

Yilin Zheng, LWVDC: We are joined by a stellar panel of individuals who I am very looking forward to hearing who will talk about this fight for DC statehood, and also discuss the nuances of this movement. This event also marks the one of the eight events that the League of Women Voters District of Columbia is hosting across all eight wards this year.

So last year, I see some of the faces that were at our state for DC statehood conference, we had about 100 leaders and advocates come together to talk about their work and more than a dozen organizations and want to thank Philip Panel, who's the executive director at the Anacostia Coordinating Council, who was also there. Big round of applause. Thank you.

And one of the key takeaways from that conference was that residents really want to hear about DC statehood in their neighborhoods. So that's why we kicked off in Ward One just a few weeks ago at the African American Civil War Museum. And today we're kicking off here at the gathering spot and thank you so much to the League of Women Voters US and to our amazing organizer tonight, Nile Blass for gathering us together. Thank you, Nile.

And I also want to thank the collaborating organizations League of Women Voters DC and DC Vote, Kelsey, who's in the audience. Thank you for being here. And I actually want to take a moment to talk about the work that the League of Women Voters DC is doing because I was asked to come up and say a few words but also if you know a Leaguer, you know that they don't like to brag, they just do the work. And I'm lucky to work with some amazing colleagues, who for the last few years has presented across the country on DC statehood in more than 30 states with numerous community-based organizations in DC and continued to build those relationships. And along with League US has delivered nearly 37,000 signatures in support of DC statehood to Congress. And I would be remiss if I didn't also recognize our leadership President Kathy Chiron, who's sitting in the audience. Thank you, Kathy. And also Anne Anderson I'm looking at the camera so hopefully she sees me she has joined us virtually she's the chair of our full rights and DC statehood committee, and she has been fighting for DC statehood for more than 50 years a round of applause for an Anderson.

So the last thing I want to do is I'm also supposed to introduce Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, who, I believe unfortunately may not make it tonight. But I do want to take a moment to recognize her because she has been such a tremendous champion of DC statehood. Thank you. And just a couple sentences about her because she has a very long resume. For those of you who don't know, she has been serving as our Congresswoman since 1991. And she is a third generation Washingtonian. And actually, I learned this at one of the women's training events that I was at she has actually been voted as one of the most effective House Democrats, and she is a nonvoting member. So imagine that she has been voted the most effective house Democrat. So I hope that she may be able to join us later in the event, but she is an incredible leader. So again, appreciate her support.

And without further ado, I'm going to pass it along to Nile and our amazing panelists.

Nile Blass: Thank you, Yilin, for that wonderful introduction. And thanks, everyone, for showing up. You know, over the course of COVID, I forgot what it's like to be in a room with likeminded people who are

pushing forward around a likeminded issue. So it's always great to be in that community. I think that when we're talking about this issue, especially when it's represented in national media, we talk about it with the literal facts of representation, the lack thereof, what it means to not have voting power in Congress, and to have that regional control that comes with being a state. But it is a racial justice issue. It's a human rights issue. And I think that when we're having honest conversations about DC statehood, broadly, the core of the issue stems from a long-term mythos in this country, that certain demographics of people are incapable of self-governance and off to have people acting and making decisions on their behalf. And to deny the Black and Brown imagery that is associated with that would be us not doing it justice.

So I wanted to create space to ensure that we're having that conversation, when we're looking at the *DC Emancipation Act*, not just the broad one for the country. But the specific one that President Lincoln signed, there is reason to commemorate that it was framed Black and brown people who later went on to, I think, create the culture and identity of our city. But that same act ensured that their former owners received \$300 for compensation of their loss. And so we're having a conversation around justice, juxtaposed with injustice.

And I think that's at the core of this conversation. We have DC residents who are obviously serving an office, who are paying taxes who are serving in our military. And they fundamentally are denied the rights of other individuals who are doing maybe in some instances, even less to their duty and their commitment to what it means for us to be American citizens and what it means to vote, what it means to be engaged in our communities and the decisions that impact us. So I'm really excited to be having this panel. I'm really excited for this conversation. And I hope especially because we have dozens of people coming forward from across the country that we can understand this issue, not just to like the square footage of the district, but a larger narrative of what we stand for what we want to be and who we want our country to represent. So I'm excited. And I said it again because I felt it so much. I had to say it like three or four times.

And I'm now excited to introduce our panelists, everyone, I guess we can mosey on the stage as I introduce you, you know, stage call, but I'll start with our wonderful CEO, Virginia Kase-Solomón. She has spent the past 27 years of her career fighting for social justice and civil rights. As CEO of the League of Women Voters, Virginia builds upon her vision of an inclusive democracy, where everyone in America can participate and advocate for issues that mattered to them. Before joining LWV. She served as CEO of CASA, an organization at the forefront of the immigrant rights movement, representing nearly 100,000 members. So thank you, Virginia so much for joining us. Can we get a lot of applause for Virginia.

Coming up next, we have Jamal Holtz. He is a champion for DC statehood, a seasoned community engagement strategist and community advisor, who currently serves as a local engagement expert. He is a lead organizer with the 51 for 51 statehood campaign focused on making DC the 51st state with 51 votes in the Senate. Holtz has extensive local government public affairs and Community Relations experience drawn from roles at numerous statewide and local government agencies. Jamal currently serves on many organizational and corporate boards, advising executives and officials on diversity,

equity and inclusion issues. So thank you again, Jamal, for being a part of this conversation. We're happy to have you.

Next we have George Derek Musgrove. Musgrove is a PhD and associate professor of History at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He is the co-author with Chris Myers Asch of *Chocolate City*, a history of race and democracy in the nation's capital, along with numerous other books and articles to the same effect. He lives with his wife and two sons in Washington, DC. Thank you so much for joining us, appreciate your book. It was assigned reading at Georgetown. So I enjoyed it.

And then we have last — not last because we have two more people — but certainly not least, we have Philip Panel, who is the executive director of the Anacostia Coordinating Council, a consortium of organizations and individuals committed to the revitalization of Anacostia and its adjacent neighborhoods. With over four decades of experience as a community activist. Phillip has received over 100 awards for his outstanding work including the US President's call to service award and the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum's Community Service Award in director panels fight for DC statehood. He has been arrested twice for demonstrations and provided information and materials throughout the Anacostia community. I am a big fan of civil disobedience, especially when it's called for so thank you, Philip, for your work on this issue. And thanks for being on this panel.

And now we have last and certainly not least, Jason Fink. Fink currently serves DC as statehood initiatives director and the Office of Federal and Regional Affairs. Since 2015, Director Fink has led the Mayor's office of scheduling in advance where he was responsible for the execution of the mayor's short term and long-term schedule daily movements and events and preparing briefing materials for the mayor. Before joining the Bowser administration, Director Frank served in the Obama administration working directly for Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, and Sally Jewell. Thank you, Jason, and again, thank you to all the panelists for being a part of this conversation.

So obviously, I want this conversation to be kind of free-flowing and honest, I think when we're talking about DC statehood, it can often be, especially when spoken of by people who aren't from the district or don't know the city and a very procedural, stoic way. So I want us to have an honest conversation and engaged one. And I was hoping to ensure that we have questions that kind of speak to everybody's different expertise and perspectives when we talk about this fight for DC statehood.

So I'll start with you, Virginia. And obviously, as we're talking, even if the question is initially directed towards someone, if you feel like you have something to say about it, or commentary definitely provide it. So I would ask generally, what are the responsibilities of other states in the struggle? And how can they help make an impact and promote change when it comes to DC statehood?

Virginia Kase Solomón: Yeah, I think one of the things we try you know, the League, we have 760 Leagues throughout the country. So we have a lot of chapters all throughout the US. And it's so interesting, because more often than not until we engage in that conversation, people don't even know. And so when we talk about people who are living in other states, it's really to be an ambassador for the people of DC to really share what the challenges are, that the people of DC are facing: the fact that there is not the right to self-determination here in DC, the fact that DC people living in DC pay more

taxes than most people in this country, that the people there are more people in DC than in some states in this country.

People just don't know the facts. And when they hear about it, they're horrified. Like, how could that be possible here in the US, but yet it is, and we know that these types of injustices occur with anybody who's deemed a quote, unquote, territory, you know, Alma, who's here with me, we talk about Puerto Rico all the time, right? The idea that people in Puerto Rico don't have the opportunity to be able to decide their own future and their status. But DC has made us a very clear decision, the people of DC want statehood.

And, and so I think that's the important thing is being ambassadors, making sure that they're calling their elected representatives, putting pressure, we know squeaky wheels get oil. So it's about making sure that this is not just a DC issue. This is not just about people who live in the district. This is about American democracy. And it's about civil rights for people who are living here, but across the country, because it could be any one of us at any time, right. And we've seen rights being taken away all throughout this country. So the fact that people in DC don't have voting rights and representation, I think that's the important thing for anybody else living anywhere in the country is making sure that you are standing up for the people who are living here and making your voice heard. Because, you know, as we know, with politics as of late, you know, coming soon to a community near you. And so that's what we try to reinforce.

NB: That's great. And I feel like your answer was really oriented — oh, not a chair, I was going to stand — well, the call to duty. But okay. Thank you. I appreciate it. But no, I'm, I feel like your answer was very action-oriented. So I kind of want to open that up to the rest of the panelists. What are some of the call to actions that you think are immediate and assessable to people in different regions and states in the country to be allies to DC residents in this fight?

George Derek Musgrove: If I could, one thing that we know from previous campaigns, many of which were the League of Women Voters was right there in the middle of them, is that when people from other states tell their members of Congress that a vote for DC in Congress is a priority for them, they respond.

I'll give you one example in my good friend I've learned so much from, Johnny Barnes, is here. But 1978 the city was pushing for the DC voting rights amendment, which would have treated us as though we were a state for purposes of representation in the Congress. So two senators, and that time, it would have been two or three members of the House because the house was allocated slightly differently.

And Strom Thurmond, no friend of Washington, DC, did a poll because he was in the middle of 1978 of a very close reelection campaign. And he found because of the organizing of activists here in the district, specifically, Walter Fauntroy, a non-voting delegate at the time, around Black churches in South Carolina, he found that 60-something percent of Black voters in his state believe that DC voting rights was a major issue for them in South Carolina. And so he went right down to the well of the Senate said, DC voting rights is a human rights issue, and I'm gonna back to DC voting rights amendment, and

voted for it and got Barry Goldwater to vote for it, right. And that's really a product of people in the states caring about the issue.

One of the things that we have to do is constantly keep before our fellow Americans, that one, this is happening because they don't know. And two, we have to tell them that this, you know, you want to make this matter to your members of Congress. That's the only way it can work. Because they don't care about what we say we don't vote for them. But these folks do.

NB: I think that's a really big point when it comes to this, that advocacy, because I can't go to my senator to ask them to do this, because that's the fight in and of itself. And I think kind of pivoting from that, you know, Director Fink, you're working at that government level when it comes to the issue of statehood. So I wanted to ask, from the standpoint of that mural office, what are the political and economic implications of granting DC statehood and kind of what's happening at that level?

Jason Fink: Thank you, first of all, thank you for having us. And I'm happy to be here with all these great panelists. I just wanted to totally agree with you what you said before answering the question that, you know, in this environment with the current Republican controlled Congress, what we do outside of DC, and how we engage into advocacy and outreach to other states and help improve the DC brand is critical.

Because, you know, we have Republicans in Congress, hammering you know, into the media, and on the House floor day after day about, you know, all these negative attributes about DC, which, you know, aren't really true. And it's really important that we, you know, engage and have outreach into these key states to help, you know, with the DC brand. And in terms of DC government, I wanted to bring up three examples of direct impacts, you know, not having statehood.

The first one is going back to our National Guard, you know, over the last several years, you know, the National Guard has been had been deployed for humanitarian, and, you know, also public safety events, and not being able to control our National Guard has had disastrous resources, disastrous ramifications. And I think, you know, having control the National Guard would have helped with the migrants issue last fall, and it would have helped with January 6, as well.

Also with Coronavirus. You know, at first we're treated like a territory. And we're only given \$500 million instead of \$1.25 billion for funding for COVID. And that was a big strain on the city in terms of making sure we had everything available to our residents.

And the third thing is our judiciary. Right now, we don't control our judges, and we can't you know, control what happens in the public safety arena. No, the federal government controls that as well. And those are three huge things that could really, you know, help our city and really has come into play.

NB: Okay, you know, LW V even with our non-partisan aspects, when we look at the criminal, like code revision, that was a bipartisan initiative to undermine the people of DC. So when it comes to the responsibilities and who we're bringing to the table of accountability, that has to be everyone, regardless of what side of the aisle they sit on. But kind of taking that government prospective, we have

the 51 for 51 campaign, we have LWV, these are organizations that are working at that grassroots and grassroots level. I'm kind of curious, does how we talk about it shift when we're going from that government institution to what we're seeing on the ground?

Jamal Holtz: Yeah. I'm gonna be very frank, when I say this, I don't think there's enough progressive organizations making the grassroots effort. I think we, we do very well at making it a talking point, but what we don't have in this moment is people movement.

To your point, like in this past criminal code, fight like that, like, there was nobody in any other state advocating, or sort of any other local chapters from these national organizations getting their local chapters, or call their senators and call their representatives to tell them otherwise. Right, and I think for the work that we when we started this campaign 51 for 51 back in 2018 — even when we started the idea of mixing the filibuster, how do we how do we mix a strategy on becoming a state, well, let's make it the 51st state with 51 votes, if it was enough for Mitch McConnell to confirm Supreme Court justices that should be enough for democracy — so when we came up with that strategy, it was even like organizations were like, “that's a stupid idea,” democratic organizations that was like our friends telling us that was a stupid idea, right?

So what we have to do in this movement is think about what are the things that are unconventional and make them the status quo, — but also, we have to make our organizing unconventional too. Right, so how do we tap the local organ — the national organizations that have local presence?

And I'll give you another example, we had a big march on Washington, that we caught the March On for Voting Rights. And that a part of that was not to just talk about the voting rights bill, but to talk about DC statehood.

Do you see any of those organizations talking about this data now? No. Did you see it talked about this past century, this past year? No.

And that's the problem. I think, in the moments where DC statehood is sexy, and it's the hot button issue. People always try to find a way to talk about it. But in the moments when it's not, we have to figure out how do we tell our organizing to.

And I'll say one more point is we all serve a purpose throughout organizations that we work in, whether we're fighting for reproductive rights, affordable housing, gun violence prevention, what we have to know is that DC statehood is an intersectional issue. If you care about those issues, you should also care about DC statehood, and the idea that we become a state that we have the opportunity to actually make progress on those issues.

VKS: Can I add some, of course, as somebody who got arrested five times over the filibuster? One of the things I think we talked about this being you know, we're a nonpartisan organization, we like to say that we like to spank and thank our political and elected leaders in the sense that we will thank you when you're doing the right thing. But when you're not, we're going to — we're going to let you know.

And that was a moment where we intentionally — many people were focused on Congress — we put the pressure on President Biden, because we know that he has the use of his bully pulpit, he did it for the infrastructure bill, he needed to do the same thing for voting rights. And it took a very long time, and we tried to be very strategic.

And a lot of our friends were afraid. They were like he, you know, he's, he's, he's a good guy. It doesn't — sometimes we have to help our friends muster the political courage to do the right thing. And I would say that with the Democrats in general, we can't just make this about vilifying the Republicans, we know that there are attacks on democracy.

But going back to what you said, we also have to help those who say they stand up for democracy who say they stand up for civil and human rights, when it is not politically advantageous to them. We have to continue to put the pressure on.

And I will say, you know, I'll go back to the tweet that the President put out a few weeks ago, when it came to criminal justice reform. And when we were talking about sentencing guidelines in DC, right, that wasn't, nobody asked him to do that. Nobody asked the President to do that, the White House chose to weigh in in that moment.

And so I think we also need to make sure that we're having those conversations, right, the people of DC deserve the right to make those decisions for themselves. People, people who live here are not children. Nobody's here is a baby who needs to be able to have them, you know, put your shoes on brush, your teeth go to bed, nobody needs that people need to be able to determine what is good for them and their families.

And so we need to, also, we need to hold people on both sides of the aisle accountable when they are not standing up and standing in for the right things.

NB: You know, actually, kind of thinking about that aspect, I know Philip, and even Derek, you know, Chocolate City, there is a very rich Black cultural presence, in essence that comes with DC but we've been seeing with gentrification a lot of different economic factors are changing the population. When we're talking about Anacostia and across the US, I think one of the few communities that is still you know, majority black, a lot of residents have been there for decades. So when we're talking about that kind of grassroots work in that narrative, like how does that impact Anacostia specifically as a community?

Philip Panel: Oh, well, not. Let's not just focus on Anacostia. You know, I which happens to be one geographic area east of the river and with and as we see, the progress of gentrification in the city, east of the river will probably be the ebony coast in the near future.

I think that what is important that we all realize is that there is a need for everyone in the District of Columbia who is a resident to actually be involved in the movement for statehood.

To paraphrase the late Senator Ted Kennedy, he said that the issue of our disenfranchisement here in the in the District of Columbia is never going to be part of the national political conversation until that disenfranchisement rises to the level of a personal insult among all of the people in the District of Columbia. And and to that end, what the Anacostia Coordinating Council has been doing is to make sure wherever we have a presence in the community that the issue of statehood is being raised the anytime we table in the community, we have information and buttons about about statehood. And I would say we do most tabling east of the Anacostia River.

Today we are celebrating the DC Emancipation Day. But if my memory serves me — well, then the historian to left will keep me honest on this — I believe it was 60 years to this date that Dr. Martin Luther King penned his Letter from the Birmingham Jail. And it is within that spirit of the civil rights movement that the Anacostia Coordinating Council has taken some pages out in terms of what we do for statehood, first of all, involving you.

Dr. King and the civil rights leaders were unabashed and unapologetic about using young people in the struggle. We need to get more young people involved here in the District of Columbia. To that end, the ACC, with thanks from the district government for getting a DC voting rights and statehood grant, we have sponsored creative contests for young people in the city to do essays and, and poetry, oratory, TikTok, around the issue of statehood. We've done that for the past two years, Jamal, you were one of the people who helped to be at one of our events. The League has been — of which I am a member — a sponsor, because we have to get young people involved, also taking another page from the civil rights struggle.

The faith community must be involved. We have over a nearly 1000 houses of worship here in the in the District of Columbia, we have to energize them so that they can make those connections with their other houses of worship throughout the country. I see of Reverend Wendy Hamilton, who has been at the forefront of that.

So in terms of how we move the issue of statehood, which is not just a political and a governmental issue, it is also at the very core civil rights and human rights. And what we need to do is to take some pages from the past and to update off playbook so that we can make it the human and civil rights struggle that it deserves.

NB: As a young person, I take more of my political news and movement information from TikTok than I would care to admit. But I think that's right. I think it's important to be bringing young people into those spaces. I know LWVDC with Kathy and with Anne Anderson have been going into high school classrooms, giving them the historical narrative in the implications of that lack of representation. And I think at the core of that is that history in the education of history. So I was going to ask, you know, Derek, it was a good lead-in for in Philip when you were calling forward that civil rights aspect, what do we think the racial history of the District plays when we're talking about denying DC statehood? And what do we think a historical understanding of this does and informing our current efforts to achieve statehood?

GDM: Well, I'll start in the recent past, because DC residents don't in any serious way start demanding statehood until 1969. And it doesn't become a sort of majority demand in the city until 1980.

And so the statehood committee is created in 1969, and it comes out of the Black Power movement, the new left. And they're really marginal. They they formed the statehood party. And if you look at the statehood party, going all the way to 1979 it only has a single digit number of members. It's much more popular to be a backer of a constitutional amendment to give DC a vote in Congress.

And what happens in 1980s, we get the DC statehood referendum and large numbers of residents, a majority, back that referendum, and we're sort of yoked to statehood as our primary strategy for getting a vote in Congress and self-determination from that point forward.

Now 80% of residents the last time we had an election, which is 2016, more than 80% are backers of statehood.

At the same time that that happens, as the city moves towards statehood, what you see is that the parties begin to separate when it comes to issues of DC self-determination, and race to a significant degree. And so, you know, right back when we got home rule, one of the biggest champions of statehood was a Black Republicans, Edward Brooke from Massachusetts, right. He was literally part in coalition with the League of Women Voters, the NAACP, and others, in the self-determination for DC committee was a leading member of it.

But people like Edward Brooke slowly got pushed to the side within the Republican coalition. They became rhinos, they became the people that no longer represented the party as the party listed right word. And you know, today you have the leader of the Republican Party, Donald Trump, saying at the NRA convention, not only should we not have DC station, we should get rid of DC Home Rule. Right. So they've gone hard, right? Radical, right.

At the same time, Democrats for most of that period have really not cared much about DC self-determination. We had a vote back in 1993. Most of the people in this room remember it right? And a solid 150 Democrats voted against DC statehood for petty things, right? Steny Hoyer, leader of the Democratic party today, voted against DC statehood because he didn't want his residents who lived in Maryland taxed if they worked in DC, right.

So why did they change? Because Steny Hoyer, of course, voted for statehood last time around. They changed because they came to see DC statehood as being in their self-interest, right? As the other party pushes towards authoritarianism, as the other party gains its power from a lack of democracy, folks in the National Democratic Party began to say it, in fact, behooves us to back democracy, right?

And of course, race plays a huge role in this because African Americans flooded into the Democratic Party, in the second half of the 20th century — the Republican Party really becomes a party of sort of white grievance politics. And DC has for most of the period that we're talking about been a majority black city, if not a plurality, Black City.

So when it comes right down to it, race plays a huge role. But at this exact moment, I think partisanship with it with a tremendous amount of race thrown in, right, is really the dominant impulse. You have Republicans literally saying we can't do DC statehood, because that would be two more Democrats in the Senate, one more Democrat in house. And you have Democrats saying we need more Democrats in the Senate. We need more Democrats in the House. And so we back DC statehood.

PP: Following up your point about partisanship. The Democratic Party needs to do more to push the issue of statehood. And I'm thankful, I'm sure we all are, that the House of Representatives has voted twice for statehood.

But let's be honest about it. Since DC first voted for President in 1964, we are the only electoral jurisdiction that has cast our electoral votes for the Democratic presidential ticket every single time, the only one the in 1972 in the Nixon landslide, it was only Massachusetts and the District of Columbia voting for the Democratic ticket. In 1984, in the Reagan landslide, it was only Minnesota and the DC voting for the Democratic ticket.

For us to have shown the Democratic Party unmistakable faithfulness and love, they need to reciprocate. And it's not just the House. Our democratic presidents could do more to speak up for DC statehood.

And it should not be something about us getting all excited because President Clinton on his last day in office decides to put some DC license plate on the presidential limousine. The thing about it is that, you're like, we need for the Democratic presidents to use the bully pulpit to push this issue. We need a Democratic president speaking for DC statehood, the same way that President Johnson spoke for civil rights in one of his addresses when he said "we shall overcome." We have yet to unite we have yet to see any democratic president — and we all love Obama but he basically did nothing, you know, for DC statehood — possibly prayed for us. But the thing about it is that, you're like, we need to have we need to have Democratic presidents in the State of the Union addresses make this issue something front and center, because that has not been the case.

You know, I — also, we need to have celebrities stand up for us. I want to see, I you know, like I want to watch I want, I want to watch a Tony, or a Grammy, are like, an Oscar, they win a winner, after thanking God and his or her mother will also mentioned something about you know the District of Columbia and our disenfranchisement. You know, like, what color is our ribbon going to be? It, like, it is only until, you like, go up the thermostat, the political thermostat has been turned up, you're like on this issue, will we truly get the type of support that this issue deserves.

JH: Panel is over.

NB: We have the space until nine, we're gonna have to stretch it out a little bit more. But no, I think that, you know, it's like laissez faire support. You know, words are nice, but those can go on a postcard. So I agree that it, to some extent, if it's not action-oriented, it's not particularly helpful that you feel bad for me, but you won't vote in my interest. But yeah —

JF: I just wanted to say I agree 100%. And you know, the word that ACC does is excellent. And I also wanted to give a shout out to DC Vote for the work that you guys do is excellent as well, engaging everyone out of the states.

But the one thing that we struggle with, is how do we get — and this is what you're alluding to — how do we get support for statehood in the consciousness of you know, all Americans, especially young people, like what are the strategies to engage, to activate to mobilize young people and keep it kind of like a constant level of support. So when we're at a situation where there's House hearings, for HR 51, when there's a vote for HR 51 in the house, and when it passes, we have this mobilized base, you know, sitting like dormant ready to be activated and engage. Because it's not always like you said, Jamal, it's not always sexy. It's not always like, there's always highs, there's lots of lows. There's a lot of this baselines.

So the question is, how do you make, you know, statehood, which is a civil right, but how do you make it in the consciousness of, you know, our supporters, and, you know, advocated across the states, you know, 365 days a year, so when we're ready to push that button to activate our supporters, they're already, you know, three-fourths there. And that's one of the things you know, we'd love to I'd love to hear from you guys as well.

VKS: On to that, because one of the things that I will say, that is so highly disappointing to me, and I know, there are a lot of people watching, and I hope people who have money see this, because movements require resources. And this fight has been completely inadequately resourced.

To be able to have very small grants to do small amounts of work. And not to say, the work isn't big to the people who are doing it, but in order to create big change, and so we need to have investment in this work that is long-term investment. I'm not talking about a small grant of \$30,000 or \$50,000, to a handful of organizations.

And so part of what we need to do is call in the funding community, there are a lot of resources that are going.

I would also say that there's an opportunity to call in those elected officials who are constantly doing fundraising, this needs to be part of their fundraising platform as well. So that when they are running for office and being able to create the pressure on them on where they stand on DC statehood, that that is a question when there are debates in their home states in their cities. It's the kind of thing that in order to do that, though, the resources, so I would call on those foundations, those funding communities and people who are investing impacts and other groups to get people elected. They need to be investing in this work as well. And I think that that's something that just can't be understated enough.

JH: You said PAC and my light bulb went off. I noticed this is a nonpartisan space. I'm asking for forgiveness, not for permission, so I can't look at you while I say this. But I also serve as the president of DC Young Dems, and we're a part but we also care about DC statehood, right, and you ask, how do you show for young people, right? Historically, DC Young Dems has been the most underfunded

organization in this entire city. Because people don't invest in young people. They only invest when they need them at a particular place or location.

I'll tell you, in the work that we did not as 51 for 51, when we went on the road, all across the country, asking for presidential candidates to support our mission, it was, it was just known and seen and felt that we didn't belong, right, like you show up to a democratic fundraiser and everybody's looking at you like you're not supposed to be there because you all have on the same shirts. And you create this sense of — you're supposed to foster a sense of belonging, and if we don't feel like we belong, like, as the advocate, I'm gonna keep coming back, but as somebody who's just getting their feet wet in the fight, I'm discouraged right? From the point where we were had the police called on us, because we showed up in the same shirts and uniform to a fundraiser. Right?

So it's like when we've shown young people historically that we only want them around when that's the time to have them around because it looks nice, and not when we actually need them to be a part of their strategy, then they won't be involved in the fight. And that's the hardest part that we had as organization.

And how do we get young people involved in DC statehood, when half of them don't even know what DC statehood is, or the other half just don't feel like it matters to them? Because we haven't made it matter to them.

And so if you want to invest in young people, put your money where your mouth is in investing youth organizations who are doing the work. And that can be DC Young Democrats, if you want it to be. But yeah, we got to invest in our young people and ways big and small.

PP: Mentioning young people and Democrats. I too, was the president of the DC Young Democrats, 45 years ago, and, literally, and it was the it was the delegation — DC Young Democrats delegation that went to the National Convention in Miami, and put on the floor the resolution in support of DC statehood, and that was the first democratic party entity to ever be go on record for statehood.

And I'm glad that you are still in that, in that spirit. I think it is important that wherever we go, we carry the statehood message. And, Brother Fink, it is particularly important for folks who have been appointed to these boards and commissions who are traveling across the country, on the taxpayer's dime, that they actually more they go to these places that they take information about statehood, that when they're introduced, they use it as an opportunity to mention something about our disenfranchisement.

I was a library board trustee member for 10 years. And whenever I went to any of the American Library Association meetings and I was introduced, I made it very clear that I was that I was resident of the colony of the District of Columbia. Everything we have to, we have to make this a burning issue wherever we walk and talk. And the same way that the Bowser administration, I believe, is starting to view radically everything through the lens of equity, we should also view everything through the lens of statehood, in terms of actually focusing on our disenfranchisement.

JF: No, I agree 100%. And I think having statehood be more of a presence, whether it's, you know, when it lands at the airport, and they come into DC. Also, you know, you know, DC has thou- probably millions of tourists to come in every year. And like integrating statehood, messaging and materials and documents when somebody's at hotels, or a different restaurants, or bars or conventions. So they leave DC knowing about the DC statehood, whether it be whether or not they came to DC to learn about it.

I also think that you make a good point that, you know, when people are traveling, whether they're DC residents who are college students, or, you know, members of boards and commissions, they need to be the messengers for the statehood message. And they need to be our ambassadors. And I think you're absolutely right. I think that's the only way that you know, word of mouth. And like the ambassador is telling their experiences to their friends and colleagues, when they're traveling is key to you know, building that, you know, national network of support.

GDM: I'll just have one thing because, you know, we used to have those signs, right, you're now entering the last colony, those used to be on on Eastern Avenue and southern Avenue and everything, as far back as I think the 70s and 80s. And I can still remember the League of Women Voters member with it with The Last Colony sticker on her purse sitting on her lap, right. It's a famous picture that's that's been in the DC press for decades now.

And public education is important. I think we have to take advantage of it in every step. But we also have to remember that we it's been tested, right? And folks would see those signs and say "meh" and drive right into the district. Right.

And so I think that if we look at what has moved the needle in the last couple of years, it was the election of 2016 period, period right? Support for statehood outside the District, within the Democratic Party, was consistently low before the 2016 election. And what Democrats saw in the 2016 election is my God, this is the second time in 16 years that a Republican has won the White House with a minority of the national vote. And if they were looking at the Senate, they'd say, well, it's also happened a couple of times that Republicans with a minority of the people who vote for Senate candidates across the country have seized the chamber about three, four times since 2000, as well.

And so what they saw was that a minority of Americans were dominating the country. Right. And what they realized is that when you look at the map, the bottom population, five states are almost all Republican. Right? So if you take five states, I think there's there's nine Republicans out of 10 senators there. If you take the top 10 population states, it's basically evenly split five, five, right. You got California. Cool. We got Texas, you got Florida. Cool. We got New York, right. But that's not, there's no sort of democratic Wyoming. Right. And the idea for many Democrats was we need a democratic Wyoming. Right, it was in the interest of the National Democratic Party.

And I think that has to stay consistent in the messaging, not just as a pitch to the Democratic Party, but to gun control advocates. Hey, you want two more senators that are gonna vote for gun control? DC statehood? Hey, you want two more senators who are going to vote for actual serious efforts to bring back the labor movement in this country? DC statehood, you go on and on and on on it pretty much any issue. And by the way, that's how the right has always pitched why we should not have DC statehood.

Right. We don't want two Black senators, Pat Buchanan used to say, former DC resident for God's sake, right. Phyllis Schlafly, if you get DC statehood, oh, my God, you're gonna get the ERA. Right.

And so the pitch, it basically just needs to be flipped on his head for the Democratic Party. Because if you do get a DC statehood, you get two more Democratic senators, and you all of a sudden get that cushion where you don't have to worry about Manchin and Sinema any more.

NB: Absolutely. And I think kind of just building off that youth engagement point, because that's some of the work that I'm starting to move at the League. There's two things one, I think, nonpartisanly, and just in every political space, I think there's still a fundamental misunderstanding about how young people, particularly Generation Z is engaging in political work. Like for me personally, and for a lot of my friends, this also, just from the data perspective, it's not really party alignment, it's issue areas.

I'm going to the polls, not necessarily because I'm a Democrat or Republican or an Independent, but reproductive health is on the line, or potentially forgiveness for my college loans are on the line. That's like the moving piece for a lot of young people.

And I think Jamal, you kind of spoke to it is that and this is, I think, generally for all marginalized people, people know when you're taking them seriously. People know that when you're investing in these conversations in ways that are not just superficial, but come with resource commitment, when it's complicated, it's hard. It's not convenient, and it's not just a single day cycle on Twitter. And so until we're having those engagements, where we're not just treating young people, like you said, as bodies to fill up a midterm line, but as competent equal collaborators, not interns, not people to be directed, but thought leaders and thought partners, then we're not really going to see that change. And I think that's something both parties have been struggling with, and even nonpartisan political spaces have been struggling with. So I just want to say that as a young person.

JH: Can I add that as a young person, too? We got control. No. And I would add, we also have to challenge our work to see a voter turnout being very different in voter engagement, right? It's like we have to see DC as not a voter turnout issue, but a form of engagement.

You have to meet young people where they are based on issues that they care about. You have to engage people where they are based on the issues that they care about, and then show them that voting, that statehood, is a tool of engagement to complete that issue. It's not it's not approaching the conversation and saying you must support statehood just because you're because you're Black and you live in DC and you should care about it. I mean, that's that's bare minimum. But you should be approaching people to say, a young person and say you care about gun violence prevention, right? Like you should be caring about statehood, or here's why and how.

So I think we often have to think about the way we engage people before we ask them even for their for their vote.

PP: And I think it's also important that we always point out how our lack of statehood makes us second class, or where we are asking for major decision making here in this country.

When it comes to the confirmation of a Supreme Court justice, we have absolutely no role in that whatsoever. And even in the situation with the presidential elections, where there are people who are opposed to slavery say well, at least, constitutionally, you have electors, you know I based on on your population. Well, there there is a hypothetical there where we can actually get a cut out of the presidential election. And I know Dr. Musgrove and Barrister Barnes over there to tell me if I'm wrong on this, that the Constitution says that if there is a tie in the Electoral College, then that is, this is going to be decided in the House of Representatives. If DC does not have a voting member of the House of Representatives, then that means theoretically, we can actually be cut out of that presidential election. Am I wrong on that? personal lawyer? Yes, I'm right on that.

So you're right, even though it is, you know, what is the 23rd amendment that gives a DC have the right to vote in the presidential election, there is that situation where we can actually be cut out of the presidential election if there's a tie in the Electoral College? I put that on TikTok, this is a this is a request from a former young person.

JH: Also, who don't you know in the room? You've called on everybody.

NB: You know, think that's wonderful. And I think that even with the last few questions, we've been talking about youth engagement, we've talked about all these lines, and we've been talking about the dichotomy between what is a issue area that moves that people DC versus what's going to move larger parties of interest when it comes to getting the work together.

But I think at the point of it, or the core, is humanization. I think that when I'm having conversations with people about DC, I have friends from different states shocked that we don't like not being a state, like it's a cute thing. Like it's a special thing. And it's actually super cool. And like being neutral, like no. So there's a lot of misconceptions around that. So I think some of us are native Washingtonian, some of us have been longtime residents. So I think a really interesting question would just be from that personal standpoint, what is DC statehood, and why is it important to you? So we can start with?

JF: So I've lived in DC since 2003, originally from Cleveland, so I guess I'm a transplant. But you know, I've been here 20 years now. So I guess longtime resident. I've worked at ANC for two consecutive terms. So I've been in like community politics, and working in the mayor's office for almost the last decade.

But what DC statehood means to me is, you know, having the same rights as every other American in terms of, you know, voting representation, which is, you know, key, and, you know, being part of, you know, a community that gets treated equally, and right now, we're second-class citizens, and it's unfair. And, you know, and it's embarrassing.

And, you know, we're dealing with, you know, there's issues, the Republicans, and I know, it's not partisan, but Republicans love to focus on DC, for guns, abortion issues, and cannabis issues. And I think, you know, we don't have control or any of those. So like, it makes DC, you know, there's more guns in the street, because of what we don't have statehood. And it's making, you know, abortions, you

know, harder and, you know, not not able to, you know, because Republicans are blocking that with the rider, and then, you know, DC voted to, you know, support, you know, marijuana and, you know, the federal government with the rider we can't do anything about that as well. And those are three, you know, issues that you know, are front and center in front of the GOP that you're totally, always dominate DC statehood. So like not having those freedoms and being a second-class citizen. No, it's really disheartening.

VKS: I, too, am a transplant. I live in Brookland, — woohoo! — Brookland, Anne Anderson, who's out there, my dear friend who couldn't be here. I think not having representation is dehumanizing. And a lot of ways.

I can't tell you how many times I cringe when I watch TV, and people talk about what's happening in DC as opposed to what's happening on Capitol Hill. The idea that, like DC is just that federal government portion of the city. And and it's just this idea that it's all bad things that are happening in politics, and people don't see the beauty, rich diversity, the beauty and the richness and the diversity of the city. The beautiful parks and the people and the culture and the arts. People don't talk about that. Right?

So it's like this. It's like this cognitive dissonance that most people have when they see DC they only see the Capitol, the White House, and they don't understand that there are actual real human beings here. You're and that's, you know, it's horrifying because you want to be known for the wonderful things and people of this city.

The other thing that I will say is, for me DC statehood is a public safety issue. And that was never more apparent to me than on January 6. And I remember sitting in my house and I live on the corner and not far from the Brookland Metro. And there was like a sea of red hats walking by people who were going to the metro, they had parked in the outer parts of the city to get in for, for that day for the insurrection. And it was, it was terrifying. In so many ways. I've never been — let me tell you, I've worked in Anacostia, I've worked in I've never felt uncomfortable in Benning Terrace, never felt uncomfortable when I was Benning Terrace. But I felt uncomfortable seeing that sea of red hats walked by that day. And what was even more horrifying was the fact that it took so long to get the National Guard executed because of the confusion who's in charge who gives the not being able to have the mayor of the city make that decision to have the National Guard when there isn't an insurrection happening? People in neighborhoods around the Capitol were terrified, terrified. So for me that is very much DC statehood is also a matter of public safety.

NB: Going over to Jamal.

JH: Yeah, I always go back to the reason why I got involved in the fight. And it goes back to when I was the age of 16-years-old, 2014. Now you know my age. At 2014, the *Affordable Care Act*, also known as Obamacare, gave basically every American the basic right to health insurance to be able to walk into a hospital, get treatment to be able to get preventative care coverage, all those things that was important not just to families who were Democrats, but families all across the country and rural communities, to urban communities, and who as an individual who has been denied access to treatment at a hospital as a young kid — when I literally had a busted head and I still have a scar on my head — was denied

treatment, a parent and mother and grandmother and great grandmother who has a history of breast cancer in their family. This *Affordable Care Act* was very important to me as a young advocate in the city who was often advocating for youth issues here locally.

And when President Obama made the call to action, call your senator, I looked up, to be frank, the mayor's office and at that point realized that the mayor or nobody in our local government had the right to vote for the *Affordable Care Act*. And that made me like, explore what the hell is this fight for DC statehood? And why is it so important is because it's not just a fact of a vote. It's a fact of life or death. Right, given Americans the right to health insurance is life or death. And the fact that I didn't have a vote on that was something that was frustrating, but also that was something that we should have the right to speak on and have someone to be able to speak on our behalf in the halls of Congress.

GDM: You know, there's so many issues that that are impacted by the our lack of statehood. And so I'm going to be being forced to choose here. And as a political junkie, as someone who studies folks on Capitol Hill, you know, my my first answer would be just sitting there watching C-span hearing someone lie about me and about my neighbors in my city, and not being able to do anything about it is infuriating. I mean, throw something at the TV infuriating, right?

But when it comes to more tangible things that affect my life, I've got to say that it's criminal justice as well. You know, the US attorney appointed by the President — sometimes if there's a certain party in the White House, with consultation with our local representatives, oftentimes not. But that person prosecutes a majority of crimes in the District of Columbia.

We just saw a report come out says that US attorney has declined 60% of the arrests that come to it from MPD. Now, we don't have real clarity on why exactly, but we do know that that's the Feds that are essentially not moving forward cases that local cops, you know, overseen by local elected officials want prosecuted. And then some of those same people on Capitol Hill will say, well, you know, it's not safe in DC and they won't they won't try to solve the issue.

But it's also a problem when it comes to those folks who are convicted, sent to jail outside the city because of course people convicted of felonies are not put into DC jail. They're put into the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and the city has no good say in the rehabilitation of those individuals. There's no good say about how they transition back into the city. Right. And so that is a public safety issue. If we can't make sure that folks transition back in in a safe and productive way, then there's a high likelihood that they will, they will head back into jail because that they're not able to get back on their feet.

And so going and coming, the lack of statehood is a problem when it comes to criminal justice issues. And so I'd say that, that that's my main one right now.

Yes, yes. Yeah, I mean, I mean, the majority of DC prisoners last time I checked were typically kept in BOP prisons in West Virginia, North Carolina, but some as far as Alabama and Montana, right. I mean, that is, that's just wrong. That's just wrong. That doesn't happen to people who get convicted of felonies in Mississippi. That does happen to folks who get convicted of felonies in, in Washington, DC.

PP: Nearly 50 years ago, when I moved to DC, the day that I went to register to vote, I realized that I was basically signing a document that made me second class. I had been active in politics in New York City. And so I could always correspond with my senators, or my member of the House. And here, I moved to a nation's capital. And I become second class. Now I'd make a distinction between second hand and second class, I'll bust out of a consignment store in a second year, I get everything I've had you guys, you know, I've had a half a dozen cars, and only one was new. So I can be very comfortable with something that is secondhand. But one thing I will never tolerate, or be comfortable with is being second class.

NB: Several mic drops. I appreciate that. And I feel like especially when we're talking to a larger audience that we have virtually — because this is already a self-selecting group of people who are at least interested in the conversation of DC statehood — its people.

I think that when we're talking about political interests, what is the most efficacious thing to vote for if you're a particular party, where resources are going, those are all really relevant conversations. But when we're not just talking about DC statehood, when we're talking about criminal justice, when we're talking about racial justice, all these intersections that we have, it's people, and we ought to care about people. And we ought to empower people, because empowering people is empowering ourselves. And so I think that's what was at the core of why — I keep saying the core, but there's so many good pieces that I got to emphasize on this wonderful panel.

So I think what I'm going to do is transition a bit to questions. I know that we had a couple of post-it questions. I don't know if those were picked up on, we also have a mic in the back for anyone who was moved. didn't write the question yet, but still wanted to kind of put it forward to the panel. And we have our wonderful press secretary, Shannon. Thank you.

So here's a good one. How can people in DC get involved in the fight? And how can people not in DC get involved? kind of brings us back to our first question, but I think towards the end of the panel, it's important to emphasize action items.

GDM: Locally, join the League, join DC Vote, join Neighbors United for DC Statehood, join any organization that is advocating for statehood inside the District of Columbia. And if you're outside the district, Columbia, I guess I should use this. If you're outside the District of Columbia, make sure you're joining organizations that are advocating for whatever issue areas that you think are important to you, and then get those organizations to advocate for statehood on the national stage.

JF: One thing to add for that one way people can get involved in the near future. On May 16 the mayor is going to be testifying before the House Oversight Committee to talk about statehood and public safety. That's gonna be a great time to you know, get involved and organize and really engage on the statehood issue. And you know, it's our hope that you know, DC Vote, League of Women Voters, and all the other organizations in the city and the nationally come together to support DC statehood and the mayor that day.

PP: I remember several years ago when Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton spoke at a DC Democratic state committee meeting that was in Ward 5, it was in, and Congresswoman Norton said she needed help from grassroots residents getting the information out about statehood on social media. She said that there were certain regulations or something in terms of how Congress operates that will actually prevent her from doing some of the things that are necessary in terms of moving the ball around statehood.

So those of you who know social media, particularly young folks, because I'm gonna be very honest, when it comes to the informational highway, I am roadkill. So you know, I am not. So you know, like, I'm not the I'm not the person to do that. But if we can make that something that everyone in the city can do, and maybe we can have something that's led by the mayor, where there will be a day, when everyone will take out their phones and do whatever is necessary to do it, I think that we should help the congresswoman get that message out.

JH: I'm gonna echo a point that Virginia made earlier, resources. And you laugh, but I'm serious. People, people in power movement, but also money too. And we know that for a fact. That's how we drive these organizations that are doing the work. A lot of these organizations also, and I'm gonna go back to my organization in DC, Young Democrats, we never have enough resources to send enough delegates to these conventions where there are hundreds of chapters from across the country who do not have DC statehood in their in their policy platforms, right? How do I get more people in that in that room? Give me the resources to do it. Because as of now, only two of us are going. So and that's not just for DC Young Democrats, DC Vote, they do work all across the country. Kelsey can't get on the plane as many times and take a bunch of people with her if it's just her and she doesn't have the resources to do it.

So we have to think about how do we get our people us in this room or beyond? How do we get people to few resources into this movement in a way that's constructive?

NB: Wonderful. And I see in the audience, we have a microphone and a question. So I'd love to you know, if you want to say your name, maybe what Ward you're from, if you're from DC and your question.

Guest: My name is Robert Vincent Branham, and I am a native Washingtonian, Ward 5. I'm like, Philip, I am unapologetically a statehood, a DC statehood advocate. We've marched together to protest together, we've gone to places together in support of DC statehood in my good friend, Johnny. Several years ago, and I'm using that word lightly, I had an opportunity to be at the White House with President Clinton, and he was having a town hall.

And they made the mistake of asking for questions from the audience. And I got the mic. And I asked him point blank, what are you going to do for DC statehood? What are you going to do for DC statehood, the usual political ask for DC or like all that other kind of stuff. There's a group in this city that has not been touched to fight for status. And they put their lives on the line. And that's the DC veterans. I'm part of a DC veterans group. You know, and I think that we need to bring in the entire village to fight for statehood. Young, old, whatever. And we need to wherever we are. Raise the flag of

statehood. I go to conventions. Convention. I talk statehood, when I go to places I bring up statehood. You know, I make myself uncomfortable in the room fighting for statehood for DC.

And I think that we need to get we need to not polarize people, or diminish people who fight for or or advocate for DC statehood. And my final point if you're in New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, the local media, support what's happening in this city. They will defend the city against attacks. I'm calling on the media in this city to defend DC statehood. And they don't do it. They don't they don't do it. And they should, you may have one or two advocates to speak on statehood. But in their commentary, those old reporters, whatever, if you stand a chance to talk about, Chicago, New York City, Philadelphia, they could put you in your place. Reporters in DC don't do that. They did go along with the flow. And we need to push them also, we need to get our veterans, we need to work with them, and get our veterans and respect our veterans who advocate for statehood around the country.

JH: But is that a quick point to that, like the press the press room piece. Like, we can also think about using advocating to the press to ask the questions in the press room at the White House. Right. Like, even during the time when statehood was contentious here, you had probably not many press folks who have even raised the fact of DC statehood in the White House press room.

GDM: I mean, amen. When the RCCA was heading into Congress, not just the Washington Post, I'm gonna call their name, wrote that garbage editorial saying that it's more important to deal with crime — we can sacrifice our democratic rights or the principle of our democratic rights to deal with crime. Right? Wasn't just the Washington Post. There were certain local individuals who were also doing that, right. Some of them elected officials. And I think that those people need to be shamed.

Right, because what they're essentially saying is that my concern with crime is more important than your rights. Right? More important than all my neighbors, right. And we, we actually need to call people out for that. Right? You know, when the RCC went up, I mean, there were people who were asking Congress to come in here and violate the principle of Home Rule, which pushes us that much further from statehood. Right. And so I absolutely agree with you, gotta mobilize veterans, absolutely right. But we absolutely have to call out folks who are willing to put their single issue ahead of all of our rights.

PP: Once again, returning to the Democratic Party. Next year, the, well it's been announced that the national convention is going to be in Chicago. Years ago when the the networks ceased doing gavel to gavel coverage, it became a question of prime prime convention time. DC statehood practically never mentioned in prime convention time at the Democratic Convention.

Let me give you a case in point in 2004, when the convention was held in Boston, I was one of the three DC Howard Dean delegates. The one was councilmember [garbled]. And when Governor Dean met with his delegation, to release us so that we could vote for Senator Kerry, he, Governor Dean, then said he would take questions from his delegates and I was the very first person to ask the question, say, Governor Dean, you're speaking in prime time this evening. Oh, will you mention DC statehood? He said, even though it was for his good friend of, of Congresswoman Norton, he said he could not do it, because the convention was very scripted. And it could not be there. I was horrified by that. And consequently, the only person at that convention who had any type of prior speaking time in prime time,

who spoke for DC statehood was Al Sharpton. The next year, and we should tell our Democrats next year, the DC statehood should be mentioned continuously and passionately at the convention in prime time, so so that other people than just C-span junkies, will be able to get to get the message about our disenfranchisement.

NB: Thank you. Well, first and foremost, I want to thank all of our panelists for being here. I want to thank the good questions the good commentary got from the audience, I think, yeah, you don't yeah, that's an audience, give us applause, yeah.

My continued push for this issue, which is that DC residents have to be at the forefront of it, it can't be a conversation about us without us. And I think that this panel is a representation of that, whether you're, you've moved here, you've been here for decades, whether you were born in the district, whether you're from PG County, and you would sometimes claim you were from DC, because people didn't really know where PG County was, but you weren't from it. Like the different ways that we intersect with DC, right? This is an issue where those voices have to be central, and their absence means that we're not having a real conversation.

So I want to say that, I know in the virtual chat we're going to be dropping information to join OutreachCircle, it's our program that allows us interfacing, especially across the nation, how we can be showing up sometimes in person, but oftentimes, digitally, whether that's posting to social media, whether it's attending wonderful events like this, and other ways to show that it's not just the DC residents who have a stake in this fight, but then anyone who has a push and a want and a love for democracy and representation and equal rights to be at the forefront along with them. So I want to emphasize that and emphasize that's going to be a wonderful resource in supporting the DC residents, at least from the League's perspective.

And in closing, we are — not as being on schedule. I love that for us. Because I had like several different worst case scenario schedules, I was falling really far behind — but this is a bit of, I guess, a point of personal privilege. So when I graduated from Georgetown, and I wanted to work in the political space, I wanted to ensure that the organizing work that I was doing could extend to another community of need. So at Georgetown, when you're on this campus, you know people you can see the need of resource you can these see the point of advocacy, I wanted to share that even if I was working at that national level, or at this point, the DMV level and I was still holding that close. So when I had the opportunity to work the League, I was elated. But I was not as elated as someone who will be helping with our closing my grandmother, she said not to interrupt to introduce her as my grandmother, but like, you know, point of privilege, because I'm on the stage and I have the microphone. She's also a League member from Oxford, Mississippi. So I didn't know this when I applied. But she was a League member and then my great grandmother, who was 103, was also a League member and she was doing work in in like getting veterans, Black veterans let's be very specific in the narrative with that, getting Black for veterans their benefits have been paralegal for Black Farmers, like this has been at the core of like my DNA this work and so I felt like it was a wonderful coincidence that the League has been there longer than I've been alive. And so in closing because she's a singer, she won't let you forget if you know her. She really wanted to I thought it would be wonderful to close the event with her singing Lift Every Voice you know we're, yeah. So I'm gonna hand her off the mic and again, thank you everyone for coming for

honoring this conversation for elevating it to families and friends. I hope that we can see this issue move in our lifetime in a way that is real and important in matters to the DC residents but you know, transitioning over to every birth hey thank you.

Guest: Thank you everyone and I believe this is fitting we need to Lift Every Voice to victory for DC statehood.