THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

SETTING A POLICY AGENDA FOR BLACK AMERICANS

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Welcome:

JOHN R. ALLEN
President, The Brookings Institution

Keynote Session:

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Senior Fellow and Director, Race, Prosperity, and Inclusion Initiative
The Brookings Institution

HONORABLE JOYCE BEATTY
Chair, Congressional Black Caucus, U.S. House of Representatives

HONORABLE FRANK D. SCOTT, JR.
Mayor, City of Little Rock, Arkansas

Panel Discussion:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

GENERAL ALLEN: Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. My name is John Allen. I'm the president of the Brookings Institution. And we are so pleased to have you with us today for our event, "Setting a Policy Agenda for Black Americans."

This convening, of course, can coincide with the beginning of Black History Month, a critical moment each year to celebrate the many contributions of Black Americans to the United States. And to recognize this community's centrality to the history of our nation, but also to the future of our people.

But let me hasten to add that for our viewers, for our participants, and for our institution, that we treat every day at Brookings, as though it's the first day of Black History Month. It's our personal, it's our institutional, and it's our daily commitment. For here at Brookings this means embodying a public commitment to addressing the structural inequities impacting Black Americans across all of the country today.

We have some truly excellent speakers joining us this afternoon who will speak directly to these pressing issues, but before I do though let me reiterate a few important points. Between the intersecting crises of COVID-19, a devastated economy, and ongoing systemic racism, Black Americans have suffered terribly and disproportionately this past year. These challenges are ongoing, and they demand our full attention.

What's more, only through an inclusive public policy agenda, one that incorporates key policy ideas such as expanding access to healthcare, housing, jobs and education, police and criminal justice reform and more, can we truly begin to remediate the many issues impacting the Black community today. But also the deeply rooted causal factors that allow systemic racism and the inequity to continue to exist throughout America more broadly.

Indeed, in his inaugural address, President Biden specifically commented to this latter point, saying, "Our history has been a constant struggle between the American ideal that we are all created equal, and the harsh, ugly reality that racism, nativism and fear have torn us apart. The battle is perennial and the victory is never secure."

Now, he also spoke of a cry for racial justice, some 400 years in the making. And that moves us and it motivates us. So, too did he note the rise of political extremism and white supremacy and domestic terrorism, topics that are inextricably linked to the fight for racial justice in America.

In fact, some are, who are listening right now will remember that it was in the aftermath of Charlottesville that had prompted Joe Biden to run for president of the United States.

Now, thinking on the president's words, I believe it is incumbent upon us that we remain clear eyed and about the divisive nature of American society, and its culture, and thus, the nuance that will be required for meaningful progress to be achieved. At the same time, we also need to be honest about the past and the terrible wounds we've both suffered, but we've also inflicted.

Systemic racism was not solved by the American Civil War and the end of American slavery, our original sin as a societal norm. Indeed, with the talk of national unity and reconciliation being so prevalent today, we must also accept that while white America may have slowly reunified, following that terrible war, Black Union veterans, and more broadly Black Americans, were left almost entirely out of the process, and continued to suffer terribly as a result.

These white reconciliation efforts created the illusion of a reunited America. Yet, the reality was even much worse, as the South sank deeper into the grips of white supremacists and former slave owners and former Confederate leadership where it kept the spark alive of a future Southern white nationalist country.

But here, the flames of white supremacy continue to burn. And from them, Jim Crow laws were born, which largely exchanged the physical bondage of slavery for the legislative bondage of American -- Black Americans, for more than 100 years to follow that war.

The relative strides we've made through the heroic, the epic actions of individuals like Dr. King, and John Lewis, and so many others, are absolutely critical, yet hardly remediate the underlying original sin embedded in our society.

None of this is ancient history either. It's still painfully so much a part of our history as a nation, and who we are as a people. We should not be surprised then to see that white supremacist movements are alive and well in America today. For they were never truly defeated in the first place, and their dogma undergirds far too much of our politics and thus our laws and our policies today.

This difficult truth speaks to the vast complexity of the issues at hand and the deep historical context of an America that has never been as united or even as democratic or free as we have often professed. It also puts in stark terms, the pressing need to identify an inclusive public policy agenda for Black Americans, which will in turn be essential for our long-term healing of the nation in every sense of the word.

With that in mind, we have to continue to reinforce our most fervent belief that Black Lives Matter. And that Black, Brown, Asian and Native communities must be uplifted. And that this is an issue that must be fought for with the full knowledge that we will never arrive at good enough.

We committed ourselves at Brookings, and more broadly across America, to these issues unlike ever before in the last year. And I believe we must continue to reinforce these commitments each and every day. Too many in America will treat such a moment as a phase, one that can be put down as easily as it was picked up. That will not be our path at Brookings. And indeed, our decision to name the collective topics of race, justice and equity, as a new institutional priority was driven by this most fervent belief and our commitment.

These beliefs are central to our reason for joining together today, as well as to discuss the policies that can realize a better, more prosperous future for our communities of color in the United States. So, looking to today's event, I'll soon turn the floor over to Brookings Senior Fellow Camille Busette, who will lead a panel with our distinguished guests, Representative Joyce Beatty of Ohio, who was also the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. Welcome, ma'am. And Mayor Frank D. Scott, Jr. of Little Rock, Arkansas. Welcome, sir.

They're moderated conversation, which I know will be excellent, will then be followed by a wonderful panel discussion with some of our leading scholars on these topics at Brookings, and that will be moderated by Jamal Simmons, a CBS News contributor and a former co-chair of the Internet Innovation Alliance.

Now, a couple of final housekeeping notes. We are very much live and we're on the record. And viewers can submit questions via email to events@brookings.edu. That's events@brookings.edu, or via Twitter, at Brookings government, @BrookingsGov, sorry, or by using #BlackHistoryMonth.

With that, let me conclude with the words of America's first ever youth poet laureate, Amanda Gorman, who spoke at the Presidential Inauguration and who lifted us up with this beacon of hope for us all. She would say, “There is always light if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it.” Marvelous. A wonderful sentiment, especially on this first day of Black History Month.

So, again, we're so pleased to have you all join us today for this event. And let me now turn the floor over to Camille Busette to begin our programming for this first day of the month. And Camille, thank you, and thank you for all you do for the institution and America more broadly, and for being that shining beacon, that light for all of us. Thank you.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you, John, particularly for your very warm welcome and your very thoughtful and insightful comments, ushering in our first event for Black History Month. I am thrilled to be here and delighted, of course, to welcome Congresswoman Beatty and Mayor Frank Scott. And I just want to extend a very warm welcome to everybody who's joined us as well. This is such a great start to our month.

Just as I housekeeping note, again, viewers can submit questions for speakers by email to events@brookings.edu, or via Twitter, by using #BlackHistoryMonth. So, with that, I'm going to start the questions to our two distinguished guests. And I'm going to start with you, Congresswoman Beatty. I know you've been making the rounds a little bit yesterday, commenting a little bit on President Biden's first 100 days.

So, what I wanted to say was, with a few -- with a new Biden administration, obviously a very historic Vice President Harris, and all the numerous gains that African Americans have made politically, notably in Georgia and more generally, in the South, are you optimistic about our opportunity to intentionally transcend systemic and endemic racism?

HON. BEATTY: Well, first of all let me just say thanks to you and to Brookings for having me here on this distinguished panel. I am very hopeful. I am very optimistic. Because I think words and actions matter.

And here's what we know, in reference to Black Americans and Brown Americans. President Biden has been very clear and very forthright in how he got elected. And he even said, as

you're probably aware, that he would also have our backs.

Now, without that said, those are words. Here are the actions. If you look to his executive order, you will find many of those areas things that we had discussed with him, things that were already in the hopper that we had challenged, i.e., having him rescind the ban on diversity and inclusion training in federal contracts. He did that early on.

Also, when you look to healthcare and housing, some of the most critical injustices that some of your work shows us the data and the statistics of how we have to make sure that we look at the racial and justices and other, if we are actually going to reset the clock and move on.

And lastly, with the number of diverse candidates that he has employed in the Cabinet, in the agencies, many of them firsts. Certainly, I would be remiss if I did not applaud him for the number of Black women and other minority women. I'm an active part of what we call our tri-caucus. And when you look at that representation, whether it is with our Asian American or Hispanic and Latino Americans, I think that he is off to a good start. It does not mean that we don't have more work to do.

MS. BUSETTE: Well, great, thank you for that Congresswoman Beatty. And Mayor Scott, your thoughts, optimism, pragmatism?

HON. SCOTT: Well, I think one of the things that we're experiencing from President Biden and Vice President Biden, is not only optimism, but hope and decency and a spirit of unity with the understanding that you also have to have accountability.

I was very pleased with his initial steps, with his executive orders focusing on racial inequity from a standpoint of ensuring that the entire federal government would set the standard and example. And for all of our nation's cities and corporations to not only set that example, but to push forward as it relates to equity in all things that we do.

And so I'm very happy. We're still in the first couple of weeks. We'll see a lot more. We want to see an infrastructure bill that helps focus on true economic development and understanding that whatever we do, that it has an equity lens from that standpoint. So, right now, we're still on this high of unity and understanding that comes with accountability as well.

MS. BUSETTE: Great, thank you very much. Thank you both for weighing in on that. I feel very optimistic too. And I feel like we are all off to a very good start. But what I wanted to -- one of

the questions I wanted to ask both of you, and Congressman Beatty, I'll start with you. One of the most enduring legacies of discriminatory public policy here in the U.S. is the yawning racial wealth gap in this country. In your view, what are the most important ways that we can close that gap?

HON. BEATTY: Well, I think when we look at where we are with the wealth gap, I serve on the Financial Services Committee in the Diversity -- and lead as the Chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee. And that's one of the things that we've been talking about.

And I think because we are in a culture of systemic racism it's something that's going to take us a while to look at, because it's in a multiplicity of levels, such as much of your research or your institution's research and other research that we're reading. When you look at the unemployment rate being almost double for Black Americans, we boast that the unemployment rate is down when it's 6% to 7%. But we don't look at it when we look at it being 10% and 12% for Black Americans.

When we look at homeownership, or maybe I should say, the lack of homeownership, all of those are components to, including the food insecurities. Well, there's a reason for all of that. If you look at the economy if you look at what we just went through.

Let me give you a great example of why I believe we have a lot of work to do because it's hitting us in so many areas. So, with COVID-19, we know it when we watch the media and we look at things as a healthcare pandemic. But when we read the work from people like you and other scholars, we read about the question you're asking. The economics of it.

You have the COVID, but yet it closes down businesses. And we understand that. It's a delicate balance. But what we know is 41% of Black businesses have already been affected. So, what do we do? We put in a relief packet with PPP. What happens? Minority businesses who were already at a disadvantage aren't in the first or the second round in any magnitudes. So, when there are all these problems, it appears that for the least of us, or the Black and Brown communities, are also the last in for help.

And then you couple that with all of the injustices, especially what we had to go through for the past four years, where there was not only not attention to those issues, it was almost like the enemy from within that we were fighting against progress. We were fighting against moving on beyond systemic racism.

So, I say all that to say, but like my Mayor and good friend, I want to end on hope. So, what we have now when you look at having domestic -- a Domestic Policy Leadership Council within the White House, Biden-Harris administration, when you have a former ambassador to Susan Rice leading that, and to couple it with racial injustices being in every department. So, that means in the Federal Reserve, that means in the SEC and the OCC. That gives us hope, not that overnight we're going to change. We have 401 years of slavery and being discriminated against.

When I think of, fast forward into 1964, 1965, we still have the same issues on the table. But there is hope that we will reset the clock, because now there is more reflection of what democracy looks like. We have more Black women engaged in the process. We have Brown women and Yellow women and men engaged in that process.

So, I think that there is hope for us to move beyond where we are today. It will not happen in the next four years during this administration, but I think if we can figure out how to come together and use all of the data and the statistics that we have about the medium income. We have the data there, and I don't want to sound flippant or curse. But as people are watching this and they write in and they call in, they want to hear truth to power.

All of the research is amazing. But you know what? It's not new. It's not new data. The numbers have not moved enough. And that's why, in the Financial Services Committee, we have brought in the financial institutions with $50 billion, those who were considered too big to lose.

And so we have brought them in asking them for full transparency. The only way you're going to have to change is to have truth and transparency, and then be able to deal with holding people accountable. Why did they come in with two Black women? Congresswoman Maxine Waters leading the Financial Services, and myself as chair of the subcommittee? We also have subpoena power.

They also had to take an oath. It was also televised and streamed live. So, when we challenge the big banks too big to fail, when we challenge the tech communities through the Congressional Black Caucus, we are resetting the clock, we are making movement. And my goal is to move the needle.

But it will take you and everyone else and all of us, all of our mayors and our governors, coming together, putting policies in place and standing in the gap that there are consequences when you

do not move the needle. And that's probably far more than you wanted, but this is a topic I'm excited to revisit because I do believe, as Martin Luther King said, "It is always the right time to do what is right." And we are at a time in history that we must do what is right.

MS. BUSETTE: You know, Congresswoman Beatty, I just so appreciate your perspective and your passion. Mayor Scott, so the racial wealth gap is real, well documented, as the Congresswoman has said. You're in a slightly different position. Tell me a little bit about what you think we should be doing to address that?

HON. SCOTT: Well, first let me say the church said amen to what Congressman -- woman just shared with us, because she was spot on with what is needed right now. An old mentor of mine once said that, when you have power, use it. And so at this point in time, when we know there is sorely needed, because the data is there, the history there to address systematic discrimination, racism, whether it's through redlining. And when we talk about closing the Black and Brown wealth gap, it starts at home. And literally by increasing the number of homeowners that are representative of Black and Brown individuals, so there's equity and allowing that equity to drive wealth.

But in addition to focusing on homeownership and affordable housing, we have to have a targeted community approach. We here in Little Rock literally just two weeks ago, passed our first targeted community development approach from a resolution standpoint where we're setting a policy agenda, that for the next five years we're going to be targeted $5 million a year for low to moderate income areas that look like me.

And so when we understand that we have that policy, we also wanted to put more tools in the toolbox. We instituted a South of 630, which is literally a dividing line based on redlining from years ago here in the city of Little Rock, incentive packages to institute more development in low to moderate income areas.

So, you have to do something with the power that we have, no matter what the leader is, whether you're a mayor, a congressman, congresswoman or President Biden and Madam Vice President Harris. There is power right now. And we know that the data is there to drive the policy decisions. So, we need to utilize that power now by focusing on equity in all that we do.

And so when we're talking again about the wealth gap, its home equity, it's focusing on a

targeted community approach. But also the funding of CDFI, Charter Development Financial Institutions, to ensure that we have more access to capital for Black and Brown entrepreneurs.

One of the things that we learned in the midst of the pandemic is that not only was it healthcare disparities, there were also financial disparities with small minority business owners that are literally living paycheck-to-paycheck just like many of us.

And so what we're focused also is technical assistance in addition to the access to capital. So, when we have capital, there's technical assistance to ensure that there's operational excellence and financial excellence.

And so when you have those type of opportunities that we also have to focus on the future for our wealth gap. We have to get into the mode of understanding what the grain economy is, as well as the tech economy. So, we focus on homeownership, targeted community development, access to capital, the funding of CDFIs and others. We will begin to create this quilt of policy approaches to close that gap and understanding as Congressman -- Congresswoman Beatty has already stated. This took some time to get here. It's going to take some time to dig ourselves out. But understand that it is not a sprint. It is a marathon.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you, Mr. Mayor, very intentional agenda that you've set there. Let's talk a little bit about unemployment, which the Congresswoman had brought up earlier in her remarks.

I think we all know that Black unemployment is almost always close to double that of White unemployment, it's actually worse for Black men. What do we need to do to address this particular issue of employment opportunities? And how do we hold ourselves and others accountable for making progress on that?

HON. SCOTT: Well, I think from a diversity, equity, inclusion standpoint, we first have to understand the environments that we have. Due to the war on drugs and systematic institutional effects on sentencing, we have a number of Black men who are in need of a second and a third chance. And so many cities should follow the lead.

One of the things we've done is banned the box from a city employment standpoint, to ensure that that is not a particular issue. But in addition to that, we have set forth in hiring a chief equity

officer to ensure that all of our hiring practices are reflected, to ensure that our city government is reflective of the city that it governs. As well as that our city spend is reflective of the city that it governs.

So, we are ensuring that we're not doing things to our people, but with our people. And understanding that whatever we do, whether spending our dollars or ensuring that we have different hiring practices, that it reflects the city and all of this diversity.

So, that's -- those are a few different options from that standpoint. But ultimately, to close to further ensure that that happens, we have to continue to advocate to our business owners that there's a need to have more diversity in the marketplace. Because the more diversity in the marketplace, actually is better for the economy.

We understand that Black and Brown Americans have a high consumer index spend. But if we're going to have that consumer index spend we have to ensure that these companies that we're paying with our dollars reflect C Suite individuals that look like us as well.

MS. BUSETTE: Great, thank you, Mr. Mayor. Congresswoman, your thoughts on Black unemployment, how we raise the level of employment and labor participation more generally? And how do we hold ourselves and others accountable?

HON. BEATTY: Well, let me just start by again thanking Mayor Scott. Because I think he said it all. When you talk about toolkits and having things in your toolkit, when you talk about those obstructions and the things that get in our way, like ban the box and why we support that. When you talk about entrepreneurship and you talk about internships and apprenticeships.

I can remember going back when I was in school, you had three categories. You went to school because your parents knew that you were going to go to college, and you were in a college preparatory program. Or maybe you were more hands on. So, they put you into an industrial program. If you were a gentleman, you were in wood crafting, and you were fixing cars. If you were a female, you know the drill, you were in Home Ec, and you were in sewing.

And then there were those who were in between, but they were considered business leaders. So, they went off into a co-op program. Over the years, we lost sight of a lot of that due to funding and due to us missing the mark. So, I think one of the things we have to create, we have to realize that everyone's not going to go to college and graduate. I'm a first generation college graduate.

But what we do have the responsibility, as individuals and as government public servants and elected officials, is to look back into our communities and do what the Mayor has said.

We have to make sure that our mayors and those elected officials in our communities aren't doing things to halt or hamper us moving ahead when we look at it. Because here's what we know, we know the facts. There's more research on unemployment as it relates to demographics than anything else. So, it's easy to work through it.

We know Black and Brown people are oftentimes the last hired and the first fired. So, we have to put things into place. We have to look at what companies are doing, private and government, as they look at their inclusion. Diversity is fine. But if you're not inclusive, or there's not equity, then there is not what I call real diversity.

We're not in the C Suites in any great numbers. If we talk about Fortune 500 companies, we can name them, male and female, of color on one hand. When we come back and look at those who are in the top positions we have to do more. So, you should never just say things without having resolve.

So, in federal government, we have the Office of MWI, Office of Minority Women and Inclusion. And I can tell you we're making great progress. It had to be written into the law. We had to actually put it in Section 342 of the Dodd Frank Act to make sure people perform on it, and we're still moving the needle with that.

We now know that the Joint Center is looking at, what does your minority hiring rate look like in the Congress in government? Speaker Pelosi just came out with a new select committee that's going to deal with equity and our racial differences. Maxine Waters created the Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee.

So, it has taken us all these years to get to this point. And I think part of that is because until we diversify in having people of color and women in those positions, it brings change. You know, if you're not in the room you don't see what's happening and you can't be a part of it. If you're not at the table, you can't affect change.

You doing this today, notice what was quoted when we got on here. We quoted a 22-year old Black woman. Had she not been in the Inauguration most of the country would not be quoting her. She was in the inauguration because you have a president and a Black woman is vice president that

was very sensitive to all of the cultures that the nation should hear from because the nation would be watching.

And so I think that proves my point. And we could talk more about with unemployment, the hiring practices, the training, the apprenticeship programs, how we engage with unions versus private sector, and what we should require them to do with their apprenticeship programs. So, I think we're starting to do a lot of things because there are more people in the room.

MS. BUSETTE: Yeah, I think that's absolutely true and absolutely crucial. And I'm thrilled that you actually have brought that observation out during this discussion. I want to stay with you, Congresswoman, and talk a little bit about Black entrepreneurship.

And we know this is particularly true right now when we've had such a devastation of small and minority-owned businesses during the COVID era. But we know that Black entrepreneurs and Black-owned businesses are chronically undercapitalized. And what can we do at, you know, every level of policymaking to address this? I mean, clearly we have a very specific set of issues that's posed by COVID-19. And the PPP process, and the way that rolled out, et cetera. But that, but broadly, more broadly, how do we create much more equity around the distribution of capital for Black entrepreneurs and small and, you know, Black-owned businesses?

HON. BEATTY: Well, let me start with saying, as someone who spent several decades of my life as a small business owner, as an entrepreneur, I know firsthand what it requires for us to have capital, and how we are denied access of capital.

Now, here's something that I can say that the intentions have been well thought through, maybe not implemented, as it went back out to the public at the federal level. I think there's been a concerted effort for us to put dollars into our economic recovery packages to ensure that there is capital for minority-owned businesses, especially as you just mentioned, in light of the pandemic.

And so here's what we have to look at. If you look at the CARES Act, which we brought before the Congress, it was because many of us, again, having the diversity, having us in the room, and this includes having political folks who have a history of advocating for people. When we were talking about COVID-19 and businesses across the country were in trouble and it was affecting the bottom line, it was affecting Wall Street, it was affecting the stock market, it was affecting the economy, we put a relief

package together.

And in that relief package, when we put PPP dollars into it initially, as I mentioned earlier, minority, women-owned, small businesses Black or white, they were still in trouble. We got through the first 10 days and the dollars were gone. And I can tell you, the numbers are so miniscule, of those minority and Black businesses that received dollars, we had to do it again.

And this time, we had to revamp it. And I want you to know, I was one of the first to go to the United States House floor and use language like, what about our 1099's, what about our barbershops and our beauty shops? And what about those gig workers, and all of those folks that are self-employed? You know, there are many of us that start a business in our bedroom, kitchen or basement. And then we elevate to an office with no employees, to maybe five employees.

But when you talk about small and you're talking about 500 or 200 employees, it took us the third time to get it in a better position to help those minority small businesses and entrepreneurs. Because then we started crafting and carving out dollars for MDI's, for Minority Depository Institutions. That was outstanding.

However, we don't have MDI's in every state or any city. We don't have any in my entire state let alone in my congressional district. As a matter of fact, there are very few across the United States, less than 25. So, then we had to look to community develop financial institutions. So, we were able to put dollars in specifically to help those small businesses and to create opportunities and grants for them.

And I think for those who got saved, it was because of the government and the efforts that we put in there. But here we are, again, no one was prepared for us to be dealing with 400,000 people dying and millions of people across the United States and the world to be infected with this coronavirus. So, we are still writing the plans as we go.

So, one of the other things we have to do is to make sure that there are protégé programs. So, if you are a major bank, then you fit. You get a small company and you work with them to help them figure out how to get into the process.

We had to do this, last story, we had to do this in my congressional district, and I'm very proud of the staff I have on the financial services, and the staff we have on D and I. They worked really

well with my district who had to work with the SBA. Because the SBAs were overloaded, in one month, they had more requests than what they would have in an entire year.

So, again, if you're going to the Small Business Association to get financial help as a small business, and they can't help you, again, you have to start over and most of us can't start over. And that's why so many of our businesses, who were already devastated, I don't want to put it all on the virus, Black businesses were already devastated because of all of the financial turmoil we had been in from 2008 and beyond. And then if you look at the historical, cultural issues that we had had and the structural racism that we have, and the poverty rates that we have, again, we've gone full cycle and as Mayor said, we need to have so many more things in our toolkit. And we have to build hope, but with hope we have to have real means of financially helping individuals. And sometimes we have to change the rules. You know, we can't go by the same rules that has only helped for the most part white America, we have to not be afraid to say this is what we have to do to help all of America. Thank you.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you, Congresswoman. Mayor Scott, your thoughts on sort of the sort of chronic shortage of capital for Black-owned businesses and Black entrepreneurs?

HON. SCOTT: Well, you may not know this, I'm a former banker and commercial lender. And so this whole concept we know well. One from a standpoint, we have to be very intentional. We have to be intentional in connecting the relationship from a traditional bank to Black businesses.

And what that means is, is for our banks is to lean into the community and to understand the community, to understand the disparate, different aspects of small businesses, as Congresswoman Beatty has already shared with us today. You have the gig economy, you have true small business, and then you have larger business. And one of the things that we understand is that access to capital.

And so one of the things that we've noticed as far as what we're trying to build here in the city of Little Rock, and again we go back to our small business Emergency Assistance Program, which were $5,000 unforgivable loans that we're able to give out during the midst of the pandemic. And what we found was that the paperwork wasn't correct. Many times a bank wants to understand your taxes, you got to be, even if you're rich you got to be rich on paper, if you're not rich on paper is hard to get a loan. I'm just, that's just the fact of the matter.

So, we are focused on right now is what we call a Build Academy to help our gig

economists, our gig economy business understand what, why do you have to have your taxes done? Why do you need to have not only a banker, but a CPA and a lawyer to understand how you make certain moves? Is it the right time for you to have a line of credit? And once you get a line of credit, let's not allow the line of credit to kill your business, understand how to manage that line of credit.

So, what we're operating right now is what we call a Build Academy. That's where we basically call technical assistance, to help those to meet you where you are to help you not only to grow, but to sustain growth and understand how you want to chart your business together.

Secondly, once we move from our Build Academy, we're also focused on how do we connect these businesses to not only the lifecycle of a business when you need an actual loan, but sometimes you may not need a loan from a bank, you may need startup capital. You may need business capital for a short period of time.

And so we're just now getting ready to announce, it's already been announced recently, it's Little Rock's Venture Fund. Where we're taking $3 million, basically utilizing Community Reinvestment Act dollars from banks, but targeting our businesses in the Black community, targeting low to moderate income businesses that are located in these blocks, to ensure that these businesses who have just graduated from our Build Academy, so now they have the technical assistance, now they understand operational excellence and understand how to manage the finances of the business.

Now, we will get -- they'll be able to obtain venture capital to continue to see where they need to be. And then after two or three years now they become bankable. So, now we're moving from being unserved to underserved to becoming bankable and understanding the full lifecycle. Because the last thing that we need to do is give a loan to someone who doesn't know how to management -- to manage it and then create historic issues with their family and with their business. So, those are concepts that we're working on right now here in the city of Little Rock.

And we all this stemmed from understanding the acute disparities of small business, particularly Black and Brown businesses in our city. And that's how we created this policy impact. Moving from that, we also want to ensure that we have to increase development and be intentional about the development in our areas of the city. And that's because once you focus on it, it's a targeted approach and it benefits the entire city. It makes no sense to have a city on one side of the city there's

economic wealth, and other side of city, it's not. You create a case of haves and have nots.

And so we take the page out of playbook of being intentional, when you take to the likes of mayors like Maynard Jackson and Marion Barry. They were very intentional about any and everything they did and understood that being intentional within Black and Brown communities, it helps the entire community. So, many people want to call it reverse racism. No, it's common day economics.

If you -- that's exactly what equity is. Equity isn't Black or Brown, equity says we identify an area that needs to be improved. And we're going to now shift and transition resources to that area to bring it together and on equal footing. And hopefully, that it continues to shoot and spring forth with new branches of economic growth from that standpoint. So, we're excited about our Build Academy and --

MS. BUSETTE: I think we may have lost the Mayor so --

HON. SCOTT: -- and we're excited about the right to (inaudible) and all different organizations that what we're doing to ensure that we close this wealth gap.

MS. BUSETTE: Great, thank you very much, Mayor Scott. You are -- I mean, everything you outlined there I think is incredibly thoughtful and is likely to lead to the kinds of successes that we want, we want to see. I'm going to shift to audience Q&A in just a second, because we're getting a lot of really great questions.

But I wanted to just end with one question, which has nothing to do with economics directly. But we also, we all know that Black and Brown communities face real discrimination when it comes to the way they are treated by police. And policing is, you know, police brutality is a really devastating reality in many communities.

So, what I wanted to do was talk about, you know, generally, sort of what are the issues there? How should they be addressed? Within what timeframe? And do how we bring in community voices in that process? I'm going to start with you, Mayor Scott, and I'm going to end with Congresswoman Beatty.

HON. SCOTT: Oh well, thank you so much for that question. One of the things from my campaign we led on, I campaigned on leading on police reform. We had a serious no-knock warrant issue prior to my election. And again, you're elected to change, you're elected to disrupt and to make decisions to foster a forward growth.

So, immediately, we created a no-knock warrant matrix that significantly reduced the number no-knock warrants, to ensure that they weren't haphazardly used.

We also understood prior to all of this I might add, was prior to our George Floyd era of issues, is not only do we have a no-knock warrant policy that we instituted to significantly curb no-knock warrants and their usage.

Second, we instituted and implemented a Citizen's Review Police Review Board that had community input and reports and directly reflects the community to ensure that when there's issues of concern that we have this community board that audits it and shares feedback with our police chief, and to ultimately change certain decisions that may or may have not been made.

So, for my no-knock warrant policy to significantly curb that, to our Citizens Police Review Board, we also, in the wake of a number of differences policies, added a duty to intervene policy. We banned choke holds and neck restraints. We also instituted an independent review committee on all police procedures and policies and patterns of practice.

And so again, we've been leading reform in our city well before the tragic death of George Floyd in the summer of 2020 social and civil unrest. And so that's one of the reasons while every city experienced some type of social civil unrest, that Little Rock largely remained very civil. Because we were doing the work. We were listening to the community, and we were backing up the listening with policy and action. So, we have to move from a period of protests and platitudes to policy and actions.

MS. BUSETTE: Great, thank you very much. Congresswoman Beatty?

HON. BEATTY: Well, let me just say, can I take you everywhere I go, Mr. Mayor? Because I think you said it so well. So, let me say to you, if we look at the federal level, and if we look at the Congressional Black Caucus, we have the George Floyd Justice and Policing Act. And in it, it does just about everything that Mayor Scott just talked about.

We have, since Breanna Taylor, put in there the no-knock warrants, we have the no choke holds from Eric Garner to the eight minutes and 46 seconds that we all watched with George Floyd. We have reforming the qualified immunity. We also have, taking a look at those police officers, and if they have something in their background, they can't move to another place and then be hired. So, all of those things throughout history, they come because we did not have them. And we're reacting to

what has happened.

But I'd certainly be remiss if I also didn't say thank you to all of those movements out there. And yes, I have a phrase, Mr. Mayor, very similar to yours. I say from agony to action. And we have gone through so much agony as it relates to the need for police reform. And I'm unapologetic when I talk about sometimes police officers use unnecessary force, they use unnecessary tear gas, unnecessary pepper spray.

I've been in that. In the summer of 2020, I was out there with the peaceful protesters. And I know what it's like to be pepper sprayed. I know what it's like to be angry when you're watching people holding up signs and trying to get their views and points across. And they're being pushed and shoved unnecessarily.

I also know that there's times that we have to be reminded that tearing up and destruction is not something that's going to get us to the actions that we need. But it is that movement of 2020, I believe, that has gotten us in a better position in other cities that weren't there ahead of time.

And when you think back to our history, it has been those movements that has caused change. And so often people get upset when we say Black Lives Matter, and when we say they're out there and they're too far to the left fighting and this is wrong. No. This is history repeating itself.

I can remember standing with my fists raised. And it was because we were saying I'm Black and I'm proud. Because Jesse Jackson was running for president. When we go back to the '60s and we watch the late John Lewis, my colleague and good friend, a young person in respect to Martin Luther King, Jr., who was an adult leading a peaceful march. And it was the young John Lewis who said, no, we ought to be more aggressive. But they worked together. And they got change.

They didn't cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge the first time. It took them going back and recouping and coming back again before they united, and we saw what they went through. But they crossed that bridge, and it made a difference for Black people being able to vote.

MS. BUSETTE: Great, a lesson in perseverance and hope. I'm going to switch to audience questions, we've gotten quite a few. And so I'm going to start, Congresswoman Beatty, with you. This has to do with your role as CDC Chair. The question is, what importance does the CDC attach to maternal health?

HON. BEATTY: I think it's very important. When you think of our role in healthcare, I'm very pleased to say, we have a historic number of health providers. We have four registered nurses now within the Congressional Black Caucus. And when we look at our priorities, which we will be rolling out this week, healthcare, along with COVID-19 and the vaccination, is part of our top priority.

But when we look to maternal health, and we look at across this nation, and I'm from Ohio, we had one of the highest infant mortality rates in the country. When we look at all of the issues with maternal health it is at the top of our list. You will see us rolling out a number of issues around healthcare, including maternal healthcare. Because once again, when you look at all of the disparities we have, when you look at food insecurities, when you look at being under or uninsured, not having appropriate healthcare. And I have to say on top of it, we need to do a better job with education and awareness. Just as when we talked about the police force having community police councils and review boards, we need to go back to make sure that we have the community clinics, and we have to hold hospitals accountable.

And we have to have in the schools, because it starts at a very young age, we have to make sure that we put those relationships and partnerships together. And when we allocate federal funds to go back to the counties and, Mr. Mayor, back to you, we have to make sure that we give you enough money to do all of the things you need to do in those cities.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you very much. Mayor Scott, although Little Rock is clearly not a rural area, there is increasing, you know, attention being given to the priorities and the needs of rural African Americans. Do you have any thoughts on what we should be prioritizing from a policy perspective there?

HON. SCOTT: Well, one I just want to just share the appreciation of Congresswoman Beatty and all that she's doing to help our nation cities from a financing standpoint.

The interesting thing about Little Rock, Little Rock is truly a microcosm of the United States. We're both rural and urban at the same time. With Arkansas largely being a rural state and one of our biggest exports is agriculture.

So, one of the things I think we definitely have to focus on is ensuring from a USDA standpoint, from focusing on farm to table, ensuring that we have SNAP benefits and continue to issue

those benefits and get them into the hands of our residents as quickly as possible. That helps from an agriculture standpoint.

But secondly, understanding the sustainable economy and what we need to do to focus on more on Aggrotech. And so, again, also understanding just like there are disparities in Black and Brown businesses, from an urban perspective there are disparities for Black and Brown farmers in our large rural states.

And so we're hoping that Secretary Designee Mr. Vilsack is going to focus on Aggrotech, focus on how we can help our Black and Brown farmers that are in our agriculture states. How we can increase the number of SNAP benefits and get those to our local schools, get those through, to our local food pantries and food organizations, because there are food insecurities. And the only way to solve food insecurity is to provide food, and have access to food in a quick and efficient manner and understand that we get to those communities as quickly as possible.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you very much, Mayor Scott. So, we only have time for one more set of questions. And I'm just going to make it one question that I'll ask both of you to offer your thoughts on.

There is, you know, has been for quite some time a pretty active discussion about reparations, and reparations for Black families in the U.S. What are your thoughts on that? And what do you think are the, what's the pragmatic outlook for something like reparations? I'm going to start with you, Mayor Scott, and then move on to Congresswoman Beatty after that.

HON. SCOTT: Well, I would say definitely from a reparation standpoint, we've seen it historically whether it's our brothers and sisters of indigenous nature, being Native Americans, it's something that definitely sorely needs, is needed.

The question is, how do we finance it? But again, if you make it an issue, there's data that supports it. And I think there are ways to figure out that nature by being very targeted in our community development efforts to ensure dollars are going to the Black and Brown community, specifically Black communities.

We have to ensure that those dollars are going. How are we funding our MDIs, how we fund, how are we presenting access to capital? But true dollars have to go to the Black community. And

I think that's something from a Congressional standpoint that if it can be funded, that is sorely needed.

MS. BUSETTE: Great. Thank you very much. Congresswoman.

HON. BEATTY: Let me just say, I think that the Mayor is right on target. And what I would like to say is Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee from Texas, who is a very active member of the Congressional Black Caucus, has taken the lead on this. She has written legislation, HR 40, which calls for a commission and a study.

In the ideal world, I know people want to hear me say, yes, I'm for reparation. So, I'll say it, yes I am. But they also want to hear me say, and here's how, what we're going to give. And I think the Mayor is right, that we have to look through a commission and a study and match it with the dollars, or also legislation and actions that will help us with reparations. You know, how far do we go back and look at all of the injustices for us.

I also know that we have a new member in Congress, Congressman Jamal Bowman, who also has taken on reparations as something that he is working with and is developing legislation. And here's the good about the Congress that we're in now and the Congressional Black Caucus. We have a lot of history and we have a lot of folks who are new to the Congress, new to being elected. And that breathes new life and energy. We have people that are from the movement, and people who have lived and created the movement, and people who are still finding out what the movement is.

And when you put all that together, I think it's going to give us a good resolve, because this is something we have to deal with. Because you will find that mayors across the country are going to give you the same answer that Mayor Scott did. They're going to say, yes, we're supporting, but where are the dollars coming from? How much, is the bigger question, how much is it that we want? And where do we want it to go?

And there are many experts out there that we're going to be consulting with. And I know, including myself, I am not always in favor of the answer being a study. But I think we need a study and a task force, because you will find leaders are in very different places with what it means, even in defining what reparations means.

But I think the good thing, and I'll end on the hope, thank you, Mr. Mayor, the hope is what I know. I know we all want the same thing in righting the wrongs. It's how much and what is it and

the Congressional Black Caucus has that at its highest level. And I'm very comfortable that we will be able to push to get the study and the task force out there and to have a quicker resolve than to continue to study it.

But lastly, this is where you come in. And this is what is so good, Camille, about your work is, we have to have engagement from external partners. So, you will also see this cycle with the Congressional Black Caucus, in addition to our domestic policy and our 12 policy councils and working with the Biden-Harris administration, and with congressman, former Congressman Cedric Richmond, what you will find us doing is also exercising our power and our message.

And we will be taking a look at having an external policy committee. That means, let's not reinvent the wheel. If we need to come to Brookings, let's come to Brookings and get the data. If we need to go to the National Urban League, or if we need to go to the Executive Leadership Council when we talk about Black businesses, or the Conference of Mayors or Governors, we're going to bring that into the fold so we don't have mayors doing this and governors doing this and Black organizations doing this. And then we all want the same resolve. So, let's parcel it out and make ourselves partners. So, we're going to need a lot of partnerships.

MS. BUSETTE: Well, great. Well, thank you. And on that note, Congresswoman Joyce Beatty and Mayor Frank Scott, thank you so much for joining us on this first day —

MS. BEATTY: Thank you.

MS. BUSETTE: — of Black History Month, a great day to be celebrated, a great month to be celebrated. I'm so thrilled that you were able to offer your thoughts and insights as we start the month.

We are now going to transition to our second panel and my moderator there will be Jamal Simmons, who is the political contributor for CNBC News. And he will be speaking with four of my colleagues and myself. So I will introduce my colleagues here. We are going to be joined by Nicol Turner Lee, who is a senior fellow in Governance Studies and the director of the Center for Technology Innovation, Andre Perry, who is a senior fellow in the Metropolitan Policy Studies Program here at Brookings, Makada Henry-Nickie, who is a fellow in the Governance Studies Program at Brookings, and Rashawn Ray, who is a David Rubinstein fellow in Governance Studies here at Brookings.

And with that, Jamal, I am turning it over to you.

MR. SIMMONS: All right. Thank you very much. Thank you, Camille. And I want to thank Brookings for having me. It's a pleasure to be back with you. We just did a panel together just a few weeks ago which was really fantastic. So I'm glad to be back here and have this conversation at the beginning of Black History Month.

I do want to say, if nobody saw this today, I was watching the White House press secretary give her press briefing today, Jen Psaki, and the thing I noticed for the first time — maybe the first time in a long time -– the first person she called on today was an African American woman, the second person she called on was an African American man, and then the third person she called on was a Latino man, and then a white woman. The diversity inside that press briefing room and having a press secretary who I think on the first day — it's not an accident to me on the first day of Black History Month that we started off with African American reporters asking questions at the White House. So let's all celebrate Black History Month.

Let's get started, because I think you just sat through an interesting conversation with a couple of electees who I think have a lot to say on what's happening. I want to put this into some context, because there's so many different ways we can go. Let's just do buckets when we have our conversation today. Let's first start with the bucket of what were the things that were going on in the country prior to the COVID-19. So if you're thinking about your answers from our panelists, what was happening prior to COVID-19, the pre-existing conditions, as it were, for Black Americans. And then we have the complicating factor of COVID-19 and what has that done in the course of the last year to exacerbate those problems that may have existed, present opportunities that we may not have recognized, but what has happened in the course of the last year in the devastating impact of COVID-19 on most people's families and real lives. Let's have that conversation and then think about like what is it that we do next, what do we do now in the context of where we are.

So you've heard the introductions of this fabulous panel, let's just get right to some of the questions. And I'm going to interweave some questions that I'm hearing from the audience.

Camille, I'm going to come back to you because you just finished having a conversation where you were doing a lot of question asking, so I want to ask you this question because I know that

you've talked about American — in 2021, after this year of seeing the George Floyd murder on camera and the outpouring from people in the midst of that, you've said that we need a national kind of conversation, a recognition of racial violence. And I just want to start with you and say do you think that was started after the George Floyd video, was that the beginning of that conversation, or do you think that that conversation has yet to begin?

MS. BUSETTE: So, Jamal, it is so great to have you here. And it's nice to be in the position of not actually having to moderate the discussion, so I appreciate that. But thanks for the question.

So I actually think we are at the very beginning of a very long and probably tortuous conversation here in the U.S. And the reason I say that is watching George Floyd's murder, I think for most Americans and most human beings was, you know — it was incredibly sad and you could just see the way in which his humanity was not recognized. And it was scary for Black people, right. And I think what others have seen in that is that we really do have to have a kind of reckoning about what it means to value all — you know, everybody who lives here and particularly Black people who have been so undervalued. And that conversation has started off in I think a rocky way with a lot of people in some ways denying that there's actually a problem.

And so I think when you start down a dark road like this, that's kind of where it starts. Some people say there's a problem, there's lot of evidence, other people say there isn't a problem. And I think we have not yet gotten to the point, despite George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor — I think there are large pockets of the American population who actually believe that there is not a problem. And so my feeling is we're at the very beginning of a journey and I think that that journey will pick up steam and momentum when we get more people of color in positions where they can actually force that conversation and that consideration.

MR. SIMMONS: So I'm going to come to you guys, Rashawn and Andre, because so many of the questions that have already shown up that people are asking are in this vein. And I know that they touched on this in the last panel, but I think we ought to just go ahead and get right to it.

Talk to me about what it is you see about where we are in this conversation that you guys have been engaged in — and I'll start with you, Andre — you guys have been engaged in around

reparations. So you wrote an article — so fill people in on the conversation that you've been having and what do you think has occurred in the last year and how this conversation about reparations is impacted.

MR. PERRY: Yes. First of all, thank you, Jamal, for hosting — or actually for moderating on this panel and thank you to my colleagues for joining us. And happy Black History Month to all those who are watching.

First of all, there was a tremendous amount of activity before COVID on reparations. Remember the hearing on Juneteenth that occurred, essentially a year before the COVID. We had that. There's a lot of long standing history going back since reconstruction. What I think is happening now in this moment of time — and I'll speak to COVID — people understand that most people actually agree with reparations. When businesses were being shut down because of social distancing it didn't take long for businesses — business owners to say where's the relief, right. And they were crying, where's the relief? The federal government responded. You know, my question has been what does relief look like to a population that's been socially distanced for generations; what does that look like?

So what I think of the current is that people are becoming much more educated on the wealth gap, they're becoming much more educated on the systemic devaluation and exclusion of Black people from wealth building opportunities, and because of that education, and because this pandemic has put people somewhat — I know people get mad at me for saying this — a little bit — give them a little taste of what it's like to walk in the shoes of a Black person, just a little bit. Now, all that together — now people are trying — now starting to understand Black people need the same economic floor that was given to us as white Americans. Because for the most part Black people generally get the idea, white people are generally not accepting of Black people getting reparations.

MR. SIMMONS: Rashawn, go ahead.

MR. RAY: Yeah, I mean it's great — as Andre said, I mean it's great to kind of kick off Black History Month with this event. Camille, you did a great job, Jamal, I look forward to the conversation over this hour. And it's definitely great to be here with my Brookings colleagues.

I mean one thing that Andre and I tried to do in this piece is to lay out that the case for reparations is no only historical but current. We heard some of that with what Andre and Camille mentioned, we heard that in the last panel as well. There are a few stats that become important that we

always like to throw out.

In 1860 — so this was just five years before slavery ended — Black bodies in the United States that were enslaved were work $3 billion. Just our physical bodies. We haven't even gotten to the products that we produced. Black bodies were wealthier than the healthcare system, the railroad system actually put together at that particular time. We fast forward to today, actually right before COVID, the racial gap in wealth, white people — and this was — this is if we compare college educated whites and Black people — college educated white people have seven times more wealth than college educated Black people. Education is not the great equalizer. So we can make those connections there and highlight that some of the things we need to do around reparations — of course there are a lot of questions about who qualifies and where the money comes from. Well, one of the things that Andre and I have been talking about is that federal land becomes one of the pathways to actually being able to fund reparations. There's a large percentage of land in the United States, over 25%, that is federal land. If some of that land was sold or leased or something else was done with it, there would be funding that could be put in place to properly start the process of atoning for systemic racism and its legacy in the country.

And the key question you ask about was this happening before COVID — yes. You know, COVID has simply exacerbated these outcomes. One of the things we know is that if we look at say health outcomes, we know that Black people were already more likely to die. That's not just — that doesn't necessarily have to do with Black people's biology, instead it has to do with the structural conditions that govern our lives. And we know that during COVID Black people are three times more likely to die. Well, that's because early on we were six times more likely to be turned away from COVID testing and treatment. When it comes to policing, we know that Black people are 3.5 times more likely than whites to be killed by policy when we're not attacking or have a weapon.

So part of what we're seeing — and Camille touched on this very well — we are in a social movement right now. And simply because it's fashionable for people to say Black lives matter, there are steps after that, beyond the time in which you make that proclamation, to actually invest in Black businesses, to invest in Black communities, and to invest in Black people in an equitable manner.

MR. SIMMONS: All right. Makada, I'm going to bring you in here now because we're

talking about financial systems and wealth and he just brought up Black business. You know, so if we just take a look at that more broadly, you know, we've seen some of the numbers, (inaudible) Black executives, 3.2%-ish, we've got four Black CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. Prior to COVID-19 I think there were about 2.6 million Black businesses. They had — 109,000 of those Black businesses had employees and they employed about 975,000 people. Two-thirds of the people they employed were Black. Now that COVID has hit, we've lost more than 40% of those businesses.

So tell me, somebody who studies the financial questions, what do we do?

MS. HENRY-NICKIE: Yeah, what do we do? (Laughter) It's not just about businesses, it's just broader than that looking at just the shape of this economic recession. Who's losing out, who is unlikely to regain that footing in the next generation. I think we need to sort of not parcel out these statistics and put them together, right.

So coming out of the Great Recession Blacks lost about a third of their home equity wealth. And so since then we've seen our entrepreneurship rates plummet. Without retirement savings and home equity, we're behind the eight ball. We're not even on the pool table to begin to start businesses and even to sort of recapitalize our — the ones that we have started, the small businesses, before the PPP aid gets to us. The previous panel made a really important point around MDIs and these sort of community banking organizations that anchor Black communities in the absence of fintechs and $10 billion and above banks paying attention the capital needs both — like I said entrepreneurship and starting small businesses.

So we really need to holistically here. Before people become small business owners or entrepreneurs, they're employees, they're workers. We have to think about getting them back to work. And just sort of thinking broadly around what are the kinds of systematic policy levers we've got in our back pockets today, what's on the table already. So, for example, we've got the Community Reinvestment Act. How can we go back to where the OCC started and finish that work, thinking about what other kinds of capital instruments we can bring to bear in local markets, in low markets that help them to get on the playing field before we even start talking about leveling it.

This is about jobs. It's also about entrepreneurship and it's also about, you know, saving our small businesses. All that to say we're in a good position now that we have our consumer financial

protection bureau back in hand. We need an aggressive consumer financial protection bureau working in tandem with the Department of Justice civil rights division to ensure that the playing field is fair, that Black businesses, when they ask for credit and they show up with all of the factors, that they are considered and granted loans and not continue to face disparities.

Without those enforcement tools in place there will be no I think need to continue to have protests because we'll study and study and study and confirm results. We need to have all of our leaders at the table and fully willing to use all their tools to begin to what I sort of call start a new end game, and this time move us to action.

MR. SIMMONS: All right. So I'm going to follow up with you because in the midst of COVID what we saw in the beginning last year was this PPP loan process which resulted in a lot of big companies, a lot of big businesses getting most of the money that came through that process. Is that going to — as the Biden administration — the end of the Trump administration, Biden administration are renewing these funds, are the people paying attention to fixing that problem this time?

MS. HENRY-NICKIE: I think we've made — even with the second and sort of now this third package here, made some improvements in thinking through the mechanisms, right. We've got to think about this sort of infrastructure and the plumbing that keeps the financial services system — the artery system sort of free for Black people, for Black businesses to show up. And so part of this rests on the conventional traditional banks. But what we saw coming out of the PPP debacle was that rural businesses and Black businesses turned to fintechs. Originally fintechs weren't even authorized to become PPP loan lenders, much less even to sort of figure out how to use them and use their distributed networks to deliver much needed capital. So we've made some important I think corrections, but we really need to step back and begin to understand the full landscape of the financial services sector, which very much involves fintechs and digital lenders, as conventional lenders continue to pull back their retail footprint, not just impacting businesses but also impacting consumers.

All of these issues are intersecting. So hopefully we have people with the expertise and the wisdom to sit and bring in those external partners to help us unpack where are the bottlenecks, where are the true issues, and how can we bring more impactful pragmatic solutions to bear, other than just figuring out how to cut checks and push them through the door.

MR. SIMMONS: Yeah.

MR. PERRY: Jamal? Jamal, I just want to have 30 seconds on this.

MR. SIMMONS: Yeah, Andre.

MR. PERRY: We can't put that genie back in the bottle. When many businesses had to close because many did not qualify for the PPP loan subsidy because the way it was structured, because there were not Black people at the table when it was structured, and as a result many Black businesses are going to have to close. 50% of Black businesses survived the Great Recession compared to 60% of white businesses.

So I say all that to say that when we're moving forward, we're just going to have to have more money to help entrepreneurs become business owners because — and many of those former business owners need to find work. And so it's incumbent on cities and municipalities to figure out ways to put people to work as we build back the ecosystem so that these businesses can grow.

MR. SIMMONS: You know, I mean this is a little bit off topic, but I was watching Shark Tank the other night and they had this young brother on who had come up with this business. And it wasn't the fully developed business. And I'm a former tech entrepreneur, so I can understand — I understood all the arguments this young brother was making. It was like he'd gone to Colgate and he is like he had heard every single conversation that every white start up entrepreneur had told him about what the opportunities were in this field, and then he ran smack into the problems of being Black. He didn't have any friends and family money, he was coming in too early to try to raise money, his product wasn't developed enough, he didn't have the right engineer in place. I mean all the things that people tell you are going to be the problem, and they were the problem. And he almost broke down on screen — I felt for him — for not being — for not — you know, for running up against Mark Cuban.

But so I am going to bring Nicol in here because I think that this is a place that somebody who focuses on tech and telecom — you know, I'm from Michigan, I grew up in Detroit. And in Michigan in 1978 General Motors employed 482,000 people in the state of Michigan alone — 482,000. In 2019 General Motors employs 47,000 people. So when people ask what happened to Flint, in 1978, 80,000 people worked for General Motors in Flint. Today I think it's like 10,000 or something like that, right.

So when you're talking about what happened in Detroit, what happened in these places,

job loss can't be taken out of it. So when Makada says people need to be employees first, we're seeing these big manufacturers that are moving away from this kind of mass employment, which means you know the employment is moving into other places. How do we get people prepared and ready for the jobs that are going to exist in this century?

MS. TURNER LEE: Thank you, Jamal, and thank you, everybody. And, Jamal, you think I'm going to stay out of a conversation on reparations? Are you kidding me? (Laughter)

MR. SIMMONS: You can (inaudible) anything, Nicol.

MS. TURNER LEE: You can ask me the digital question, but I've got to jump on this reparation real quick.

You know, I want to say, first and foremost, I want to thank the fact that my colleagues and I have been carefully looking at these issues over the course of our tenure here at Brookings and before. I mean these issues are really complicated issues and the bottom line is you could actually turn a glass half empty or you could turn it half full. And I think what we're trying to do is make this glass half full.

You know, the bottom line is that we have a series of disruptions that have affected African Americans. Yes, we deserve the reparations that have been promised to us for decades, but at the same time I think Rashawn kind of put it that we also need investments in our ecosystems. Our ecosystems are actually powerful. They hire Black people when they build Black businesses, they educate Black children when there are schools that are indigenous to the community. And as a sociologist, if you go back to the Black metropolis, they actually thrive when we have economies of scale. With digital they actually go global. And so the question becomes, how do you begin to bring that upon society in ways that it actually resembles economic recovery. And we don't keep checking the boxes, which is what I think the congresswoman was trying to say, around things that were past grievances that we know historically will not be solved until you solve system inequality.

Now, on that note, when you begin to look at the automotive area and you look at the industries of trade, we're actually in the fourth industrial revolution. And, Jamal, you know that, right. We've worked together on this issue for quite some time. The challenge is how do you get people ready for that industrial revolution. First and foremost, we actually see that it's not a matter of whether or not

people can be ready, it's a matter of whether or not will we make them ready. And I just put out a piece on the broadband new deal, the tech new deal, which suggests that we actually have to be very concerted in terms of the workforce development opportunities that we provide people in addition to making sure that we have an infrastructure, a broadband infrastructure that allows people to work from wherever they live.

The thing that I like to think about — and I think many of us on this call have actually looked at this future work piece — in many respects — and I'll just tie this up and then I'll be quiet — we don't like the fact that our kids are being virtual in their schooling right now. I don't like the fact that I have a 14-year-old daughter that I don't know what she's doing half the time because I'm on these calls. But what I like about the fact that she's actually doing virtual schooling is she's using a laptop, she's learning how to work in a remote environment, she's being, in a disaggregated way, learning how to manage her own time and her content and her destiny in terms of her grades. We need to start seeing that the future of work has already happened.

And so when we begin to go back and look at Detroit and we actually begin to think about places where we had huge manufacturing losses that created huge pockets — and Andre would attest to this — not just in jobs but in land space, we need to figure out how do we take the trend of technology and actually create this new deal that puts people back to work.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt did it with the New Deal, where Black and Latinas and Native Americans went back to work to build the country's bridges and dams. We can do the same. Wireless jobs, the jobs that people are dependent upon to communicate over their phones, are livable wage scale jobs and the credentialing that is needed for that do not require a B.A. to become an engineer. But yet the challenge that we have — and I would actually put it like this -– I don't think this is a Black American problem, I think it's a United States problem — we need to invest in apprenticeships through the Department of Labor, we need to rethink how we look at education, we need to examine the extent to which we look at social supports for working families.

When we begin to do that — and this is the work that Camille has done — when we begin to see how we recover the middle class community and the working class community, we actually bring everybody up. And as we say here at Brookings, when white people catch a cold, Black people

catch the flu. We need to reverse that trend and that way we could begin at least to create what I think many of us on this call think of, equity versus equality. Equity in the distribution of resources, equity in opportunities, and equity in the ability to go back and figure out what needs to be fixed to address the upcoming and forthcoming opportunities that Black people in particular, and all people, can actually benefit from.

I truly believe that and I believe that it starts with leveling the playing field with digital. I might be by myself, I'm okay with that, because I often am. But you need to have the highway that lends itself to creating those opportunities for Black folks. And you need to recognize that we're going to be resilient either way.

MR. SIMMONS: Well, and some of those jobs are also going to be building that highway out, building infrastructure for that.

MS. TURNER LEE: That's what I'm saying. That's what I'm saying. But do you know that at the Department of Labor, we don't even have a code, an occupational code for some of these new jobs? So we have to go back and think about how technology is not just about consumption, but it's actually about production. And when we begin to think about it this way, we shift the conversation. So why are websites crashing when I schedule my COVID vaccination to how do we invest in startups that hire people of color, that actually create the same level of ingenuity and ideas.

And I think that's the conversation that I'm hoping to have as we look at the future of Black America.

MR. SIMMONS: So, Camille, I want to circle back to you here because Rashawn kind of touched on this when he was talking to us, and I know you've been thinking about some of that research that came out from Raj Chetty and others a couple of years ago about it doesn't matter what happens in terms of education or family background, Black and white people tend to — the Black-white gap doesn't shrink. And the surprising case in there that they make is that that is almost all, maybe even 100% — 99.5% due to the disparity between Black men and white men.

What's your take on that and are we prepared, as we have these conversations, to, one, deal with Black men and the challenges they face and then, two, deal with the still disparity — the disparities that are impacting Black women? Even though they may not show up in Black women versus

white women from the same families, they're still showing up when a Black women can raise, you know, $100,000 or something for a business versus somebody else who can raise, you know, a million — or $36,000 for a Black woman versus $1.3 million for a white guy.

So are we prepared to have a conversation where equity is really the conversation and not just, you know, everybody gets $5?

MS. BUSETTE: So I appreciate the nuance of that question. Let me address it sort of briefly, but in two parts.

The first is that when we're thinking about generally as a country making progress on equity, one of the things you want to do is you want to be guided by metrics and you want to be guided by the metrics that tell you what's really going extremely poorly, right. And so some of those metrics are really metrics that focus on the situation and challenges that Black men find themselves in, as you mentioned with Raj Chetty's work. So Black men tend to, you know, specifically speaking, be sort of the ones who are least likely to be employed, most likely, obviously, to be targeted by police, most likely to be incarcerated, most likely to — Black boys are most likely to be, you know, suspended from school, et cetera. So you take those statistics — and I would say of those I would say the Black male labor participation rate, and you make that the statistic that helps you understand whether or not you're making any progress. Because underneath that statistic are all sorts of systemic biases that will need to be addressed, right.

So Black men in terms of labor participation are in a much worse place than anybody else, save Native American men. And the reason for that is that there's just a lot of endemic racism, which is really targeted towards Black men. Black women have a different set of issues, right. They're also facing — Black women — we also face racism, but it shows up very differently. And we also have to deal obviously with gender inequities, et cetera. So there are different sets of issues and different sets of problems. But one of the interesting things about Black women and the economic challenges that they face is that they often are the only earner because of what's happening to Black men, right. So because we aren't dealing with what's happening with Black men, Black women then are the only earner. And then of course the fact that they earn $.56 to the $1.00 for white men and that they have a whole host of other kind of discriminatory issues to deal with, really becomes — it really becomes important to deal with

that and to engage with those issues.

So my point is different sets of issues, but they all come from systemic racism and we do have to hold ourselves accountable. And one way to do that is really to focus on this metric of, you know, very low labor participation for Black men.

And for Black women, I would say the metric I would focus on, because it tells you about how much Black women do not belong to the society, is maternal health and maternal mortality. These are the canaries in the coalmine. Focus on those and try to get those statistics where they should be and you will uncover a whole host of opportunities to do other things in other systems.

MR. SIMMONS: Yeah, two to three — I think the number I have was two to three times more likely Black women were more likely to die from pregnancy related causes than white women.

Rashawn and Andre, I hate to keep grouping you guys together here, but I do want to do a — because you —- this piece —

MR. PERRY: That's okay, because I can be grouped with Rashawn any day of the week.

MR. SIMMONS: So I grew up in a little bit of an odd situation. My dad was a single parent for me and three of my brothers when I was in high school. I lived with my mother until I was in high school and then we all lived with my dad. Because were acting up and we needed to be with our dad. But for so many Black — and in our neighborhood, which was a low-income neighborhood, there weren't that many Black dads around. And one of the things that I think we're talking about, as Camille says, what happens in the labor force is when you start to look at some of the research I've seen, it says there are all kinds of reasons why people don't participate in their families, but one of the things that seemed to be a driver is Black men feeling like they didn't have the ability to economically contribute to their families, which then caused a whole other cascade of problems, and then you see them exit the situation versus staying. And that has then a secondary set of problems.

So we're talking about this. I mean I'd love to get your feedback on that if you think that's fair, and then, two, if you — what is it that you say we do about that in the context of the work that you're doing?

I'll start with you, Andre.

MR. PERRY: Yeah. One, we've got to really interrogate that assumption, that when we

look at the nuclear family, yes, Black men do not participate at the same rates. But when the —

MR. SIMMONS: Although — wait a minute. It is also true though, more Black men — the majority of Black men do live with their children.

MR. PERRY: That's right. That's exactly right.

MR. SIMMONS: They just may have children in other households that they don't also live with.

MR. PERRY: That's exactly right. But I wanted to bring that up just to raise a larger point on the research community. And this includes a lot of the Raj Chetty work and other researchers that look at the effects of discrimination over time. We know the effects. Everyone generally who follows this work and they remember that New York Times visual of data vis where you saw Black children falling into poverty. And everybody was just astounded by that spectacle. What I was more astounded by was how white men stayed at the top regardless of their action.

Our research needs to focus there because often times we're just inundated with what's wrong with Black people, what happens to Black people. And, you know, folks who know me know this is coming, that my favorite slogan is there's nothing wrong with Black people that ending racism can't solve, right. And it gets to this point, we are constantly focusing on the effects of racism and not the causes, because if we did, we would understand how housing policy broke up Black families, we would understand how the criminal justice system broke up Black families. If we understood the labor market and its vicious discrimination, we would under what happens to Black men.

And so for me, I always want to put the onus on the source of the problem. And that's not to say that we don't have problems. I'm a Black man, I know we got problems, we got lots of them. But with that said, the source — the source of why we have these disparities, we don't put enough focus on.

MS. TURNER LEE: Can I jump in? I'm sorry Rashawn. If I can get between you and Andre real quick.

I want to echo Andre on this because I also want us to be very careful about — you know, the reality is that there are a lot of challenges that are associated with Black Americans primarily because of the history of systemic racism and discrimination. But I think what Andre is saying is that

you've got to go back to that. The reason that we have had this attempt to debilitate, dismantle, degrade, deprioritize the utility of Black men in our community is because historically it started with the transatlantic slave trade when it was part of the destabilization of Black communities and families for the purposes of transforming us into labor parts. And I think it's really important.

I mean first and foremost, I have a Black son and I want my Black son to know that he is a glass half full and not a glass half empty. So that's beyond sitting here as a scholar at Brookings. But, you know, as they say, the young people — and I am old, so it may sound kind of crude — but don't believe all of the hype that you hear, because at the end of the day, depending on how you approach history is how you then solve problems. Do we have a challenge with regards to the debilitating effects that impact Black men? Yes, we do. But when we look at what affects Black men, we also had to look at the fact that we had to say a lot of his name in addition to her name with police shootings. We've had to figure out ways to actually bring back the type of economic stabilization among the Black community, starting with Black men.

For a long time — and, Jamal, you're a Morehouse man, so I can say this — we never led with the stat of the types of ingenuity and professionalism that came out historically Black colleges. So what I love about being a sociologist, it's all how you frame the question. And the extent to which you give to solution is when you go back to what Andre said, when you begin to go back to the source and when you begin to blow up the ideologies and assumptions that have led researchers to start with that as a problem and not necessarily look at how do you encase the problem around a broader historic view that continues to perpetuate the type of research that doesn't lead us toward forward thinking solutions. I'm sorry to say this.

There are a lot of Black men that work very hard every day. There are a lot of Black men who do not land up incarcerated. I got one of them. There's a lot of Black men who find themselves being good fathers. Even when they have two pennies to rub against each other, they still know how to love their children. But we don't tell those stories because we often start from — and Rashawn is nodding his head — from the point of oppression and discrimination, which I think for this administration is one of the things that the Congresswoman said, we have to start our history — Dr. Kaya Henderson has started this project called reconstruction — from a place of reconstruction of what does it mean to

reimagine where we start to get to where we end.

I'm going to stop, get off my soapbox.

MR. SIMMONS: Okay, okay. That's good.

MS. TURNER LEE: I'm going to get off, but I had to it. I had to do it. I'm sorry.

MR. SIMMONS: Let's stop there. And I want to give back to Rashawn. And then, Makada, I'm coming to you next.

So, Rashawn, you can get to whatever you want to get to here, but I want to also know what works. What are they doing that's going to make this work?

MR. RAY: Yeah. I mean great questions.

So my recent book was “How Families Matter: Simply Complicated Intersections of Race, Gender, and Work.” And we specifically focused on this. Pamela Braboy Jackson and I, we interviewed 46 Black, white, and Mexican American families, and there were a few things to note. The first big thing is we're hearing —— and I want to double down on it —– is that Black men relative to men in other groups are actually more likely to spend time with their kids, meaning they're more likely to bathe their children, they're more likely to do homework, they're more likely to eat with them, they're more likely to have conversations with them. So we first have to start with debunking stereotypes that overly criminalize and weaponize Black men's bodies and then the relationship that Black men and Black women have with each other. So that's the first thing.

The second thing we have to do is we do have to be honest that men, Black men and men of other groups, primarily view their role in the family and their identity more broadly as being linked to work. And our research shows that when men are unable to provide financially they double down on masculinity, and that's not good for them, their children, or their loved ones.

MR. SIMMONS: Right.

MR. RAY: So with that being said, where do we got with this? Well, the first big thing is —— and Black men are already doing this —— we just haven't expanded our conceptualization of what it means to be a man in a family. We have to expand that. We have such a limited view of what it means to be a man and what masculinity is. Men are performing all these acts all the time that we don't consider to be masculine or being what it means to be a man, but they're doing it. And if we would simply expand

our conceptualization, men growing up will start to view what it means to be a man. Doing dishes in the house, doing other sources of chores, cooking, doing the housework, doing the care giving with children. That is all part of being a parent, it's just part of being a human. And we have to be fair, that women continue to pull the second shift in ways they shouldn't have to.

With that being said, what do we do about it. Too many things I'll lead with. First big thing, I do think continuing to double down on criminal justice reform is important. And we know that Black men are significantly more likely to be incarcerated. At one point in time, when many of us were growing up, one out of three Black men were either incarcerated, on parole, or have a previous criminal record. That is a problem. Now, part of what that means is ensuring — and I'm sure Makada is chomping at the bit to talk about this as this is in her wheelhouse — is ensuring that men, when they get out — men and women, when they get out of prison, that they have the opportunities to reintegrate back in the space. We heard Mayor Scott talk about ban the box. We continue to know that research — sociological researcher Devah Pager talked this, showing that even when Black men don't have a criminal record they are actually less likely to get called back for a job than white men that have a criminal record.

So even beyond that, we know that race is playing a big role. So we need to ensure that there are vocational and technical programs put in prison that allow people to get the credentials they need so once they get out they can be paired up with employers and hit the ground running.

Second thing, we have to build on jobs that are vacant. And, of course, this is right in Nicol's wheelhouse in terms of tech jobs, but also healthcare jobs. Those are two of the top jobs in American. Black men are the group that is least represented in those two types of occupations. We have to do something to fulfill that gap and then all of the sudden Black men can start to get jobs that can create a livable wage so that they can take care of themselves and their family.

MR. SIMMONS: All right. And, Makada, this is from Selena, who is watching us have this conversation and it gets back to what Rashawn was saying, what policy changes should be created or introduced to effectively create jobs for released or exonerated Black men.

MS. HENRY-NICKIE: And that's a really interesting question. Let me get to it, but start somewhere different.

MR. SIMMONS: Sure.

MS. HENRY-NICKIE: I'll start off with the family structure question. We need to examine the impact of the Tax Cut Jobs Act on family structure. We know that during recessions Black families and Brown families are — we completely blended social networks and we hold each other down. So we may not show up for childcare because a grandmother or an aunt or a cousin is nested in that framework, and so they're providing that sort of social capital trade. I provide economic security, you provide me with childcare.

Now, when we know that our young men — I'm raising a young son — somehow at 17 the tax code sees him as an adult. He was in his 11th grade at 17, still a child, still me providing for him. But our tax code is so obsessed with the marriage penalty that it overlooks the fact that the family structure itself is penalizing Black and Brown families and immigrant families who do not fit that sort of picket white — that two family — I'm sorry, two parent, two children, and a home setting. And that's costing us to shift real dollars in real time from other places, like investing in our children's college education, to paying more than our tax burden. Let's talk about commissions and studies — we need to evaluate that.

Then I'll go to, you know, what should we be doing. What works is work, right. We've been really focused, of course for good measure, on COVID. In the meantime automation has slipped off to the sideline, but it doesn't mean it hasn't stopped working. Last fall both New York and Maryland I believe automated all of their bridges. As an economist, when I drive that space it makes me think about, well, who lost jobs — 1,100 toll workers, who were mostly part-time and low-wage, lost jobs to automation in the midst of a pandemic. With 10.5 million people out of work, they're at the back of the line for a recovery, right.

So what we need to do is look at what tools do we have available. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, WIOA, that's a pretty powerful part of our toolbox, but we're still thinking about tinkering with it on the edges. It's up for reauthorization. We shouldn't reauthorize it, we should redesign it because we have saddled hardworking workforce development boards with some impossible funding formulas that keep them serving people who, but for the little bit of help, can continue to make it on their own. But folks that are really into the deep need, we're not able to serve them well. And when they do, because they can't make it through training, they get penalized and their funding gets taken

away.

We want to measure. We've got to track — you know, to Camille's point. If we're not doing something we can't count it, but yet we've been taking away money from workforce development budgets in terms of admit and overhead so they can't collect data, much less process it.

And then one more thing on returning citizens and jobs. So I'll end there. We need to think broadly about the systemic needs that exist in our incarcerated adult population. 30% of incarcerated adults do not have a high school degree. So this new, you know, reinstatement of the Pell eligibility works for 64% of the incarcerated adults, but not for those other 30%. And of those folks that have a high school diploma, that's the floor. We know it's the floor. I mean in the general population a high school diploma gets you nothing.

But let's talk about functional literacy among those with a high school diploma. 49% of them are below basic on the OECD PIAAC measure. In term of numeracy, that means you can probably add two numbers together, but when you look at fractions and sort of understand proportions, you're struggling. So they're functionally illiterate and then you've got digital literacy on top of that. We need to examine, really examine what the needs are and say the floor is GED, the floor is high school diploma, but we've got to sort of package onto that occupational training. We've got the Pell, two experimental Pell programs that have already shown you can use that money to deliver short-term training and it helps to reduce recidivism rates, increase employment outcomes, and also delivers a wage premium. But not without addressing sort of structural basic education remedial needs. We're not going anywhere. We talk about 700,000 people reentering society. Truly the number is 7.9 million when you add state and local jails. Think about that kind of churn coming into the study — 10.5 million people unemployed has us, you know, in jitters. But yet on an annual basis that's the kind of churn we're seeing with returning citizens. We cannot continue to pretend that if I give you a skills based credential that's going to do something when we've got lawsuits stacking up with inaccurate background checks. BTB policies work, but sometimes they work in the reverse and harm Black men when employers can't check. And other times they have no effect at all on employment or earnings.

So research is there, we've got the evidence. We need to now ingest the evidence and have an informed policy to make real meaningful impact today, not in a generation.

MR. SIMMONS: Camille, let me let you get back in here. This is kind of our last round and I'm going to just start with you. There's a question from Zachary Williams, he's a public policy director here, he wants to know about putting into action a national Black agenda that will deal with some of these at the local, state, federal, national level. Is that something that is practical? And if it is or is not, what would one put in a national Black agenda?

MS. BUSETTE: Okay, so let me — I'm conscious that we want to get everybody else in here, so let me just say that the content for any sort of national Black policy agenda encompasses many of the things that we've already been talking about, so I won't go over that. But what I would say is that when you are talking about moving back at the local, state, and federal level, you have a couple of different considerations, one of which is, okay, what's in it. And then, secondly, what are you going to prioritize. But most importantly, how are you going to move that politically. And depending on where you are, the politics of that are going to be very different. So if you're in Akron, Ohio, you might be talking about it in a slightly different way than, you know, if you're in Atlanta.

So I would just say that everybody who is involved in pursuing and propelling a Black agenda is going to have a different — they're going to have some choices to make about how they frame it, what they prioritize. But I do think the key elements of, you know, jobs, income, health, education, housing, those key things should feature in anybody's Black agenda.

MR. SIMMONS: All right. Nicol, we'll put you in here next.

MS. TURNER LEE: Yeah, I mean I would say this — first and foremost, I think before you could start to talk about a Black agenda, I do think it's very important that we start with addressing racial polarization and racism generally. I think it's very hard to start with a Black agenda that does not include an ideological framing and re-shift that starts with many of the things that we saw in the various attempts that the prior president tried to overturn to recenter the importance of Black lived experiences and cultural life. That's the first and foremost thing.

I think the second thing with an agenda for Black America — and this may be a little bit off — but you've got to make sure that people continue to vote, vote locally, vote in cities, vote in state, vote at the federal government level, because many of the challenges hit we're actually talking about, they come because we do not have inclusive prosecutors or state attorney generals or sheriffs, essential

school board members that pay attention or position racial equity at core.

I also think, to Camille's point — I mean we know what the big rock issues — health inequities, educational disparities, location and housing, all the things that I think the Biden administration is actually attempting to resolve through executive order — criminal justice reform. But what I would put out there — just something to think about — is it's not just about those buckets, it's about what evidence based research and forward thinking policies make it so that we don't have to keep screaming Black lives matter. Black lives matter every day. Black history is every day. And I think it's important for us to begin to think about these issues on what do we do next to ensure — and I love the way Rashawn talked about it — that ensure that we're not talking about Black men as desolate fathers who don't care about their kids, but we're starting from a frame that allows to look at the importance of when you build up everybody, everybody wins. And part of the challenge going forward is if we don't break out of this pathological thought process, the agenda for Black America will continue to look the same way it did with regards to high surveillance of pathological issues that are designed to destroy Black communities. And I think that that's not where we want to actually see this going.

So I put that out there that I think the agenda for Black America is the agenda for all of America. But, most importantly, it starts with knowing and assuming where we are, but building upon the types of opportunities that actually lend itself to the building of a more perfect union.

So I'll stop there.

MR. SIMMONS: All right. Rashawn?

MR. RAY: Yeah, I mean, look, I mean Camille and Nicol have said it all. I mean I'll double down on a couple of things.

I think the first big thing, I mean we do have to think about the fact that we are pretty much about to see the most racially diverse cabinet in American history. And, you know, it shouldn't be a coincidence that Biden is leading the way after being vice president under former President Obama. His racial equity executive orders are powerful. But obviously they're just a start, and he acknowledges that.

Two big things that I think need to happen at the federal. First the George Floyd Justice and Policing Act needs to be passed by the Senate. It was passed by the House of Representatives, as all of you know, June 2020, on what would have been Tamir Rice's 18 year birthday. He would be a

freshman in college right now with Nicol's son. You know, like we have to be very realistic about the way these sort of things can impact people's families and then send a ripple, a collective memory through our communities and the type of connections that we make. So that's a must.

Second thing is, look, we have seen more people come out in 2020 to vote, not just democrats, republicans too. Like more people voted. Like Donald Trump got the second most votes in history, right. The point of me saying that is to acknowledge that democracy seems to be working for more people than it has before. With that being said, we can't roll back the clock with voter suppression and gerrymandering. We are already starting to see the way that George is being attacked. People are honing in on that Senate race, people are honing in on the governor's race. Finally that means we need to pass a John Lewis Voting Rights Act that is not temporary but that is permanent to ensure that there is federal oversight to make sure that when laws are starting to be put in place, such as having people in Georgia produce two I.D.s — I mean these are the kind of things that roll back progress that's very much in line with poll taxes that we've seen in the past.

And if we want to move forward toward racial justice and racial equity, helping people equitably get to the polls and then ensuring that regardless if a person is a journalist, a Ph.D., a physician, or a person who is a sanitation worker, or what have you, does not have to worry about police profiling them and potentially ending their life because they have Black skin.

MR. SIMMONS: All right. I'm going to break these brothers up and not go to Andre and go to Makada, just to keep everybody on their toes.

MS. HENRY-NICKIE: I think the agenda has to center the rules of the game, right. We have been so busy thinking about how to get people into the social safety net and how to expand it, but we don't think about what keeps them (inaudible), you know, keeps them cushioned until they're able to get on their feet. And I'll just provide an example here. This concept of poverty, for example, is very fluid, you know. In the workforce system, for example, you know, we're talking about earn and learn and apprenticeships, but the minute a TANF recipient starts onto this fantastic training model getting relevant skill sets and they earn something, it's not near subsistence, they start to look non poor in the TANF system and start to approach a benefits cliff. And all of the sudden you've got make a rational decision about should I protect my primary source of income, which at that point is TANF. And so when you make

that decision, what it ends up looking like is tropes and then these narratives around public responsibilities, but we lose site of the fact that we set this system up because back in the 1980s a lot of these rules are so codified to keep the welfare queen from benefitting just too much.

So we need to sort of think about how do we redefine the participation rules in terms of how you show up in the social safety net and how you persist until you are at the point of economic subsistence so that you can provide for your family members. We are pushing for the federal minimum wage, and I get that and I am fully supportive of it, but what we give with one hand, because of these other structural issues and these participation rules, we take away with another, right. So $15 an hour and small businesses rationally react by cutting hours and sort of keeping people, you know, further away from health benefits and others, then they're earning money. In the District, $15 an hour, you still need another $15 an hour to make it to minimum sort of living wage with a kid in your household. And still that's going to put your TANF benefits at risk. You're back again at the benefits cliff. So somehow we've got to figure out how to sort of stop this vicious cycle of poverty, get people off it if, and pretend that we're really about making a difference and making progress.

So I'll say that and end it here.

MR. SIMMONS: Say it. Say it again.

All right. Andre, you want to close us out here?

MR. PERRY: Yeah. First of all, I want to thank you, Jamal, for this wonderful panel and thank my colleagues for their rigorous responses.

I'll say this, I think there are a lot of agendas out there right now, and I'm going to challenge my colleagues that we should step up and provide a comprehensive platform for those agendas. It's incumbent upon scholars like us to identify what the home ownership goal should be, what the business development goals should be, what incarceration and criminal justice should look like in the future. We have a platform and we have got to use it to uplift those agendas because for the most part they all include many of the parts I mentioned.

But remember how Tavis Smiley with his — what was it, his contract for America or —

MR. SIMMONS: State of — no — yeah —.

MR. PERRY: Yeah, I can't —

MR. SIMMONS: I think the contract with America were the other guys. That was Newt Gingrich, but.

MR. PERRY: Yeah, they're — yeah, you know —

MS. TURNER LEE: I mean, no you didn't. Tavis —

(Laughter)

MR. PERRY: Excuse my memory. But the point is that scholars like ourselves, we have got to provide that platform for these issues.

And if there's one thing I will insert here that is very specific, we need a rigorous pursuit of white supremacists in law enforcement and the military. John Allen alluded to this, or mentioned this in his remarks. But if we can't weed out racists from law enforcement, all this work becomes that much more difficult. It's so much easier to get rid of a racist president than to get rid of racist mail people, teachers, police officers, but we have got to do that. In particular we need to do this in law enforcement and the military, people who can carry guns, right. I just want to be make that very plain. And that will set the tone on how we go after other people and other markets who do not belong there.

And so, again, I just want to thank you and thank my colleagues. I'm always learning something from them. I was taking down notes. But we will provide a platform for those agendas moving forward. I guarantee you that.

MS. TURNER LEE: And, Andre, don't forget the digital divide. I know I didn't talk about that.

MR. PERRY: Oh, yeah, digital divide too.

MS. TURNER LEE: Just make sure you don't forget about the digital divide, okay.

MR. SIMMONS: All right. Sounds good. All right. I'm going to close out here. We are a couple of minutes over our time.

I want to say this, and a couple of people heard me say this earlier, this is Black History Month and we talk about these questions and these problems that are on the table because they are so pertinent, they are so present in people's lives, and we've got to address them. And I think it is also helpful for us to remember that we come from a lineage of people who were faced with a set of problems in every generation and they took action. And they took some of those problems off the table for us.

There are things that we don't have to worry about that our parents and grandparents did. So it is incumbent upon us to find the set of things that we can fix in this generation so that our children and grandchildren aren't having the same conversation 40 years from now that we're having today.

So I want to thank everybody for being here. Happy Black History Month and we will see you next time.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you, Jamal.

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