person versus average white person. How is that just? So a lot of people have had their eyes opened to that during the pandemic and have allowed us to really pursue equity in our vaccination strategy as well.

MS. LIU: We have about five minutes left in I want to use the time to come back to the opportunity now presented by a more aligned federal partner, whether in the Biden administration or in Congress. So I have a couple of questions on this. One is, you both have mentioned minimum wage

quite a bit. Mayor Whaley, I just so appreciate you reminding everyone that one of the values of just having work pay is you get your time back, because this is not sustainable to have multiple jobs, which is what is happening in many of our communities. So I just appreciate you going to be in a broken record on that, because that's a good point to make.

But tell me, this been pushed back and concerned that the minimum wage or the federal minimum wage is too high for low-cost markets perhaps like Dayton or Louisville. What do you say that? Is there business support locally for raising the federal minimum wage?

MAYOR WHALEY: Well, I don't have an answer on where the businesses stand on it. I think different groups have different positions on it. You can see different business groups no matter what sector they are in, where they are.

But I will tell you this, every single issue we have in Dayton, I mean, every single one, even mental health and addiction issues come back to low-wage. It is inexpensive to live in Dayton. You can -- the average house rental is only \$750. So we don't have an affordability issue in Dayton. We have a wage issue. So everything that we work on has been around folks not getting paid enough.

And if you can't that's if you have a community that can take on -- and family members have to take on more jobs or a have to live in unseemly conditions because they can afford that, you really come to the point of, what are we doing as a country here. My whole vision of what America is about, certainly what Ohio is about, what Dayton is about, if you work hard, you should get paid enough to build a fight for your family, full stop. That is not what is going on right now and I think we have to get back to that general belief.

And that is the challenge I think and the opportunity we have with a federal partner that doesn't want to -- I mean, mayors across the country are excited about the new partnership regardless of party, mostly because I think the last administration when we would go to Washington D.C. they were threatened but some of us in jail over some of the policies we have in our community. So it is a great breath of fresh air that we are able to have these conversations about really what needs to happen to help people in our communities.

MS. LIU: And Mayor Fisher, maybe I just -- because I'm running out of time, I maybe

want to give it to another federal opportunity, which is best may be comes back to where we started, which is the two of you represent what has been the manufacturing soul of the country. And in that respect, you both, and six other mayors, co-authored an op-ed in the Washington Post about how it is now time to have a Marshall Plan for middle America.

We've been talking about middle class, but the middle class and middle America, the geography matters. So say a few words about what exactly is in that Marshall Plan for middle America and why do we need it right now.

MAYOR FISHER: So the crux of the Marshall Plan is, how do we have intentionality around transitioning a part of the country which at one time was crucial to the resurgence of the Renaissance and the American economy post-World War II? In primarily by providing cheap energy, a coal-fired energy. And so up until the last 10 years or so, coal was our primary source of energy, it still could be, in the country. But as we transitioned away from coal, we've left devastated parts of the country behind with not even a thank you. It's like we're going somewhere cheaper now. Thank you very much for while you helped us.

We need a just transition of people that have been central to the cold economy so that they can move into a green economy, they can move into an economy where broadband is available to every resident in the Ohio River Valley. So we move into an economy where everybody is upscale. And that's what the Marshall Plan is all about, much like what took place in Europe after World War II. It requires money. It requires intentionality. Requires our country to have a conscience to make sure that everybody is part of this American dream once again. So mayors from Pittsburgh to Louisville through the Ohio Valley, and Mayor Whaley as part of it as well, are putting this notion out there so that we can see the kind of rebirth and middle America this needed for the benefit of all of our country.

MS. LIU: That's great. We have come to the end of our time. I just want to say just how thankful I think our whole nation are to be because of your leadership. And just 45 minutes we've covered everything from the fate of work, the economy, respect, time, community relationships, all the things that we need to heal and also just to support the common family in our society. So thank you so much for your leadership. Thank you for your time with us today. And on behalf of me and our team at

Brookings and Richard Reeves at Economic Studies, I want to thank you again for your leadership. Thank you for joining all of -- and for you tuning in, thank you for joining us. You guys have a great day.

MAYOR FISHER: All right. Bye-bye.

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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