THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

THERE IS NOTHING FOR YOU HERE:
FINDING OPPORTUNITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Introduction:

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Keynote Conversation:

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Panel Discussion:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. ALLEN: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is John Allen, and I'm the president of the Brookings Institution. It's a great pleasure to welcome you today to the book launch of "There is Nothing for You Here: Finding Opportunity in the 21st Century." Published earlier this month, "There is Nothing for You Here" is a timely work that examines the political, economic, and social dynamics that have shaped democratic crises in the United States, in the United Kingdom, and Russia. And it does so through the prism of the author's life. Written by British-born Dr. Fiona Hill, who is currently the Brookings Robert Bosch Senior Fellow in the Center for the United States and Europe, "There is Nothing for You Here" follows Fiona's extraordinary journey from her forgotten coal mining town in northeast England to studying Russia at Harvard University. And finally, to the White House where she served in several capacities under three U.S. administrations, including most notably and most recently, her role as the senior director for European and Russian affairs on the National Security Council from 2017 to 2019.

But "There is Nothing for You Here" is so much more than simply a memoir. After the fall of the Soviet Union nearly 30 years ago, many experts thought that Russia would veer more towards the democratic norms of the West and the United States. Yet, as Fiona looked back on her experiences, she actually found the contrary. In her book, Fiona draws parallels from the 1980s United Kingdom that she grew up in, to Russia at the turn of the century. And to the United States today, she illustrates the similarities between the decline of coal and manufacturing jobs near her hometown in England to the lack of employment in America's rust belt.

She shows how Russian President Vladimir Putin used popular narratives and populist depictions in his early 2000s as the leader in Russia, to being similar to President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan from his 2016 and 2020 presidential campaigns. And with regard to the 45th president, who many critics blame as the catalyst for the decline of democracy in the United States, Fiona offers a different perspective, suggesting that the Trump administration was symptomatic of greater structural issues that rattled the very foundations of American democracy today.

In her clean prose, Fiona writes lucidly on the frustration and the fear of people left behind and how their lack of social and societal opportunities have led to democratic crises that we face

today, not just in America, but around the world. Only through genuine policy reforms that can address the needs of all of those who call this great country home, she argues, will America finally begin to heal from its divisive wounds.

I have no doubt that in time, this work, "There is Nothing for You Here," will be considered an essential resource for many of us within the United States and around the world as we reckon with the many transnational threats such as climate change, and societal racism, and economic inequality. Threats that we face every single day to understand how these erode the underpinnings of democratic governance. And before I turn the floor over to Brookings Senior Fellow Mike O'Hanlon, who will be the moderator for today's keynote conversation, a quick reminder that we're on the record and we're streaming live. And please feel free to submit your questions via email to events@brookings.edu. That's events@brookings.edu or on Twitter using #ThereIsNothingforYouHere.

So, with that, Fiona, again, a sincere congratulations on this remarkable achievement and the success already of this book. It is a testament to your successful career, your deep expertise, and your indominable spirit, all in one. So, Mike, the floor is yours and over to you.

MR. O'HANLON: John Allen, thank you very much. Fiona, what a treat for me to be part of this conversation today, and congratulations. I got to say just a quick word of introduction and a little bit of gushing myself. I remember when we were so happy to welcome you back to Brookings after your remarkable tenure of service in the Trump administration. You started talking about the idea for this book and I knew right away that it was, knowing you, you didn't want to write a kiss and tell. You didn't want to just write one more Trump memoir, so to speak. You wanted to really wrestle with these themes that you had witnessed and experienced in your own life that really seemed to intersect your experience growing up in an economically challenged part of England, your work on Russia, and then your experiences in the United States.

And I have to say at first, as much as I admire your skills, I wasn't sure you could do all that in one book and have it come together and really cohere. But it did. It does. It is one of the most remarkable books I have read in years. It is, perhaps, the best-selling Brookings book of all time. Recently in the top-ten list on the New York Times best-seller list. And I don't know how you do it, but let me just start by saying, congratulations, and I look forward to talking more today. But, wow, well done on

an amazingly challenging and very important manuscript.

MS. HILL: Well, thanks, Mike. And you were one of the first victims of reading it too. So, I'm very appreciative of all of your suggestions as well to help improve it.

MR. O'HANLON: Well, you know, I got to say for those who haven't yet decided whether to buy it and haven't yet read it, not only is there incredibly uplifting thinking and from a very serious diagnosis about problems in society, but there is humor. There is witticism. There is Fiona's classic self-deprecating kind of view of herself, but at the same time a confidence that comes through knowing that what you're doing with your life is important and sensing that there are so many other people who want to help pull this country together. And your efforts to try to chart out a path forward building largely on our colleagues in other research programs. I know that's what the panel discussion is going to get to with Ed Luce leading the way from the Financial Times in about 25 minutes.

So, just for those who are tuning in, the game plan. I'll have the pleasure now of about 20 minutes of conversation with Fiona. She'll then stay on and join a panel that Ed Luce from the FT will moderate and your questions, as John Allen just said, will be welcome at events@brookings.edu, should you with to chime in.

But, Fiona, I have to start with Russia because you and I are foreign policy folk and your job was Russia and Ukraine and Central and Eastern Europe on the NSC. And you also, seven or eight years ago, wrote one of the most important books on Russia that I've ever read, “Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin,” you wrote with Cliff Gaddy. And, you know, let me just put the question to you this way about the state of U.S.-Russia relations. We see again in today's news that there are concerns about Solar Winds hacking and more, you know, more kinds of Russian cyber sleuthing, cyber-attack. Obviously, the relationship is not stable, and Vladimir Putin looks like he's ensconced in the Kremlin for a long time to come.

But do you at least take some hopefulness and solace in the sense that it looks to me, at least, as if NATO has held together pretty well through these seven years, through the Trump administration and Obama and Biden. Through lots of different governments in Europe through Brexit. Through all the shenanigans that Putin has continued to try to carry out in various countries, you know, a lot of disinformation and so forth. And in fact, we've even beefed up our defenses at least in military

terms in the Baltic States and Poland. Is there any reason to feel a little better about the situation today compared to seven years ago when Putin seized Crimea and started to stoke up unrest in the Ukraine?

MS. HILL: Look, I think there's always room for optimism. And you and I, Mike, are definitely incorrigible optimists. Even though, you know, I think we also recognize that things are pretty tough as you've laid out. And we could have gone on, really couldn't we, of the kind of catalog of issues and problems here in the relationship. And that, I think, is the main dilemma that we have right now. There's not a positive trajectory forward for the foreseeable future. In part because we've got ourselves stuck into this confrontational relationship. It would be nice if states would actually like to manage that confrontation off onto a glide path in a way to basically fade away completely.

Putin, however, and the group around him, need to keep that confrontation in the forefront managed, so that it doesn't kind of blow up, but because it's used for mobilizational purposes inside. You mentioned that Vladimir Putin seems sort of set to be here not just for the foreseeable future, but well into the long term. There have been amendments to the Russian constitution suggesting that he can run for two more six-year terms after 2024, taking him up to 2036, which is a really kind of a remarkable span that he will have been at the helm of Russia either as president or prime minister. I mean, essentially, for 36 years. And that'll be the longest record for anyone, you know, kind of certainly in recent memory. And he'll become more than he even is now, a historical Russian figure very much along the line of Vladimir the Great. Which is, you know, really what he's aiming for right now seeing himself in the pantheon of great kind of Russian historic leaders.

And that's problematic for us because of the nature of the system. It always needs to have some kind of enemy. Because Putin is presenting himself as sort of the defender of the faith. The Russian Orthodox faith, you know, the kind of cultural and value set that is being presented around modern Russia. And, basically, the defender of the country itself. And what are you defending it against if the United States disappeared away? Because Russia like the rest of us is pretty focused on China. Russia not wanting to get into a competition with China as we seem to have moved ourselves into as well, but Russia basically wanting to create a strategic partnership with China.

And when we want to focus on China, Russia wants to make sure that we remember at all times that Russia is there. So, what we have to do is figure out a way of managing this so that we can

kind of defuse the situation. And I think we can only do that -- and this is where, you know, the optimism comes in -- with our allies. Because I think at this particular juncture, a lot of our other European allies and others around the world have realized how problematic the relationship with Russia is as well.

At different points it looked like just we and Russia were involved in some spats over issues. But the annexation of Crimea came out of a dispute with the European Union about Ukraine having an association agreement. Not with us, though Russia's trying to turn it into a proxy war with us, all of the conflict in Ukraine. And the same kind of hacking and assassination attempts and all kinds of things that have affected relations with the United States has also affected European countries too. The being, you know, the murders of political opponents in other countries. There have been efforts to infiltrate the Parliament's email and other sort of systems just like there have been here. And, of course, Alexei Navalny, the opposition leader, the assassination attempt against him. It was the Germans that sort of can take responsibility.

So, I tend to think that if we can work together with our European allies, and not just in the NATO context. I mean, you were suggesting something much broader than that as well. We have a sense of solidarity. We may be able to blunt the effects of Russian action over time, you know, change the situation.

MR. O'HANLON: By the way, speaking of European allies, I should have thanked the Robert Bosch Foundation for its work with us and support, and, of course, many European friends, as you say.

I want to ask one more question on Russia, which is motivated in part by your book on Mr. Putin, and the way in which you and Cliff documented the evolution of his thinking over the years. And you painted a picture of a half dozen different Putins who were influenced by different ways of thinking. You know the great nationalist, the historian. There was even a Putin the reformer as I recall at one time.

But also, in the early 2000s, Putin did not seem to want to have a bad relationship with the United States. You know, he had the famous visit to George Bush's ranch. He was the first foreign leader to call with condolences after the 911 attacks. He seemed to want to create a grand, global counterterrorism coalition in which Russia and the United States would almost be collaborating. And we

would wink and nod at what he did to the Chechens, and he would help us against Al-Qaeda. And as I recall from your book, it took until about 2006 or '07 that Putin really firmly turned against the West and developed this anger that seems to, really, be inexhaustible. Is that a permanent change? Or is there any hope that in the next 15 years, Putin could again become a more complex, somewhat more manageable, and reformist-minded leader of Russia where he actually looks to even cooperate with the United States? Or are those days just gone for good?

MS. HILL: No, I think there's some areas that might provide a frame. Climate change is one. People may have noticed that Putin and many of his colleagues in Russia have changed their tune somewhat on climate change. Because, actually, they're seeing now, some of the really disastrous effects that we are too. There have been fires in Russia over this past summer that have been in size far greater than any of the fires, and cumulatively, all the fires in the United States. I mean, remember, Russia is an enormous territory. And huge squares of forest, also peat bogs. All of which when they dry out can really, you know, kind of burn forever.

They have been having all kinds of methane emissions. It hasn't just been the gas flaring that we've all been concerned about. There was a big piece in the newspapers over the weekend about the dangers from gas flaring along pipelines and associated gas and oil fields in Russia just like the United States. But they've been having the melting of the permafrost. Which has been acting as a capstone against, you know, natural methane deposits. And those have been erupting with potholes, huge sinkholes, all over Russia bubbling up methane from some of the Arctic Sea, for example, in the Artic region. Where they've been with the melting of the permafrost, the release of anthrax spores from, you know, old burial grounds of reindeer, you know, from the past, and things like this.

There's all kinds of issues that Russia's now realizing it's going to have to contend with. So, I do think we have the right kind of frame on climate change. Especially as a affects the Artic, which we know is melting much more quickly. And, of course, Russia is the Artic power par excellence. There may be some technical issues that we can work with that might help to reframe things. Not just arms control.

And obviously with the pandemic we've missed an opportunity. But we may not have done because Russia right now is rethinking, I think, some of its anti-vax propaganda. Because that's

had a nasty effect at home. Russia today, this week, now has in this past week, the highest infection rates, and the highest mortality rates that it's had throughout the COVID pandemic. So, you know, this could also be a turning point.

The problem, you know, that we have really is in the mindset and worldview of Putin and the people around him, to get to the first part of your question here. Because, you know, for Putin, there's been a very dark reading of what the United States has done successively over a period of time. There was also a lot of shock about how badly we handled the economic crisis in 2008-2009. That was really a kind of turning point in Putin and everybody else's views of the United States and the West.

They thought we knew what we were doing in the economy and it turned out we didn't. And that aftermath saw the rise of China, of course, from 2010 onwards. But then there was also the Arab Spring which came on top of what the Russians had also already decided with the United States bent on regime change. Our invasion of Iraq. The removal of Saddam Hussain when they knew he didn't have weapons of mass destruction, for example. And then when, you know, we basically stood by in their view and allowed Mubarak to be removed in Egypt. And then, you know, of course, with all of the emergence of the civil war in Syria, the Russians decided that that was what we were about, the United States. We were just about regime change. And Putin, himself, worried that he was going to be in the crosshairs. The murder or the assassination, the killing of Gadhafi, the murder from Putin's point of view, in Libya, you know, after he was dislodged. All of this, I think, got Vladimir Putin's neuroses really working long and hard. And, you know, started the kind of thing, well, that the United States has to be stopped here.

So, we're going to have to manage this very carefully. We have to be very well aware of what their security perceptions are. And for Putin, he always thinks that the United States now is out to get him. And he's always looking for examples of this. So, the more that we handle that in a more nuanced way, the better it will be. But, of course, we have our own domestic perspective. Because there's also a lot of antagonism, and rightly so, towards Russia because of their interference in 2016 when they tried to show us a lesson. So, you know, again, this is going to be a very difficult challenge.

MR. O'HANLON: And most of the rest of today's event will be about, at least I suspect, American domestic policy and many of the problems in our own society and other Western societies that

you've identified and worked hard on and thought about hard. So, let me stick with Russia for a minute because we have some good audience questions. Our colleague, Marvin Kalb, wants to know, in the same vein, but maybe thinking longer term, can Russia ever really become a democracy? Or is that just too anathema, too out of the DNA of the Russian polity? And so, it goes beyond Putin to just thinking about Russia as a society. How would you answer that question, please?

MS. HILL: Well, democracy comes in many forms. I mean, you know, there are many people in the United States that argue we're a republic rather than a pure democracy. There's all kinds of different definitions of parliamentary democracies and different ways of elections being conducted, you know, for example. But Russia can definitely become a more pluralistic society. It already has had many episodes of expansion of fundamental rights, individual rights, freedoms of assembly, and speech, et cetera. In the late Gorbachev period or the late Soviet period, end of Gorbachev in the 1980s, we saw a real opening up of Russian society and politics. The same all the way through the 1990s. The problem was that that democratization effort became discredited because -- and that's one of the themes of the book -- because of the massive collapse of the post-Soviet economy and the way that many of the economic issues were handled.

And people started to associate unemployment, their own pain, and the rise of, you know, kleptocratic oligarchs as being the part of the substance of democracy. So, I think, you know, as we look at Russia in the future, if there's a different perception about Russia's security environment, if there are different people coming to the top of politics. You know, we saw with Demetri Medvedev, for example, a totally different approach from Putin because he didn't come out of the security services, for example. A new generation of people there may be openings for a more pluralistic political system emerging.

And we also have to think that, you know, Russia is much more connected now to the outside world and Europe, COVID notwithstanding, than it has been before. So, there's all kinds of ways in which this can change. So, I wouldn't, you know, count that out or rule it out in the future.

MR. O'HANLON: And one more question on Russia from an audience question, Mike Smeltzer. He asks, especially because, Fiona, you've become such a public figure and those of us who know you just love it because you're such a wonderful, warm, kind friend. And to see you also get public recognition, you're going to be a great role model for a next generation of scholars. And what would you

say to the extent you have any message or any kind of mandate you would want to give to that next generation of Russia and Eurasia scholars as they think about the questions that you've just been discussing, a future of the U.S.-Russia relationship.

Is there any particular angle that you would encourage people to take on or maybe somebody who's thinking about studying Russian, is that worth the trouble? Is this a relationship that's going to be consequential long term? Just any message you have for the younger generation going forward.

MS. HILL: Well, I think the relationship is going to be consequential long term. I mean, it continues to be and, you know, no one can ever count Russia out of world affairs. I think it's really important to remember that Russia is not just a regional European power. You know, we've seen the extent of Russia's interests in the Middle East. You know, Russia forced its way onto the agenda with the intervention in Syria in 2015. You know, we've also seen how, you know, Russia's tried to revive relationships around the world in the Western Hemisphere, you know, by sending in specialists to Venezuela during the height of that standoff with the United States.

And then Russia really is a force to be reckoned with in the Asia-Pacific. We keep forgetting, I think, when we look at the map from all those other sort of vantage point. Not only does Russia have a border not far too away from ours, remember Sarah Palin saying she can see it from her window. You know, from Alaska --

MR. O'HANLON: She was almost right.

MS. HILL: Yeah, the Aleutians, she was almost right. Although probably from where she was looking, not quite. But the general concept was there that we do intersect in the Asia-Pacific region. And, you know, we've got many examples of, you know, the first Americans and, you know, native people of Siberia going backwards and forward across, you know, the Bering Straits. But we also have to remember that Russia borders China, a huge, long border similar to our border with Canada or our border with Mexico. And also, with North Korea and with Japan where it still has disputed territories in the northern territories of the Kuril Islands.

And so, Russia needs and wants to be a factor there. So, I think that when people are looking at Russia, they are looking at it in its totality in a comparative perspective looking at all of kind of

the web of Russia's relationships. And also, as much as we can really trying to understand the direction in which Russia is traveling. I mean, it's more difficult now than it was before to go to visit there. A lot of the school and university exchange programs have been shut down. But I think we need to try to keep pushing for those.

And, of course, there's lots of opportunities to study with and meet Russians in Europe, European contacts. So, I do hope that people will consider continuing to study Russian. I think it's a very vital relationship with the United States and Russia to try to figure out how we can, you know, move that forward onto a more even keel than it is right now. And there's so many different aspects, I think, to look at. So, I would say I've certainly never had any regrets in starting off my career in studying Russia and then I think there's plenty to do still there.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. So, now, let me begin to turn to the domestic policy discussion, which I know the panel will pick up on in about 10 minutes when I hand off to them. And I think the main question I wanted to put to you, but really, go where you wish with the answer. To spring off the title of your book, which is a great title and it's at least a double entendre, if not a triple entendre. And let me say how it strikes me and then ask you to just explain, you know, how you came up with it and how you think about the basic idea here.

But, of course, literally speaking, this is your dad's statement to you saying that there was not economic opportunity of the type that was consistent with your obvious early interests in academics and other things in the part of northeastern England where you grew up. And in that sense, it's just a statement of fact, right? That, I mean, this was a coal mining area that had done badly since the Thatcher period and trends and globalization and other dynamics had really put it back on its luck. And your dad was simply saying, you know, don't stay around here, Fiona.

But in a second sense, as I interpret the double entendre, British society was telling you, a gal from a coal mining town in far away remote northeastern England that you weren't going to necessarily be welcomed in the upper echelons of British society or higher education and that, you know, you probably shouldn't aim quite as high as thank God you did. But then, of course, you came to the United States on a fellowship to Harvard in, I think, the mid-1990s or so. And you were hoping, like many of our ancestors have over the years, that America would be the land of great opportunity. And in one

sense it clearly was for you because look at how well you've done.

But in another sense, partly because you're so empathetic and you care about other people, you were observing how much this society was itself developing its own problems with class and, of course, with race, and with polarization. And that's why as John Allen said in the introduction, you saw this period in the Trump administration not so much as a, you know, Donald Trump hijacking the country somehow, but as a reflection of division that's been emerging really for a long time, certainly the whole time you've been in America now, a quarter century.

So, could you just expound a little bit on that and how your evolution of your thinking developed through your life. Did I have it about right? What would you do to put it more accurately and embellish what I just said?

MS. HILL: Yeah, well, actually, I mean, I came in 1989. So, I was, --

MR. O'HANLON: Okay.

MS. HILL: -- you know, it's that whole period of the 1990s that I was in Boston, you know, so. Boston has really gone through a remarkable transformation that whole time since I first arrived. Because when I first came there, that's when I was immediately struck by the fact that although Harvard was obviously an amazing opportunity for me. A massive door to a, you know, a future not just of higher education, but of all other kinds of possibilities that immediately became apparent. But, you know, the overall view that I had of the United States was this was the land of opportunity. And, you know, I was kind of expecting, you know, kind of to sort of see this as sort of uniformly evident.

And Boston was in some turmoil when I got there. Now only was it the end of efforts to desegregate the public schools, the Boston bussing that had caused an awful lot of tension and strain within the city. And I came just as that was ending at the end of the 1980s. But it was also a period of wrenching economic dislocation for Boston or the kind of suburbs and a lot of Massachusetts. It was kind of up in the whole New England northeast corridor closing of textile mills, big manufacturing, auto plants. Meatpacking plants were closing down. Brickworks, all the kinds of things that I saw closing down in the northeast of England and saw in trouble in the Soviet Union that I'd just been studying. Because again, this is just before the Berlin Wall comes down when I first arrived. And the Soviet Union, you know, their economy was also grinding to a halt. And, you know, the whole place was sort of falling apart under the

mismanagement of sort of central planning.

And I was shocked to see the same things in and around me in Boston. And also, just kind of walking around the city, I thought, wow, this is a place that's also in trouble. And then, you know, talking to, you know, many of the people outside of the Harvard compass, it became evident that they were experiencing the same things.

Now, I mean, fast forward and a lot of that northeast corridor Massachusetts, but not everywhere, has really turned itself around and become a vibrant part of the new economy. But there are still, you know, plenty of those old textile towns and cities, places where a major manufacturer closed and something else didn't come in. And where there's feelings of sort of disaffection and people feeling that there's nothing for them here. Not just in terms of economic opportunity, but also in terms of politics because they don’t see that their concerns or their views, their values are being reflected in the politicians around them.

Because over time, it's become also less likely in the United States for people to move from the lower quintile to the top quintile. And, therefore, you know, when you kind of move in terms of social and economic mobility, and then perhaps, you know, run for political office, you know, there's a lot less likelihood of that happening than there was in the past. Because as I came to the United States in the 1980s, late 1980s then into the 1990s, which was a critical period, there started to be shift away from the idea that investing in education and social mobility was the means of reconstructing the country overall. It was a shared endeavor. Because that was kind of certainly the view after World War II in the whole period of reconstruction.

The emergence of the G.I. Bill. And later on, the 60s and onwards the expansion of Pell Grants. I mean, we're still grappling with a lot of this right now so that people could go to college. People like you and me and others, you know, be the first in their families, you know, to go on to college would get supported. And that just didn't have to be just, you know, elite, ivy league schools, but community colleges, and all kinds of training. And by the time you get into the 1990s, there's a viewpoint that this is on the individual because only individual success matters.

And so, what I'm observing, you know, really in the book, is this kind of that breakdown of the idea of this being a shared investment in our human capital. It becomes extremely problematic in the

United States. And also, frankly, in the United Kingdom, because I also benefited there from the expansion of educational opportunities to blue collar, you know, kids. And then later on, the emphasis is on people taking out loans and, you know, basically it's all about yourself. There's the individual. And the returns on your investment in your own education.

And I think, you know, in that way, when we get back to our national security perspective, you know, Russia has had problems in the educational field. But still has really, you know, kind of excellent public education in, you know, particularly, basic sciences and all kinds of other, you know, a bit less on the humanities education. But certainly, has invested back again in education. And China, you know, which we're all focused on, has made huge investments in education. Seeing that, again, as part of an investment in its own future. So, a huge expansion of public education and emphasis on building a workforce for the 21st century. And we've lost that plot completely. Not completely, but let's just say we've lost that as a main focal point that we had before.

MR. O'HANLON: It's a fantastic answer. It's also a good reminder that even in so-called blue states, we're not immune to these same kinds of fractures and fissures. You saw this first in the United States, as you say, in Massachusetts. And so, it's not as if it's just certain big swaths of the country where these effects are pronounced. It's really everywhere, depending on which community you happen to live in or what economy is your background.

Just one last question and then I'll turn off -- turn off my camera and hand off the baton to Ed. But I wanted to -- you've thought hard about what to do about these problems. And I want to really commend you. You've read a lot of our colleagues' best work in economic studies, metropolitan studies, governance studies, global economy, and development. You've really studied what might be done to fix some of these problems. And I'm not going to ask you for an exhaustive list now. I suspect that conversation will continue over the next hour.

But I wondered if you could just maybe tease up one idea. Maybe you want to take the education concept that you just mentioned but make it a little bit more specific and give one suggestion of the kind of initiative that you think policy makers need to be focused on, whether it's in the education realm, the job retraining realm. There are a number of ideas in your book. I just want to give you the change to maybe, you know, highlight one of them right now. And then I will back off and give the baton

to Ed.

MS. HILL: Yeah, look, I think, you know, we're grappling with this right now when we're looking at the infrastructure bill that's going through Congress. And, you know, certainly seeing the people having to pick and choose and being forced to pick and choose there between, you know, do you give everybody universal pre-K education? You know, how do you, you know, kind of deal with community college? For example, do you make that universal and open to everyone? I think the main thing that we have to bear in mind on education and a lot of our colleagues at the Brown Institute and, you know, all of us at Brookings who work on education are looking at this all the time, is commend people to, you know, look at their blogs and, you know, look at the information that's on the Brookings website.

But from my own personal experience, it's continuous education, further education, all the way through your life, but knowing that you will have to retool and reskill. I mean, I've been incredibly fortunate because somehow Brookings has paid for me to have a master class for the last, you know, 20-odd years, along with you, Mike, because we've been --

MR. O'HANLON: I know the feeling.

MS. HILL: -- at Brookings for a long time one way or another. Where we do have this opportunity to listen to other people, it's been, you know, one long -- one long master's or, you know, kind of further education program. So, we get to retool, you know, with the benefit of other people's really fantastic research. But I think that everyone needs to have a chance no matter how old they are to basically get new qualifications. We need to find ways of having those qualifications recognized across the country as well. Because the big problem in my own family was when my father lost his job in his 30s from the coal mines. He'd only ever been trained on the job. And he left school at 14. So, there was no way, really, that he could then retool. There were no funds set aside for ex-miners to retool.

Later on in the 1980s, when people of my generation, you know, lost jobs initially, there were actually funds that were put together partly from the European Union which Britain is no longer part of. But there were kind of restructural funds for sort of retaining and retooling. And I think the United States needs to think long and hard about how we do that too at the state level and the local government local. That could be, you know, managed, for example. But a public/private enterprise seems to be the

most effective. Because a lot of it is getting people trained up for new workplaces as, you know, large manufacturing companies and companies that are in some innovation, you know, start to look for technically qualified workforce.

So, I would argue for a kind of a public/private approach to this. One that really kind of instills this idea and the capacity and the availability of further, continuous education to be able to sort of reskill and requalify, you know, given the rapid changes in the workplace and in the economy.

MR. O'HANLON: Fantastic. So, I will thank you again for the opportunity to be part of this conversation and to be your friend and colleague. I'm going to say one more time, we're discussing this wonderful book, *There is Nothing For You Here* by my wonderful colleague, Fiona Hill. I'm now going to sign off and hand over to Ed Luce, who's going to introduce just a spectacular panel, which Fiona, of course, will be part of as well. So, over and out from here. Thank you.

MS. HILL: Thanks, Mike.

MR. LUCE: Thank you, very much, Michael. And I echo Michael's congratulations to you, Fiona, not just on a great book, but on a seriously arresting title, *There's Nothing For You Here*. And I think we're going to focus a little bit in this panel on the word, here, because place is such an important part of the points that you make in your book. But I'm just waiting for Carol, Rashawn, and Angus to come online because I want to introduce them.

Just to say, Michael focused a lot more for most of that discussion with you, Fiona, on the foreign policy Russia sort of dimensions of your career and what you write about in your book. But we're going to be linking up more of your biographical story with the broader challenge that we're facing with deaths of despair, with racial and economic entrapment, and what kind of challenges that poses to our democracies in the United States, Britain, and elsewhere.

And the really heart stopping implication in your book, Fiona, the real relevance of Russia is not its alleged interference in our elections, but that Russia's present could be our future if we don't address some of these problems. So, with us to discuss this very broad and extremely important topic I have to start with the Nobel Prize winner, Sir Angus Deaton. And I ought to say I feel a little bit humbled being from a relatively privileged background in the south of England, London, and the home counties, to be sandwiched by highly successful people from hardscrabble roots. Fiona, from the northeast of

England and Sir Angus from a working-class Scottish background.

Sir Angus needs no introduction along with his wife, Ann Case, coauthor. *Deaths of Despair* has become a part, quite rightly, of the English language through his work. Nobel Prize winner, Emeritus professor at Princeton. But we have Rashawn Ray, who's also at Brookings, one of colleagues of Fiona and at the University of Maryland. And is a leading specialist on racial and economic issues and inequality. And then last but not least at all, Carol Graham, who's a pioneer really of the economics of happiness. And, again, I mentioned place at the beginning of my introduction, that's clearly a very important consideration in everything that we're going to discuss.

Fiona, let me start with you though. I've got another arresting quote from your book. Let me just read this out and then ask you to comment on it. "Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan helped to drive the nail into the coffin of 20th Century industry while ensuring that those trapped inside the casket would find it practically impossible to pry the lid off." The lid of the coffin that is. Now, you did pry the lid off. Were you just lucky or why were you able to pry the lid off and others not?

MS. HILL: Well, thanks. And I'm just really delighted that everyone could join us today on this panel. I mean, it's just a real honor that Sir Angus, Carol, and Rashawn were able to come and do this today. So, I just wanted to say thank you to them as well as to you, Ed, before we begin.

I also just want to just clarify a little bit on that quote. Of course, you know, Reagan and Thatcher didn't build the coffin. You know, they just basically put the lid on. Because I know that a few people have written to me actually since reading the book and said they thought I was a little bit too hard on Margaret Thatcher. But I will just say that, you know, from the perspective of somebody growing up in the northeast in the 1980s, you know, Margaret Thatcher coming in in 1979, it was really under Thatcher that all of the industries really started to close down.

And the most wrenching part of that period from my perspective, was 1984 and the miner's strike where there was a big clash of the titans between Margaret Thatcher and the head of the National Union of Mineworkers. Arthur Scargill, who were both, you know, much more focused on their own powerplays than they were on what the impact would be on the communities. And it's really the community that is the focal point of that quote there, Ed. Because Margaret Thatcher sort of famously has this quote about there not being -- it's not a country of communities, the United Kingdom, but of

individuals.

And that's, you know, kind of maybe from the vantagepoint of somebody who was the daughter of a shopkeeper. Somebody who had their own business, you know, kind of growing up in a sort of very individually self-reliant. But if you grew up in one the communities like Angus', you know, communities in Scotland or in North Yorkshire where some of his family are from or, you know, of mine in the mining community, it was a community that kept everyone together. And when the workplace was destroyed, those communities basically went along with it.

But for me, there was enough fabric left, enough social fabric left or what I call the infrastructure of opportunity, in the remainders of my community for me to get a head. So, it was the provision of grants, student grants to go to the college. A bit like the Pell Grants in the United States, the local education authority grants. I would not have gone on to college and to St. Andrews University had I had to take out loans. My family were completely and utterly paranoid about any kind of debt. One of my great-grandfathers ended up in a debtor's prison. And so, you know, there's an awful lot of people in, you know, the northeast and elsewhere who have a fear of debt. You know, they don't see this as an opportunity in any way. And even if, you know, in business one actually celebrates debt at times, and, you know, in an economy of Rolfe. For an individual, debt can mean death. And, you know, kind of all kinds of complications. So, that would have been an obstacle itself.

Then there were all kinds of initiatives still around in the community. The Durham Miner's Association, the local rotary club, individuals, and other, you know, small philanthropies, who provided me with small grants and subsidies for educational opportunities. So, the way that I got out was really through education and having the opportunity to have that education funded. Because the idea of taking on a debt would have been an obstacle. And it was education that opened the door and propelled me forward.

And also, a kind of a collective feeling within the community that I was part of that making an investment in me and in others was an investment in themselves. The problem was that I left and didn't come back. And, that, you know, kind of sent me into those kinds of resources that perhaps I could have brought back to the community, you know, did not come back again. One of the other motivating factors for writing that book.

But, you know, what I have understood through my own career and looking around is that people can't do things all on their own. They often, you know, kind of basically flounder without that. And it really takes larger networks, mentors, and other funding to really be able to move people ahead.

MS. LUCE: I'm going to get to the other panelists in a moment. Let me just steal one more question from you because there is another quote I wanted to cite from your book where you mention that all of these problems, these trends that we're experiencing in places like northeast England and the Appalachian regions here are leading to a situation where the traumas of the four years from 2016 to 2020, the years when you were in the Trump administration, could seem like a preface rather than a postscript to the United States democratic demise.

That's a really strong comment. Are you more pessimistic now than when you were in the Trump administration about America's future?

MS. HILL: I am, actually. I do think there's a sense that we know we have to fix this. You see in Congress right now the grappling with the infrastructure bill, the grappling with, you know, all of the other legislative efforts to try to tackle many of these problems. But I'm not so sure that there's sufficient political will behind this to really move forward.

And I'm extremely pessimistic because of, you know, what happened on January 6th, you know, with the insurrection, the attempt to storm the Capital. Because, you know, we're now in a state where people are fighting over that event. There's no longer any kind of sense of shared mission and shared purpose. And the polarization has become even more acute. When you have a situation where people's primary identification is being with either being a democrat or a republican in terms of political policy sense. When you have, you know, a real problem in terms of them thinking about how are you going to address more of these broader social issues? Because people can't even agree on what it is that they're addressing at the moment.

So, I kind of feel, and, you know, this is one the reasons for writing the book and trying to speak out and trying to engage with all of my colleagues here, that we need sort of a mobilization from somewhere below the political edifice right now to get people to, you know, be working together to show that we can overcome this even if it might be on local and community level. You know, kind of state and local government depending on the state, of course, if there's not the same kind of mirroring of

polarization there.

So, we have to kind of basically show that we can actually get things done. Because at the top, the frustration is building up with the state of affairs in Congress. An integer of an acute atmosphere of polarization we're more likely to see outbreaks of violence again in the future.

MR. LUCE: Sir Angus, a lot of what Fiona is describing on both sides of the Atlantic, you know, is the destruction of communities' ties and of sort of mutual help culture both from the state and outside the state that has led to some of this declining mortality that you've so famously written about. So, first my question to you is based on what Fiona has been saying and what's in her fabulous book. What is it that will stop this from continuing as a trend?

She mentions, you know, again, very heart-stoppingly the rationed morale class in the 1990s leading to a really serious decline in life expectancy there. That, I think, has stopped, but at a very low level. What's going to stop and then reverse these trends in our societies?

MR. DEATON: I wish I knew the answer to that, Ed. And I'm actually quite pessimistic actually in both countries, or in all three countries. I don't know as much about Russia. In fact, one of the great revelations of Fiona's book is this sense that these systems are not working for large fractions of the population no matter whether you're in Britain or whether you're in the U.S., or, you know, Russia. You know, this is sort of a third pole of this.

You know, I did not have as hardscrabble an existence as Fiona did. My dad had already done actually quite a lot of the work. But on the other hand, I mean, he grew up in a mining community not far from where Fiona grew up. And, you know, we were both escapees and you might call us the happy host of ships that deserted the sinking raft rather than the other way around. But the one big question which comes out of her book, and I think the answer is probably no, is do we think it would be possible for us have those opportunities now?

And I'm not at all sure that that's the case. And, you know, in both these deaths that you talked about, to us they're a consequence of building a two-class society with a sort of a third of the population who are well-educated and they're doing fine, and whose mortality rates continue to fall. And two-thirds of the population for whom communities are falling apart. The labor market is falling apart. Their family life is falling apart. Their religious and spiritual life is falling apart. And communities are

being destroyed. And I think that's happening on both sides of the Atlantic and not just in Britain.

And, in fact, we are seeing some of the deaths that we documented in the U.S. is now coming to -- in fact, if you look at the life expectancy patterns in America and in Scotland, you wouldn't actually know which country you were looking at. There is a drug epidemic. People are dying in large numbers in proportion to the population. And you can see it beginning to happen in Britain too.

I'm less sure that education is the answer to this. The making education available to everybody. It's a great thing that education should be available to everybody. But I think we're actually past that. I think we've allowed this divided society to exist without taking care of large numbers of the population. I was a little more optimistic before the elections.

And, you know, I know that the people who have the levers of power in Washington, Janet Yellen has been a huge fan of our work from the beginning that we started. C.C. Mattis (phonetic) used to be our boss. They know exactly what needs to be done. But you can't do this in a polarized country. And I don't think it's just a failure of Washington. It's if you have no votes, then it's absolutely that easy for the plunderers, whether it's pharma or the banks or whatever, they only have to change one congressman's mind or one congresswoman's mind. And we're just not going to get out of this right now.

And the alternative is the repetitions of January the 6th, I fear. And so, it's very easy to be pessimistic. And if you look at what's happening to Britain. They have the highest, I think, the seventh highest COVID infection rate in the world. In the world, we're talking about. And your prime minister's determined not to anything about it (inaudible). So, you know, there really is the sense of impending conflagration.

MR. LUCE: Thank you. And when you say your prime minister, I hope you don't mean me. But thank you for those remarks and I'll get back to you in a moment, Sir Angus.

Rashawn, one of the most striking things about Fiona's book is she moves from a society in Britain where the limits are basically class-based, mostly. There are some racial elements too. The United States where race and class are extremely hard to disentangle. And race plays so much a bigger role, and the legacy of slavery, in poverty entrapment, and opportunity deserts in this country.

Sir Angus has recently written about the deaths of despair also now spreading to non-white communities. That we're seeing it amongst African Americans and Hispanic populations. Could

you talk a little bit about what this does to the challenge that Fiona has sort of thrown down to us? How do we recreate opportunity in these circumstances?

MR. RAY: Yeah, well, thank you for allowing me to be a part of the comments so far that have been excellent. And, I mean, I think Fiona hit the nail on the head earlier when she said debt could mean death. And you highlighted the ways that race, class, and even gender, as Fiona does so eloquently and at times, difficultly to read in her book at the way that social inequality comes together.

You know, society is set up for some of us to be tokenized beacons of success that oftentimes cloud our ability to view social inequality as pervasively limiting as much as it actually is. In other words, it's what we call what you all noted as opportunity deserts. One way I'll oftentimes like to think about it is the brain drain where people like Fiona, myself, and others who become these tokenized beacons of success, we also become the exceptions that prove the rule. And depending on who you're speaking to, we become the exception that says why can't other people do these sort of things?

And what recognize is that the brain drain occurs because in these opportunity deserts where we're from, we can't do what we're doing now where we're from. We would like to do so, but segregation is so pervasive that it prevents those particular opportunities from transpiring. And when I think about solutions, solutions have to be restorative. Now, we just heard that people know what the solution should be. The solutions have to be restorative. And in a climate where we are so hyperpolarized around politics, but we know from statistical research, that people's opinions about certain political attitudes correlate strongly to their racial attitudes, to their class attitudes.

So, for example, a person saying state's rights, for example, takes on a meaning, a quite a different meaning for a person that studies race. Because I'm like, oh, okay, that's a proxy that started being inserted into the equation as a dog whistle three or four decades ago, that means something quite different to the people who are saying it versus the people who are going to actually receive it.

So, it has to be restorative. I mean, I definitely think that we know from research that education is not the sole solution. Particularly in terms of addressing the racial wealth gap. And I think that's the biggest thing. Is that we know that it can do something around education. That's what it's supposed to do. I think universal pre-K, community college, those sort of things can help with that. But it does not reduce the racial wealth gap, which we know even for college educated Blacks and Whites, is 7-

to-1. So, college educated Whites have seven times more wealth college educated Blacks.

So, here are these Black people that have done everything you said to do. Similarly, when we talk about gender. That women are told, okay, you're supposed to do these things. You can do everything that men do. And then all of a sudden, they go to school. They get a job and guess what, they face the gender gap in pay that continues to hamper families, continues to hamper women.

So, when we talk about solutions, they must be restorative. The research that I have done suggests that reparations is a pathway for doing that. Now, there are different packages in which that should look like. There are different ways to think about it. But one of the ways in which it could be paid for is getting back to what started this and that's dealing with land. About 25 percent of land in the United States is federally owned. People know what they do with land. They sell it. They lease it. They do different things with it. There is a financial platform available that doesn't necessarily include digging into other people's taxes and getting into that big debate.

And so, I think we know what the solutions need to be. It's just that the United States of America has never been willing to do that because unfortunately, we know that the United States of America was founded on these forms of inequality. And as are losing some of the preferences that they've been given based on what they look like or where they're from, they realize that these changes are going to reconfigure how they view their own success and whether or not they are able to maintain that success.

We've seen that recently -- last point -- with COVID funding. Where not only was it that predominantly small businesses owned by Black people or Latinos or women were highly excluded from the first round of PPP funding, but now we know that some of this COVID funding is not only being used for law enforcement, but also for prisons, like in Alabama. Where they are using COVID funding to rebuild prisons. I mean, this is the legacy of convict leasing where after the Civil War and after reconstruction, convict leasing paid for 75 percent of all Alabama state's revenue. There are some people who are to reclaim that and there are a lot of us that are going to be on the outside looking in unless something drastic is done.

MR. LUCE: Well, thank you for that very stark answer. There's a number of threads in there I'd like to pick up later. Tokenized beacons of success is a particularly memorable one. But your

larger point that it's not that we lack the ideas of what to do to begin to address some of the problems Fiona lays out in her book, it's that we lack the political constellation to put them into practice. So, it's not a lack of ideas that's the problem here.

Which brings me on Carol, last, but very much not least, to get to you, Carol. You've written, yeah, you pioneered so much work on happiness and the economics and sociology of happiness. Clearly, you know, this isn't just a material problem we're facing. Although, that's a huge part of it. We're facing a problem of suspicion. People feeling alone. People feeling like nobody gives a damn about them. And anger, therefore, being their predominant reaction or just complete resignation.

Could you talk a bit about how -- what's the legislative program or what's the legislative plus way of addressing the psychology of all of this? Because that's a huge factor in deaths of despair and what we've been talking out, isn't it?

MS. GRAHAM: Yeah, well, thanks, Ed. And also, for the wonderful opportunity to be on this panel and read Fiona's amazing book and life story. Your question's a very good one. And I, indeed, have been I went from working on the determinants of happiness to the determinants of despair in the United States in the past decade. And I've been tracking trends and deaths of despair with those markers of well-being and ill-being trying to understand the psychology of them. And, indeed, the most stark finding is how patterns in complete lack of hope, despair, having given up, as you say, being lonely, being angry, track very closely with deaths of despair at the level of individual race and place. With middle sort of working age, prime age, White males, out of the labor force being the most desperate group.

And what is, you know, sort of remarkable about the nature of that despair is that it's so bad that it's also associated with high levels of addiction, terrible levels of health, no hope for the future, of course. But that these same people just they won't move. They're living in their parents' basements or in their parents' census tract as adults. And so, when you talk a lot about moving for opportunity or success stories, like Angus, and Fiona, and Rashawn, all leaving a place that they may like but has absolutely no future and going somewhere else. But these people won't move. They wouldn't move if there was, you know, access to opportunity office across the street.

So, we're dealing at one level with almost a group paralyzed in despair and the death rate, obviously, shows that. And yet, at another level, we have an increase in the same kind of deaths of

despair now as Angus and others have noted now spreading to minorities. And what's really puzzling about that trend, which we need to understand a bit more, is that we have a new -- there's certainly an uptick in overdose deaths among urban Black males, but also among minorities more educated minority teens are seeing rises in suicide rates.

And to me, that is a whole other level of despair and another marker that they're glass ceilings, right? If you're seeing successful minority teens now in despair, that's a big marker of yet another barrier in the kind of, you know, two Americas or two Englands question. Although that's an American data point.

The one thing I've been thinking a lot about trying to be more optimistic and it's very hard in this context, indeed, you asked about the legislative agenda. I testified on a report that we did at Brookings on despair as part of our economic recovery process. And despair is a national security problem. Something Fiona was involved in. And it was the congressional Subcommittee on Economic Disparity and Fairness and Growth. A great session. Lots of interested people talking a lot about despair, but also other factors in our labor market and in our support system for workers and our healthcare system, which is something Angus has also -- and Ann have written a lot about.

In this country, if you lose your job, you lose your health insurance. You lose everything. So, losing your job is sort of akin to falling into despair. But anyway, on all of those topics, there was not one republican member of the committee present. So, we were speaking to each other, you know, in a circular way. That's the less optimistic part.

And just a last point. I do think that it may not be education as we conceive of it, but I think we really need to address the next generation's need to not end up as a next generation in despair. And that will require different kinds of education. And I've been doing surveys of low-income White kids and then African American kids about 17 to 18 years old in poor school districts in Missouri. But my findings match with larger end data.

And what we find that's remarkable is that White kids are much less likely to pursue college, conditional on high school, than Black kids are. I'm not talking about success rates in getting there. But just in their aspirations, in their hopes. And the White kids essentially say they have less hope, less trust in others, whatever, but that their parents actively don't support them going beyond high

school. Which is it's a sign of how we've also been split politically into lack of faith in education, lack of faith in science, along with many other political things. I mean, what are these kinds going to do? You know with a high school education and quarter now you can buy a cola-cola. It's just not going anywhere.

The minority kids were much more likely to believe in education and to have a parent or a grandparent or some other mentor that supported them in that pursuit. And what we're finding, including with some interventions from places that try and enhance well-being and hope at the community level, is that it is, indeed, the need for hope and a mentor that helps kids then take those aspirations to reality because they don't know what's available. They don't know how to match what kind of education should I get to be able to participate in tomorrow's jobs? It may not be college. For every kid, it's probably not.

But there are ways to at least get out of the place where they're stuck, but they need mentorship, and they need community. Community sort of support as well, which is something that Fiona mentioned early on about the community she grew up in even though there was a lot of depravation.

MR. LUCE: Thank you for that. And I'm going to before I ask Fiona about place, because this is a very important part of your book, let me just very quickly bring Rashawn and Angus back into this because there's very important findings here that I did mention and you've expanded upon, Carol. That the deaths of despair are spreading to all racial groups. And we had sort of previously, I think, in shorthand thought about this as, well, these are Whites starting from much higher status, and therefore, less able to cope with these massive disruptions and transitions that are going on. And African Americans, for example, well, they have such lower expectations that despair comes less easily. But Sir Angus, and then Rashawn, I want you both very briefly to comment on what these trends mean and why they're happening.

MR. DEATON: Yes, thank you. It's true. But one of the things that's interesting is within the African American community, the deaths of despair as in the White community are almost entirely among African Americans without a BA. So, the same educational split is working for minorities that it's working for. And what has happened and I have a recent paper in the proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences is that if you go back to even 1990, which is not very long ago, if you split adult life expectancy between races or between African Americans and Whites and you split it by education,

basically, the race was destiny in 1990. Didn't much matter whether you had a BA or not. And that's a common thing in the literature that African Americans with a BA didn't get much kick of it in terms of life expectancy.

But that's no longer true. So, now, people with a BA whether White or Black are much closer to one another. And people without a BA whether White or Black are much closer to one another. It's still true, of course, as it's been true since the beginning of time, that even within no matter what your education, that African American mortality rates are higher than White mortality rates. So, be very careful. That's never reversed. But the stunning thing is that education, this educational split, this class split, if you call it that, has become much, much more important in life chances relative to the racial split.

And then, of course, you've got this horrible situation that Rashawn was talking about before where you've got these less educated Whites who see African Americans as a threat and see the privilege they've long had being taken away and they hate it. So, you've got a sort of war between the less educated Whites and less educated Blacks, which is becoming such a central part of republican policy or politics. Thanks.

MR. LUCE: Rashawn, sorry to throw a curveball at you. But I suspect you're used to it. How do you get poor Whites not to see poor Blacks as the enemy? I know this is a question that could have been posed in any decade in America's history. But this is the 2020s and I'm posing it to you again.

MR. RAY: Yeah, I mean, I don't consider it a curveball at all. I mean, a Nobel Prize winner definitely through an alley-oop because it led to this question which is, you know, President Lyndon Johnson said if you can convince the lowest White man that he's better than the best Black man, you can pick his pocket and he won't even know that you're there. And I think that sums up the essence of this. That it's a term in sociology that we call oppression Olympics. Where all of these groups are competing for scarce resources. When instead, they should probably be coming together to come together as a collected to think about what's going on.

And interestingly, there have been these moments in time in history where there have been leaders of poor White alliances, of counter Black power movements, of women's suffrage movements that have come together. And throughout history, many of these leaders kind of in a rainbow fashion have been taken out. So, I think that's one big part.

I think the other big part deals with segregation again. And just how different people think their lives are. That a person like me, I've lived in every region of the country. I've lived in Europe. I moved around a lot. And part of thinking about that is after you get past some of the ways that we know place is salient, that Fiona highlighted in her book, there are a lot of similarities in the way people are living life. And what it boils down to oftentimes are expectations.

So, unfortunately, racial resentment is highly strong. Similarly, to the way that gender resentment and there has been, I think, a huge increase in resentment against women and some of the successes that they've had for some men, particularly men who are less educated, who oftentimes have certain expectations of what should potentially be given to them or at least opportunities that should be given to them. They feel like those things as well.

So, in short, oftentimes, working class and poor Whites view Black people as their culprit. Similarly, they're starting to increasingly view Latinos as such. Whether they be people from Mexico, but also even, historically, we know even people from Asia when we would see certain images in newspapers.

And final point, is the role of cable news and social media. Cable news and social media are highly, highly polarized. So, oftentimes, you could get pretty far with people by asking them what primary news source that they have. And oftentimes, they will tell you the messages that have been going on. And I think, look, collectively, social class identifies matter. They intersect with racial identities. And people's expectations for success is an underrated variable in explaining a lot of these outcomes.

There's a key question in the General Social Surveys. I'm on the advisory board for the GSS. And there's a key question that's been asked since the 1970s, that continues to be significant with a lot of things. And that is, do you think -- at 16 years old, did you think that you would be better off than your parents? And people who say no to that question what they outcomes looks like is largely part of this conversation. And so, I think as much as we think about the outcomes, it's also about what people think about themselves and what they think is possible. And we have to shift that particularly among working class and poor White people.

MR. LUCE: Thank you very much. Fiona, let me get on to the place element of what you write and, indeed, the title, *There's Nothing For You Here*. Here being Bishop, Auckland, County

Durham. But it could be many, many places we could name. Now, that is, and I want Carol to comment on this on what you answer to my question as well. That is, in an American context, a fairly sort of new thing to say, which is not that you should leave and find opportunity elsewhere. But that we should ensure that the place you live in, and in fact, there's a quote, where you live should not be what matters. That's not an exact quote, but you make that point very forcefully in your book.

Is it true to say that we're not going to be able to solve this by people moving? That we have to bring the opportunity back to them? Is that a fair summary of what you're arguing? And then I'd like Carol to comment on that.

MS. HILL: Yeah, I'm arguing that in part because, you know, obviously, you know, all of us here, I think, on this panel, it's often quoted that we've always moved for opportunity. And, you know, Rashawn, and Angus, and I, and Carol too, you know, have all moved around. We've seen an awful lot of things.

But, you know, as Carol, I think, very vividly described people that are living in their parents' basements or the census tract, a lot of people find it very difficult to move. And there's all kinds of different reasons for this. In the case of, you know, why I described the sort of the coffin and, you know, the nail in the coffin, for people like my father and my grandparents, they got stuck in the place that they were. My father was actually able to move eight miles away from his pit village of Roddymoor in County Durham because he had a bicycle. But he didn't have a car. And he actually didn't have, you know, regular money for a bus fare either, just to put this into perspective.

So, a lot of people are physically constrained is how far they can move and, you know, where they can go to find a job. And we know lots of stories, particularly in African American neighborhoods of not being a regular bus route, you know, for example. Or, you know, they're not near to a metro or, you know, kind of a light rail. People might have a bicycle. And often bicycles get stolen. My dad's bicycle got stolen. So, my dad had to walk. So, then there's the whole question of how far can you walk?

And, you know, this isn't just, you know, some kind of comedy here. This is actually some people's real life. Everything that I had to do as a kid trying to find opportunities, how would I get there? You know, how would I get to a particular interview? How would I get there to a job?

Then there's also the problem of assets. And Rashawn has written and along with many of his colleagues at Brookings about the problems of Black Americans building up generational wealth and not having generational wealth and having nothing to pass on. My parents all grew up in public housing. They were the first to basically by a house. They couldn't really afford to buy the house. The house mostly didn't have the utilities working. And we often, you know, didn't have anything in it because my dad was determined to have a house because he knew that that was the first step to generating wealth. And also, creating better opportunity for your kids.

But often those house choices then become an extra burden because if you've bought a house in an area where there were jobs and those jobs disappear, who's going to buy the house from you? So, you know, there are all of these issues where there are constraints on people actually moving.

In many cases, people have psychological issues about moving. And I mean that impacted their relational capital as many economists talk about. You know, they're intertwined with their families. Those are their mechanisms for self-help or their communities and friends. A lot of my friends didn't want to move from, you know, our town. It was hugely wrenching for me as I know it was, you know, for Rashawn, you know, leaving your family in Tennessee, or, you know, Angus. These tight communities, you know, that you're leaving. And it's a big psychological leap to do that. Talk about a leap into the unknown.

When you go to college, it's easier because everything's set up for you. But if you're trying to leave without any contacts in another place. I know of a lot of, you know, family and friends who became homeless because in making that leap to look for a job somewhere else, they had no contacts whatsoever and ended up sleeping in the streets or sleeping in their car because they didn't have a network in another place to assist them. Its sometimes easy to immigrant in that regard than it is to actually make that move.

So, that comes back to the reality then of a lot of people not going to be able to move still what do we do with those places? And, you know, for the people who are actually there, how do you bring in opportunity? And I talk in the book about all kinds of different ways in which some of this might happen. Telecommuting, you know, this has made things possible. But education is part of this as well. And also, having basic infrastructure. Some places, of course, with climate change are going to be

unlivable and then we're going to have to think about moving people out. But that might have to be larger endeavor.

So, there is now this whole new thinking. We've got a lot of colleagues at Brookings who are looking at this and to, you know, kind of place pace development. You know, spatial, you know, regeneration. And that's going to have to a factor even if towns and cities and small villages are not going to be on the scale that they were before, there are still going to people who will have no opportunity to move.

MR. LUCE: Carol, I'm going to after this get onto some of the questions, as many as I can that have been posed in the chat box. But let me just ask you, what Fiona said is really striking. I mean, her parents did buy their home. This was Margaret Thatcher, I assume, selling council homes to people. And the theory was that an ownership society is a wealth creating society. But, of course, if you own your homes in places that nobody wants to buy them, think of the debt equity trap in Detroit. There's no point in owning them unless somebody or some institution or groups of actors are going to revive that place and make it attractive.

Place and happiness are hugely important things, aren't they? And yet, the philosophy here, at least for the last 40, 45 years has been something Fiona mentions in her book, get on your bike, which was a famous phrase from one of Thatcher's ministers. Get on your bike. If you're in despair, get on your bike and find your future elsewhere. Isn't she right in saying that's a completely unrealistic way of address the problems most Americans are facing?

MS. GRAHAM: Right. Well, there is so much talk about moving to opportunity, you know, and a lot of the moving to opportunity strategies actually invest in attractive places, but they tend to be cream skimming. Because the attractive places were more attractive compared to the places really in decline to begin with. And that's where people invest. So, you haven't solved the problem of declining places. And there's a problem of entire communities in despair. Ill health, addiction, no hope, no jobs, you know, the firms have moved out. So, I think we have to distinguish between sort of thinking about places we can revitalize. There is a lot of work at Brookings that Fiona mentioned on sort of comeback towns in the Heartland and places where Silicon Valley invests in sort of medium scale tech. And there are some, you know, I would say promising stories of taking advantage of places that have some

infrastructure that have at least, a community college and can be renovated not just in terms of community health and despair, but in terms of economic sustainability.

There are an awful lot that can't. And that's where we have a lot of tough choices. People may want to move, but they can't. They don't have the skills. They don't have the knowhow. My kids in Missouri, almost all of them said they would like to move to another county or another state. And yet, they didn't have the skills or finances to do it. It was just a black box. How could they ever manage that, right?

So, I think in places that are really in decline, we need to think about two kinds of strategy. And they're a bit -- strategies, and they're different. One is something for the sort of already out of labor force, elderly, or near elderly population. Can they do purposeful activities? There are a lot of well-being interventions in the U.K., actually. The What Works Center. That show that just getting isolated desperate people out into the community, whether it's volunteering or participating in the arts or group walks in green spaces. They're very simple. They don't cost much. But they change the community dynamic in a way that, you know, again, it's not solving economic problems, but it's solving despair problems.

But in those same places, you've got to give the next generation a chance to educate, to understand what's available. What kind of education they could be getting. That requires mentorship. I think it requires sort of more centralized strategies that can be communicated to communities about what works and what doesn't in terms of helping kids invest in the kind of skills they need. And skills that are achievable for them. I mean, we can't sell college to everybody. You know, it's not that useful for some people. But community colleges are a great gateway. We're seeing that medium tech skills training is providing a lot of opportunities.

And so, in these places that are dying and declining, I think we can sort of help people who are stuck in place. But we really need to help the next generation be able to move. I think to think that they will, you know, get educated and come back and renovate the community economically, is a bit of a swan song. Not to be pessimistic, but I think that it's much better that we don't have another generation that ends up in despair and that's very vulnerable to political polarization. That's a whole other side story that Fiona can talk a lot about.

MR. LUCE: Well, thank you. And whilst we're on that topic, let me pose the first question is from Gary Burtless, your colleague at Brookings, a senior fellow there. He says, for many types of inequality described in your book, there are few remedies available to the individual who suffers. One cannot change one’s race, for example. But for one type of inequality, you highlight place inequality. There is a remedy. The disadvantaged person can move from less -- a less to a more prosperous place, as you did and I did. Why do you think in the U.S. that geographical mobility has declined, even though place inequality has increased in recent decades?

So, I'm asking that question, not just because it was written, but because I think there is more to say on this subject. All of you, free to come in. But, Fiona, let me start with you.

MS. HILL: Yeah, and I'd like to also hear what everybody else has to say too because, you know, I already started to sketch out some of the reasons just from my own personal experience about how difficult it is to move. And I think our colleague at Brookings, William Frey, who is a demographer in the work that he's done, also shows that mobility in the United States is less now -- and COVID, obviously has had something of an impact -- than at any point since 1947, since the end of World War II.

I think an awful lot of that change came with the Great Recession, the financial crisis, 2008-2009, the housing bubble, more difficult to, you know, find rental properties. I mean, I think Rashawn can, you know, say quite a lot about that for, you know, especially for Black Americans and minorities actually, you know, find themselves, you know, squeezed out of rental markets and discriminated against, you know, in the housing market, you know, for example.

But a lot of it comes down to people not having information about opportunities in other places. You know, places to lives, schools, not just about, you know, information for jobs, you know, networks to make it possible for them to move. Qualifications, you know, Carol is saying, as well, that don't translate across state lines. You know, it's not just doctors and lawyers that have to requalify if they're working in another state and get licensed. But it's similar, you know, for people in trades and crafts and things as well to have to license themselves.

So, I think there are multiple factors here that are at work. And, you know, Carol is also saying too, particularly for younger people, you know, it's the mechanisms. It's very easy, you know, kind

of when you get into college in another place, honestly, because colleges set up networks for you. They give you all of the information for housing. You'll have a ready set of contacts when you go there. But that's not going to work for everyone.

We have colleagues at Brookings who were talking about national service and volunteering. You know, but that tends to often be class-based. You know, people, you know, higher up the socioeconomic ladder are more well-informed about the opportunities for this. You know, we have to figure out ways of bringing that back to less advantaged communities.

There's one group that I'd just like to highlight that Carol and I have been looking at recently in Portland, Maine. Portland Community Squash, which is an effort to mentor kids from all kinds of different backgrounds around squash, and, you know, and organized sports. And to give kids going all the way from elementary and middle school all the way to high school a focal point in which they can, you know, learn a skill in sport, but also to get mentorship from a whole range of volunteers that's helping them think about their future and school, and, you know, further education and larger opportunities.

And they're taking this effort national because Portland has been one of these places that fell on hard times, has had an influx of refugees, you know, different tensions within the town, the city itself. Different socioeconomic levels, and they found a way of formulating a community-wide initiative around something concrete that everyone can relate to. I think that these kinds of efforts can also help with some of these problems about mobility, literal mobility, because they can give advice by bringing in volunteers, you know, and others not just from the community, from the outside to help.

MR. LUCE: Angus, place inequality has increased as geographic mobility has reduced. Would you like to comment on that?

MR. DEATON: I mean, I see this as part of a bigger picture in which the people who've been already successful are brocading themselves against the people who have not been successful and making sure they don't succeed. So, that for example, in cities like San Francisco or Los Angeles or New York, the regulations make it impossible to build the sort of cheap housing that has been possible in some cities like Chicago and Houston, for example. And it's just a very good example of what I think of as this concerted plunder that's going on in America of the already successful against the people who would like to succeed.

I mean, even if people are incredibly well-informed, you just can't move to San Francisco, or you can't move to New York because the entry level jobs that people used to get when they used to move are now prohibitively expensive.

Another part of this, which is not being as widely commented as it is, is that gives increased monopsony power to employers in the places where people can't move from. And that's one of the reasons, one of the many reasons why profit shares are rising. It's one of the many reasons why wages are going down and unemployment -- not unemployment, but lack of employment has really increased.

So, unless we have this sort of fundamental redistribution that we're not beginning to have, I see this is as a symptom of part of that. It's almost like repression of the less educated by the more educated.

MR. LUCE: So, there's I think time for two more questions. Once of which, I think, specifically, in Fiona's lane. And then the final one of which I'd like Rashawn and Carol to answer. This is from Austin Barton, Fiona. Will Americans' attitudes towards democracy change as our cultural memory of the capitalists versus communist cold war fades away? In my experience, many conservative Americans still hold on to a cold war era fear of socialism and communism, meaning that somewhat ironically, they're afraid of liberal Americans bringing about socialist policies through democratic processes. This does seem very topical given the debate going on with the reconciliation and infrastructure bills right now. But is that largess of cold war framing the fact that it's gone but we're in a new cold war, arguably. How would you respond to that, Fiona?

MS. HILL: Well, I think, you know, because it touches on everything that we've been talking about now. It's just this very unfortunately labeling that, you know, is perhaps an artifact of the cold war, but I think is actually much more useful in the terms that, you know, Angus has just laid for people being able to just refuse to take actions that would, you know, certainly improve everybody's general well-being. I mean, you know, there's been quite a bit debate recently in kind of going back to the preamble of the Constitution and, you know, that line there about the common welfare, the common good, the well-being of society, which was, you know, one of the issues that the founding fathers were trying to promote.

And the other thing that leads to that, which would require some, you know, kind of decision on the part of people higher up in the economic system to basically forego something, you know, in return for that, you know, kind of common good is being labeled as socialist or communist or Marxist or any kind of label here. And we're all too -- I actually try to move away from labels completely in any of the things that I'm talking about because nobody really knows what they mean. I have no idea what liberal means anymore. I just have no idea.

Because certainly coming from a U.K. historical perspective, you know, kind of my great grandfather was a member of the liberal party in, you know, the kind of the late 1800s and early 1900s in the United Kingdom. And their focus was on sanitation and, you know, public works, you know, to kind of head of cholera and typhus and to stop, you know, kind of small children ages six and seven from going down coal mines and things like this.

So, you know, kind of if that's liberal, bring it on. You know, but it's just that's not the kind of label people are now applying, you know, the sort of improvement for the general welfare. So, I think that, you know, Austin's absolutely right. We've got this kind of legacy of labeling here that was actually a deliberate effort now when those are applied to prevent, you know, from taking the kind of steps that we need to act in the common good. So, I mean, I'm sure that, you know, Rashawn and Carol also have something to say about this. But I think this is really problematic that any of the policies, you know, as Angus was saying before, that we know we have to implement get stopped in their tracks particularly by this pernicious form of labeling.

MR. LUCE: Yeah, and let's hope Joe Manchin is watching this show. So, Rashawn and Carol, there are three or four questions, but I want to sort of summarize them. They're all on the same theme about populism. What is driving it? And how do cure it? But let me just read out one of them because it, I think, typifies the spirit of all of them. From Maureen Wharton. You've written -- she's saying about Fiona -- that the hollowing out of certain communities has facilitated populism's rise and have suggested ways to gradually reinvest in them. Meanwhile, how do we best cull the feverish animosity that populist politicians purposefully stir up to get their bases to vote against their own interests? Can I ask each of you, I mean, it's a big question. And there is another, you know, what is the biggest threat to American democracy? But I think we've been discussing it. So, the answer to that's implicit in this whole

panel.

But Rashawn and then Carol, could you sort of address that larger thumb sucker about what the hell do we do about populism?

MR. RAY: Well, you know, I mean, as you noted to me, some of the ways we've been talking around this one big thing deals with racial resentment and it deals with the rise of really white supremacist sects that have always been there but have popped up in different ways. Particularly in the way that it's framed around kind of far-right ideology. Obviously, we don't have time to get into all the details but I think one way to deal with it is to think more intersectionally.

Oftentimes, from a policy perspective, we approach policies as focusing on class or family or race or gender. And we do a disservice because our society and even our identifies are not singular. So, we have to start thinking in a much more holistic way about how these identities come together. I think one big thing now is the narrative that drives things around how we think about taxes, how we think about the price of goods. And I think the bottom line now is as we think about young people. Young people feel like they've been lied to. They were supposed to be doing better than their parents, but many of them won't. Especially not in terms of quality of life, which is quite different from whether or not you have a degree and you make decent money. If you're living as Angus was saying, I mean, if you're living in the Bay area, which is where I did my post-document, if you're living there you're making a lot of money. What does that really mean?

And so, part of this is we have to think about what success means and we also then have to reconfigure the way that America thinks about success, which some European countries have done a much better job at that than the United States has.

MR. LUCE: Carol, I've giving you that last word.

Ms. GRAHAM: Oh, well, that I'm very lucky. So, I'm going to say the last work on well-being and the importance of it. Something Fiona raised and I think it's exactly what Rashawn is saying, as well, that we really have -- we've stopped thinking about our society's well-being and have started thinking in terms of wealth and profits and everything else. And if you look at the way the American system works and how divided it is from everything from access to good school, to healthcare, to health insurance, which other countries just have as basic rights, we don't have that.

And so, until we start thinking about our society as a whole, and policies reflect that, I understand there are efforts now to get there, but there's a lot of political polarization, of course. But also, I think we need to recognize that when people are in complete despair, and when they don't have any reason to live and they don't have any meaningful or purposeful existence, it doesn't have to be a high-end job. I mean, it just needs to be some sort of purposeful activity. They are very vulnerable to radicalization, to polarization, to populist politics because they have nothing lose and nothing else to hope for.

So, I think we really need to take a step back and think about how -- and look at countries like the U.K. who has made a lot of efforts -- which has made a lot of efforts in the well-being space. New Zealand, Canada, others, Costa Rica even, you know, it's -- we need to think beyond our borders about what countries can do to support society's well-being as a whole and that might be a step toward decreasing some polarization between the haves and the have-nots and racial resentment and all of the other, you know, terribly difficult problems we're dealing with. So, thanks, Ed.

MR. LUCE: Now, thank you, Carol. And thank you to all of you. I sort of fancy myself as somebody who keeps abreast of these topics. But I've learned a great deal from all of you in this session. And, of course, from Fiona's fabulous book, which you must buy. I have to say one comment by Sir Angus that he doesn’t think that your or Fiona's stories would be possible today is going to stick with me because that's a pretty stark comment.

A lot of food for thought. Fascinating discussion. Congratulations, Fiona. And thank you very much to Carol, Rashawn, and Sir Angus for contributing so richly to this important discussion.

MS. HALL: Thank you so much to everyone.

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