

7-28-2020

## Racism Is a Life Issue Panel Discussion

Marcus Cole

*Notre Dame Law School, gcole2@nd.edu*

Katrina Jackson

*Louisiana State Senate*

Ernest Morrell

*University of Notre Dame*

Gloria Purvis

*EWTN Global Catholic Radio*

Jacqueline Rivers

*Harvard University*

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/gmcole>



Part of the [Legal Biography Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Cole, Marcus; Jackson, Katrina; Morrell, Ernest; Purvis, Gloria; Rivers, Jacqueline; Watson, Benjamin; and Snead, Carter, "Racism Is a Life Issue Panel Discussion" (2020). *2019–Present: G. Marcus Cole*. 11.  
<https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/gmcole/11>

This Discussion is brought to you for free and open access by the Law School Deans at NDLScholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in 2019–Present: G. Marcus Cole by an authorized administrator of NDLScholarship. For more information, please contact [lawdr@nd.edu](mailto:lawdr@nd.edu).

---

**Authors**

Marcus Cole, Katrina Jackson, Ernest Morrell, Gloria Purvis, Jacqueline Rivers, Benjamin Watson, and Carter Snead

# Racism Is a Life Issue Panel Discussion

Jul 28, 2020

A moderated discussion on racism and the culture of life with distinguished panelists G. Marcus Cole (Dean, Notre Dame Law School), Sen. Katrina Jackson (Louisiana State Senate), Ernest Morrell (University of Notre Dame), Gloria Purvis (EWTN Global Catholic Radio), Jacqueline Rivers (Harvard University), and Benjamin Watson (NFL Legend).

## Transcript – English (auto-generated)

*Errors have not been corrected.*

0:00

good evening everyone i'm Carter sneed director of the nicola center for ethics and culture and professor of law here at

0:07

the university of Notre Dame given this fraught moment when we're all called upon to examine our individual

0:13

and institutional consciences about the shameful injustice and consequences of racism we at the

0:18

nicola center believe that an essential resource to draw upon in our own reflections and plan for

0:24

moving forward together are the core principles anchoring a culture of life and civilization

0:30

of love namely radical hospitality solidarity and respect for the intrinsic

0:35

equal dignity of every member of the human family born and unborn these are the principles that are

0:41

generative of a commitment to fight alongside our brothers and sisters of color and their struggle

0:46

for equality and justice so as we do at the nicola center we brought we brought

0:52

together a panel of brilliant and thoughtful friends from a wide array of disciplines to have a conversation this evening

0:58

about how these core principles of the pro-life movement can offer us guidance as we move forward together

1:04

and to explore the essential points of connection and mutually reinforcing goods among the fights for equal justice under

1:11

law for unborn children and for racial justice and we agreed that there's no better place to have

1:17

this conversation than the university of Notre Dame where we do not shy away from hard conversations and we stand as a

1:24

counter-cultural beacon that is long recognized and affirmed that a commitment to the dignity of every person

1:30

entails protecting the most vulnerable including the unborn child and those who suffer from invidious

1:36

racial discrimination this can readily be seen in the university's official statements

1:41

just a few months ago in a formal statement the leadership of Notre Dame declared that our commitment to the equal dignity

1:46

of all quote compel us institutionally and individually to combat the sin of racism

1:53

and work to include all fully in our community and ten short years ago the leadership

1:58

reaffirmed that quote consistent with the teaching of the catholic church on such issues as

2:03

abortion research involving human embryos euthanasia the death penalty and other related life issues

2:09

the university of Notre Dame recognizes and upholds the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death so this

2:16

synthesis of a culture of life and the quest for racial justice are encoded in our university's foundational

2:22

documents and statements as Notre Dame's principal locus of teaching research and public engagement

2:28

on culture of life issues we at the nicola center for ethics and culture are proud to sponsor tonight's

2:33

conversation and we are so grateful for the co-sponsorship of the college of arts and letters

2:38

the law school the mendoza college of business and Notre Dame right to life which i might

2:44

add is the largest student group on campus and now without further ado i will

2:49

introduce our moderator who will introduce our amazing panel of friends professor ernest morrell is the coyle professor in

2:55

literacy education and director of the center for literary literacy education at the university of Notre Dame

3:01

in addition he's the director of the james r squire office for policy research in the english language arts an

3:08

initiative of the national council of teachers of english he is an elected fellow of the american educational research association

3:15

a past president of the national council of teachers of english and a co-convener of the african diaspora international

3:21

research network professor morel has authored 90 articles research briefs and book chapters and 10

3:27

books including stories from inequal inequity to justice in literacy education and critical media

3:34

pedagogy teaching for achievement in city schools his scholarly interests include literacy

3:39

studies the teaching of english media and youth popular culture and education in the african diaspora

3:45

professor morell received his doctorate in language literacy and culture from the university of california berkeley

3:51

where he was the recipient of the outstanding dissertation award in 2001. he is the chair of the planning and

3:56

advisory committee for the african diaspora consortium and sits on the executive boards of lit

4:01

world and the education for democracy institute most importantly for us ernest has been

4:07

a faculty fellow of the nicolas center for ethics and culture since he joined us here at Notre Dame in 2017. so now i will

4:14

turn the evening over to my dear friend and colleague professor ernest morrell thank you so

4:20

much Carter thank you for having me um and it's always a pleasure to collaborate with the nikola center for

4:26

ethics and culture and tonight's panel is is no exception so without further ado

4:31

i'd like to introduce our esteemed panelists we'll start with dr Jacqueline rivers

4:38

Jacqueline rivers is a lecturer in sociology at harvard university and she's executive director

4:44

and senior fellow for social science and policy of the seymour institute for black church and policy studies

4:50

welcome dr rivers [Music] thank you so much it's a pleasure to be here thank you

4:57

Ben Watson is recently retired from a 16-year career in the nfl where he won a super bowl

5:04

ring as part of the 2005 new england patriots he is currently producing a documentary

5:10

on abortion titled divided hearts of america featuring aveda king Ben carson and other pro-life advocates

5:18

thank you so much for being with us tonight mr carr mr Watson thank you professor morell and also uh

5:23

we have uh one person mr uh uh Carter snead dr snead is in there in the uh video as well in

5:30

the movie as well so uh we do have some connections in the movie uh to Notre Dame which we are uh

5:36

very happy about so it's an honor to be here with you all and talk about this very important topic and thank you so much Carter gets around

5:42

for sure next i'd like to introduce senator Katrina Jackson

5:49

Katrina Jackson is a democratic member of the louisiana state senate for the 34th district

5:54

she has been a vocal defender of the defense of life at all stages and was the author of louisiana house

6:00

bill 388 which was at the center of a supreme court decision on this term thank you so much senator

6:07

Jackson for being with us tonight thank you for having me

6:12

next i'd like to introduce miss Gloria Purvis Gloria Purvis hosts the morning radio

6:17

program morning glory on ewtn global catholic radio

6:22

and she's the creator and host of the ewtn tv series authentically free at last she served on

6:28

the national black catholic congress's leadership commission on social justice thank you so much for being with us here

6:34

tonight miss spurs thank you for having me and finally and last but not least um my

6:40

colleague dean Marcus Cole g Marcus Cole was appointed the 11th dean

6:45

of the Notre Dame law school in 2019 in may 20 may 2020 dean Cole published

6:53

an op-ed titled i am george floyd except i can breathe and i can do something thank you so much

7:00

for being with us tonight here with us tonight dean Cole thank you earnest for having me

7:05

great um so now that we've met all of our panelists a little bit about the format um what we've asked each of the panelists

7:11

to do is to take two or three minutes to respond to a general prompt essentially why do you think it's

7:18

important to talk about racism as a pro-life issue so each of them as i said we'll speak for two or

7:24



three minutes about why this work matters to them and how they are engaged but particularly

7:29

addressing this connection between racism and and the pro-life pro-life agenda

7:36

so we'll start with dr rivers well i'm really grateful to the nicolas

7:43

center for bringing this panel together because this is really such an important topic

7:50

in so many ways this is important to me because in so many ways the black church and the black community have not been

7:57

deeply involved in the pro-life issue and

8:04

yet the such high rates of abortion among black women here in the united states

8:09

um in 2015 36 of all abortions nationwide were performed on

8:15

african-american women that is just so deeply troubling uh especially given the fact that according

8:23

to the pune research center african-americans are so deeply religious we are people who are

8:31

we pray more often we believe in the existence of God and yet here we have a situation where

8:37

young black women are engaged in abortion in fact in new york city for several

8:44

years the abortion rate was higher than the rate of live births so this is really important to me for

8:50

that reason because there is this connection between abortion and not just race but poverty because

8:58

there was a study in 20 in 2000 that found that 27 of women having abortions were poor and

9:04

in addition to that 31 percent were within 200 percent of the poverty

9:10

line even though only 30 percent of women of that reproductive age were at that level of poverty so there's

9:17

really this connection between poverty and abortion and between race and abortion and it seems clear

9:25

that in fact there's a link between the three because the poverty rate among black women is almost three times the rate

9:32

among non-hispanic white women uh in 2001 it was 25 percent of black

9:38

men who were poor so this is all rooted in institutional

9:44

racism the high levels of poverty among black women and issues such as slavery

9:51

the new deal redlining and the gi the institution of the gi bill have

9:58

really created barriers to well formation in the black community have created

10:03

barriers to accessing good education and therefore have also created gaps not just in wealth but also in income

10:10

all of this is related to these high rates of abortion among black women this is why this is such an important issue to me because the two

10:17

are right now indivisibly connected

10:24

thank you dr rivers next we'd like to hear from mr Watson thank you again for for having me for

10:31

this discussion and uh particularly right now uh where we sit um

10:36

in july a few months after the murder of george floyd at the hand of police officers in minnesota

10:41

there is currently a an angst um a heightened sense of awareness when

10:47

it comes to this topic specifically when we talk about racism uh i like many of you have fielded

10:52

questions about what can i do uh people are reading they are getting deep into the history of this country

10:58

starting all the way back 1619 and even beyond that there's a heightened awareness of all the things that we're going to talk

11:04

about tonight from a structural institutional level from a policy level things that have created the the atmosphere when it comes

11:12

to race in america that we see now and we cannot leave from this place without

11:17

being changed uh it seems like we come back to this place every few often every few years and we get all

11:24

excited and upset and we cry together and we lament and then we come right back here and so the difference i want to see

11:30

now is that we move from this place as a changed country also with changed

11:35

hearts and with change policy and laws when it comes to the life issue so many

11:41

call themselves pro-life but when we talk about this issue of race we get a deaf ear and so why it's

11:47

important to me and why it should be important to all of us who consider ourselves to be believers and consider ourselves to be defenders of the unborn

11:53

is that this is a justice issue primarily the bible talks a lot about justice it talks a lot about righteousness

11:59

in the book of jeremiah one of my favorite verses chapter 9 verse 23 24 it talks about God being a God of

12:04

loving kindness justice and righteousness for he delights in those things and so as someone who wants to defend

12:11

the unborn i believe that's a justice issue justice is simply giving people their just due whether that's punishment

12:16

or protection and this also talks about treating people people with equity and so we cannot be people who consider

12:23

is who are consider ourselves to be advocates or warriors for the unborn but when someone comes to us and tells

12:29

us of their mistreatment while they are alive we ignore them we have to be people

12:35

that advocate for those who are victims of sex trafficking those who are victims of poverty those who are victims of yes racism

12:42

because that is on the entire spectrum of justice issues

12:47

so many are turned off by those who consider themselves to be pro-life but when i

12:53

enter enter bowling into this discussion and so the reason why i'm involved and

12:59

what i hope that we get from tonight is that we first have a sense of humility going back to that verse in jeremiah

13:04

chapter nine it starts off with talking about how we need to be people of humility and we can only enter into this very

13:11

difficult topic with humility first and then we must turn our attention to truth and that truth has to bring us

13:18

to action and so we need to be people i need to be someone

13:23

who can see the variety of a friend that calls it the single garment of justice that covers so many issues of our day

13:31

and we can't simply pick and choose which one we need to be a part of because in that way we become hypocrites to many

13:38

who God will want us to reach

13:43

thank you so much mr Watson next we'd like to hear from senator jacks

13:52

hello um i can curve wholeheartedly with what everyone is saying at some point

13:58

in order to really really deal and tackle with the issue of life i've always said that i'm a whole life advocate which

14:06

means i care about life at every stage of life and and i've always said that in a sense of

14:13

caring about life at every stage that shouldn't be based or shouldn't be diminished based on someone's race or

14:19

skin tone or their culture or their class or their socio-economic background

14:26

race is at the forefront of the life issue and it should be some have

14:32

selected to ignore it thereby diminishing their advocacy for life i truly believe

14:39

that when you advocate for life you advocate for all life and that at any time uh like Ben Ben Watson said

14:48

that you see someone's life being diminished or devalued or

14:53

um because of race that if you truly are a life advocate if you truly

14:59

hold life uh in its in in sanctity if you believe that

15:05

regardless in a wound or outside of the womb a human deserves a chance to really

15:11

progress that's the entire life issue for me and as we've gone around the country as we

15:18

pass legislation in louisiana we have always looked at

15:24

how it's going to apply and it's application of the law and what that means and how the law will apply to all races

15:32

but at this moment uh and at many moments in american history we are seeing in at in the

15:39

area of race african americans being disproportionately treated disproportionately placed in economic

15:46

situations we are seeing african americans once again having to fight against police brutality and not having

15:54

their rightful seat at the table and so if we're going to really truly advocate

15:59

for life we must advocate along this issue when we must make sure that life matters for

16:05

everyone and that we assert ourselves as advocates who truly believe that black lives

16:12

matter

16:17

thank you so much senator Jackson um next we'll we'll hear from this purpose

16:25

well i believe we have to talk about racism as a pro-life issue because pro-life issues

16:30

deal with the human person um as a catholic i value life from conception until natural

16:36

death and it would be uh really a false witness to the gospel in my opinion if i were to be silent about racism

16:43

uh every person is made in the image and likeness of God and racism says that God's a liar and

16:50

that not everybody is made in his image and likeness not everybody is worthy of dignity and respect and i see

16:56

that being the same kind of arguments used to justify uh treating the unborn as if they are not

17:02

made in his image and likeness and worthy of dignity and respect and so i believe as a Christian

17:08

that i have an obligation to not only not do what is evil but to actually do what is good

17:14

and so to talk about racism in the area of being a pro-life matter i i believe will

17:19

help Christians understand that this is an issue that has a gospel mandate that we

17:25

must be involved in it and i also want to say that frankly racism is a sin and people go to hell

17:31

for it and we need to help people understand that that this is a very serious issue that

17:36

when we fail our brothers and sisters fail to love them as God has commanded that we will have

17:42

to answer for it and so because people hear the term pro-life and it already has some

17:47

visibility to help them understand that racism is an issue of a pro-life concern hopefully helps

17:54

people understand the answer to injustice is not to uh be less

17:59

pro-life but to be more pro-life more loving God gave us the capacity to do so

18:04

and we should do it and so that's why i believe that racism should be discussed in the area of a

18:10

pro-life issue because it is and because it's a gospel mandate

18:16

thank you so much mrs Purvis um and finally uh we'll hear from dean Cole

18:21

thank you so much ernest and uh thanks to the nicholas center for including me in this discussion i want

18:28



to participate in this discussion not as a legal expert or a business law expert or an employment law expert

18:35

instead i want to participate as a person of prayer um

18:42

as a catholic as a Christian uh my wife and i uh we prayed for

18:48

12 years to have children uh it took us 12 years before God answered that prayer

18:55

and then after we had those children we had two boys after we had those children we prayed

19:01

over them every day and as we sent them off to school we would say a prayer over them

19:06

every single day and we told them that it's important to pray

19:11

and to not just pray for your day but also to pray for miracles but it's just as important when you're

19:17

praying for miracles to realize that you are an instrument of God and

19:22

that when you were praying for miracles sometimes God wants you to do more than just pray for miracles he wants you to be

19:28

someone's miracle and so we would tell our children as we sent them out the door

19:34

be someone's miracle today but as they got older and now they're 20 and 18 we found

19:40

ourselves praying for them twice a day not just as we sent them out the door to be someone's miracle

19:47

but later in the evening before they got home we found ourselves in prayer again about

19:53

whether or not they're going to make it home safely and i know that there are lots of other families out there

19:59

that say the same prayer that that their children will make it home safely and we know

20:08

that from experience that they don't have to be engaged in any wrongdoing for them to to be victims either of

20:15

crime or misdirected uh police brutality and so as a person of prayer i'm hoping

20:23

that we could recognize the connection between racism as it's exercised in daily life

20:30

and the the lives that we pray over and pray for and bring into it and God has brought

20:36

into being and i want to uh echo uh what ms Purvis said

20:41

um each of us is made in the likeness and image of God which means that God reflects many races

20:49

and that we need to see each other as he sees us

20:56

thank you dean Cole and and thank you everyone so um as i uh announce this next part of the

21:02

format um please panels feel free to unmute your cameras and microphones so we thought we'd do now um and again

21:09

thank you for those statements is just have a free-flowing discussion we have a couple of questions

21:15

that we've pre-formulated and shared with the panelists but um also there are questions being

21:20

populated in in the chat function and we'll we'll get to those as well we'll start with some of the uh

21:26

questions that we've talked about and then maybe with 10 or 15 minutes to go um

21:32

in our segment here we'll we'll shift and bring some of those questions from the chat room um this first question is for for all of

21:38

you to consider how do you see the connection in your own fields and experiences

21:44

between your commitment that unborn children be protected in law and welcomed into life and your devotion to racial equality and

21:51

and we can start anyway anyone who wants to jump in

22:00

okay i'll go thank you and i've done a lot of uh pro-life work um

22:06

outside of clinics with maternity homes um and things like that and trying to talk about pro-life matters in the black

22:13

community particularly protecting life in the womb and the number one pushback that i get

22:18

is the is the notion that people only care about black life in the room when it comes to politics or election time

22:25

and so to be able to show that the pro-life community cares about black lives not just in the womb

22:33

but outside the womb i think it's important for us to step in and talk about issues of racism police brutality racial profiling for

22:40

consistency and witness and because it's the truth if we are truly pro-life we care about these issues and that's the

22:45

number one pushback that i get is for some reason the pro-life movement is perceived as one that's merely political and

22:52

really doesn't care about uh life black people outside of the room and only cares about black life

22:58

when it can be used as a political ploy and so to um to the degree with which we

23:03

can give an authentic witness that is consistent i think it helps people to believe that they can have a place in the movement as

23:10

well that they aren't just pawns and that they have a vested interest um also in black life in the womb because

23:17

frankly i believe that talking about police brutality while at the same time stomaching or

23:22

allowing the high rates of abortion in our community also diminishes that witness as well

23:28

um how can we say black lives matter if we don't mean it from the womb to the tomb

23:33

and so just in my experience of working in uh uh with women who are considering

23:40

abortion um in discussions in the black community about us being more involved in the pro-life

23:46

movement around protection of the unborn these are kind of challenges that come up great

23:51

thank you so much and uh real quick i see others that are unmuted um i've been told it's not the chat function it's the q a

23:58

where you put your questions but i see uh mr Watson senator Jackson you're unmuted uh would you like to respond

24:03

okay sure i i wholeheartedly concur what i find is in the legislative arena

24:10

i find a lot of people who question the sincerity of the pro-life movement when it comes to african-americans and

24:17

really nurturing their life and advocating for their life what i find is this when i'm on the

24:23

senate floor and of course eight years on the house floor is this my fellow pro-lifers will vote for me on

24:29

the life issue on the what i call it is the abortion issue because life goes more uh way further

24:36

than just avoid abortion and so where i take the most slack

24:41

where i have the most debates with my african-american constituents sometimes and colleagues is

24:47

uh in a sense of well where are they they when it comes to other life issues

24:52

where are they when it comes to the death penalty and why are we always fighting this as a black caucus as a legislative black

24:58

caucus than as lifers where are they when it comes to offering programs and

25:04

uh things that give a hand up and not a handout to get people out of situations a lot of

25:09

african americans in louisiana and around the country are targeted by uh planned parenthood and others

25:16

based on the fact that they say we really and you know you're on your fourth child or your third child or you're on your

25:22

first child and you're still in school there are no resources to take care of them you know one of the biggest issues i

25:27

faced and probably was most controversial was medicaid expansion and

25:32

you know i said this is a life issue the catholic bishops bishops came to the table and said this

25:39

is a life issue and and i always say on the floor even on my pro-life bills so you cannot

25:46

ask a person to choose birth but not support that person's life and

25:52

their opportunity at the american dream at least give them the same opportunity that others have

25:57

so what i find is that there's a major push back in the african-american community to

26:03

really come out and support the pro-life movement because they don't believe it to be authentic they believe it to be a pro-birth

26:09

movement and to not really include the issues that really matter and allowing someone helping someone and

26:16

allowing them to choose life and making sure that they're able to give their child a life that they would

26:22

want them to have we all have our own responsibility but at some point

26:27

when there's so much legislation one thing that louisiana and i can speak to louisiana we had the

26:32

highest incarceration rate in the world we were number 49 of 50 in education

26:39

but we were the number one pro-life state so when governor edwards came in who was

26:44

a pro-life democrat and he had promised and we promised that we were going to turn some of that around

26:49

it was very very important in that first year to gain pro-life support in the african-american community

26:55

to make sure we were no longer the highest incarceration state in the world right capital of the world and so we're

27:01

inching toward there and as we inch toward that as we really begin to have the true conversation of

27:07

what being pro-life means we're seeing more uh african-american advocates come on so we can't ignore the racial race the

27:14

racism issue we can't act like things that are important to someone's life

27:19

out of the womb as they're you know matriculating through life is not important in the life movement

27:25

and the life advocacy and and so that's what i found to be very difficult in my area of translating in the african-american

27:32

community what wife means and how it you know stands against racism

27:38

thank you i'll just i'll just add to that and just say that um i found that the the terminology of

27:44

pro-life has been problematic in the circles that i've i've been in uh in the locker room for 16 years as a

27:50

football player but also in neighborhoods where i've grown up or even in navigating some of the pro-life

27:57

community when it comes to speaking at different uh pro-life functions the the term

28:02

pro-life immediately brings about ideas of republican versus democrat liberal

28:08

conservative it brings a host of other issues that seem to be anti-black

28:13

whether that's true or not that's beside the point and so it's always important to emphasize the fact that

28:18

pro-life take it out of the political realm although we do vote on these types of things we need to be able to take

28:24

that out of that realm and be able to speak to the truth about what it really is and what it really means

28:29

because i believe dr rivers said earlier the black community is overwhelmingly pro-life in the sense of for life

28:36

against abortion we are but the term pro-life you know coming along in the 80s with

28:42

reagan or wherever it kind of started in that area has come to mean something totally different

28:47

than what the the essence of what it is which is something that i believe many of us across ethnic lines all agree

28:54

with um so so that's important that we strive to really identify that this isn't a political issue it's

29:01

not just about accepting everything with some political platform it's about being able to pick and choose the things that actually do support life

29:08



through its entirety i would say the second thing that i've bumped up against a lot of times is ignorance and i say ignorance not be

29:16

not in a derogatory way but a lot of people don't know the history of our country we're all

29:22

learning it i think what we're facing right now in this in this season of life is an increased um emphasis on

29:29

finding out the truth is there really racism still going on if racism were to disappear today would

29:35

all the inequities change would the wealth gap that's 10 to 1 would that automatically come together no it wouldn't uh would

29:42

incarceration rates change no they wouldn't because the censuses have already been there and so when people

29:47

are able to this is black white and different are able to dig deep into our country's history and read and learn

29:54

then suddenly the picture clears up the fog is lifted and they can say wow this racism thing

30:00

really is beyond simply um a personal i don't like you because

30:05

you know your ethnicity is x it becomes an issue of wow these things have happened

30:11

continually over and over again and there are ramifications for them now we can get people on board to say

30:16

okay how do we fix these things but first they have to understand that there's a problem and where those problems intentionally

30:21

came from okay thank you can i pick up on that um uh

30:29

i i think it's i think uh what Ben Watson has just said is incredibly important um that

30:37

and i think it's under it doesn't get emphasized enough that history is incredibly important to

30:43

understanding racism today and also to understanding life issues today um americans need to

30:51

understand the the history of racism and they also need to understand

30:57

um the origins of the culture that we're in right now margaret sanger

31:02

um came out of a eugenics movement uh that was focused on

31:10

um purifying uh the race purifying the white race uh and

31:17

that meant that people who had disabilities people who were not of the right

31:22

ethnicity those people needed to be eliminated and so we need to understand

31:29

that component of the history of racism the the the history of eugenics uh and

31:36

the progressive era has has given rise to these structures that are part of our culture today and unless

31:43

we face that um we're not being honest with um the society that we're

31:49

we're living in we're not being honest with ourselves the other thing that i would add is really picking up on what senator

31:55

Jackson said about the fact that the movement can really be seen as

32:00

pro-birth instead of pro-life because we're all for the baby until

32:06

the baby pops out of the womb and then how the mother feeds a child clothes the child access to high quality

32:13

education to a good standard of living all of those things are irrelevant and i do think uh that uh Ben

32:20

is right this is all extremely politically charged it's so difficult at least here in the

32:26

northeast to find any democrat who is pro-life and increasingly but on the other hand as he

32:34

also pointed out uh it's assumed that you're republican if in fact you are pro-life

32:39

this is really a golden opportunity for us to say to people who care about life

32:44

this is an issue which is deeply embedded in the issue of race and this is an opportunity to

32:51

demonstrate that you really care about life not just about birth and to bring in

32:57

uh an entire community of people who stood on the sidelines because of the

33:03

perception that the pro-life movement

33:08

was largely racist so i think that this is just a very important moment and an important

33:14

conversation great thank you all and there are a lot of questions coming in the q a about this distinction between

33:20

pro-life and pro-birth but before we go there i want um to ask a follow-up question so um almost everyone

33:29

in their comments spoke to how it's important to get those who are focused on pro-life to be

33:35

focused on anti-racism uh what about the flip side i mean what what is it that you're doing

33:41

in your work or that you're seeing to convince those who are against racial injustice of the importance of connecting to the pro-life

33:48

movement well i think actually that senator Jackson began to speak to this

33:53

that or perhaps was a miss Purvis that it's so important to say if you are

33:59

if black life matters then it matters in the moon

34:04

that black babies black lives don't just matter they certainly do matter when there's a

34:11

white uh police officer with his knee on the neck of a black man black life matters then

34:16

but it also matters when it's a baby in the womb and and so this is also a moment for us

34:22

to say to people who are concerned about life you can't just be concerned about you know if we really tell the

34:29

truth a relatively small number of black men who are dying at the hands of police officers and be unconcerned

34:36

about tens of thousands of black babies who are dying every year so i think that the argument has to be

34:43

made in both direction great thank you and i i wholeheartedly agree with that

34:48

i remember in my second year serving i was called out on the mic for being an

34:54

african-american democratic woman who was supporting life and they said shame on you and i said

34:59

shame on you because more black babies die in the womb every year than from any sickness illness uh

35:07

murder or crime combined for if you take every reason that african americans die

35:12

every year and combine more african americans die by the hands of abortionists

35:18

than by anything else and so what i've said to them is this if you truly care about the

35:23

african-american community you have to recognize this is modern-day genocide of the african-american

35:29

community period and that we are slowly becoming the minority of the minority at the hand of

35:35

abortionists at the thing that we promote we're becoming the minority of the minority

35:42

and so that translates into a lot of different different sectors if i'm going to a

35:47

voter rights rally i talk about how we are truly diluting diluting our own voter

35:54

uh power our voting power by perpetuating modern-day genocide and by

36:00

supporting it and so if i'm in an area of education i talk to people

36:05

being a former educator about how you don't know what the child that you're aborting in the african-american

36:10

community will grow up and be you don't know if that child was said to be because God says i know you

36:16

before i formed you in your mother's womb which means we're destined to be who we are before we even form whether we've killed

36:24

the person that had a cure for cancer or sick of cell anemia and so i really just talk real to them

36:31

that's just the bottom line and say listen we are in and of ourselves when we put when we don't stand for life

36:38

when we don't stand for a life movement when we do not do that we are promoting modern day genocide in the

36:44

african-american community and our population is severely suffering

36:49

from it more than anything else if i may um just i'd like to add

36:54

when i have these conversations what i notice um seems to be the sticking point for people is how they perceive

37:00

police brutality versus abortion so police brutality and all these other things are seen as an existential threat

37:07

whereas pro-abortion advocates have done a very good job of convincing people that um to be able

37:13

to have the choice is a right is a power that this is a if you are not allowed that choice somehow

37:20

you are losing your liberty and for black people who have been denied liberty for so long

37:25

you know that sort of rings in their mind and also people don't understand the degree to which

37:32

abortion has been targeted for our communities people still believe as just an individual choice and it's not

37:39

having this larger impact whereas with police brutality it's something they have no control over

37:45

can happen randomly yet abortion they don't see in the same way because it's something that somebody has to actively

37:51

choose and yet when you look at what happens when a woman who becomes pregnant and we said well you have a

37:57

choice well does she really if she has no support whatsoever that she really is even going to work

38:04

and being pregnant will be harmful to her career that she really have a choice and so to be able to reframe abortion

38:12

and help people understand that it is not an exercise of personal liberty that is actually a gross abuse about

38:18

liberty because we're supposed to use liberty to do what is good but when we help them understand that it is not the right use of liberty

38:24

but rather an abuse of liberty just like racism is hopefully we can shift people's

38:29

perceptions and understand it because i'll tell you that's what i see and having these discussions in the black community they don't see abortion

38:36

as the existential threat that it is

38:41

so i think that that's just absolutely i have to agree with that i think the other issue is that it is

38:47

much easier precisely because we as black people and um our allies

38:55

our work allies uh really it's much easier for us to

39:02

blame the white police officer it's much more difficult and much more loaded to talk about young

39:09

black women who are choosing abortion and so i think there's a lot of sensitivity there we

39:15

have to be very thoughtful about these young women we have to be very sensitive to them and i want to say that i think

39:22

that the as much as i agree that we want to make the case to black life matters advocates we also want to make

39:29

the case much more strongly to the pro-life movement because i think the ball is really in their

39:36

court it is really an opportunity for them to say yes we recognize in this moment think

39:43

about all of the young people who've been out the hundreds of thousands probably millions of people who've been

39:49

out demonstrating not just in the united states but around the world has a pro-life movement showed

39:55

up how can we convince people we care about life if we wouldn't even do that so i think

40:02

the ball is really in the court of the pro-life movement as much as i agree the argument goes both ways can i uh dr rivers you know one of



40:10

the things if i could give some advice to pro-lifers that are listening for goodness sakes

40:15

stop saying things like the real racism is abortion stop trying to tell black

40:21

people that their concerns are not legitimate that their concerns are not as important

40:26

um and somehow that you can you don't have the capacity to do both we can walk and chew gum okay and i

40:34

think if we pro-life is if you are going to show up you're also going to have to listen you cannot go in and assume a position

40:40

of superiority over black people is that they don't know what is best for their community you've

40:46

got to listen you've got to be in solidarity and you've got to be humble and for goodness sake please please

40:53

stop with the political talking points of the far right you will turn people off faster than you

40:59

know what don't use these coded race language like black on black crime and absent and black fathers and all

41:06

this stuff because what it sounds like you're doing is it's not you're not there to have a conversation you're there to dominate and if you

41:13

cannot go in a position of listening and being humble please do stay home because you're going to do more harm

41:19

than good and if you're only going to see this issue as political um and for me as a believer and it's not

41:26

one that is spiritual that we are you have to understand we are fighting powers and principalities here

41:31

and i'd ask you to pray before you go and engage and uh i'd also ask you to be humble and

41:36

ask the Lord to help you and guide you and put a guard over your mouth and to open your heart to love as he

41:42

does because too often i will say especially in this moment so many black people have come to me and

41:48

said so-and-so pro-life person is a racist and i they they are just completely

41:54

turned off by the movement and no one wants to go into a movement where they're going to face racist aggressive comments on a regular that's

42:01

a big turn off i had the experience of taking black people down to the march for life and somebody walked up to us and said

42:08

something so racially insensitive they looked at me like sister we ain't never coming here again so please

42:14

please pro-life white people learn how to listen learn how to be humble

42:21

and stop trying to dictate the black people how they should vote what should be their number one issue or that somehow you know better than they

42:28

do about what real racism is do not do that

42:33

thank you miss Purvis that that's that's that's a good that's a good word i think you took the word right out of all of our mouths um but

42:39

you said it so eloquently and needed to be said because the what about ism really does uh create

42:45

a wall um between the progress and really the message that some people are trying to send and

42:50

others are trying to receive and also it's also an excuse for some people to not engage and to not really understand

42:57

um what is going on in the black community for me in my circles again you know talking speaking as an athlete but also

43:04

as as a father of seven with my wife and i we do a lot of speaking on

43:09

the power of fatherhood and when it comes to the abortion issue in general uh no matter who's getting

43:15

the abortion whether they be wealthy or or or not or poor or whatever the ethnicity may be fathers play a critical

43:21

role and so you know the question kind of go back to the question about what are we doing in our circles

43:26

uh challenging um young men older than middle-aged men when it comes to being fathers whether

43:32

you are married unmarried or whatever it may be statistics show that women are more likely to go to

43:37

abortion clinics if they if their their relationship um is in flux and if they don't have a partner there

43:44

that is willing and able to stand beside them from an emotional physical spiritual and

43:49

economic standpoint and so uh as men we need to challenge other men

43:54

not that we do it perfectly but we need to challenge manhood and in many respects that has to come

44:00

from another man to challenge another man but for many of us we are too worried about being

44:06

hypocritical or maybe we've had some missteps in the past is what i found a lot of times sometimes

44:11

guys just feel like you know what i messed it up before well you know what you can do it right this time just because you didn't have doesn't

44:17

mean you can't do it means that the power of God may have to transform you may have to learn some certain things about being a father

44:24

but we need you men and not only do we need you but you have what it takes God has put in

44:29

you i've had this conversation many times in an nfl locker room God has put in you

44:34

you have what it takes to be the man to be the father that you were called to be you won't do it perfectly but when we're talking

44:40

about pro-life and we're talking about the womb and we're talking about the women that are carrying these children you have to step into your role

44:46

especially if you had a role in creating uh the baby that is in her womb

44:55

thank you thank you all for those uh responses i'm i'm trying to read i don't know if you're looking at all the questions that are

45:00

coming in um i had a bunch of questions uh but but i think we're going to go to the questions that folks are

45:06

are asking because this is where the conversation's at um and uh several of you have already

45:11

spoken to this but but it seems as though a lot of the questions are honing out on this issue of language and how we can

45:17

develop the right language to transcend and one of those areas is uh

45:23

how do we bring back pro-life from the political divisions we have in the

45:28

country and and what are some strategies maybe in your own work or as we think out loud um about how to

45:36

elevate pro-life above a political divide in the country um and and i think like i said each of

45:42

you has spoken to it a little bit but the question has come up uh in a couple of different ways i'm wondering if we can just speak to that more directly

45:51

well i think um if let me just start if nobody else minds um i think you have to approach this now

45:57

well number one you can't approach it as a political issue you have to approach this as an issue that you are dealing with another human

46:04

person and and check your motivations why are you pro-life is it because that's what your political

46:09

party says or is it because you fundamentally believe that each person in the human family

46:15

whether from the womb to the tomb is worthy of dignity and respect and their life

46:20

matters and their life should be protected um if you come for any other reason than that i think

46:26

you need to really check your motivations because it comes out in conversations so i would say never

46:31

want to purify your motivations um and recognize you're dealing with human persons and speak with them in the

46:36

same dignity and respect as you would want to be spoken to and don't uh go into it to try to get

46:42

people to vote a certain way other this and that any other go in simply without political motives

46:48

and and understand that you are motivated because you care about the human person you care about every member of the human

46:54

family no matter what stage of development they're in in their uh cycle as a human person as

47:00

simple as that i think thank you uh dr evans you want to jump in yes uh i think

47:05

i i certainly agree with Gloria and i also agree with her that this is really a spiritual issue um

47:11

i like her emphasis on prayer and i think that that's a place to start to really humble yourself and

47:18

to pray about it i i think that that's the beginning it's really about changing

47:24

attitudes and understanding that's how the language will change and so to go in with a very prayerful

47:29

attitude uh humbling ourselves as we approach people

47:34

but i also want to come back to something that dean Cole said the importance of knowing the

47:40

history so one of the questions that was in the chat was how did the gi bill restrict wealth among black people well

47:47

the gi bill allowed soldiers to get loans get mortgages get educational

47:53

opportunities get vocational training but those things

47:59

were often denied to black soldiers and disproportionately they did not have access to the benefits of the gi bill

48:06

that white soldiers did which then meant a huge uh contribution to the current

48:13

wealth gap that Ben talked about where the average white family has 10 times the wealth of

48:18

the average black family that is not something that i think the average pro-lifer knows

48:23

i may be wrong but i think that really understanding the history beginning to come to grips with a history in a

48:29

prayerful way that's the way the language starts to change it's not just the words we use

48:35

it's really the underlying attitude and underlying understanding of

48:41

the depths of the problems thank you i was going to circle back dean Cole if you don't mind

48:46

maybe this is an appropriate time you kind of teased us in that short statement about um historical context maybe this would

48:52

be an opportunity to flesh that out a little bit more yeah so um you know the the culture that

48:58

we're in right now is really a product of um the

49:03

same forces that they gave rise to nazism uh the progressive movement and and

49:09

eugenics at the uh at the turn of the century uh and margaret sanger who was the founder of

49:16

the organizations that eventually became planned parenthood was deeply committed

49:22

to racial purity for the white race and she was deeply committed uh to a program of eugenics and saw

49:30

abortion as a mechanism to rid the nation of the

49:36

undesirables from the perspective of of the

49:41

progressives of the eugenics movement it's the same progressive movement that gave rise to

49:48

woodrow wilson um and it had a parallel

49:53

track in nazi germany which is part of the reason why the nazis took the approach of what they

50:00

called the final solution uh to purify the aryan race so the culture that we

50:06

we need to understand that the culture that we live in today is a product of that history um

50:13

and and um we have to be aware that um uh the structures that are

50:19

around us were this designed or focused on eliminating us

50:26

maybe um we can speak to this just briefly because people are talking not only about language but but

50:31

mechanisms for communication whether this is usccb or um how do we bring

50:38

awareness of this context to those in the movement



50:48

well i when i when i talk about it i remind people that the moment this country decided

50:54

that black people were not human and could be enslaved all for profit was the

51:00

beginning of our cooperation with evil and that it still has um uh

51:06

from a spiritual sense we haven't really dealt with that evil and so it permeates and and ruins a lot of things in our

51:13

country and so we're dealing with that legacy today because we never slayed the demon the first time frankly um and uh i think it

51:20

the more that we can help people recognize from the beginning um that we cooperate with evil and it

51:26

has its impact and strains reaching out now i think matters and also to be able to talk to

51:32

the history i mean as a catholic we can talk about how in the united states religious orders uh and catholics owned people

51:40

even though it's contrary to our belief in the gospel we owned people we also can talk about the fact that

51:46

black men weren't seen as suitable to the priesthood we have to talk about our particular histories and how people

51:52

understand it the the scholarship is there it's just not taught and so i would like to see

51:57

frankly in catholic schools that they would teach more of this history um about what the church how the church

52:03

cooperated and did not defend in certain ways that they should have even though the popes had written

52:08

clear statements against uh slavery so i think the more that we actually talk about the history the

52:14

also that the the more that people are less defensive in hearing the truth that perhaps we can start to have people

52:20

wake up but they've got to have the heart to want to hear it and i think if people

52:25

actually pray and ask the Lord to help show them um the brokenness that he will

52:30

do that because he wants us to grow in holiness too he wants us to slay this demon as well

52:36

we have to not be so much respecters of persons as we are respecters of the truth

52:41

and we have to be willing to um decouple our honor of certain uh heroes of the past

52:49

and their actual conduct and when i say that what i mean is you know we all have these conversations so much especially

52:55

when i talk when we talk about racism and we talk about enslavement we hear these conversations about the founding fathers

53:02

and there's an unwillingness there to identify their faults we can still identify someone's faults

53:08

and hold them accountable for that while still honoring the great things that they did we are no less american

53:14

um no less uh great country men and women by saying you know what what that person

53:19

did in this respect was a problem and it created much of the problems that we're having now but oh by the way i still

53:25

also respect and honor them because they did a great thing in the founding of of the country and

53:33

so many times we refuse to do that and then on a more personal level we need to bring that same idea and that

53:40

same willingness to our living rooms all of us have people in our family that you know of

53:45

that are racist it might be on betty it might be your grandmother it might be your sister or your mom are

53:52

you willing to say to her or to him what you're saying what you're doing is incorrect in this area

53:58

i still love you i'm not turning my back on you but you need to stop because you're you're propagating an idea an ideology

54:05

that is wrong and our children and their children are going to inherit it from you i need to hold you accountable so

54:11

it starts with accountability first with the people closest to us where it's the toughest and then we have to be able to you know

54:17

decouple patriotism from the truth about our country's inception and our countries found it

54:27

i agree let me tell you what i find to be one of the major hurdles in dealing with

54:33

this is that as Christians sometimes especially in the legislative arena

54:39

where i um operate a lot in is that we cherry pick

54:44

how we legislate as Christians what i mean is that we'll holistically agree

54:50

that the pro-life the pro-birth issue is a Christian issue but then i see a lot of people

54:58

legislating past that based on their party like for instance for me if i solely

55:03

legislated based on my party right i would never have stood up in a pro-life movement

55:10

so i think what we have to have is real quick questions uh real conversations about what being a

55:16

Christian what what what does it mean to be a Christian and an advocate and stop cherry-picking

55:22

what the bible says you know a lot of people will say well i didn't vote for that because i believe that's the church place to

55:28

help people but the bible says that the government will be on his shoulder God never gave us an arena one over the

55:35

other well we helped people and so a lot of times when and this too a lot of times when we're promoting

55:42

legislation that we believe that we know uh goes right in line with the life issue they

55:49

go to their parties and so i don't think you can cherry pick when you're going to follow God and when

55:54

you're not either you're his advocate holistically or you're not not saying that we don't make mistakes

56:00

but i think that is i know that is where we're having a major misinterpretation also i think we have to be real about

56:06

this just like this country has created generational wealth for some people

56:12

through contracts through contacts through government officials um we have created based on the laws of

56:19

the past based on the jim crow laws based on you know not having you know allowing certain

56:25

people to have a seat at the table we have created generational poverty

56:30

and if those laws in the past help to maneuver and and put in place

56:36

generational poverty it's going to take legislation and laws and being real about it to break that

56:44

stigma and that generational poverty but we're not willing to do that now as Christians

56:49

i am i think everyone on this panel is but that was birthed out of racism

56:56

but now the laws are gone jim crow laws are often booked

57:01

but so many people have found new ways to create classism and make sure that some stay in poverty while others don't

57:08

and as soon as you talk about disadvantaged business enterprises as soon as you talk about giving someone

57:14

their first seat at the table people begin to say oh that's not needed

57:19

oh we reversed that with the 1965 civil rights act but you know what people are ignoring the supreme court just took the 201965

57:27

civil rights act and for the first time in redistricting states have been able to redistrict away

57:32

minority seats states have been able to redistrict away people's seat at the table

57:37

thereby further perpetuating this generational poverty but why is that not a life issue so i

57:43

don't think you can cherry pick and i i think whatever you did to create racial injustice

57:49

whatever you did to create the stigma of generational poverty you have to be as aggressive as making

57:55

sure there's protections in law that it doesn't happen again and what i'm saying in america

58:01

even at the national level is we're becoming more of a pro-life nation louisiana is the number one pro-life

58:08

state but we're always itching back the clock

58:14

on laws that set in place um mechanisms for turning around

58:19

the wrong that was done and so i think that we have to i know we have to have

58:24

real conversations about that and like mr Watson said those conversations don't mean that we're bad people those conversations

58:31

don't mean that the things that happen in a bad in the past are attributed to us i'm not a perfect person

58:38

this is where humility plays a big role i heard someone talk about humility that when you can admit you did

58:44

something wrong but it doesn't make you a bad person because until you can really come to the

58:49

realization that you were wrong in the area it can never be corrected so i've had bills that i've passed

58:55

outside of the life issue and someone in in the field of practice of that maybe it's a medical

59:00

physician i voted for a bill concerning medicine and i realized throughout the year that it was the

59:07

wrong thing to do i'm willing to come back to the table and file a bill to correct it right

59:12

because in admitting that i just didn't get it right that time i'm able to get it right the next year

59:18

when i said it that takes it at the table a lot of people are not willing to do that so cherry picking when you

59:24

legislate and when you hold yourself out to be a Christian not letting your party have total

59:29

control over your platform i tell people if your party controls your platform

59:35

then God doesn't control it and that's just the bottom line so you have to step into any situation

59:41

as an advocate as a legislator as someone who's working uh in abortion

59:46

i mean in in in life clinics as someone who's advocating on the street you have to me

59:52

you have to first come in as something other than a democrat or republican that can't be your priority and for so

59:59

long i'm seeing that as a priority thank you so much so um i think that's a a good segue

1:00:04

there's a lot of folks that are asking about what this looks like um for you and your in your particular

1:00:10

uh domain and so that was a you know a really great response to help us understand what that looks like

1:00:16

in the legislative realm um now maybe we can hear from dr rivers and dean Cole

1:00:25

what does this work look like for you on the ground at the seymour institute or harvard university or

1:00:30

um what what does this work look like um at the Notre Dame law school or for deans in higher education

1:00:36

maybe we'll start with you dr rivers so one thing i really wanted to say is that

1:00:41

i think that research shows that people listen to the people whom they trust what changes them is not

1:00:49

simply exposure to facts so uh just to add a little more to the

1:00:55

history they [Music] new deal did a great deal for black

1:01:00

people but it also disadvantaged them because the only way that the new deal

1:01:06

could be passed uh with so given getting support of southern democrats was that the two industries in which

1:01:12

blacks were most employed that is uh as domestics and

1:01:18



as uh agricultural laborers were left out of the new deal so that they were

1:01:23

excluded from social security and from unemployment benefits precisely for racist reasons for

1:01:29

racialized reasons i can i can present that fact to someone

1:01:36

who is a racist they won't hear it from me the same way in which they would hear it

1:01:41

from someone who's white someone whom they trust so i think that what the nicholas center is doing here

1:01:47

tonight is an incredibly important mechanism for getting the message out because as a

1:01:53

leader in the pro-life movement the nicola center can send a message

1:01:59

that pro-lifers will listen to much more so than if it came from another source so to me that's a really important

1:02:06

mechanism that it has to be the people who are leading in the movement who begin to take this message

1:02:12

about the connection between uh life and racism thank you yes so i i agree with that

1:02:20

and in my sphere you know i'm a university administrator i'm a professor

1:02:25

uh educator um universities have been um contributing

1:02:32

to human flourishing for 800 years and they've been doing they they've been doing research and

1:02:38

scholarship and teaching very well for 800 years but it is not

1:02:43

enough for universities to just do scholarship and uh research and teaching we've got to be

1:02:51

actively engaged in the real world we have to take what we learn and put it to use um

1:02:59

you know in the words of saint paul faith without works is dead and we need to um we need to put our

1:03:07

um our learning um uh to use on the ground and

1:03:13

to improve the lives of real people so as a law as a law school dean one of the things

1:03:19

i'm focused on committed to is um improving the lives of

1:03:25

of people in uh underserved communities around the country at Notre Dame law

1:03:31

school we have a motto that we are uh training a different kind of lawyer and i really

1:03:37

believe that i believe that we are focused on training lawyers who are who are not

1:03:42

just good lawyers but lawyers for good lawyers who want to take their training

1:03:48

and go out into the world and serve communities this doesn't mean that they all have to be public interest

1:03:53

lawyers but this does mean that they have to have a higher aspiration

1:03:58

than simply making money or simply concluding deals they have to be focused on improving

1:04:05

society that means going out into the world some of them are going to be civil rights lawyers some of them are going to be

1:04:11

corporate lawyers but at the end of the day Notre Dame lawyers will be lawyers who are focused on

1:04:18

making the world a better place whether that's exactly what they do with their with their work day

1:04:24

or um uh uh in their involvement in their communities or to what uh Ben Watson was saying about being a

1:04:32

father being a real father and um uh communicating what it's like to be a

1:04:38

father uh or mother uh in their communities and and being uh the

1:04:45

glue that holds uh our communities uh uh together so there's lots that we can do as uh as

1:04:52

university administrators as professors um but it but it has to mean that we have to be doing things

1:04:59

in the real world and touch people's lives for good so i didn't actually answer the part of

1:05:05

the question about what the work looks like so i wanted to just say quickly that one aspect of our

1:05:10

work has been trying to defend life not just here in the united states but also in the caribbean

1:05:16

because there really is an impetus to export this culture of death not just uh

1:05:22

around the world especially to places in africa and the caribbean where there's a strong belief in God and

1:05:29

a strong belief in um defense of life and so we had the opportunity to be in kingston jamaica

1:05:35

and rallying with people against the effort to change the laws there so the fight is

1:05:42

not just local it's also international great thank you um we had a similar set

1:05:48

of questions about um you know the work in the media or being public figures so

1:05:53

um as very public figures um ms Purvis and mr Watson maybe you could respond to

1:05:59

some of the initiatives that you're doing how you're you're using um your particular position as

1:06:05

a as someone who's in the media or someone who's in sports and entertainment to communicate about these issues

1:06:13

Ben do you want to go first sure i will i will um and by the way uh dr rivers i'd love to

1:06:20

go with you to kingston next time let's take this show on the road for me

1:06:28

for me as a again as an athlete but also kind of delving into film like we talked about before it's

1:06:34

about influencing the influences really i mean we look at the power of sport and the fact that the nfl the nba major

1:06:40

league baseball these are multi-billion dollar industries people can't wait for these seasons to start people listen to every

1:06:47

single word that many of these athletes say whether they be good or bad and so in my in my sphere and in my

1:06:53

experience has been about challenging those who consider life to be an important issue

1:06:59

now they have to realize also that there's going to be a risk you know Jesus talks about taking up your cross and following me you are

1:07:05

going to be persecuted specifically if you have this lens and you have this stance because it is not popular in

1:07:12

mainstream media and so you're going to be looked at oddly but also many people will follow you and what my

1:07:18

experience has been is that whenever i've spoken out about the issue of life there are many

1:07:23

people thousands who appreciate someone speaking out and speaking their language speaking for

1:07:29

the unborn um but but it definitely is a risk and so um i always encourage you know whether it's social media uh

1:07:36

whether you're doing film whether you're doing uh commercials whether you're in your locker room um

1:07:41

to speak out there are multiple opportunities there have been opportunities where i've had interviews before and you can steer those conversations

1:07:48

toward the issues that are important to you specifically when it comes to this idea of social justice i mean right now

1:07:54

you look across the board at different athletes and many have created social justice

1:07:59

organizations they've created funds to help fund certain grassroots organizations

1:08:05

uh but at the same time i'm always particular when i use the the term social justice i like to

1:08:11

say justice now not that social justice isn't real but it isn't something we need to advocate for but when we're able to

1:08:17

strip off the justice part the social part and get down to simply what it is justice i can then challenge others to

1:08:24

see other justice issues to see the importance of other justice issues and i would going back to my introduction when i

1:08:31

talked about trafficking and the like i'm a part of an organization that has a lot of pro athletes that do a lot when

1:08:38

it comes to rescuing uh survivors of human trafficking sex

1:08:43

trafficking uh we support those organizations with our dollars we go on visits we i've actually you know been places where

1:08:50

i've been able to to support the the restoration efforts of children who are brought out of the

1:08:55

global sex trade um that's a justice issue and so when i turn that justice issue

1:09:01

i'm then able to turn to the guys to the men and women who are advocating against racism and rightly so and then

1:09:08

say that's injustice so is this this is injustice and by drawing the

1:09:15

line there um i'm able to challenge them now you know whether they agree or not because again it goes back to being a political

1:09:20

issue which is the stumbling block for so many um just by that change in terminology and by saying hey we're about defending

1:09:28

um the vulnerable being a voice for the voiceless yes yes yes we are well here's some more here's some more

1:09:34

human beings who are voiceless how can we advocate for them as well um

1:09:40

i would say in my role um because i'm in catholic media live then also the secular media as well and by the way Ben

1:09:46

i'm in your movie i was interviewed for that if they don't tap me out of it hey i said we got we literally have

1:09:51

we literally have dr Cole you know only one up here in the panelists that hasn't he sat down

1:09:57

with all with dr carr rivers senator Jackson yeah he went uh to get a camera you and

1:10:04

professor of morrow you know you're the only ones that we didn't get so maybe maybe on round two we're going to get you in

1:10:10

divided hearts of america round two all right so i would say if in the media

1:10:15

um you know i didn't get into media because it was something i wanted to do it was something that i really believe that God

1:10:20

called me to do i had no designs on being in media but i am i am okay being made a full love for Jesus

1:10:27

and i'm gonna go forward and i'm gonna speak the truth even if it means i won't get invited back even

1:10:32

if it means i'm gonna lose speaking engagement because i'm not there to become famous

1:10:38

i'm there to serve Jesus Christ and if you go into media understanding that and being willing to

1:10:43

follow him and speak the truth you may not be popular but what you can be is faithful so

1:10:50

i use my role um to also give commentary on things so for example

1:10:56

when the uh people were lamenting that aunt jemima was being taken off the serp

1:11:02

you know container i helped explain to them about how uh that image of aunt jemima further

1:11:07

perpetuated stereotypes about black women being always available and subservient to white people and that it was really a

1:11:13

racist trope and to the degree with which that could be thrown aside and

1:11:18

discarded in favor of a truth of about the human person telling the truth about black women we

1:11:24

as people of faith we as pro-lifers we as people understand that dignity of the human person should be cheering that so i use

1:11:31

my role a lot of times to comment on issues in the public arena from a

1:11:36

faith perspective and help people understand how uh choosing the dignity of the human person and representation

1:11:43

and how we tell stories is always a good thing and i don't necessarily just follow the the

1:11:49

party line if you will i deeply think about things i research issues and i come to the table and talk

1:11:55

from there and also trying to shine the light of the gospel on it and believe me it's not you know made me a lot of friends and in



1:12:01

fact some people want to label me a particular way but i understand that those are the darks of the enemy and you cannot be

1:12:07

discouraged by that you have to stay the course and be true to Jesus Christ and be willing to carry your cross as well because with every

1:12:13

good friday there is a easter sunday and that's what i'm waiting on is my easter sunday

1:12:19

thank you all so we have about 10 minutes and there are um a ton of questions so i will try

1:12:26

um we'll see if we can get to as many as possible and try to get a couple of responses for for e for each one um

1:12:34

so pardon me i'm trying to read and and and uh talk at the same time so there's a

1:12:40

question about uh what literature would you recommend to help unpack our history so there were a lot of people referred

1:12:45

to kind of um need to be aware of this or wait aware of that so that's a quick one people can just talk

1:12:50

about like some recommended reading yeah one of my favorites is our katz nelson

1:12:55

when affirmative action was white a very provocative title and a great

1:13:01

book uh there is a new book out in 2020 um on reparations from hair to equality

1:13:09

i also recommend that highly and there's a book uh on black banking the color of money

1:13:16

so those are three good ones to start with because it's really important to recognize

1:13:22

that um the wealth inequality uh interracial wealth inequality does

1:13:28

not just stem from slavery and that's what counts nelson speaks to that it really is

1:13:33

a long-term issue that it was going on well into the 20th century

1:13:39

thank you maybe one more person wants to respond to that um

1:13:45

yeah i would say um i've heard a lot of people respond to me when they have read grant by ron chernow they

1:13:51

start to see how much uh opposition was put up uh to the black friedman um so i would suggest reading grant by

1:13:58

ron chernow slavery by another name is also a good book because it helps people understand what happened

1:14:04

after uh abolition up until i think world war one they could see the efforts

1:14:09

that were made to criminalize the black population um the efforts that were uh made to basically disenfranchise us and

1:14:17

also i would say they can also watch pbs's series eyes on the prize it gives a good history of the civil

1:14:24

rights movement and those the visual impact of seeing how abused black people

1:14:29

were to see how people uh purposely talked and did things to to undercut black

1:14:36

progress anything you can get your hands on regarding the tulsa race riots i know there was a film made about it

1:14:42

it's really eye-opening when you see the cooperation of the government authorities with basically bombing black wall street

1:14:48

which was a very uh wealthy successful black community and so when you start to open your eyes

1:14:55

and see these things the history is out there there are many things that can be read those would be a few things that i would suggest and also the african americans i

1:15:02

think by professor gates i believe is also on pbs because you have to see some of our wonderfulness too

1:15:07

not just the bad things that happen but some of our wonderfulness too there's another book called the color of

1:15:12

law by richard rostein that is uh really opened my eyes to a lot of what dr rivers was talking about

1:15:19

we talk about policy that was enacted really in a way that was discriminatory that

1:15:26

has led to the wealth gap you know talks about things like redlining the list goes on and on

1:15:31

how we have residential segregation you know a lot of people think that we live in the certain neighborhoods we live in

1:15:37

simply because black people want to live by black people and live by white people but that is not the case it was

1:15:42

systematically done on purpose um and those that legacy is still uh here today

1:15:48

the other thing i think uh to add to the list of media so that people who might want to watch

1:15:54

documentaries 13th is an excellent documentary on uh mass incarceration and uh

1:16:01

professor henry lewis gates also has a very powerful series on reconstruction

1:16:07

stony the road um there's a book that accompanies that as well and that really outlines that moment in

1:16:14

the sun when black people hoped with the abolition of slavery that there really would be equality and

1:16:21

it was a very hopeful time when there were actually black representatives in congress

1:16:26

and the story of how it was deliberately undone is very powerful great thank you so much um there are

1:16:35

a couple of questions that that um kind of lean back to something you you just said Ben about policy and i know that dean Cole and um

1:16:42

senator Jackson yourself talked a little bit about um how racism makes its way into policy

1:16:48

uh i try to i'll try to pull a couple of these together but um one of the questions is uh

1:16:56

how what are some sensible policies to support more two-parent families and homes and to to to tackle

1:17:02

the fatherlessness issue that each of you spoke about

1:17:10

okay i guess i'll go first the things that okay the things that we have really

1:17:16

tried to do and where we've tried to advocate especially to support policy and to

1:17:21

foster two family home is um and people may not think of this a lot

1:17:27

of our small businesses are african-american businesses and so what we've been doing on policy

1:17:33

to make sure there's not friction in a home one of the number one reasons for divorces

1:17:39

in the united states is uh lack of financial resources and how that plays a role in disputes in

1:17:48

the homes and so what we've tried to do is support dba is events business enterprises

1:17:53

we've tried to make sure that small businesses are not left out we generally had a tax structure here

1:17:58

and in the united states that gave major credits and rebates

1:18:04

to larger businesses thereby living leaving out the small businessman what

1:18:09

we've also tried to do in our state uh is to facilitate after school programs for the two family

1:18:16

household which both parents are working to make a living to have to give the children somewhere

1:18:21

to go out to school uh where their parents can be comfortable while also ensuring that they have uh a good

1:18:29

education and tutorial so what we've done is target policy and what we what i call target policy is

1:18:36

we look at what's happening in those communities to foster two-parent households

1:18:41

uh for me criminal justice reform was one of those things what that was seriously blocking um two family households you would have

1:18:48

a father or mother incarcerated for a crime that normally someone with

1:18:54

financial means would not be incarcerated for or someone not of my skin tone because sometimes it's not about financial me

1:19:00

there has been i'm a criminal law attorney as well by practice a criminal defense attorney there has

1:19:05

been a lot of inequities and the amount of time that african americans receive

1:19:11

for similar crimes committed by non-african-americans that's received no time are received

1:19:20

even probation with the benefit of an expungement immediately after probation where even

1:19:25

when we receive probation what i've found is that there's no benefit of expungement so how does that plan people saying how does

1:19:32

all of this play into creating and fostering a two-family household it does

1:19:37

because the more you a family the more that family will cease to the the more likely it is that that

1:19:43

family will cease to exist so that's what i call targeting figuring out what's going on in the community

1:19:49

why is there a lack of two family households why is it dwindling because let me tell you before

1:19:55

all these laws before all of these injustices honestly the african-american family unit was

1:20:03

extremely strong and we all know that but through

1:20:08

systematic racism it has been torn down and so rebuilding that

1:20:13

has to be done with targeted policy that really addresses the issues

1:20:18

thank you so much so i want to uh echo what uh senator Jackson just

1:20:24

uh said there's been a tremendous escalation in incarceration of african

1:20:30

americans over just the last 10 years and a number of cases

1:20:37

involving completely actually innocent people uh being sent to prison is the focus of

1:20:45

the new exoneration clinic at Notre Dame but also wrongful conviction clinics at

1:20:51

other uh law schools but we've seen a geometric increase in the number of

1:20:57

african-americans who've been incarcerated in this country just since 2010 taking

1:21:04

parents out of households the other thing that i think is really important for us to recognize

1:21:10

is that there has been an assault on catholic adoption agencies in the united

1:21:16

states because catholic adoption agencies have focused on trying to place

1:21:22

kids in family situations that are consistent with our faith

1:21:28

meaning uh two parent households uh not placing children with all commerce

1:21:34

and this has an important um effect on life because catholic adoption agencies make

1:21:41

it possible for mothers to have children knowing that the catholic adoption agency will place

1:21:48

those children but also those adoption agencies in order to place children in families

1:21:56

stable families i need to be licensed by the states but states right now are denying catholic

1:22:02

adoption agencies licenses because those adoption agencies

1:22:07

are using their faith-based principles with regard to where to place children

1:22:13

um in order uh uh to carry out their mission and uh that is not consistent with uh the

1:22:20

political agenda of uh of a lot of um uh activists uh out there right now so

1:22:27

we now have states that are denying um uh the ability of adoption agencies to uh

1:22:34

to operate uh according to their faith even though the people who would want to adopt

1:22:40

uh outside of those faith-based principles have alternatives nevertheless because

1:22:47

the catholic adoption agencies are basing their principles on their faith

1:22:52

they're being denied licenses and we need to recognize that as a life issue and that's a policy that would support

1:22:59

two-parent households thank you so much and um that's gonna unfortunately have to be

1:23:04

the last word i can't um thank you enough for for your um your time this evening as as

1:23:10



you look in our kind of brady bunch zoom configuration um dean Cole dr

1:23:15

rivers miss Purvis uh mr Watson and senator Jackson um you've been um eloquent and succinct um and and

1:23:23

hopefully um everyone has taken away as much as i have so with that and uh with a minute to spare mr snead

1:23:30

um we will turn it back over to Carter thank you again panelists and everyone who tuned in tonight

1:23:35

thank you ernest uh and thanks to all the panelists it's just been an extraordinary evening um

1:23:42

the the level of the conversation was so compelling the insight so incisive the heart and the really as

1:23:49

challenging as a conversation was and it was very challenging conversation in the very best sense uh we are so

1:23:55

grateful for every single person to just to to to be so candid and so thoughtful

1:24:00

um this is really in my opinion this is this is Notre Dame at its best this is the nicola center at its best we're so

1:24:06

grateful uh to all of you uh every single one of you and we should also mention our our

1:24:12

wonderful colleagues in nd studios our own staff ken helenius and petra farrell our culture of life

1:24:18

program manager our entire staff which i've said many times before and i'll continue to say it

1:24:23

until i can't speak anymore is the most incandescent and extraordinary staff in the history

1:24:28

of staffs uh in in the known world and any other world that is unknown um thank you guys so much God  
bless all

1:24:36

of you this was a panel discussion worthy of the blessed mothers university please join us again at the  
nicholas center for ethics and culture

1:24:42

i'm so grateful to all of you and God bless you good night