

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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PANEL:

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MODERATOR: FREDRICK HARRIS: Class of 1933 Professor of Political Science, Columbia University

HARRIS: Good morning. I'm Fred Harris, professor of political science at Columbia University. And we'd like to welcome you to the Brookings webinar, "African Americans in the 2024 Presidential Election." This presidential election is predicted to be a tight race in which the outcome will likely be determined by several thousand votes across a handful a handful of states. In many of these battleground states, African Americans will be a key voting bloc whose level of voter participation could determine which presidential candidate prevails. As in past elections, African American voters and other minorities may be the target of voter suppression efforts that could have the effect of diluting minority voting strength. Our conversation today will examine African American voting patterns, voter suppression efforts, and how the spread of misinformation through social media might influence the voter participation and partisan choices of Black voters. Given the enthusiasm that Black voters demonstrated in 2008 and 2012, when presidential candidate Barack Obama headed the Democratic Party's ticket, it was a very critical moment in the history of the country. And so now we have somewhat of a repeat. So this panel of experts will explore what challenges and opportunities this history making nomination of a woman of color as the standard bearer of the Democratic Party is having on the political behavior of Black of the Black electorate in this electoral cycle. Today's discussion would also consider the possible inroads the Republican Party might be making among Black voters, especially Black male voters who are expressing softer support for Democratic Party compared to previous previous election cycles. So we have a distinguished panel of experts who will provide some insights. First, Dr. Nadia Brown, who is a professor of government and director of the Women's and Gender Studies Program at Georgetown University. She is one of the nation's leading experts on Black women's political behavior. A prolific author author, Dr. Brown is the author of the books "Sister Style: The Politics of Appearance for Black Women, Political Elites" and "Black Women and Legislative Decision Making." Dr. Michael Fauntroy is a professor of policy and government and director of race politics of the Race, Politics and Policy Center at George Mason University, an expert on African American voter behavior and efforts to suppress minority voting. Dr. Fauntroy is the author of the book "Republicans and the Black Vote," a study that traces the partizan realignment of African Americans from away from the Democratic Party to the Democratic Party. And finally, and certainly not least, Dr. Nicol Turner Lee is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and is director of the Center for Teaching Innovation. Dr. Lee's research focuses on the intersection between technology and social justice and the area in areas that range from universal access to the design and application of artificial intelligence models. Dr. Lee is the author of the recently recently published book "Digitally Invisible: How the Internet is Creating a New Underclass." So here's here's how we're going to proceed. First, the panel will have a discussion about the topics at hand. We will then take questions that have been submitted to us by the audience. And just as a reminder, you can submit questions

via formally Twitter. The handle is @BrookingsGov. GOV. With #BlackVoters, or you can email events@brookings.edu. So here's the first question. So very important one is one that's been in the news recently, and it's really around this question around the intersection of race and gender and how those that intersection, those intersect. That intersection has influenced the presidential campaign thus far. Specifically, how has the unique circumstances of having Kamala Harris as the standard bearer of the Democratic Party? How has her candidacy impacted Black voters participation in this election cycle? So, Dr. Brown, we're going to start with you.

BROWN: Hey. Well, good afternoon, everyone. I am so pleased to be here to talk about this topic with you all and my esteemed panelists. And so let's just dive right in. So after Joe Biden decided he was not going to run for president on June 21st of this year, we saw record breaking numbers of people that came out to support Kamala Harris. So that might be Win with Black Women, a organization of Black women who come to talk about Black women's politics in their own capacity, not through their professional lenses, but through their own personal capacity. Over 44,000 Black women came together as a couple of hours after Joe Biden made that announcement and raised over \$1 million in less than three hours. And so what that showed was a huge enthusiasm boost for having Kamala Harris at the top of the ticket. Before that, right, there were the Biden administration and the campaign had been kind of limping along in terms of like Black support. But as soon as Kamala Harris was endorsed, after Joe Biden stepped down, there was an immediate take off of enthusiasm among Black voters and Black women in particular. After that, we saw another levels of phone calls that also fundraised. There was a win with Black men. There was one for Latinas, Asian-Americans, white dudes for Kamala, right? And so in Black communities, we saw that enthusiasm go up. But primarily, right. It was Black women who were first on the ground to do so. It's because they had been organizing for four years or more Sunday night calls and were well-prepared to lead this effort.

HARRIS: Right. Right. So what impact has the Harris candidacy had on Black women voters in particular? You talked about. So that the initial sort of rollout of of the candidacy and how has their level of enthusiasm, is it different or similar to support by Black male voters?

BROWN: So in comparison to 2016, where Black women did not were supportive of the Democratic candidate, there was not the same level of support in 2016 when Hillary Clinton was on the ballot. Moving forward to 2020, Black women showed up for Joe Biden, and that's how Joe Biden became the president. And he also had agreed to nominate Black women to the Supreme Court. And he was going to have a Black

woman as vice president. And so because of that, Black woman showed up in 2020. Now, fast forward to where we are today. Black women are getting more or less enthusiastic about Biden, but we're going to do what Black women do and support the Democratic ticket. But the discrepancy between Black men and Black women, this is all the stuff that's in the media right now. And it is really it's misguided. Right. So Black women vote for the Democrats upwards of 90%. And they have done so really since the 1960s when Black women were able to vote because of the Voting Rights Act. Black men likewise vote for Democrats around 87 to 85% of the time. So that is still the largest percentage of voters, any demographic group that are voting for the Democrats. White Americans sometimes vacillate between 49-47% voting for for Democrats and Latinos around sometimes 66 to as high as 72. So it's it's a misnomer to think that because Black men are slightly deviating from supporting the Democratic candidate, that there's something going on, that something is wrong or miss with Black men. To be honest. Right. The Democratic Party has captured Black voters because the Republican Party has done so little to reach out to Black voters and to express policy preferences. But where Dr. Fauntroy is the expert on that. So I'm sure he's going to weigh in, weigh in more. But I just want to. Right. Really just use numbers through this longitudinal look that shows that Black men and Black women are not that far apart from supporting Democratic candidates. And it would be a surprise right if Donald Trump picks up even let's say even 20% of Black men vote for the Republican candidate this this election cycle. That means, though, 80% of them are voting for the Democrat. So just need to be able to recalibrate how we're thinking about the situation based on what the historical numbers are and in real out in reality, what the new numbers in 2024 might show us.

HARRIS: Right. Dr. Fauntroy, what do you have to say about this? I mean, I'm sure you, given your expertise and Black voters in general generally, do you see any increase in support for Black male voters? Is there solid evidence? There is. Dr. Brown has given us some insight on this, but do you have any thoughts?

FAUNTROY: Yeah, I do. So I have always thought that some of the numbers that have come out recently in terms of polling Black men has been a little overstated. And one of the reasons that I came to that view is from a because of a poll that was recently released by Howard University's initiative on public opinion. And that poll showed, to Dr. Brown's point, Black male support very much in line with historical norms. And the public, particularly mainstream media, seem to have been jumping up and down about a 2 or 3, four point difference between 2024 and 2020 and 2016, as if that actually is going to mean anything. But the Harvard University poll shows that actually the numbers are within the usual numbers that we would expect to see. So I think that at some level, this is a little overstated. And I would add, as we get closer to Tuesday, we

ought to see if some of this the last week or so, in which the Harris campaign has made significant public effort and outreach to Black voters will actually make a difference. And I think I think that it potentially will. So I think that the Black male piece is it's a nice talking point. You know, I've been asked about it a ton of times, I'm sure you all have been to. But while, you know, past performance is not always an indicator of future success or future results, history tells us that we're probably going to be about where we've always been. And so if that's the case, then if Vice President Harris doesn't win, then those who are sort of lining up Black men to be the reason why she lost will have to find somebody else or some other group to go to.

HARRIS: Right. I think this is a very important point, particularly for those of us who are familiar with serving African Americans. I think one of the most critical, important things about the poll at Howard University is that it has a huge sample size. And so many of these press polls, particularly the one from The New York Times, I'm thinking, which I had around less than 600 and that may be even generous, were given estimates on on differences between the voting preferences of Black men and Black women with a huge sampling error. And so if you go and read the details, when you read these articles about how well they can go from 2 to 3%, but when you you know, generally when you for the survey itself, but when you do analysis of subpopulations, the sampling error goes up hugely and it can go anywhere from 5 to 6 to 7% plus or minus either way. And so it's very curious that that people sort of take these findings as they are reported, but they are reported with sort of fine print, sometimes given at the end of the article and sort of run with it. And I mean, we saw the same kind of of a viewpoint around Stacey Abrams candidacy for governor. Right. That there were Black males were not supporting her candidacy and win it. And so as it turns out. Right, it was sort of within the similar historical pattern. Black men have been pretty much voting Republican. Around 15% maybe since the Reagan era, if not before. And so I guess because very much closely contested campaigns and the idea of sort of the impact of seeing a difference in response, at least from perhaps the faulty polling we're seeing, that people are raising these issues around this huge gender gap, which is much larger among other demographic groups, by the way.

FAUNTROY: So so let me just add quickly also, as you all know, one of the things we want to look at is trends. So, right. What are the polls say over time? In this Howard University poll, you see the trends getting much closer to historical norms. From the September poll they did to the October 1st. And so if we sort of assume that this continues, there's no question in my mind that by the time we get to voting on completing voting on Tuesday, there will be roughly where we've always been.

TURNER LEE: And Dr. Harris, if I can just jump in real quickly, too, with regards to the trends, I mean, I think the other thing that we see in this particular campaign cycle is the tremendous use of media to hype up perhaps issues that are not necessarily realistically in the in the scope of what the data is telling us. And I think if you really go back to the whole thing about Black men, some of that was actually percolated on the Republican side. Right. To sort of give us a divide and conquer mentality based on some of the successes of, you know, Black women, the Black women voting bloc coming out pretty aggressively early on when it came to fund raising, especially if you all remember after Biden dropped out and there was a conversation of whether or not Vice President Harris could run with the type of merit that she would have had if had she won a normal primary. So I want to put that out there, too. I mean, some of this is along with the hype of the public discourse and strategically plays as a way to sort of steer people towards these narratives that may not justifiably be backed up by data.

HARRIS: Right.

BROWN: And I think these narratives are one that's rooted in racism and white supremacy. Right? So we have to call a spade.

TURNER LEE: Call it what it is, right?

BROWN: Right. And so when the election goes the way that a majority want it to go, Black people get held up as saviors. Right? So you remember in 2018, 2017, Black women, all the headlines were Black women saved democracy. And it wasn't an idea that Black women had, you know, a dog in that fight. It was that Black women were so altruistic that they decided to save American democracy, save America from itself. Now, on the flip side, right, if Kamala Harris loses or more are the race is closer, Black men will become the scapegoats. Right. Go from savior to scapegoat really quickly within a couple of years. But it's all putting the blame on Black people rather than thinking about these larger demographic shifts that you were talking about earlier. Professor Harris Right. So the gender gap is much larger. And other demographic groups among white Americans, among Latinos and Asian-Americans, and there are among Black people, but because of Americans not thinking about Black people as being citizens and having the right and opportunities to cast their ballot, to have the knowledge of civic skill that or take it that they're needed to be able to exercise an educated vote. These tropes abound because we are supposed to be these democratic outsiders not fully included of the country, but not fully, you know, not fully excluded, not fully included

somewhere in the middle. And it's back to this, you know, boogeyman narrative or magical Negro or, you know, whatever kind of race based stereotype. But either way, by Black Americans are damned if they do, damned if they don't.

HARRIS: Right. And also, Dr. Brown, I since you raised this, I think it's also important that for those who try to do intersectional analysis, whether they're on the Republican or the Democratic side, sort of a in the equation to not just talking about sort of Black man, but not mentioning, for instance, when Secretary Clinton ran for president, Black men voted 30 points above or more than white women for a woman candidate. And so these questions around sort of all this is evidence of misogyny, I think are they are misplaced. And, you know, the same thing with Stacey Abrams is, as you know, white women in Georgia did one point better than white men in their support for Stacey Abrams, which was around a fifth of the of of the white vote. So I think we should be very careful about these narratives. And you're right, Dr. Turner Lee there is a design behind this, a purpose, a strategic purpose to sort of create these narratives. But I don't want to get stuck here. Dr. Fauntroy giving you a sort of deep historical knowledge about these things. I want you to sort of put into perspective the level of mobilization compared to Obama's candidacy in 2008 and in 2012 to sort of what we feel or perceive or what the data has shown us about participation or less participation For Kamala Harris any thoughts on this?

FAUNTROY: Yeah. So I think that the best way to approach this is to look at it more longitudinally. So Vice President Harris is doing some things in terms of mobilization and fundraising, and he have that that we hadn't previously seen, just as Barack Obama had begun to do some new things and digitally. And I have to always give a shout out to Howard Dean, because in two and 2004, when he first ran, he was sort of the first social media darling in terms of being able to use the internet to raise copious amounts of money. And Dean, in my view, sort of began to shift the narrative on how campaigns mobilize voters. You know, historically, you look at the last election, you decide where your voters were and find out where your voters were, and then you go get them out again. And there was less attention from our perspective and trying to sort of do micro-targeting and finding out are there is a small handful of voters in this one county that we lost that we could potentially get. And that helps to explain as you fast forward to 2024, partly why Vice President Harris is campaigning in some places that you might not ordinarily see a campaign go. So you can maybe win some voters in a red county if you're a Democratic candidate and lose by a smaller gap in that county and potentially use that to bridge a victory in that state. And so between social media and particularly and this is something that I have real mixed feelings about, the use of celebrity endorsers through social media, I think

helps to explain the way in which we have a new framework for mobilizing. And so between social media, some of the traditional ways in which we do it. And the incredible fundraising. You can't mobilize without being able to raise money to pay staff to go out and do the mobilizing. Vice President Harris, by the estimates I've seen, has raised over \$1 billion in three months. That is a staggering amount of money and potentially scary if you if you realize that that's the new bar that may well have been set for fundraising going forward. So for me, mobilization has shifted. It is much more dependent on social media, much more dependent on livestreams, for example, to reach voters. There's a lot of talk about former President Trump's event at Madison Square Garden in New York last week and people asking, why is he doing these events in New York? Well, with the YouTube and the Internet, you can do you can be in one place and be seen by people in various parts of the country. And in some ways target those same voters as if you were in their state. So we have a new universe of mobilizing, and I think it will continue to evolve. And once we count all the tea leaves after November 5th, we'll know Just you know, we'll know very well what worked and what didn't.

HARRIS: Right. Dr. Turner Lee, I mean, you're an expert in the social social media domain and technology. How do you see the difference between then and now, particularly as it affects Black voters?

TURNER LEE: Well, first and foremost, I am just so shocked that I'm sitting among political scientists. And the word social media came out of Dr. Fauntroy's mouth. I know that for quite some time.

FAUNTROY: I'm about to go to IG right now.

TURNER LEE: So I'll just put it out there like that, though, Michael, for quite some time. Listen, I think we're right on, right when it comes to how the media was used. We did see it. And I love the way that you really brought it out historically, because some people think that the Internet and gay activism happened with President Trump and the way that he used social media during the time that he was in office. But really, we had seen a percolating experience among both parties as to how to leverage this new technology. And I think what what Vice President Harris has really done has used it in a way that has made it more intentional. And I think that's the difference that we're seeing here today. You know, not only if you all remember after that call that Dr. Brown is talking about. Next thing I know, you know, my feeds were filled with advertisements. So they leveraged the advertising space, I think, very uniquely to attach it to Democratic fundraising. The other thing that we've seen in this election, I think it's actually been on both sides, which is

really interesting, is that the leverage of high profile aggregators that are on these platforms, both in traditional broadcast as well as online, has also worked to their advantage. I mean, we've seen and this is a really interesting statistic, right? We've seen a vice president Harris, go on the Breakfast Club several times, right? Well, they have about 8 million monthly viewers and listeners that come to that site for their news. We've also seen the leverage of other shows and the use of celebrity endorsers who come with a following. I mean, come on, let's think about it. The appearance of Beyonce at the Houston rally was intentional based on not just who she is, but the fact that she's got millions and millions of followers that will take her lead. Very similar to the Taylor Swift experience that I've written about with our challenge going forward. One other thing I do also want to mention, too. Both conventions also have the highest rate of influencers, in particular the Democratic Party. The Democratic Convention had the highest number of influencers they ever had before, and that was by design to actually capture gen-z and below voters. My point is we have seen technology sort of infuse the campaigns. Now, there's challenges with that because the same way the technologies are used to get at Black voters, it's the same way that micro-targeting is to use it for malfeasance, are going through the same channels, Onyx Collective, who do a really great work on what I think the web of misinformation is not just talking about the new disinformation coming when it comes to where's my polling place? But it's disinformation around health, you know, disinformation around the economic livelihood, disinformation around, you know, intersectional ties between Black men and Black women. That is all fed through the same channels. And so I think we have a particular interest in sort of studying this when this is all said and done in terms of the role that these online platforms play. And I think we also have an interesting time to also look at the extent to which they also feed into other tropes and other narratives that are election related and beyond. I mean, I think that's going to be the biggest challenge. Like the can has come off the lid. And so there's going to be a lot more is happening in terms of where people have found a space in the political sphere. But that also means we're going to have more intruders. And we've seen that recently. I know you all have been watching. In the news about the Chinese and other governments coming in and infiltrating in those areas. And it only gets worse as we lead up to the election. So, you know, I totally agree. We just have to figure out, I think as researchers, how do you harness this in a way that you understand how it contributes to better democracy versus being something that happens just because of the normal circumstance of folks wanting to actually leverage a voice online?

HARRIS: Right. Well, Dr. Brown, I want your thoughts on on on the again, the intersection around gender and race and social media, because social media and the influencers were not a big thing when President Obama ran or when he was president. We saw a great deal of racism around birtherism and how that was

used mostly circulated through radio as one platform. But social media wasn't a thing then as much as it is now. How do you think, sort of with Kamala Harris as a candidate, misogyny, Racism is being circulated through and through social media that perhaps wasn't as as as as didn't have the same platform of social media then. Do you see any evidence of that? And what are your thoughts about then and there, if you have any?

BROWN: My colleagues Camille Berge and Christine Slaughter and I have done this some polling and lots of surveys to Black women about where they're getting their media from and how they're getting political mileage and how we ran this in 2022, and we're doing it again right now. We're also doing focus groups, but what we're finding are that Black women are Black Americans are not, by and large, get most of their news from the television. So that's all demographic groups, which we were still pretty surprised to see. But of those that and if those that are getting their media from those are getting their news from social media are younger and they are also some people that are lower educated and lower SES status. And so it's really telling because of two things. The first is that after George Floyd was murdered, right, the media felt are proposed to have some racial reckoning in trying to showcase Black lives in a much more holistic way, not just showing Black death, Black suffering and, you know, still up for debate to say whether the media has done a good job of rectifying. Right, how race has been depicted? But what we saw from that were Black Americans really moving to more indigenous spaces to get their own news. So you could think about Black newspapers like the St Louis African American, or we could think about TV one or Radio one, right, trying to go to Black owned media outlets. But even within that. Right, you get to use Twitter now, ex Instagram tik-tok, Snapchat to curate your own media. Right? So you don't have to be beholden to what's, you know, a big conglomerate somewhere is telling you. But as Professor Turner Lee was sharing, this is prone for abuse because people might not have the best skill set to be able to recognize when something is fake or when it's not. And we saw that this disinformation around Kamala Harris being a prosecutor, locking up Black children was something that actually came from Russian bots that infiltrated Black, Black Twitter, Black social media spaces and proliferated right around by Black women and Black men. But really Black women really propagating this and tying it back to Hillary Clinton and the 1994 crime bill, which locked up a lot of brothers. Right. And so Black women were now at this space saying, I'm not married. I don't have the life that I thought I would have had because Democrats have been locking up Black men. Right. And so this kind of spiraled and unraveled very, very quickly. And now moving fast forward to 2024, Black women have been using social media, particularly after the pandemic, where we took to social media to find community, to do some health care, do some social, social radical care for communities that are talking about Kamala Harris. And a much more holistic

way is taking place on some of these platforms, but they're not necessarily filtering out. And there's not to say that there's not sexism, racism. Right. There's a lot of attention paid to what she's wearing, how her hair is styled. And in some of those ways, like we saw with the Keke Palmer podcast. Right. This is good information. It's uplifting. It feels like sisterhood. But when we find out that she uses the round brush, right. Something that we could all take back to our spaces. But we also know that they're being demonized in others. And so I think Professor Turley's point was imperative for scholars. But public facing scholarship is to help Americans figure out how do we digest what we are seeing, how do we know what's true and what is untrue, and how do we combat those untruths? Right. And how do you engage with people who have targeted malice towards Black women because they know that Black women are going to turn out and show out for Democrats. Right.

TURNER LEE: And Dr. Harris, if I could actually add on, and I love the way you've spoken about it, my dear colleague. You know, I think the other thing, too, to be clear of, we have run this election without any regulatory guardrails. Right. Or any protections against misinformation and disinformation, deepfakes of which Black voters tend to be, you know, likely targets of that type of egregious manipulation of online content. And what's so interesting, I just wrote a paper about this. We've seen memes, you know, very emotionally charged images and illustrations and imagery sort of pushed through the Internet to sort of define these campaigns. I mean, most recently when the campaign debate happened between Trump and Harris, you know, immediately her response of her face was memed as one to suggest other messages, like the strength of her character, whereas other people interpreted otherwise. I think it's really important for the Black community because of our likelihood to be online, much like Hispanic voters. The same thing. You know, 80% of Hispanic voters actually go to social media for their daily news right now. We're seeing, I think about 70% of Black voters using, for example, media for news. The challenge is how do people interpret what is real and what is not real? And during these processes and time frames in which we're actually, you know, bringing people into the democratic process, what role the social media play in sort of forming their truth. And I think that's an issue that we're going to continue to expand and become more complicated, especially with the infiltration of artificial intelligence. But I also want to say something as well, which I found to be interesting as a sociologist. And this was also a very class based campaign. Right, in many respects, because the people who are watching social media also have to have Internet access, which is the purpose of my book "Digitally Invisible." So there are a lot of people who sit in other areas of this country that are not connected. They're not necessarily part of these conversations that are happening online. They're not necessarily the target of my co-founder. I just talked about of the of the fundraising campaigns. They are

people who sit in digital deserts who cannot necessarily be part of the civic engagement sphere, where these conversations are happening or understand the corrections to false narratives. So I want to put that out there too, because I found it interesting. I'm getting most of my formation online, but what about people who live in the very rural South or live in areas where, you know, having technology access is the determination between broadband and bread. You know, how are they navigating through these conversations and debates in ways that will make them more informed about what they're getting into? And I think they feed into Dr. Brown some of those tropes we're talking about because they're not getting other perspectives.

HARRIS: So, Dr. Fauntroy.

FAUNTROY: Can get to that quickly. We also have to keep in mind the sort of generational aspect to all of this. Right. So what we're really talking about is what kind of media diet all consuming as citizens.

TURNER LEE: Yes.

FAUNTROY: And if you are younger and, you know, I've been teaching courses on the presidency and race and politics to undergrads now for a long time. And I'm at a point now where if it's not on IG, if they can't find it on Reels or Tik Tok, then it doesn't really exist. Right. Conversely, you have folks who are at a different age and a different part of the arc of their lives, and they don't have any time for any of that. So if they are having a constricted media diet on either age frame, they're likely not getting all of the information they need to be engaged, civic citizens, civically involved, citizens that we need. And as a consequence, you end up with more low information voters, the very people who are more susceptible to the Russian bots and the misinformation and disinformation, and helps to explain why there are still some people who have certain beliefs about things that we know are demonstrably false. And so that's the other aspect of this that I think we need to keep an eye on going forward.

HARRIS: On that point, Professor Fauntroy, do you think these efforts I mean, what role does this sort of new information or misinformation have on potentially voter suppression? Is it there? Is it or is the old school, if you want to call it that way? Voter suppression is still a thing, particularly post reversal of the Voting Rights Act on a Supreme Court.

FAUNTROY: So I think it's sort of both and. So I think ah, ah, you know, voter suppression is omnipresent. It exists in all kinds of ways. And since Shelby versus Holder went down in 2013. We've seen an explosion of changes to voter ID laws that would not have passed Section five muster of Section five of Voting Rights Act muster and a previous regime, which means it's actually easier to suppress voters and more difficult to fight. And so what you're seeing just yesterday in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the state in which I teach the Supreme Court, supported a move by the Republican governor to remove voters from the rolls this close to an election, some of which were determined to have been legally registered to vote. And so moving ballot boxes or stores constricting the number of days for early voting. Harris County, Texas We see a circumstance in which all of the drop boxes were were taken away except one in the largest county in the state with 4 million voters. So we have a new regime of voter suppression that has evolved to meet the challenges they see of the day. But I can just tell you, the history of America shows that there have always been efforts to keep Black people from the polls. And this is just something we need to continue to fight against, call out. And for those of us who sort of face the public in terms of being able to address group. And audiences across the country. We need to call it out because if we don't, it's going to continue and continue to get worse.

HARRIS: Right. I want to shift the bit. We have a few more minutes before reopen up for questions. What role I want to look at sub populations within the Black population, voter population and talk about things that we don't talk about. I think enough that may be very relevant and important. And so do you suspect that there are any social class divides among Black voters in terms of enthusiasm for this candidate or for the election more generally? You know, do we see the sort of grassroots efforts that happen across social class during the Obama years? Do we have a sense that that's the same today, or could it be just the way that their campaigns, because we started out in this question about mobilization, about what was basically happening, what seems to be among Black professionals, right. Who can contribute money or mobilize around that and sort of Greek latter organizations coming to the fold. Are there any class differences you suspect and the levels of enthusiasm compare to Dan or to the Obama years as compared to today? Who wanted Dr. Brown? You want to, have any perspective?

BROWN: I was going to jump in about differences I've seen around age and generation status.

HARRIS: Okay. So we can talk about age.

BROWN: That was my contribution.

HARRIS: Okay, let's start there.

BROWN: So. So we know that Gen Z is a highly politically motivated and active group, right? They are dispelling notions that young people don't care about politics and they'll be more politically engaged when they get older. But actually, what we're seeing is the opposite, that Gen Z have political beliefs and they are using them in both traditional and nontraditional forms of political participation. In my own research, I found that younger Black women are really questioning some of the tropes that got older Black women to turn out for politics. So just having descriptive representation, someone that looks like you is coming from comes from your same background isn't what drives young Black women and Black men to to the polls. They're asking distinct policy questions and they want to know how this Black representative is going to help them and their Black lives around the policies that impact them. Now, this is a slightly different rate from people who feel the connection of symbolic representation. And they're saying just having, you know, a role, a Black woman at the top of the ticket, the role model effect that that provides is enough for me to want to cast my ballot for for this person. But I want to share an interesting, perhaps anecdote. I conducted focus groups last week, and there was a millennial Black woman with millennial Black women who are all college educated, who are members of a historically Black sorority. And so I assume going into this focus group, they were pretty much all going to be Team Kamala, but they were kind of eerily silent. And so what I ask directly, you know, what's this about? One of the participants in the focus group said, I'm going to let the aunties have their thing. Literally. I'm going to let the parties have their thing. So what that signifies, right, in Black colloquium is that this is a campaign led by and for older Black women and that Kamala Harris wasn't doing enough to speak to this young woman's concerns about the conflict in Gaza. And so she said, it doesn't matter. You vote for a Republican or a Democrat. They're all war criminals. And this isn't something that, you know, I think where we've had more attention to the conflict in Gaza on college campuses, we've talked about that, particularly in terms of liberals and more progressives. But we haven't seen the nexus of younger Black people, Black women in particular, middle class, you know, millennials or middle Ages that are feeling some sort of way about the war in Gaza. And so to sum this all up. Right, I think it's a misnomer to think just because Kamala Harris shares or has so much overlap with the groups of people that I was talking to that they were automatically going to get in line. So, yes, I'm sure that there was a class bias and, you know, perhaps Dr. Found for a doctor trying to leak it to hold more about this. But I was just surprised and to hear that comment in addition to some some others. But maybe we can get into that later.

HARRIS: Dr. Fauntroy, you have any thoughts about this?

FAUNTROY: Yeah, I do. And. I think. Part of what? Dr. Brown is speaking to is the fact that even in this post-Obama world, there are certain Black people who don't see themselves in the people that are being offered to them as candidates to choose from. You know, we have a first with President Obama and now with Vice President Harris, Black people who have relatively exotic Black backgrounds. And I think for some of them, that might be a cause of hesitation. Now, as we look at this in the in the context of class, socioeconomic status, that sort of thing, I think that. The the talk about her background in terms of where she went to school and a sorority to which she is a member is something that for people who are not part of that world might see as an exclusionary point. And so that might help to explain why some of them in some cases might not be as excited because they see somebody who's been a typically sort of, you know, may resemble them but doesn't necessarily come from where they come from. And we see this somewhat in the conversation around American descendants of slaves versus Black people who are not American descendants of slaves, notwithstanding the lack of nuance and conflict and context around that conversation, in my view. So so I think there is a socioeconomic status point here. There's a class base point here, MIT organizational membership, where you went to school, where you live. All of these kinds of things helped to, in some respects, cleave Black voters. But these are the kinds of differences that cleave voters all over the country from all kinds of backgrounds. So I'm not I'm not necessarily jumping up and down about it, but I do think it's something that we need to keep in mind as we think about what happens in 2026 elections and 2028 elections and candidates running for state legislatures. How do we communicate in a way that speaks to the broadest possible universe of voters who might be open to voting for you? And sometimes sometimes I think we can make the case that that doesn't always happen with Black voters.

HARRIS: Right?

TURNER LEE: So, yeah, I mean, I'm going to kind of divert from what people know me as in the technology space and talk a little bit as a sociologist. So first of all, most I agree, both my colleagues. Right. And I would add on to this and I think, Michael, you sort of indicated this. This is really been an exercise of Black Paulism, just based on Vice President Harris's background. She's not necessarily only a Black woman, but she also comes with Asian descent, which I think speaks to, you know, many other Black voters that have not traditionally been engaged potentially in the Caribbean universe, as well as the intersectional universe of

Blacks who are mixed with other races and ethnicities. I think this is interesting, just as an experiment in of itself, and I've been working on this piece that I'm hoping to put out at the election, I also think that this has been the greatest BMI experiment that I have ever seen in the history of campaign, because not only has we've seen the Democratic Party mobilize Black voters, but we've seen them motorbike mobilize white women and Black pastors and white men and people who are entrepreneurs and technologies and other people depending on whatever, you know, aspect of your life you want to actually amplify. You've been able to organize around that. But as a sociologist, I think it's a really important question, Fred, that you ask because, you know, infrastructure wise, we go back to E. Franklin Frazier. This was the this was my real dissertation before I did technology When You Met Me was 40 years ago.

HARRIS: E. Franklin Frazier a sociologist who taught at Howard University.

TURNER LEE: I know, right? Exactly.

HARRIS: He wrote a book called "Black Bourgeoisie."

TURNER LEE: I was really about the infrastructure that Black communities put together to support these types of moments like this prior to the erosion and, you know, the erosion, the disintegration of our of our communities more broadly in Chicago, the Black middle class, as well as the Black political elite, were very strong based on the civic associations that support them, from fraternities and sororities to even Black civic organizations like the Links and other organizations. The challenge, though, over the course of history we've seen because of white supremacy, because of economic erosion, because of those things, we've seen these organizations sort of diminishing power. And I would suggest that in many respects, you know, Vice President Harris is benefiting from President Obama in sort of regurgitating that conversation, because if you all remember, you know, even though he was able to get many people to the poll, I remember I was in Chicago the first time he ran on the bus coming from the south side to the north side meeting 80 year old plus women. Who was the first election I ever voted in. What was so interesting is he did see, I think, the space for Black communities to sort of take their ownership back. And I wrote my dissertation on that. It was not on technology, folks, I'm sorry to tell you, but it was actually on the Black middle class and collective activism we saw like that, that sort of collective memory come back of all those things that we were. And I'm really excited about the fact that we've seen this happen again. The challenge to your question is not every Black person is part of a civic organization. Not every person, Black person is part of a Greek lettered

organization. Not every person participates in a variety of civic infrastructure that is pretty much defined this campaign. So it'll be interesting to see. And I like the way that's for sure. We talked about like the things that she's doing to work online, go out to communities, kiss more babies. Right. Shake more hands. You know, the question is, will this actually work in. A way that the civic infrastructure that has been defined by the Black bourgeoisie translates for those who in many respects historically have been left behind due to a variety of socio socio economic conditions that have affected communities. I would also say, though, that we can't make this just about the Black community, but the economic and social infrastructure of white candidates is stronger than Black candidates, and so many of the white candidates are walking in already with a political base that believes in them. I mean, I don't I don't care what people say. Former President Trump has his base and they give, you know, an equal amount and in some instances more money because they believe in that infrastructure has been built up for quite some time. So I think you have to have that concurrent conversation as well as to why that infrastructure worked well in this particular iteration of politics. And what that suggests when we actually compare it to other infrastructure that's already been laid out before people made a decision to run. And so, you know, I think, again, how this pans out, Michael, I hope there's not going to be a Howard versus Spelman and other kind of competition on that one.

HARRIS: But we can say we can say a lot more about this, but we really are up against the clock. I wanted to say, because we're going to get to some questions that I think many of these questions would have been settled had there been a primary contest, particularly over issues of identity. Yes. Around policy debates, which you saw with Obama, because some of the same issues, sort of particularly 2008, came up and he addressed them during the campaign trail, particularly the South Carolina primary, which can be described as the Black primary, because this is when you get all these proposals about a Black agenda from various Democratic candidates. We have a question on voter turnout that was submitted by a Vada Strickland I hope I have that name pronounced that name correctly, from the district, from D.C., which I think is an interesting question that often doesn't get addressed. Are there misconceptions about it? And the question is, is voter turnout among African Americans lawyers lower than other ethnic groups across the United States or Black people have?

BROWN: Yeah, no, the answer is about yeah emphatically, no. Research shows that. And so I'm going to talk about what I know the best and has written. Black women voters. Black women are being out registered to vote. Almost every other group, demographic group of Americans, but have that group of registered Black women voters. They vote upwards of 90%. So the average American we are talking about, we don't have

compulsory voting in this nation. Right. So it's good if like 45% of all eligible people to vote turn out to vote at any given election. So when there are 90% of all eligible Black women voters turn out, that is monumental. There is no other demographic group, you know, white men, even the gold standard of American democracy, don't register and turn out to vote at the same proportional rate as Black women.

HARRIS: Any other viewpoints on this? I have. I mean, I think one of the things that often get missed in this discussion about voter turnout, given African Americans socio economic status and, you know, the median the average Black voters come out more than they you would expect them to be given that and in fact, have consistently voter higher voter rates of participation in either registration or turnout compared to Latinos like of voters, Asian-American voters, even two who have higher than average levels of education and in some cases in the Obama years, years have met and slightly exceeded white voter participation. And so I think that's very important to keep that in mind as we talk about Black voter participation. There is a question related to the role of mainstream media when it comes to disseminating facts and fighting misinformation. Is there enough? What is the role of the media in this? And this is from Kelly Taylor, who is from Silver Springs, Maryland. I think this is for you, Dr.

TURNER LEE: Turnbull I think the mainstream media plays a key point, and I would also suggest that the prior question, Dr. Harris, that, you know, we keep talking about the national election, but there are very significant, you know, down ballot elections that are going to also matter, which I think is also an interesting conversation, particularly you look at the race in Maryland right now in terms of how those camp, those that marketing is happening, those campaign promotions are happening. You know, I think the challenge of mainstream media is that over the course of the last 10 to 15 years, they have not been owned by Black folks. And so as a result of that, they still sort of play to mainstream messages that may or may not encompass fact. And I think it's been very unfortunate on a policy level that we've not seen, as Dr. Brown was talking about, the growth of newspapers and independently owned networks where they're able to survive, you know, not only against the Internet, but more importantly to survive the scrutiny of what it takes to be owned by diverse founders. So with that being the case, I think people should always be skeptical of mainstream media. You know, Abby Phillips is recently on CNN that is so interesting, corrected one of her guests and then sort of removed him from the set. But that doesn't happen often. Right. And it could have been something that could have been used as a tool to actually take her off the set because she doesn't own that particular media brand. My point is, misinformation is a conversation around who owns the media. And

until we actually dig deeply into that conversation there, I think we're going to continue to see vulnerable populations manipulated by information that may not necessarily be about them or written for that.

FAUNTROY: May I just add quickly, this leads back to a point I made earlier about our media diet. Right. So those of us of a certain age understand the concept of mainstream media one way.

TURNER LEE: Yes.

FAUNTROY: But you have. But what does mainstream media mean when I have a choice between going on and Shannon Sharpe or the Breakfast Club or some other podcast where there's going to be little or no fact checking and I can say what I want versus going someplace where I might get checked. So if I'm interested in trying to manipulate and share messages that may not necessarily be connected to fact, there are so many more options that exist now that didn't exist before. So we're sort of playing whack a mole on this whole thing around misinformation. And unfortunately, until we get a tighter handle on this idea of civic education and that's at the root of so much of this, in my view, the lack of strong civic education. The question that you just raised from the register is one that we're going to continue to struggle with, because the reality is it's a lot easier to lie and get away with lying than there's ever been before and in American history.

HARRIS: Okay. So I'm going to put we only have a few minutes, so I'm going to put particularly you political scientists on the spot. And Dr. Lee, Turner Lee, you can you can see.

TURNER LEE: Am I being excised out of this conversation.

HARRIS: No, you're not. But you might want to be out there. I ask this question. Who's going to win next Tuesday. Political scientist? Any predictions, any voter models that you've been tinkering with that you can tell us which way, which direction it's going to go? Have you been diving deeply into the data?

BROWN: Well, maybe I'll start because I am an interpretiveist. I am a quiet searcher. I'm not a person. I have not been diving into darkness. So I will leave this to a.

HARRIS: Qualitative data, no?

BROWN: Yes, but not that I don't do survey data.

HARRIS: Right.

BROWN: That time of year. But I am a mom of three elementary school girls and the Nickelodeon poll came out on Tuesday and Nickelodeon poll is rarely wrong. They predicted the president, these children. Right. I predicted the president almost to a tee with the exception of two, and they had Kamala Harris winning. So I'm going to go with that. That's what my daughters are also excited for. And so I'm going to say, I don't know how it's going to be close, but Kamala Harris, we're going to get out.

HARRIS: Dr. Fauntroy?

FAUNTROY: Yeah. So I, I think Vice President Harris is going to win. However, I am there's one data point that I find very notable that I don't think has gotten the kind of attention that it needs, and that is in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin and North Carolina, Republican registration rates are up between 6 and 8 percentage points over 2020. And if those voters are turning out for President Trump and they aren't being included properly in the surveys because the surveys often look at whether or not you voted last time, then there could be a different result in President Trump. Former President Trump could end up returning to the White House. I agree it's going to be super close. I think, you know, I am somebody who thinks that the Electoral College needs to go away. So my dream scenario is, is that Vice President Harris loses the popular vote but wins the Electoral College because at that point, maybe Republicans will want to have a serious conversation about the Electoral College, because I think that's the biggest root of some of our problems right now.

HARRIS: And finally, our resident sociologist. Do you have any thoughts on this?

TURNER LEE: Well, in the interests of sticking to it, adhering to the Brookings policy, that we are nonpartisan and apolitical, I'm not going to say who's going to win, because I'm sure I will get a response if I actually say that. But I actually want to just end with what are we going to learn? I mean, honestly, I think what we're going to learn at the end of this election is the extent to which residents in our society care about civility or they care about, you know, other issues that are affecting them individually. So we'll see if this is a

collective conversation or is it a very individualized compact that people want to make with their determined results? I think we're also going to learn it. More states are going to pull up Virginia on us, right, in these next coming days. And we're going to see a lot more pushback, maybe not in the sense of an insurrection, but if we're going to see pushback legally, that is going to make it harder for us to actually close out the outcome of this election. And I think what we're also going to learn is, you know, what type of campaign politics works better in a 21st century world. I mean, to me, that has been the most fascinating thing watching when with Black women watching how media is actually playing a role in this, watching how character has been at the center in core of both campaigns in many respects. So I think those are things that we should learn and we should come back after the election and talk about how these things pan out.

BROWN: We've already learned a lot from our conversations and we've had a whole hour of conversation talking about Black voters, Black political participation. And we haven't at once talked about the Black church, which would have been unheard of.

HARRIS: Wrote a book for us.

BROWN: Yes. Professor Turner Lee has put out for us. But where is, you know, the role of civic engagement that Black churches have been known for? We have that needs.

HARRIS: That used to be a whole separate, separate conversation about civic infrastructure. How, it compares to the rise of celebrity influencers, young people who are less committed to the church than their parents and grandparents. That's a whole other that's a conference, actually.

BROWN: It's usually come back to a conversation about Black vote. And we had a whole hour together and nobody mentioned the Black church, right?

HARRIS: Now, that says a lot, actually.

TURNER LEE: Franklin Frazier mentioned the Black church. So that was my oversight as a sociologist because I was wrapped up into the social media influencers that Dr. Fauntroy, I kept talking about.

HARRIS: Okay. So I really this has been a terrific conversation. You guys you all have have provided our audience with really a deep dive into Black voter behavior historically and during this period, this election cycle. And so I want to thank you again, and we look forward to the next round. So until then, enjoy the rest of your day.