

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION  
WEBINAR

BLACK LIVES MATTER AND THE ANTI-RACIST MOVEMENT IN FRANCE

Washington, D.C.  
Thursday, June 24, 2021

PARTICIPANTS

**Introduction:**

CÉLIA BELIN  
Visiting Fellow, Center on the United States and Europe  
The Brookings Institution

**Featured speaker:**

PAP NDIAYE  
Director, Palais de la Porte Dorée  
Professor, Sciences Po

**Discussants:**

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

RASHAWN RAY  
David M. Rubenstein Fellow, Governance Studies, The Brookings Institution  
Professor of Sociology, University of Maryland

\* \* \* \* \*

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

MS. Belin: Good morning. My name is Célia and I am a visiting fellow in the Center on United States and Europe at the Brookings Institution.

It is a pleasure to welcome you today to the 16<sup>th</sup> Raymond Aron Lecture. This lecture series was launched in 2004 and is named in honor of a great French man, Raymond Aron, who was a renowned political scientist, philosopher, journalist and a great friend of the United States.

Before we dive into the series lecture, I'd like to first take a moment to thank our partner. We are very grateful to the Embassy of France for their collaboration and support over the years. I want to particularly recognize Ambassador Philippe Étienne and the team at the French Policy Planning led by Manuel Lafont Rapnouil. Thank you for your support.

Today it is my great pleasure to welcome Dr. Pap Ndiaye who like Lafont Rapnouil is a great friend of the United States. Pap Ndiaye will give this year's Raymond Aron lecture on a top of great importance on both sides of the Atlantic.

The question of anti-racist movements both in France and in the United States. A little bit more than a year ago, George Floyd was murdered and his televised death compelled millions of Americans across the country to protest racism and police brutality. Throughout 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic raged in the U.S. and across the world, the Black Lives Matter movement inspired a global discourse on race and racism.

The movement found an echo in France which has also been experiencing its own anti-racist reckoning. No one is better placed to provide a comparative reading of anti-racist movements in France and in the U.S. as Dr. Pap Ndiaye.

Dr. Pap Ndiaye is professor of history at Sciences Po in Paris and is a director of the Palais de la Porte Dorée, home to the French National Museum of the History of Immigration.

As a historian, Ndiaye focuses on African American history and on the transnational philosophies of race drawing from both American and French thought. He notably authored an essay in 2008 entitled, "La Condition Noire, The Black Condition," which pioneered the field of French Black studies. Which is why it is our distinct privilege that he accepted our offer to give his perspective on movements for racial justice on both sides of the Atlantic.

We are also honored to be joined this morning by Dr. Rashawn Ray, a David Rubenstein fellow in the Governance Studies program at Brookings who will offer a response to Dr. Ndiaye's remark. Dr. Ray is also a professor of sociology at the University of Maryland. His research focuses on the mechanism that manufacturing and maintain racial and social inequality with a particular focus on police/civilian relations.

And last, but not least, our very own Dr. Camille Busette will moderate the conversation between Dr. Ndiaye and Ray. Dr. Camille Busette is the director of the Race, Prosperity, and Inclusion Initiative at Brookings and a senior fellow in the Governance Studies program. Dr. Busette's work focuses on systemic racism and the question of economic advancement. I expect this to be a fascinating conversation.

Finally, we are on the record today and streaming live so please send your questions via email to [events@brookings.edu](mailto:events@brookings.edu) or on Twitter using the hashtag #AronLecture. Once again, thank you all for joining us this morning for this important conversation. Dr. Ndiaye, the floor is yours.

MR. NDIAYE: Thank you very much, Célia. Thank you so much for this great and wonderful invitation by the Brookings. Thank you also to the French ambassador in Washington, D.C. It's a great pleasure and a great honor for me to speak this morning or this afternoon, Paris time on indeed a very important topic that of the anti-racist movement in France in light of the recent events a year ago that took place in the United States and that had such a strong echo throughout the world including in France, of course.

In my short presentation, I want to discuss and highlight a few points that maybe of interest to all of you. I want first to -- well, obviously, to insist on the international dimension of the anti-racist movement including in countries in Europe which didn't have previously so much of a strong history of organized anti-racist organization. Think of Switzerland, for example, which had such large demonstrations a year ago in Geneva or Zurich.

In France, tons of demonstrations took place last June and early July including large demonstrations in Paris by early June. Gathering tens of thousands of people which I will discuss briefly later.

My main point here is that it is important to look at the movement not as a spinoff of the

U.S. movement, the French movement not being a byproduct of the U.S. mobilization that took place a year ago.

Journalists and commentators mostly insist on the U.S. origin on George Floyd's murder and it goes which this murder had throughout the world which is true obviously. What I insist on to is that it is important to focus on the local dynamics, on the national dynamics which is not to say that the murder of George Floyd had no importance.

So what I want to insist here is the idea that anti-racism is an American import which is something that maybe quite commonly heard in France. Or some people would speak of the Americanization of anti-racism in France.

So I want to discuss this and I will also focus on another important issue which is that of the originality of the anti-racist movement in 2020 as compared to earlier anti-racist movements and end with a question about the main differences between the French mobilization and what took place. The American mobilization at the same time. I think it's nice to have some kind of comparative perspectives.

So let me get back to my first question which is that of the long history of anti-racist organizations in France which can be traced back to the 1920s following the First World War. So we are talking about a century of anti-racist organizations. While we could think of the League of Human rights that was created in the very late 19<sup>th</sup> first century.

But the 1920s are quite original in the sense that a number of organizations race-based organizations were created. In my work, I mostly focused on leagues created by Black activists and intellectuals in the 1920s. The league of defense of Black people. For example, a number of them were created at that time with connections with the United States. Du Bois was read, Du Bois troubled and stayed in Paris in the first few months of 1919.

Marcus Garvey also traveled to Paris and was well known and translated in Paris at that time. Cozu Tuvalu (phonetic), one of those French African activists traveled to attend to New York to attend the annual meeting of the United Negro Improvement Association. The association by Marcus Garvey at that time.

So we are talking about this long history of anti-racist organizations which parallels that of the United States. That had its ups and downs. There is no central organization such as the NWACP in

France for sure, but a number of organizations have survived sometimes for a few years, sometimes a little longer throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century up until recent revival in the years 2000 with creations of Lucon (phonetic), for example, in 2005. And more recently a number of Black Lives Matter groups that mushroomed around 2013, 2014.

So when we speak of Black Lives Matter in France, we're not talking about something that was created a year ago. While talking about something that has been around for a while. When I thought at Sciences Po up until recently, every year I participated in a meeting organized by the Sciences Po, Black Lives Matter France group. Each time there were about anywhere between 50 and 80 people attending those meetings and this was before the murder of George Floyd. So this long history needs to be told, needs to be remembered for sure.

In parallel to this history, there is also a long history of intellectuals reflecting on racial issues in France. Think of the Negritude movement, of course, as it appeared around 1935 with Senghor, Césaire and Damas. Of course, all connected actually to U.S. intellectuals from the Nadal (phonetic) sisters who are more and more well-known now as they were a little bit swept on the side by the male founders of the Negritude.

Think of the Presence African journal and publisher that was created in 1947 in Paris. And if you get through the Presence African journal you will read and you will realize how broad the scope was and a number of prominent intellectuals published in Presence African including Frantz Fanon actually before publishing "Peau Noire, Masques Blancs" paper in (inaudible) "Revolution Africaine" as well in another intellectual journal in the early 1950s.

Think also of, of course, of the famous 1956 Congress at the Sorbonne University of Black creators and intellectuals that had such a deep echo and impact in France with also U.S. intellectuals and novelists coming from the U.S. or who lived in France at that time. See Richard Wright, for example. Du Bois couldn't come. Others coming from West Africa, from Haiti, from the Caribbean in general.

All this was made. This long intellectual history is very precious because when looking at the relationship with the U.S. with African American thinkers and intellectuals, first of all, W.E.B. Du Bois. It is important to look at that in both directions.

Historians of the Harlem Renaissance, for example, know that it is almost impossible to study the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s without making the international connections with Paris, with London or so with the Caribbean that help understand what the Harlem Renaissance was all about at that time in the 1920s.

But think also of the time of this long conversation on race that has existed for a century between U.S. and French intellectuals. And when we speak of that it's not only about the U.S. influence over French intellectuals. It is also about the French influence over these African American writers and intellectuals.

The best example being that of Frantz Fanon. Frantz Fanon had a deep influence over the Black Power movement in the 1960s and a deep intellectual influence from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to such a point that as a grad student, I discovered Frantz Fanon in the United States and not in France.

In France, I had never heard of Fanon. I came to realize how important Fanon's writing was when in the United States. And I first read, Fanon in English, not in French because it was not easy to read and to hear about Fanon in France a few decades ago. When mentioning Fanon, people would laugh. People would say, oh, he's a kind of, you know, marginal writer so he was definitely swept under the rug.

So it is absolutely crucial to look at this long conversation as a way to criticize, of course, those who would argue and would speak of the recent Americanization of the anti-racist movement.

Now, it is also true that we have witnessed a revival and changes in French anti-racism since the 2005 or the late 2000s with U.S. influence. It is true that a number of people have contributed to think about or to rethink about these issues have spent time in the United States including myself. But again, this is not about Americanizing the French situation. It is about reintegrating. It is about also engaging into a fruitful conversation with our American colleagues and France.

So again, this long history needs to be told because the classic casual and intelligible history of France tends to neglect at best issues of race that are seen as foreign to our own society that are seen as an American import once again when we need to realize that those issues have been discussed, have been told in deep and interesting ways. Most of them appeal, most of them in marginal ways as opposed to the centrality of issues such as class in a Marxist sense that has very much

organized the way the social sciences have looked at inequalities in French society.

Women have also had to face similar issues when women studies, the history of women and gender histories were on the rise in the 1970s and '80s. Women, female scholars, had also to face a number of criticisms saying, oh, these are imports. This is not the reality of French society. We have a history of gallantry in France that protects us against what could exist in the United States and so on and so forth.

So it is always a tendency in France and possibly elsewhere to explain the rise of new intellectual or not so new intellectual thinking as coming from a growth, as not being local when in reality we're not talking about local realities. The reality of racial inequalities in France and the reality of those who studied these inequalities in France as well in conversation with activists and intellectuals abroad.

The point I want to follow up on too is precisely what happened a year ago with the murder of George Floyd as the demonstrators were protesting. Of course, what happened in Minneapolis, but also what happened in France in issues of race profiling by the police as well as police brutalities sometimes in a very racist way.

And the demonstrators, most of them, associated George Floyd with Adama Traoré. This young man who died in police custody in July of 2016. So demonstrations were very much with George Floyd and Adama Traoré. The U.S. referenced as well as a local situation which was similar although not the same as what happened in the United States.

So each time this would be true actually in other countries in Europe, in the U.K., in Germany and Switzerland. People would protest what happened in the U.S. while also talking about events. While also talking about forms of violence and structural racism that do exist in their respective countries. Sometimes not with Black people being race profile but sometimes with local situations, minorities one way or another.

The second point is the originality of the 2020 events and how original are those events, those demonstrations and the talks and the writings as compared to the previous time. The first point, I would highlight is that the demonstrations were definitely more diverse than the previous anti-racist demonstrations if you compare the demonstrations taking place in 2016 following the death of Adama Traoré.

As you will see on the few photos. People were mostly Black people, Afro-European people, Africans and of African and Caribbean descent as opposed to the demonstrations that took place a year ago where a large share of the demonstrators were white people. So that's something quite interesting to witness and I have never witnessed that for a very long time this broadening and a more diverse group of people demonstrating. And these are things quite similar, I understand that took place in the United States a year ago as well.

The second point I would highlight is that the demonstrations took place in highly central neighborhoods in Paris, for example, or in Marseille, in Neon, in Huang, in Strasbourg. Not in the suburbs unlike the demonstrations that took place the previous years, but in highly central neighborhoods in the urban space. People being in very central ways which was a smart as a way to attract more people through local transportation, of course, but also as a way to be more visible. And this is something that might echo demonstrations that took place also in the United States at the same time.

The third originality I would highlight is that women were at the forefront. This is not to say that women were not in the anti-racist movement through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the contrary, women have always been highly central. But women were not at the forefront as a spokesperson, as leading the movement when in France we have witnessed this shift from men to women when it comes to an anti-racist movement, the Black Lives Matter. The France organizers are mostly young women.

So this is something which I'm very happy about for sure, which is quite original and quite interesting. And again, we might compare this French situation to the U.S. or possibly to the U.K. where a new generation of young women, young activist have taken the lead and also, of course, built and thought about the connections between various forms of racial inequality but also gender inequality much to the despair of conservative thinkers who regret what they see, again, as an American import, which, of course, is not correct.

The last point I want to -- I'm not sure about the time, but I believe that my time is close to the end, right? The last point I want to highlight are the differences between France and the U.S. How different are the -- or is in the anti-racist movement in the U.S. from that of France.

I could first mention, of course, the scale. The scale is different, of course. France is a smaller country for sure. The anti-racist movement on the European scale doesn't have the same



homogeneity and the same lines as the U.S. anti-racist movement. It's more diverse. It's not as united. I don't want to exaggerate the homogeneity of the anti-racist movement in the U.S., of course.

But the European situation is real different so it's a difference of scale that could be seen as quite obvious. But what I would like to insist a little more is the history of anti-racism in France which is often seen as a history of defeats. So history of recent defeats with the rise of extreme right movements since the mid-1980s. Of course, and when looking at the past, it is often seen as something a little, you know, that doesn't give much hope.

It's sometime seen with a little despair. With also the decolonization processes that was not smooth to say the least in France with the two wars including one -- what? Let's put it that way in Indo-China and Algeria with the deep scars that the war in Algeria has left on French society.

But in contrast to the United States, I would say that we haven't had -- we never had the equivalent of the civil rights movement. So there is no history from the French standpoint. There is no history. There are no heroes. There are no heroes of anti-racism. Larger than life figures to which people could refer.

We don't have a Dr. King. We don't have a Malcolm X. We don't have these giants which is not to say that there were no people in France, no heroes of anti-racism. But there's heroes. All these people have often been marginalized or are celebrated in decolonized countries as people who fought against French colonization.

So the narrative of anti-racism in France doesn't have the great moments so to speak which it has in the United States. So it is not young activists in France for those who want to get into the anti-racist movement to think about this history. They don't have much to say about this history in contrast again with the United States.

So important thing I think when looking at this long history of anti-racism in France would be to reflect on this history and to build a narrative that would unite this history. That would unite also people who maybe celebrated in their newly independent countries but are not seen as French. Or not seen as part of French history.

This includes also issues raise into slavery as slavery is quite often seen in France as foreign, but the French of course slavery is part of French history. And we need also to tell about the

resistance to French slavery and the heroes that fought and sometimes and often died, of course, fighting slavery.

So all these I think is a significant difference when comparing the French and the U.S. situation. I just want to end with a few photos of the movement last year just for you to have a sense of how it looked like. I hope you see the photos.

So this is a photo of 2005 following the death of two young teenagers that prompted uprising, a major uprising in the suburbs of Paris and elsewhere in France. So these are the people. The young people, the mostly young people protesting in France and engaging into a revival of these anti-racist movement which I told you about earlier.

This is a photo following the death Adama Traoré as a way for you to illustrate the fact that few white persons participated in these demonstrations as you can guess on this photo. And these demonstrations were, in fact, much, much smaller than the demonstrations that took place in Paris last year.

This is Paris Merrill by a very famous artist named J.R. And you have the eye of George Floyd on one side and the eye of Adama Traoré. So they are all united you see on the same wall on a building in in Paris.

These are demonstrators. What is an originality also the demonstrators was that English was used. And it was quite new to me to see English language being used in these demonstrations. You see we can breath on the color of those who are being persecuted as it says on the left in French.

These are also photographs of people, demonstrators, of course, of George Floyd who was very much there. Black Lives Matter in the background. You can see here people demonstrating using English again. Sometimes, the icon breath being translated. You see here, I want (speaking French). It means I want to breath in French.

You can see also there's demonstrators in Paris. There were several demonstrations largest bringing together tens of thousands of people in spite of being said illegal by the police for sanitary reason, COVID reason.

Again, photos of young people, but you see how diverse it is just to give you a sense of what I'm talking about with this idea of there's large crowds and there's diversity.

Okay. I have already spoken too much. I'm going to end here. Thank you.

MS. BUSETTE: Dr. Ndiaye, thank you so much for a superb and very thoughtful consideration of the dynamic and longstanding anti-racism movement in France. You had brought up so many interesting themes that I know we will probably end up running out of time to discuss everything particularly with our audience.

For everybody who has joined us, I really want to welcome you. Thank you for joining us on this very interesting topic and it's been an absolute pleasure to hear Dr. Ndiaye give his perspective.

We are now going to move to Dr. Ray who is going to give us a bit of a response to Dr. Ndiaye's perspective. And then from thereon, we will have a very fast conversation between the three of us. And then we will move to audience questions and answers. So with that Dr. Ray.

DR. RAY: Thank you, Dr. Busette. I really enjoyed the comments, the presentation that was made. There are many parallels between the United States and France. I aim to highlight a few of them.

I mean first when we talk about protest mobilization. And we look at what's been happening around the world. Not just in the Americas. Not just in Europe. But literally around the world. I mean of course there's this centering around George Floyd's murder.

I think a lot of that is situated in the fact that we have video evidence. But of course, as many people that came out in the summer of 2021, we know that this has been a build up over a number of years that has really led to this spill over point.

We know before the summer of 2021, some of the largest protest we had seen was the Women's March in the United States in January 2017, which also spread around the world as well. And also had a social media component which is a theme that I'm going to highlight as we go along.

We know before that Michael Brown's killing in Ferguson, Missouri and the nine indictments of former Officer Darren Wilson for his killing in November of 2014 really helped spark the Black Lives Matter movement. But of course, this has origins in the killing of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman who, of course, was acquitted for killing a 17-year-old who was going to the store and purchase iced tea and some Skittles.

And as we think about this moment and we think about the connection between protest

and pandemics, this is nothing new not only to the United States but to other parts of the world as Jennifer Roberts recently wrote from Brookings “How We Rise.” And it speaks to a racial awakening that we're in right now that we haven't seen for half a century or more and is shifting attitudes.

I think the key question people are now starting to figure out is what else is it going to shift? I mean it's tittering when it comes to policy. But we also know that there's a backlash to some of that that I think we'll get to that we heard from Dr. Ndiaye about right wing extremist and white nationalists that have been popping up not only in the U.S. but also in Europe.

And oftentimes has some stronger historical connections in parts of Europe like France and Germany and Great Britain that obviously has links to what happens in the United States. And accordingly, people are starting to recognize that slavery in the U.S. is linked to European colonialism in Africa.

And of course, when think about that it collectively has roots in how we think about anti-Blackness around the world. And I think that is a key point particularly when we think about the academic writings of people that we heard mention from Frantz Fanon to W.B. Du Bois to even others we can include by James Baldwin and many more who we can also mention.

But I think in terms of talking about academics oftentimes they are the way that we can make these connections theoretically, substantiatively and empirically. When I think of Du Bois I also think about people like Carol Anderson who I think is one of the best minds and writers of our time who is a professor in a university in Atlanta.

One of her recent books is not only called the *Second* and about the Second Amendment, but the book before that was called *White Rage*, which actually popped up yesterday during a congressional hearing with General Milley. And he talked about how we need to link white rage to the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurgency.

And I think that is important to make that note that this is coming from the highest echelons of the military. And of course, when we talk about the U.S. military and we think about the way that the United States has infiltrate various areas around the world, we can make those important connections from the academic to the policy space and to obviously what's happening in the streets.

But of course, in the U.S. context one of the things that the U.S. does that is different in

some ways to what happens in France and in other parts of Europe as we think about kind of group identity and collectivism versus individualism is that in the U.S., we over individualize things.

So as we heard mentioned about Dr. King or Malcolm X. I mean these are of course people that we should hold up, but there are many others that we don't have a good history about because of the ways in which the United States actually frames history and the way that ethnocentrism operates in the U.S.

And accordingly, when we talk about police which is one of the big elephants in the room and the reason why this mobilization is happening is if we as bad as police killings are right now in the U.S. And I'll get to that in a second. There were more people killed by police in the 1960s.

And importantly Black civil rights leaders were being killed off. There are many that we can mention that had that particular pattern. And I think when we collectively think about this, it speaks to what happens in schools. And the current debate that is going on around a critical race theory and what students learn in school, which I think is important.

You know, there's a quote that I heard recently that I think is pretty profound which is that if Black kids are older enough to experience racism, white kids in America are older enough to learn about it. And I think that is the ways we that we move on whether we're talking about in the U.S. context. Whether we're talking about in France or other parts around the world.

Now, of course, one of the differences that people always try to note between the United States and France and other parts of Europe and it's notable but not in the way that people think about it. And Dr. Ndiaye really highlighted this. So we know that over 1,000 people are killed by police in the U.S. every year that's about a person every eight hours.

But this doesn't mean that racial profiling and brutalization does not occur in places like France. It definitely does. One of the key differences is the way that guns operate in the U.S. compared to France. But that doesn't mean that we still don't see racial profiling of Black people in France even when there's a citizenship component to it, which is also another important difference to note that citizenship matters in certain ways in France in ways that in the U.S. context we see it not mattering as much when we look at the roll back of voting rights. When we look at some of the restrictions of people's ability to navigate public space. So we can think through that.

The final point I want to make is about the power of social media to circumvent traditional modes of communication and education like in schools. We also know that social media has helped to highlight the relegation of women's voices and perspectives. This is why parallel hashtags or movements, if you will, like Say Her Name is so important.

Some of the research I've done with some of my colleagues, Melissa Brown who is at Stanford in particular, is we did an analysis of Twitter during the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. And we found that women who are leaders of the movement were less likely to be highlighted in the media. They were less likely to be re-Tweeted. They were less likely to be followed on social media. And this is part of the reason why Say Her Name has popped up.

So in addition to thinking about people who lost their lives like Breonna Taylor and Sandra Bland. It's also all the ones we don't know like one of the ones I always hold up is Korryn Gaines.

Korryn Gaines was killed by police in Baltimore, Maryland and the settlement for her killing is \$38 million. We put that in perspective to the \$27 million of George Floyd's family is receiving or the settlement. Not necessarily all the money they're receiving after lawyer fees and the stuff and the complications of the way the U.S. criminal justice system operates.

But just think about it that that is a settlement in a case that most people don't know. And I think it speaks collectively to the ways that we receive information and the way that social media can be used to circumvent traditional modes of communication. So I'll stop there. And I look forward to the conversation.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you, Dr. Ray. This has been an excellent set of perspectives and lots of interesting topics that I think we'll have a chance to cover in some depth.

I wanted to start, Dr. Ndiaye, with a question for you. Given the long history of anti-racism movements in France. I think it would helpful to our audience to understand what has been the official response to the demands that have been made, you know, over that long history?

Has there been progress? If so, what is it? If not, why is that?

MR. NDIAYE: Yeah. It is an important question. There is indeed there aren't official answers, of course. Which basically revolve around the longstanding French, let's say, political tradition to be officially color blind.

France is color blind so as a color blind country, we don't have any problems of racism, right? Because we don't care about skin color. Skin color doesn't matter more than eye color or hair color in France. That, you know, that could be the official answer. And the French pride themselves of having had no, you know, segregation laws, no Jim Crow laws.

There is a long tradition of African American intellectuals and writers coming to France as a way to escape racial violence in the United States. All starting in the 1920s. So France has also this major of being a country where the most brutal forms of racism do not exist the way they existed in the United States.

And yet, when looking a little closer, clearly things are not so obviously. And I like often to remind my students that in the early 1960, and we're close to the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what happened on October 17, 1961 when the police in Paris killed hundreds of people. Hundreds of Algerians who were thrown into the Seine River in the most brutal and lethal ways.

So when talking about these forms of violence, we also have a long history of it. But officially speaking, color blindness, French universalism is supposed to protect us against the most brutal forms of racism. And so, it's often a form of denial, which is a little less true these days as the French government has created agendas to fight racial discrimination in France, but the official agenda is often seen as a problem by the French government which does not often listen closely to what people specialized in racial discrimination have to say.

So I think to sum it up, I think the French have moved to a light form of denial. You know, it's not perfect in France, but it's worse elsewhere especially in the United States. That could be something like the official discourse that can be found in France.

MS. BUSETTE: Okay. Thank you. Dr. Ray, in contrast would you say that we've had a different policymaker response particularly to the Black Lives Matter demands? But in general, how would you contrast the official responsive with what Dr. Ndiaye has just mentioned?

DR. RAY: Yeah, I think it depends on who you ask. I think that the big point that we just heard is from the top down. It is a very color blind approach in France which we can even juxtapose not only to the U.S. but also to Great Britain and Germany. And the different ways in which they even classify people.

And I think that is an important point. I mean whether or not we talk about information that's collected during a pandemic like COVID, for example. Racial data and otherwise. So in the U.S., U.S. is people would say is quite racially conscious. But when we look at the response, the response really depends on who we ask when it comes down to policy.

There is some people particularly on the right, Mitch McConnell has said this a lot that he thinks that having a black president and ending slavery 156 years ago is enough for us to get past racism. But instead, there are tons of outcomes that we can highlight why that actually falls short of reaching a true equitable democracy in the United States. And that's fundamentally because the U.S. has never truly dealt with slavery or anti-Blackness.

And I think it's important for people to recognize that reconstruction in the United States failed. And we don't have time for me to go into a soliloquy and a history lesson on that, but that is important to note.

I think the other thing is how we think about voter turnout. We know that in the 2020 U.S. election more people came out to vote than ever before. Had percentage wise one of the highest voter turnouts ever. And in response to that there are some state legislatures and even some in Congress who have made it more difficult to vote for certain people in states.

Like in my great state of Tennessee where I was born in Murphysboro. It's easier to buy a gun than vote. And I think that speaks to one of the key differences between the U.S. and France in terms of access to certain types of weapons which I think when it comes to leasing them fuels a level of threat that doesn't exist in the same way in France as it does in the United States. At least to a justification of a use of force in the U.S. context.

We also know that, hey, look there's a lot of symbolism in the U.S. I mean look Juneteenth was just passed as the 11<sup>th</sup> federal holiday. And while it's important as I wrote for "How We Rise" with Andre Perry that we need to celebrate this and we need to embrace.

I want people to think about this. And since France's neighbor is Germany and I don't think I've said this here, but I spent some time teaching at the University Monheim in Germany. And spent quite a bit of time in Europe obviously including in France.

And think about it like this. Imagine if the only thing that Germany had done to this point



is to give a federal holiday 156 years after the Holocaust. Of course, this is even fast forwarding more. That is the current state as it relates to the relationship between the United States engaging in a restorative process.

The other thing is the George Floyd Justice and Policing Act has not passed Congress yet. It passed the House of Representatives. I was with Congresswoman Karen Bass who helped to draft that legislation earlier this week and supposedly something is coming because we know that Derek Chauvin is going to be sentenced tomorrow unless they end up moving that back.

So we can think about these connections. Yes, it's a lot of attitudinal shift. Yes, it's a lot of cultural shifting. Yes, it is symbolism. But that does not always come along with transformative and reparative policy.

MS. BUSETTE: Right. Thank you very much, Dr. Ray.

Dr. Ndiaye, did you want to respond to that? I have another question of course. But if you look just very engaged. I wanted to make sure that we were able to accommodate you if you wanted to.

MR. NDIAYE: I full heartedly agree with what Rashawn just said. I just want to mention as a way to be in align with his comments is the fact that in France we do not have a racial statistics that could properly highlight the forms of inequalities that I'm talking about.

And when it comes to the COVID crisis, we suspect, of course, and we have many estimates that nonwhites have paid a higher price to crisis than white people. But officially speaking, we don't know. We have no idea about that. No clear idea unlike the United States. We know that African Americans had twice as many die, I mean dead people than white people and this is all I can say.

So why a deficit of knowledge when it comes to addressing those issues which is of course also an outcome of this color blind policy I'm talking about. Although, it is possible to have the statistic. I mean, but in a kind of an official on the side. And when it comes to the health crisis, it is quite clear that we don't have and we won't have any statistics beyond statistics related to geography and class, what the French usually do.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you, Dr. Ndiaye. I want to stay with you and ask you a little bit about racism and that term. And how it is understood and maybe how those meanings have shifted and

evolved over time with the anti-racist movement in France.

When you think about racism in that term, how are you thinking about it? How are folks in the basis movement in France thinking about that? And how do you think that might contrast with the U.S. kind of definition and narrative around racism? And then, Rashawn, I'm going to ask you the same thing.

MR. NDIAYE: Yeah. It's an important question because for the longest time the racism in France was thought in terms that we're deeply influenced by the Second World War and the decolonization movement of the 1950s.

So racism was about fighting evil. Was about fighting the deep forces of evil and uprooting. Anti-racism was about uprooting the bad or presentation and stereotypes and prejudice that people may have. So education was seen as highly central as a way to fight racism in the official policies.

When in the same time a major issue was swept on the side which was the issue of discriminations. Racism was seen as, you know, the most brutal, obvious ideological forms of racism coming from the long French history of official racism in the social sciences, for example. And official discourses before this world war.

But in the other hand, racism discrimination, the fact that people cannot get a job or cannot rent an apartment or can be harassed by the police was something that the French never addressed up until recently when this agenda was created in the years 2000.

So we've seen this interesting shift from fighting racism as an ideology as it was the case for decades to fighting in more pragmatic ways the effects of racism and the issue of racial discrimination which have come to the forefront as people realize that not finding a job because you're Black is a central issue that has deep consequence on life. And this issue is possibly as important if not more important for those involved directly concerning people than the issue of fighting racism as an ideology in the traditional sense of the word.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you. Dr. Ray?

DR. RAY: Yes. I mean most definitely. I mean, look, when we talk about racism and defining it. Racism operates on multiple levels. We oftentimes overly simplify it as being interpersonal. As something that happens in a social interaction between two people or groups of people.

But instead, it's part of this racial awakenings doing for not just people in the United States but people in Europe and around the world. It's leveling up this knowledge to understand that racism operates also on a systemic level to influence our social institutions.

Historically, as we just heard there's been a reliance when we talk about race to situate racial differences to be about biology and genetics because we're still limited on the variables that we use to capture racism. It's been difficult to capture systemic racism in statistical model because we overly rely on attitudinal variables. And even as, you know, as you all know it as social scientists, we overwhelmingly do that.

We take an attitudinal variable and then we make interpretative leaps that we get, but it's difficult for people to know and it's also systemically and even out of states, we know that racism exists in the housing market whether that be with appraisals. Whether that be with the type of loan that people receive for their home. Or whether or not people even receive it.

Jobseekers who are seeking a job, there is evidence documenting that if a Black person attended an Ivy League school that does little to actually give them a boost even over people who attended a state school. And, of course, we can get into the details on whether or not that should even be the case or not. But nonetheless, we see a racial gap there.

We also know that Black people who don't have a criminal record. Research has documented are actually less likely to be hired or called back for a job than white people who do have a criminal record.

We in policing, obviously, we know that Black people are actually more likely to be killed by police when they're not attacking and do not have a weapon. Not just to whites but even to the baseline of a number of Black people that are killed.

And then in health, I think it's important to note that there's a lack of empathy. Not only do I think the maternal and infant mortality gap between Blacks and whites is one of the most horrendous things that we could point to. And, of course, there's an overreliance on biology and genetics until people like Beyoncé or Serena Williams come out who are two of the fittest people on the planet come out and talk about their own birthing experience.

We also know that Black people oftentimes get lower quality organs for transplants like

kidneys. And then in the NFL where they just had a multibillion-dollar lawsuit even at baseline for what they considered intelligence. And I don't even have time to get into the details here. But at baseline Black players review is having a lower intelligence level.

So that means in order to show that you have a deterioration from playing football, you actually have to score even lower on the test.

In France as we heard, the making of migrants and the importance of citizenship is really played up because the data for highlighting racial differences doesn't always exist in France as it does in the United States. And I think the bottom line is that data is really important to be able to firmly get at people's every day experiences.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you. I want to press a little bit more and talk a little bit about anti-Black racism in particular and how that manifests itself and how that is actually countered by the anti-racism movements both in the U.S. and in France. So, Dr. Ndiaye, I'm going to have you speak to that first.

MR. NDIAYE: Yeah, I think that these are similarities between France and the U.S. when looking at the specificities of anti-Black racism as opposed to anti-Arab racism which is also very strong in France.

Anti-Black racism, it seems to me, from the natural prodigals standpoint has this uniqueness of being obsessed with black bodies. This obsession and this centrality over black bodies, over the threat by black bodies or what black bodies mean is quite unique, I would argue, to the various forms of racism that have existed for centuries.

Of course, it is linked to slavery and to the numerous discourses that have been developed or since the 16<sup>th</sup> century to connect slavery, more than slavery, to the enslavement of Africans as opposed to early forms of slavery. So I think that this focus, this obsession with black bodies and how to make black bodies work and make profit. And in the same time, controlling black bodies because they would present a threat by old means from a medical standpoint, but also as a physical prisons is really central.

And when thinking of the murder of George Floyd, for example, or the murder of so many young black men in the past, it is often quite striking to see that the use of violence by the police. See

how George Floyd was killed by this knee over his neck for eight or nine minutes, it represents this idea of controlling the body of making sure that the body doesn't move. That these George Floyd, this man was being properly controlled.

So this is really, really to me very central as opposed to anti-Arab racism that exists that is very strong in France which has an obsession which is more towards religion, you know, the beliefs or anti-Asian racism which has also different forms. So I would highlight the centrality of -- the anthropological centrality of that bodies.

MS. BUSETTE: Great. Thank you. Dr. Ray?

DR. RAY: Yes. I mean I'm over here taking notes because I mean that really captured it.

I mean, in the U.S. context, everything is situated in comparison to blackness. The one drop rule which originates back to slavery meaning if you have one drop of Black blood you were considered Black. Of course, this was one of the ways that slave owners were able to continue to relegate Black people even children that they actually birthed. And of course, led to a host of things whether that be about the brown paper bag test and the role of skin tone in the U.S. context, which operates in France and in Europe in similar ways, but often times in a very stronger component in the way we just heard. Not just about blackness and whiteness, but what part of Northern African you're from or what part of supposedly the Middle East you're from and what your skin tone is.

And even within the race, we see the juxtaposition of the way that people are treated which really in the U.S. context speaks to people's ability to supposedly pass. But what I always find interesting about this is it is interesting how we never prime whiteness as a race. And what we do, like the current discourse in America, the backlash is sharp and fierce.

America overwhelming emphasizes whiteness in economic terms. And by doing that we miss some very important components of what happens in people's everyday lives that social scientists have pulled out theoretically that historians have pulled out theoretically and even humanists to highlight that whiteness is much deeper and goes beyond economics.

We can't simply think about it like that because, of course, there are tons of poor white people in the United States. And they say, oh, you want to talk to me about racism? Look at my everyday life. And part of what people are trying to say is, look, yes, there is a huge economic

component, but whiteness also brings along with it this social and cultural benefit that are not discussed enough.

And so, by focusing on blackness alone, we miss this. It is only then when we center what Du Bois calls the rages of whiteness do we get Carol Anderson's highlight of white rage and what happened on January 6<sup>th</sup>.

MS. BUSETTE: Well, excellent and, of course, very provocative which is fantastic for our audience.

I'm going to go to one more question for the two of you and then we're going to move onto audience question and answers. So this question is really about public spaces and what happens when Blacks or others who are targeted by racisms and discrimination occupy those public spaces. And how and if those public spaces are regulated? And how does that kind of regulation of public space may or may not differ in the U.S. and France.

And so, I'm going to actually start with Dr. Ray and then Dr. Ndiaye will have the last word of this section.

DR. RAY: So I've done a lot of research on what happens in public spaces particularly around physical activity. I want to juxtapose the experience of Ahmaud Arbery who was a 20 something year old Black man who was killed in Southern Georgia for running in a predominantly white neighborhood.

We can also think about a student at Yale University who was sleeping in the common area. Students do that all the time and she had the police called on her. And, of course, she was a Black student. And collectively what this speaks to is the protection of white spaces that when we talk about policing oftentimes policing often times has the liberty to engage in state sanctioned violence to protect property over people.

If we think about the protest last year and some of the narratives that were coming out of law enforcement. Some of the narratives that were coming out of the media, it was about protecting property over people. And part of what the protestors were trying to say is that, look, we don't want to see buildings burned down either, but buildings can be replaced, people's physical bodies cannot.

And I think that is something to highlight when we talk about a reliance on public spaces

that oftentimes is used as a justification to police people. We can also think about zoning practices and the way that that plays out. Whether it be about school zones. Whether that be about homeowner's associations. Whether that be about voting redistricting.

It becomes about protecting a certain form of vote and making these spaces exclusive in ways that we see all across the United States that speak to not just anti-blackness in these public spaces but really the protection of certain groups of people over others.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you.

MR. NDIAYE: Yes, France doesn't have the same history of segregation as the U.S. of course. Especially Europe and segregation. Things are a little fuzzier in France with no, you know, district laws, redlining the way that it exists or covenant laws the way that they existed in the U.S. for decades.

But clearly, those issues do exist in France as the police doesn't behave the same way in the predominantly white neighborhoods or non-white neighborhoods. The mixing of class and racial issues does create specific neighborhoods where the police behave in different ways.

For example, in France, we have these differences between the you and those, you know, *vous* and *tu*. *Tu* being an informal way to speak to someone. But the police may use the *tu* when talking to someone they don't know, which is not the proper way to interact with a person. And yet, the police does that but would not do that, of course, when talking to a white person.

All those issues, there's every day humiliations are part of the experience of the larger share of the youth in France. And people protest in France -- not, well, they protest of course massive acts of violence such as the murder of Adama Traoré, for example, or George Floyd.

But they also protest the everyday little things, you see. The everyday interactions with institutions. The everyday behavior of the police. The everyday of little things that accumulate and create situations which are seen as intervariable and create apprising.

So all these are important and it has a geographical dimension. It has a spatial dimension. It happens here. It doesn't happen there. And all those issues need to be studied. But again, as we said earlier, our little bit of knowledge in France when it comes to those issues is significantly lower than in the United States as officially speaking, we don't study race as a legal and

meaningful category to understand inequality.

So the first step, and I said as is color is, you know, to accumulate knowledge. And knowledge is food for thought. It is also food for action. It is the possibility to do things and to push forward and to put pressure onto the authorities and say, look. Look at the data. We need to do something about that. We need to do something about the police. We need to do something about the hospital system. We need to do something about education and so on and so forth.

So this need for data. This need for more social science is something which is harshly debated these days with a lot of people protesting what they understand as again an Americanization of our society. But I also believe that as I said this is absolutely a necessity. Knowledge is an absolute necessity if we want to understand better what are the social forces which are playing in French society these days.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you so much. We're going to move audience question and answer. I want to remind our audience that we have two ways to reach us. One is [events@brookings.edu](mailto:events@brookings.edu) and the other one is #AronLecture.

So we've already received some very interesting questions. And I'm going to tee up one here which is really about -- it is a topic we haven't really discussed in much length, which is about the rise of the right. And the impact the rise of the right has had on the way -- on the official responses to anti-racism movements.

So, Dr. Ndiaye, I'm going to let you answer that first. We want to get in as many questions as possible so if we can be direct then we can move onto Dr. Ray for that question as well.

MR. NDIAYE: Yeah, the rise of the right, not the traditional right, but the, you know, the extreme right which has a strong political basis in France with the (inaudible) Nationale is a major issue that has also intimidated the whole political spectrum in ways which are such that anti-racist activists are often seen as more dangerous than racist people themselves.

The major effect of right rise is that it's not easy to find among politicians and friends competent and willing spokespeople who would, you know, be efficient when fighting racism that we build their political career on anti-racism. Anti-racism is often seen as something that will go to, you know, to go to problematic to embrace.



So we are talking about the major effect of the rise of right which means to marginalize or try to marginalize anti-racism that is why what happened a year ago was so important because it was a way to make it visible what the extreme right wants that is to make invisible anti-racist activists.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you. Dr. Ray?

DR. RAY: Yeah. I'll just quickly say that the Department of Homeland Security in the United States has put out a few reports in recent years.

And according to them as well as my research the biggest threat to democracy in the United States is domestic terrorist primarily right-wing extremists who are white nationalists and white supremacists. We saw that on January 6<sup>th</sup>. I think in many ways there are a lot of other examples that we could highlight, but I think what we heard from the General yesterday in Congress speaks to when you follow the data, you come to that conclusion. And it is definitely something that needs to be addressed.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you, Dr. Ray. Dr. Ndiaye, has there been any -- this is also an audience question -- has there been any discussion of reparations for Black citizens in France similar to the kinds of discussions we've had here?

MR. NDIAYE: Yes. It is an emerging issue although not on the same level as in the United States. It's still fairly marginal being discussed by scholars and being discussed by people actively involved into the anti-racism movement, but it is somehow on the rise with issues regarding the creation. The recent creation of the museum of slavery that is painted in the French Caribbean and the island of Guadeloupe with the first point to think about knowledge and to have a better understanding of slavery as it existed in France.

A need for museums and for more education. This debate has been very, very central. And it comes to more it's a financial issue. This is really something that is almost a tabu. In politics some people just go ballistic when they hear about that. So I think we need time to discuss those issues, to create a democratic conversation. And museums, of course, education have a central role into engaging and creating this democratic conversation.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you so much. So we are just about at time. Dr. Ray, did you have any closing thoughts you wanted to share with us? And then, Dr. Ndiaye, we'll have you close us out.

DR. RAY: Let me on the topic of reparations in the United States, there has probably never been a better moment with what's happening now. Not only at the local and state level are we seeing passing of legislation for reparations, but on the federal level.

The classic 1989, when it was first introduced, HR 40 passed a subcommittee in the House of Representatives. There's a truth and reconciliation legislation being made there by Representative Barbara Lee.

And so, there's a lot of momentum in this space right now. And I think a lot of people are paying attention to what's going to happen in Congress around policing and reparations.

MS. BUSETTE: Great. Thank you, Dr. Ray. Dr. Ndiaye, your final thoughts?

MR. NDIAYE: Yeah. Well, you know, as a conclusion, I would just say that we need more than ever to maintain well and alive these trans-Atlantic conversation on race that has existed for a century. It's a very fruitful -- it's absolutely democratic and it's absolutely essential when addressing our respective problems in the United States, in the Caribbean and France and Africa. Wherever you want around the Atlantic Ocean. We absolutely need forms of conversation.

Also forms of activism into follow up these long and proud tradition of thinking together, acting together which is not to say that the countries are similar, the national situations as we know very well are different. And yet, we have issues that can be fought together. We have issues that can be effectively reflected on a trans-national level. That is why this initiative by the Brookings is so welcomed because it is so much part of this long and fruitful history I'm talking about. So thank you so much.

MS. BUSETTE: Thank you, Dr. Ndiaye. Thank you, Dr. Ray. And thank you to our audience for joining us for this important conversation. We are now done and I hope everybody has a great day. Thank you.

MR. NDIAYE: Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you, Rashawn.

\* \* \* \* \*

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

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

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2024