

THE ECONOMIC CLUB

O F W A S H I N G T O N, D. C.

Virtual Signature Event

Wes Moore, Mayor Muriel Bowser, and George Lambert

**Wes Moore
CEO, Robin Hood**

**The Honorable Muriel Bowser,
Mayor, Washington, D.C.**

**George Lambert
President and CEO, Greater Washington Urban League**

**Moderator:
David M. Rubenstein
President, The Economic Club of Washington, D.C.**

Friday, June 18, 2020

ANNOUNCER: Please welcome David Rubenstein, president of The Economic Club of Washington, D.C.

DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN: Welcome, everyone, to our 13th Virtual Signature Event since we began doing these Signature Events a few months ago.

Now, I'd like to have Wes Moore for our first guest. Wes, thank you very much for coming.

WES MOORE: It's my pleasure. Thanks so much, David. Great seeing you.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Now, Wes Moore is somebody that has an unusual life story, and I would like to go through that a bit because it's so extraordinary; I think all of you will be quite impressed with what you hear. And then we'll go into what he's doing at Robin Hood, and then also his new book that's coming out next week.

So, first, Wes, you were born in Baltimore. Is that right?

MR. MOORE: Yeah, I'm a Maryland guy and where most of my family still is.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So, you were born in Baltimore. But at the age of four, your mother took you to New York where she thought that was a better place to raise you. Is that correct?

MR. MOORE: Yeah. So, well, I only have two memories of my father. One time was when he saved me from a beating that I was going to get from my mom for hitting my sister because my mother always – only had a couple rules in our house was that men do not put their hands on women, and when she saw me hit my sister she went after me and my father saved me. Explained to me what I had done so wrong. And the only other memory I have of him was six months later when I was about four years old when I watched him die in front of me, and my mother –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: He died from what?

MR. MOORE: He died from something called acute epiglottitis, which is a virus where, essentially – all of have us an epiglottis in our throat and every time we breathe or chew the epiglottis goes up. It allows air into your windpipe. Acute epiglottitis is, essentially, where the epiglottis becomes so swollen that it is so heavy that it just sits on top of your windpipe. So, essentially, his body suffocated itself, and – [audio break] –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Your voice has broken up, is silent.

MR. MOORE: Sorry. Is that better now? Sorry.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Now it's OK. All right. So – all right. So, your mother moved you to New York.

MR. MOORE: Yeah. So, my mother moved me –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: And you were raised there.

MR. MOORE: Yeah.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: And then you were a superstar student in school?

MR. MOORE: [Laughter.] Yeah. I wish that was the case, David. No, when I went to New York that was probably some of the most trying moments of my life because I found myself, you know, consistently hurting people that loved me so I could impress people that they could care less about me.

And the truth is, is that, you know, the first time that I felt handcuffs on my wrists was when I was 11 years old. I think I was just filled with a lot of confusion and hurt and pain that I was still very much trying to process about what happened to my dad and why my neighborhood felt so chronically neglected, and I think that it eventually turned around that when I was 13 years old after years of threatening me my mother eventually sent me to military school.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So, you were not bar mitzvahed, right, at 13?

MR. MOORE: (Laughs.) I was not bar mitzvahed. No, I was not. I had a – I had a manhood ceremony of a different type. I had a manhood ceremony of a different type. And that's – [inaudible] – system.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So, you did OK – you did OK in the military academy, well enough to get into Johns Hopkins, right?

MR. MOORE: Yeah. Well, so I finished – when I finished at the military academy I found that I actually – I enjoyed it and there was this graduated sense of responsibility and leadership that I relished, and then I finished high school I actually joined the Army and I enlisted in the Army. I went through ROTC.

By the time I was – I went to a junior college first. I went to a community college, got a two-year degree. And then when it was time to transfer I was already a second lieutenant in the Army and I said – and I went to say I want to go back home, so I applied to go to Johns Hopkins University.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: All right. You got into Johns Hopkins, and then you became a Rhodes Scholar. So, what did you do to become a Rhodes Scholar? You know, only 32 are picked every year out of the United States. So, what did you do to deserve to be a Rhodes Scholar?

MR. MOORE: Well, I mean, I remember actually going back to a conversation I had with another former Rhodes Scholar, who is the former mayor of Baltimore, a gentleman named Kurt Schmoke. And I was doing an internship with Mayor Schmoke and on the last day of my internship he called me into his office. And he knew about my grades. He knew about my

extracurriculars, and he asked me – he said, have you ever heard of the Rhodes Scholarship, and he brought me over to a picture that sat right next to his desk and he pointed to it.

That was a picture of him and his Rhodes class, and he said, I want you to consider applying for this. And that story is really important to me because had he not done that, had he not had that conversation, nothing would have changed about my grades or my criteria or my qualifications.

I just wouldn't have even known that the door was there and they never would have known about me, and it was the importance of the fact that in that moment he shed a light that now has helped to light a path for the remainder of my career. But it was that moment that helped to do it.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, you got a Rhodes Scholarship. You went to Oxford, and after that did you go to law school or business school or something? What did you do right afterwards?

MR. MOORE: Right after that I actually went into the investment world because I'm really more – I have more of a quantitative mind than a qualitative mind. But I remember actually I was in London and I was working in finance, and I got a phone call from a buddy of mine, a guy who is now General Mike Fenzel. At that time, he was Major Mike Fenzel in the Army. And, you know, I enlisted in the service. I was a paratrooper. I had done all my training. But now this was 2002 and 2003, actually, and many of the soldiers I trained with were now on their second and third deployments, and I had never deployed.

And he called me up one day and he said something to me where he said, when are you going to join the fight. And it was indicting to hear that from my dear friend because I knew exactly what he meant, and I remember thinking about it and praying on it and I, literally, went back two days later and I went back to my job in finance and I told them that I was called up. I wasn't called up. It was – I did a by-name request, and I joined back with the 82nd Airborne Division and went over to deploy with them.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, you joined the 82nd Airborne and then you went to Afghanistan?

MR. MOORE: We did, yes.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Now, did your – [audio break] – weren't you worried that – [audio break]

MR. MOORE: Yeah. You know, I think, you know, there was definitely the worry. In fact, that's one of the reasons why I told my family that it was – that it was a call up because had they known I actually volunteered to do it, it probably would have been a very different – very different conversation.

But the thing that – I went over there, there was that level of fear that they all had. But I also knew that, for me, it was the right decision, and I think about my time over there where I saw some of the greatest acts of heroism that I've ever witnessed in my life. I mean, I'm still in

awe of the men and women that I served with. And when I thought about the conflict that was going on over there, you know, I remember at that time in 2005 it was all Iraq. All the news was Iraq.

And so in some ways, when I told people that I was going to Afghanistan, they're, like, well, at least it's not Iraq, without realizing that the first time that we got into – you know, had shots on was my second day there. So, you realize very quickly that Afghanistan was a much hotter spot than people understood at that time.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, you survived Afghanistan and you came back to the United States and you were selected as a White House Fellow. Is that right?

MR. MOORE: That's correct. Yeah.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: And you worked for Condoleezza Rice?

MR. MOORE: I did. I did, which was a remarkable experience, and, specifically, coming back after deployment to do that, where you spend a year seeing how policies are implemented and then you come back the next year to see how policies are made, and you realize not just the power of the folks who are making the policy but also, frankly, in many ways, the disconnect between policies that are made and policies that are implemented.

And I think the ability to be there and, frankly, to work for a person in Secretary Rice and also people like Dina Powell, who were – who didn't just, you know, involve me but who really were genuinely curious about my experiences deployed overseas and wanting to incorporate that into how we thought about policy, that was really meaningful to me.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So, eventually, you went into the finance world. But then about four years ago, somebody said, why don't you become the president of Robin Hood Foundation.

MR. MOORE: Yeah.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, didn't you tell people that you were already going to do things in the finance world, you had already served your country and you'd done enough, or you didn't say that?

MR. MOORE: [Laughter.] No, I didn't say that. But, you know, what's interesting is that my first reaction when Robin Hood approached me, my first reaction actually was no, and I gave them three reasons. I said, you know, one is I live in Baltimore, so I don't know how, you know, you're going to lead an organization that's based in New York.

The second piece was I told them that I'm enjoying the work that I'm doing now, and the third piece was I said, you know, I've been critical of philanthropy in the past, and the person who was chairing the search committee at that time, he said, no. He said, we've done our diligence. We've seen it and it's pretty public because it's all over YouTube that I'm pretty critical of philanthropy. And he said – but he said something that really struck with me – that

stuck with me. He said, but what if I told you that we actually think many of the things that you said are right and that's actually why we wanted to talk to you.

And that became a really interesting opportunity for me that, you know, that I don't believe in charity. You know, I believe in change and I believe that the role of organizations like Robin Hood is to really be change agents and use all muscles and tools at our disposal to be able to drive that in our society.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Now, Robin Hood is focused on New York City. It's about 30 years old now. But what does it mainly do in New York City?

MR. MOORE: Yeah. So, Robin Hood is now, yeah, 30, 32 years old and really had a core focus of saying how do we end poverty as we know it. And so, we focus on everything, funding from education to housing to transportation to mental/physical health to criminal justice reform, understanding the interconnectedness of poverty.

You're never going to say, OK, how do you fix poverty. Well, do one thing. Because poverty is completely intertwined into every aspect of our society. It's how we're asking people to live, what we're asking them to drink, the air we're asking them to breathe, the schools we're asking them to attend.

And so how do we attack it from every single facet is really how Robin Hood has approached it, and one of the things that we've been able to do in our time in Robin Hood is know that, you know, while Robin Hood is New York born and New York bred and New York focused, poverty is not a New York issue. And so, we've been able to really expand and think about how do we work in partnerships with other groups around the country to be able to think about our work in a holistic basis.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Now, in your spare time you've written three books. The first one is called "The Other Wes Moore." Who is the other Wes Moore?

MR. MOORE: So the other Wes Moore is actually a gentleman I learned about right when I received the Rhodes Scholarship, because right after I received the Rhodes Scholarship the Baltimore Sun, which is, you know, my hometown paper, wrote an article about how this local kid, despite, you know, a pretty uneven childhood, now was just announced as a Rhodes Scholar.

And at the same time, they were writing a whole series of articles about four guys who robbed a jewelry store and in a botched jewelry store robbery ended up murdering an off-duty police officer. And there was a 12-day national manhunt for these four guys and, finally, after 12 days all four guys were caught, and I found out from these articles that one of the people that the police were looking for was a guy whose name was also Wes Moore.

And I one day decided to write him a note, and a month later I got a letter back from Jessup Correctional Institution from Wes Moore, which is a maximum security facility, and I learned how much more we had in common than just our names. We were from the same area,

around the same age. Both grew up in single-parent households. Both had academic and disciplinary troubles.

And so that one letter turned into dozens of letters. Those dozens of letters turned to dozens of visits, and after knowing Wes for a few years, someone approached me and said, would you consider writing about these parallel lives and the things that our society should learn about how we are far too quick to either congratulate or castigate without understanding pathways.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: And what happened to him now?

MR. MOORE: He is currently in year 19 of his life sentence in prison. Him, his older brother, and two other guys who were there, where one was found, you know, guilty for the murder. The other three were found guilty of felony murder, and the way felony murder works is the main question that the judge will ask is, were you there, because the person who gets the highest sentence everyone else will receive that same sentence. So, he's now in year 19 of a life without parole sentence.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Next week you'll have a new book coming out that deals with Freddie Gray, "Five Days." Talk about Freddie Gray, who he was, and what happened to him.

MR. MOORE: Yeah. So, Freddie Gray was a 25-year-old young man, an African American young man in Baltimore, who one day made eye contact with police and ran, and the police chased him. And back then, you know, that was actually a law that you could not make eye contact and flee from police if you were in certain neighborhoods.

And he did. His neighborhood happened to be one of those neighborhoods. Eventually, he was arrested, and an hour after he was arrested, he was in a coma, and a week after he was placed in a coma he died. And there was weeks of protests that took place in Baltimore, demanding accountability and transparency, and those protests were all peaceful until one night. Actually, it was the night of Freddie's funeral when he was laid to rest that they were no longer peaceful and eventually Maryland went into a state of emergency and the National Guard was called in.

And the thing that I really wanted to explore with this story was, you know, I look at the five days surrounding his – of surrounding his funeral and this uprising, and I look at it through the eyes of eight different people, from a basketball star turned protestor to a police major who actually grew up in west Baltimore to the son of the owner of the Baltimore Orioles, who's the head of baseball operations, that when the Orioles played a game with no fans he was one of the people to help make the final decision.

So a group, a collection of people, who are helping to tell a story of what was going on at that time and helping to highlight the fact that this was not just about policing, and the thing that we should be – the thing that should garner and, you know, enrage with – a rage within us is not just Freddie's death. It was his life. It was the fact that his life from birth was surrounded by

poverty and inequity, and if we're not willing to understand the trauma and damage of his life, then we have no right to stand there and just mourn his death. We have to do both.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, tell us why you're living in Baltimore, my hometown. It's a nice place. It has some challenges for sure.

MR. MOORE: That's right.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Your job is in New York. Why don't you just pick up and move to New York?

MR. MOORE: Because I'm a Baltimorean. I love my city, flaws and all. You can't understand who I am without understanding Baltimore. And the truth is, is that when we're talking about understanding the challenge of cities, Baltimore is actually a pretty important example because we understand that the level of divide didn't happen accidentally. There's history to it. There's laws.

There is the history of redlining and the history of discriminatory housing policy, the discriminatory lending policies that really do define everyday modern-day life within the city of Baltimore now. And I feel like Baltimore, in many ways, is one of these places where our story is still very much being written every single day and I'm just very proud to be one of the 600,000 authors of a pretty powerful – what I think is going to be a pretty powerful story.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, your mentor and friend, Kurt Schmoke, ran for mayor and served three terms as mayor of Baltimore. Has anybody ever suggested to you, you might run for office in Baltimore, Maryland? You've never heard that before?

MR. MOORE: [Laughter.] I've never heard that before, David. No, I mean, I'm a person who really does strongly believe in – I spend no time thinking about the next job. I spend thinking about doing the best job possible in what you're doing right now, and we've got a big fight ahead of us. You know, this issue of poverty is terrible and traumatic and, frankly, getting worse.

I mean, we've seen over – we've watched 11 years of job growth go away in 11 weeks. You know, we've watched how – if you look at 23 percent of people who have lost their jobs due to COVID-19 alone, the reality is 23 percent of people who lost their jobs due to COVID-19 were living in poverty before COVID-19.

So, this was the working poor, people who were working jobs, in some cases, multiple jobs, and still living in poverty. And so I know that my life's work is going to be trying to create spaces where opportunity and ambition can actually meet each other, where we can actually create pathways for growth and opportunity for people in a very real and in a very consistent way.

And so, you know, I have never been focused on a title. I'm focused on impact, and I think we're making a real impact right now.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So the protests that have arisen recently because of the killings of certain people and are well known, and George Floyd, among others, what is your reaction to what the United States should do about this or what people can do about it to make a difference, an improvement?

MR. MOORE: Yeah. Well, I think the thing that people have to remember in all of this is that what people are protesting right now is not just inequitable policing and, frankly, it's not even just the levels of economic disparity. We have to understand that what's being protested right now also is the history of race and racism in this country.

And I think we carry around this myth that racism is an individual act. So, you know, unless you are saying the N-word or, you know, wearing a hood that, you know, that you're not racist, and we have to dispel with that because racism is a system. It's a system that allows for – right now, for a Black person with a college degree to have less earning power than a White person who's a high school dropout. That's a fact. That's a system.

And I think what we're talking about right now is it's a system that has to be confronted in a very real way. It's a system that's been built and reinforced for the past 400 years, and the reason that I think we have to be – and when we say what do we need to do about it, I think we have to be deliberate about understanding how it is interlaced and interplayed in so many of these systems.

I think we have to be honest about the fact that it does exist and is not – it's not as a to play a gotcha. It's to say that it's the only way we're going to move forward and, frankly, I think the reality is we have to deal with this process with a real truth and a trauma and a reconciliation process within our society.

You know, we've watched other countries that have been able to look at some of their greatest pains and to be able to be honest about them, and whether it's South Africa or Chile, whether it's Northern Ireland or what Canada just pulled off with their Reconciliation Commission, the history of race goes back as far as the history of this country, and I think there needs to be a way that our country can wrestle with that, to sit with that, and also to know that the only way we're going to get better from it is not to ignore it but actually is to make sure that our individual actions are – and our individual goodness is something that can be – proactively go after a system that is really embedded in so much of how we exist.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, I assume your 6- and 9-year-old don't tell you every day they're proud of what you're doing because they're probably focused on other things. But what about –

MR. MOORE: [Laughs.] Yeah, I'm sorry. You said – and you said what about –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: What about your mother and your grandmother? Do they tell you how proud they are of what you've achieved?

MR. MOORE: I'm proud of them. I mean, my grandfather was the first one in my family born in this country. He was born in Charleston, South Carolina, and when he was four years old, his

father, my great grandfather, who was a minister, was run out of the country by the Ku Klux Klan because he was too vocal. And the majority of my family vowed to never come back to this country and the majority of my family have not. They went back to Jamaica and they stayed there.

My grandfather did. My grandfather came back to this country in his 20s because he said this was his birth home and this is the place where he wanted to raise his family, and that's when they moved to the Bronx where he became a minister in the South Bronx. My grandmother became a schoolteacher in the South Bronx for 29 years.

They believed in this country. They believe in the promise of this country, and it's their DNA that runs through me that makes me have that same exact belief. And so, there is nothing that I will ever do that can make them more proud of me than I am proud and thankful of them and for what they gave to me.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Wes, it's an incredible story. I want to thank you for coming.

Now, your book coming out next week is called "Five Days: The Reckoning of an American City."

MR. MOORE: Yes. Yes. Thank you.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: All right. And I don't want to sound like your book agent, but I hope people buy it because it's no doubt going to be a great book, as your previous two were.

Thank you very much for coming, Wes.

MR. MOORE: Thank you. Thank you so much, David. Appreciate it. Thank you.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: All right. Bye.

Now, we are privileged to have the mayor of Washington, D.C., Muriel Bowser – the Honorable Muriel Bowser. Thank you very much, Mayor, for coming today and coming back so shortly after you were here just a few weeks ago.

WASHINGTON, D.C. MAYOR MURIEL BOWSER (D): Thank you, David. It's my pleasure.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, anything new in the District of Columbia these days?

MAYOR BOWSER: Mm. Well, there's a lot new all over our country and, certainly, right here in Washington, D.C. But I couldn't be more proud of our team and residents who are helping to confront this pandemic and the many days of demonstrations we've had in D.C.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, let's talk about something that everybody in the world has seen, the protests that occurred in Lafayette Park, Lafayette Square, a few weeks ago. So, who was

supposed to police that? Was that the District of Columbia police? The National Guard? Who was really in charge of policing it, in your view?

MAYOR BOWSER: Well, I think there's been a lot of finger pointing going on, and you probably watched the federal forces point fingers at each other, which is the problem that we have called out, David. In Washington, D.C., we police demonstrations all the time. We're the seat of the federal government. People come here to address their grievances with the government.

We do parades. We do the 4th of July. We do inaugurations. And all of those are done in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Department, or the D.C. police, which was our local police, and with federal police as well that have responsibilities in the District – the United States Park Police, the Capitol Police, and sometimes we use the D.C. Guard on those large-scale events.

So, we approach all of those events in that way. The federal government, however, is responsible for federal facilities like the White House and Lafayette Park in front of the White House, and all of the people that you saw, and I assume you're referring to the very unfortunate event where peaceful protestors were cleared from in front of the park, and they were all federal police, we believe, under the command of the attorney general.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So, in the future, have you and the federal government coordinated such that if something like that happened again it'd be clear who's in charge of policing things? Or is that not worked out yet?

MAYOR BOWSER: Well, it is clear who's in charge of policing things. I think from the federal point of view, which I can't tell them how to do their business, that you're right to question if there was a legitimate chain of command. Who were the Park Police listening to? Who were the National Guardsmen assigned to listen to? Because nobody can really think of a situation where the attorney general should be directing those officials.

So those are some things that, certainly, have to be worked out on the federal end and it may come down to the Congress getting the right answers.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Well, there's a bill in Congress now that would prevent the president from federalizing the D.C. police force, I believe. I believe the president must have the authority somehow to federalize the D.C. police force. Is that a realistic possibility that he will do that or that that bill will pass?

MAYOR BOWSER: Well, I think no one ever thought of a scenario where that threat would be made or, certainly, that it would ever happen. But there is a provision in our home rule charter. It has some hurdles, but they're not very high hurdles, that would enable the president to require the mayor of the District to release the Metropolitan Police Department, which we would regard as a very – not just a significant affront to our autonomy that's granted to us, but we think it would make the District less safe because the federal government, in with whatever chain of command they have determined, would not be in the best position to provide local policing.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So, speaking of Congress, there's a number of other bills that Congress has taken up recently or going to be taking up relating to the District. One of them deals with making the District the 51st state. I believe that's going to be taken up by the House shortly. What is your prognosis of where that stands in terms of getting passed?

MAYOR BOWSER: Well, I would say that we are very excited about it. We expect that the House of Representatives is going to vote in the affirmative for D.C. statehood, which has never happened in the history of the statehood struggle. This bill has more co-sponsors in the House. In fact, it has enough to pass just with the number of people who have co-sponsored it and it has a record number of senators who are also on the bill.

We were with the speaker of the House and the Majority Leader Hoyer the other day, with our congresswoman, Eleanor Holmes Norton, and they announced the vote date, which is going to be next Friday, and this is amid the Congress trying to work on very – a myriad of pieces of legislation during the pandemic, and they haven't been able to schedule everything. But they made the point to schedule this before they go out on recess, and I think that is a huge development in the move toward statehood.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Does it require a majority vote or a two-thirds vote?

MAYOR BOWSER: It requires a simple majority in both houses.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Thank you.

MAYOR BOWSER: So, where we are is the – you've heard the president and the Senate Majority Leader call out the issue in the starkest, partisan terms. And we – our argument is that this is not about partisanship; it's about democracy, and that people who pay every bit of the federal taxes as any other American – in fact, more per capita than any jurisdiction – has to be represented by a voting member of the House and two voting senators.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: And some of the people who oppose it basically saying that it's basically racial; that you are essentially going to give a city that, to some extent, half Black, you know, three additional voting members in the House and the Senate. Is that basically it?

MAYOR BOWSER: That is – that argument has been made for decades – that we were too Democratic and too Black in Washington, D.C., to be considered a state, and we know that that is – [laughs] – those are not the principles of equal representation.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: The Congress is also supposed to be dealing with providing you another \$700 million that you got short-changed in the first CARES Act. Is there any chance of your getting this money at this point, do you think?

MAYOR BOWSER: Well, we're continuing to work it. Speaker Pelosi has very much lived up to her word to us to make sure that it was dealt with in the next piece of legislation, which is the Heroes Act, and we continue to work it from all sides.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, let's go back to the protests. Not too long after the protests, during the middle of the night, Black Lives Matter became the name of a plaza in front of – or behind, I guess, Lafayette Park. Did you make that decision yourself? Do you need the city council to approve it? How does that get done?

MAYOR BOWSER: I made that decision, and I made it the moment I was walking through the streets of Washington and saw federal troops that had advanced from Lafayette Square on to D.C. streets. And I was with a group of our interfaith leaders who were actually wanting to go to St. John's Church and couldn't because there were a line of federal officers there.

I knew then that we had to reclaim those streets and send a powerful message that not only are these D.C. streets, but we have a moment in history right now to stand up for our Constitution, stand up for fairness and justice in policing, and to hold officials accountable. And I knew the Black Lives Matter Plaza could be that place.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: All right. Now you've been sued to stop that designation. I assume you are confident you will win the lawsuit.

MAYOR BOWSER: Well, I'm very happy to defend my decision in the District in court – in any court.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So, this has been a challenging time for other reasons as well. You have to deal with the COVID-19, so let's talk about that easy decision you have to make there.

MAYOR BOWSER: Yeah.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, on COVID-19, we're now in Phase 1 –

MAYOR BOWSER: Yes.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: – and tomorrow you are making an announcement on whether Phase 2 will occur or not. What are the decisions and criteria you are going to use about whether to go into phase two?

MAYOR BOWSER: Well, David, we have been very methodical, and I think so far, our experience with the spread of the virus is suggesting that we're doing it the right way. Today, for example, we reported 56 new cases. That's among the lowest number that we've had since early – since mid-March. So that's a very good thing.

We've identified our metrics, we have been communicating on almost a daily basis how we're responding to COVID-19, and our residents and businesses have told me, in no uncertain terms, that they really appreciate how we are approaching this. So, we will get several metrics, including a 14-day decline in transmission, which we achieved today; how we are contact tracing and how quickly we can be in touch with a person with a positive case and their contacts. We're

also looking at test positivity – so how many people are testing positive over the number of total tests. And we're way below 10 percent, which is a good thing.

And so, we – I think that we're going to approach entering Phase 2 in very good shape.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. Now 4th of July is coming up, and sometimes people gather on the 4th of July in large groups. What are you going to do to prevent that, or how are you going to deal with that?

MAYOR BOWSER: Well, that's a – that's a big question, and certainly we've been talking about mass gatherings, especially since we've seen these First Amendment demonstrations, which is what they would be called in the public safety world. In the public health world, they are called mass gatherings. And so, it is a big concern when we see people – especially people who are traveling here from other places where they might have hotspots, we continue to be very concerned.

So, we've told people to get tested if they think they need a test. We've opened up our testing all around the city now. Our fire department is participating in free testing in evenings through the city, which is very helpful.

I'm actually going to be talking to the Interior Secretary today. I'm not exactly sure what the plans for the National Park Service are, and so we're going to be getting to the bottom of what their plans are.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK, so let's talk about the D.C. police force. We saw in Atlanta and Minneapolis some signs of police conduct that, obviously, was inappropriate and deadly. So, are the D.C. police trained differently than the Minneapolis or Atlanta police? And are you fairly confident that something like we saw in those instances couldn't happen in D.C.?

MAYOR BOWSER: Well, I'm not an expert on Minneapolis or Atlanta, but I can tell you about our experience in Washington, D.C. And I think that any mayor will tell you that police and community relations are – that's a relationship we work on each and every day, but a bad incident can happen any time or any place. And so, we recognize that.

And what we have done over the last 18 years is reform the Metropolitan Police Department. Many people will remember when our police department didn't enjoy a great reputation. In fact, we entered into a consent decree back in 2002 with the Department of Justice addressing use of force. And since then, we have consistently implemented reforms to the point that when the D.C. auditor asked the independent monitor to come in recently – within the last several years – and review D.C. police, that independent monitor found that D.C. police were acting in an unbiased, constitutional way. And so, we thought that that was a very good mark on how – not only how our reforms have been implemented, but how they have taken root in the culture.

Let me give you a couple of examples. We've professionalized our police force over the years. We require our officers to have some higher education credits to come into the

department. That means they've been more exposed, and they are actually older than in some other departments. We've implemented de-escalation training, we've outfitted all of our officers with body-worn camera, which we think adds a layer of accountability that's very important.

We've been very intentional about ensuring that we have a diverse police department as well so that our police department looks like our city, and we're very proud of that. So, we have more minority officers, more female officers, and more officers that actually live in the jurisdiction where they police in Washington, D.C.

In my current budget before the council, I doubled-down on D.C. resident police officers in a program that we're very proud of that hires D.C. high school students, pays them as civilians in the police department, sends them to the University of the District of Columbia, and then they can enter the police academy as people who grew up here in D.C. So, we're very proud of that.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Now there is a movement in many cities – and I think somewhat in D.C. – to reduce funding for the police departments, and some people want to defund it completely. But you have resisted that. So, you are fairly confident that you can get your budget through the city council?

MAYOR BOWSER: Well, the city council is reviewing it. I know that they are hearing a lot of the calls that you hear that I've heard – and in some jurisdictions may be valid calls for shifting resources.

But we know that D.C. residents and taxpayers have been very generous to the government in allowing us to make investments across the board. So just in the five budgets that I've sent to the council, for example – since I've been mayor for the last 5 ½ years, we have seen police investments go up by 12 percent over five years. We've seen – on the other hand – education investments go up over 40 percent. And in my current budget, despite the fact that we saw an \$800 million decline, dive in revenues, I actually increase public education spending by 3 percent.

We can look at other categories, too, like the human services, what we're doing to end homelessness. Those investments have gone up over 70 percent in the last five years. The things that we're doing for violence intervention – in partnership with the council, we created a whole new agency that is non-law-enforcement police and public safety intervention or violence interruption. And we've gone from zero to funding a complete new agency in those activities.

So, the bottom line, David, is our public safety funding is not just policing. It's opportunity programs, and education and job training, and it's also intervention programs in violence interruption and behavioral health intervention. And I think the budget that the D.C. Council has, has exactly what we need in all three of those buckets.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Back on the public school system in the District of Columbia, when do you think you will make a decision about whether public schools will open in the fall?

MAYOR BOWSER: We will make a decision shortly. We will have a summer bridge program that we expect to start on August the 10th, and that's going to be able to have our kids in the transition years so we have some time where those kids are going to start early – I think in grades 3, 6 and 9 – and then by August 31st, we will be ready for school.

Our expectation is that we will have in-person learning with modified schedules to accommodate social distancing. But I'm getting those final recommendations based on a survey that we've conducted of our public school families.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So when would you think that the District might be completely open – in other words, when all parts of the District can operate as they were before COVID-19? Is that sometime next year? The middle of next year maybe? Or maybe later? Is there any guess on that?

MAYOR BOWSER: I don't really have a guess on that, and I think a lot of it depends on the effectiveness and availability of a vaccine as to when we wouldn't have to have the type of social distancing guidelines that we expect to have through Phase 4.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. And what do you think the business community can do a better job of in helping you? The business community in Washington has, you know, an interest in helping, I'm sure. Is there anything the business community can do that they're not doing that you would like the business community to do?

MAYOR BOWSER: Well, I think that various sectors of the business community can help us amplify this message, is that the response to COVID and the shutdowns related to COVID are bigger than any local government can handle. So really having relief packages that come through the Congress by sector are going to be hugely important.

When I think about housing, I'm very concerned. We have been able to do less with our housing dollars than we expected because of the dip. When I think of the rent relief that people are going to need – both tenants and landlords – those are going to be huge numbers, and they are included in the Heroes Act. And that needs to get through Congress.

When I think of the commercial tenants and commercial landlords, they're in a similar boat. And some of them are going to come back last, like our large venue tenants. So there, there needs to be relief there.

Higher education – they are going to continue to be, I think, hit, and they are big employers in our city, so we need them to be addressed. I think there has been a lot of attention on hospitals and medical providers, so we want to continue to focus on that as well.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So finally, you are still running the city largely remotely. Are you in your apartment now – or your house now? And are you going to keep doing that?

MAYOR BOWSER: No, I'm in my home, but I'm – largely in person I'm running the city. We work out of a(n) emergency operations center. Since the last time we spoke I have another – I'm

back at City Hall some, so I work between City Hall, our emergency operations center at the Health Department, and when I'm doing conversations like this, from home.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So, your daughter Miranda is happier when you are home, I assume, and when you've got to go back to the office she's not as happy?

MAYOR BOWSER: She is very happy to have me at home, and it is fun to be able to take a break and play with her.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, Mayor, I want to thank you for –

MAYOR BOWSER: Thank you.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: – coming today and thank you for giving us your insights. And we look forward to your decision tomorrow. And you are always welcome to come here. Thank you very much.

MAYOR BOWSER: Thank you. Thank you, David. Bye-bye.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Bye.

So, our final guest today is George Lambert, who is the president and CEO of the Greater Washington Urban League. George, thank you very much for coming today.

GEORGE LAMBERT: Good morning, David.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Good morning. So where are you coming to us from? Are you in your home or your office?

MR. LAMBERT: I'm at home – yes, I've been at home this morning, still teleworking at this point, and going to the office maybe once, twice a week.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK, so for those who may not know George, George is the head of the Greater Washington Area Urban League. He's spent approximately 30 years of his career associated with the Urban League in various parts of the Urban League in Virginia, Ohio, Washington, and since 2014 he's been head of the Greater Washington Urban League. He is a graduate of Virginia Union University and somebody who is very committed to the Urban League.

But for those who may not know what the Urban League does – and I should say that my predecessor at the Economic Club of Washington was the national president of the Urban League, Vernon Jordan – tell us what the Urban League does, and specifically what the Greater Washington Urban League does.

MR. LAMBERT: Sure, David; I'd be delighted.

So first of all, let me say that, at our core, we are a civil rights organization. We provide services to many of the residents that we serve, particularly in the District of Columbia, Montgomery County, and also in – sorry – in Prince William – I’m sorry – in Prince George’s County as well. But we help African Americans in underserved communities certainly to reach parity, certainly to reach power, and civil rights. That is really the work that we do. We were founded in 1910, at least as the National Urban League in New York – we’re still based in New York; at least the national office is.

And let me also add a bit of context regarding the Urban League movement. We came about because, in the early '90s – I’m sorry – the early 1900s, particularly around about 1910 or so, there was a great migration in this country from the south to the north, particularly for African Americans. They were really migrating to seek a better life in the north, really kind of trying to escape the vestiges of the old, if you will, and certainly the Jim Crow attitudes of the south. But guess what? When they got to the north, they found that there was discrimination in the north – discrimination in housing, discrimination in employment, discrimination in many other areas as well.

So, the NAACP, which was founded in 1909, they took on the battle of really beginning to litigate many of those issues in the courts. But then another organization needed to really help many of the folks who had gone to the north to navigate their life in the north. And that brought about the founding of the Urban League movement.

There are 90 Urban League affiliates around the country, I will share with you, and – [inaudible] – so in the District of Columbia as well. So, again – [inaudible, technical difficulties].

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, the head of the National Urban League, that is who? The current head.

MR. LAMBERT: The head of the National Urban League is – current head is Marc Morial. Marc Morial – many of you should know – is the former mayor of New Orleans.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Right.

MR. LAMBERT: But some of the other famous leaders of the – presidents of the National Urban League have been Whitney Young, Vernon Jordan – who you certainly mentioned and alluded to a bit earlier – and then John Jacob as well. And by the way, Vernon Jordan was the person who really opened the door for me to have a membership in the Economic Club.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So, let me ask you, where do you get your money from? Is it from the private sector, from the government? Who are the sources of your capital?

MR. LAMBERT: It’s a hodge-podge of all of those that you have mentioned at this point: government, state government, federal government. Much of our money comes from foundations, it comes from individuals, it comes from corporations. Many of them are represented on our board of directors as well. So, we are – probably the operating budget, about

\$5.5 million, but we manage and also administer another 2\$0 million in terms of program funding as well.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, the racial composition of your leadership is not only African American. Is that right?

MR. LAMBERT: Absolutely. In fact, we were founded as an interracial organization, so it's not only African American. My board of directors is a mixed board as well.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, if somebody said, I want to help deal with the challenges we now have in racial relations, and they wanted to help support the Greater Washington Urban League, what can they do? Can they volunteer? Can they give you money? What are you looking for?

MR. LAMBERT: We have – so a lot of those things, as well, but you know what, David? We have been very intentional in terms of really kind of using this opportunity to invite – and we're hearing from many, many folks at this point – but to invite them to become engaged and certainly become involved with the Urban League. We have an advocacy committee where we're certainly very much involved with regard to what's happening now in the civil unrest space. Our board of directors, they provide wisdom, support to us. Many of them are donors to the organization. Companies, they come to us. We in fact work with a number of companies in what I refer to oftentimes as helping them to navigate through blind spots.

For example, many companies now are reaching out – and we've even seen a lot press – what's going on with some of them as it – really taking a hard look at their iconic brands with regard to, for example, Aunt Jemima, you know. I guess a couple of days or so ago, they decided they wanted to kind of change their brand to be a bit more, I think, in lockstep with where we are as a country now, how we're moving as a country.

So, we're looking for lots of engagement. We have the young professionals, which a Thursday Network. They are very much involved with us in terms of helping us to move the needle, particularly on the social service front.

So again, we welcome the involvement of those who have an interest in working with the Greater Washington Urban League.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, you devoted your entire professional career to this area of endeavor, so why did you choose to do so? You did. You could have gone into many different areas. Why was this the one you chose?

MR. LAMBERT: So, you know, for me it is a moral compass. I would say it's a passion. And what I will also say to you is that, you know, I also believe that every person – at least every Black person, I should say – in America really each day is touched by racism. It's really very live, at least for us. You know, I find that, really, when I look at it, we have been shut out oftentimes, we have certainly been denied access, you know, other times. We have been killed while praying in church, and so, you know, that's a lived experience that we deal with every day.

My role – and what inspires me and kind of my moral compass – is that I get to inspire fine, talented people who’ve come to work for the Greater Washington Urban League, and then to get them to help us to deliver the goods and certainly deliver the services to those we work to empower.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, as you were growing up, did you experience the kind of police conduct that we’ve seen recently, and unfortunate kind of behavior, or were you able to escape that?

MR. LAMBERT: Too many experiences to share, David, but what I will tell you is this. So, like the mayor, I am a native Washingtonian, so we are a rare breed. I did my early life work in D.C. But, you know, I had a mother that had lots of wisdom and decided both of her sons were probably having challenges and difficulties in Washington, D.C., and sent us to a place called York, Pennsylvania, which changed my life.

Many times, African American mothers, particularly when they are raising sons, have to do that for their sons. So, yes, I experienced it, you know, and that experience really changed my life in terms of opening another door for me.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, as we go forward, do you think that the events we’ve seen in Atlanta and Minneapolis will spur greater change in race relations, or are you skeptical that that actually will happen?

MR. LAMBERT: I am very optimistic that we are in a different moment in this time, at this point. The fact that, you know, when I kind of look at the marches, the protests, I see that they are multiracial, and I think this is a time we certainly have to take advantage of that particular opportunity.

David, you know, you are a historian. You are someone who have lots of deeds in terms of – you have philanthropy as well, and so if – I don’t know if you can see behind me, but it is my home library. And one of the books I pulled off the shelf today from my home library is your book, and this is – your book is about – writing about the history of America.

And so, you know, where we are at in a moment – at this particular moment in time, I don’t necessarily envision sitting around the fireplace talking to my grandkids about what’s happening in this moment in time, how we missed changing and making the opportunity. I envision how we look at resetting – taking advantage of this moment in time, and resetting. And those are the kind of history stories that I want to be able to share with my grandchildren. This is what we did in this particular moment in time. This is how we changed the trajectory, and this is how we moved forward. And hopefully there will other stories that you will write about as well.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: George, if I had known you were going to talk about my book, I would have had the entire show with you today – [laughter] – and nobody else!

Now you have four daughters – or you have four children? You have –

MR. LAMBERT: My wife – my wife and I, we have five. Yeah, I can't call them children any more. They very quickly remind me they are young adults, so let me say it that way.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: And you – and you have grandchildren yet?

MR. LAMBERT: Yes, I do.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. Well, I hope they live to grow up in a world that's a little bit different than the world that you grew up and I grew up in.

But I want to thank you, George, for what you are doing for the Urban League, and that's an impressive library you have behind you. And I want to thank you for being a member of the Economic Club, and also for coming on today and letting us know more about it.

If people want to send you money, they can send it to your website, which is what?

MR. LAMBERT: www.gwul.org

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. And your offices are where? Your main offices?

MR. LAMBERT: Our main office is at 14th and Harvard, 2901 14th Street, NW. We also have a satellite office in Prince George's County, but we provide additional services in Montgomery County as well.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: All right, George. Thank you very much for coming on and letting us know more about the Greater Washington Urban League. Thank you.

MR. LAMBERT: David, thanks so much – appreciate it.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So I want to thank everybody for coming today and listening, and I would remind everybody that our recording of this show will be on EconomicClub.org right after the end of this, and that we have an event coming up next week, June 23rd, with Michael Neidorff and some others that we'll announce shortly.

Thank you very much and thank you to our sponsors.

Good day.



Wes Moore
CEO, Robin Hood

Wes Moore is the CEO of Robin Hood, one of the largest anti-poverty forces in the nation. He is a bestselling author, a combat veteran, and a social entrepreneur.

Wes' first book, "The Other Wes Moore," a perennial New York Times bestseller, captured the nation's attention on the fine line between success and failure in our communities and in ourselves. That story has been optioned by executive producer Oprah Winfrey and HBO to be made into a movie. He is also the author of the bestselling books "The Work," "Discovering Wes Moore," and "This Way Home."

Wes grew up in Baltimore and the Bronx, where he was raised by a single mom. Despite childhood challenges, he graduated Phi Theta Kappa from Valley Forge Military College in 1998 and Phi Beta Kappa from Johns Hopkins University in 2001. He earned an MLitt in International Relations from Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar in 2004. Wes then served as a captain and paratrooper with the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne, including a combat deployment to Afghanistan. He later served as a White House Fellow to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Before becoming CEO at Robin Hood, Wes was the founder and CEO at BridgeEdU, an innovative tech platform addressing the college completion and job placement crisis. BridgeEdU reinvents freshman year for underserved students. Wes remains chairman of the board of directors at BridgeEDU. He has also worked in finance as an investment banker with Deutsche Bank in London and with Citigroup in New York.

Wes' proudest accomplishments are his two children with his wife Dawn.



The Honorable Muriel Bowser Mayor of the District of Columbia

Muriel Bowser is committed to making sure every Washingtonian gets a fair shot in a growing and prosperous Washington, DC. Her administration is focused on making DC's prosperity more inclusive, advancing DC values, and building safer, stronger, and healthier neighborhoods across DC's eight wards.

Washington, DC is unique in the American political system – the mayor, DC's chief executive, functions as a governor, county executive, and mayor. Like governors, Mayor Bowser runs Medicaid, issues driver's licenses, and has tax authority. Like county executives, Mayor Bowser runs the local jail, and, unlike most mayors, also oversees the public school system. In 2020, Washington, DC is home to 705,000 people across 68 square miles, has a AAA bond rating, and an annual budget of more than \$15 billion.

On November 6, 2018, Muriel Bowser became the first woman ever re-elected as the Mayor of Washington, DC and the first mayor to earn a second term in 16 years. Since taking office, the Mayor has taken bold steps to reset DC's global and national competitiveness, speed up affordable housing production, diversify the DC economy, increase satisfaction in city services, and invest in programs and policies that allow more families to live and thrive in DC.

In the past five years, Mayor Bowser has:

- added more than 57,000 jobs, reduced unemployment by 28 percent, and increased DC Government's annual spending with local businesses by \$200 million;
- chaired the National League of Cities Task Force on Housing, doubled the District's annual investment in affordable housing, and set a bold goal to build 36,000 new homes by 2025;
- transformed DC's homeless services system, building small, service-enriched shelters across the city and bringing chronic homelessness to a 15-year low;
- championed a wide range of family-friendly policies, including: raising the minimum wage to \$15/hour, adding more than 1,000 new child care seats, and focusing the DC Government's attention on improving maternal health outcomes;
- delivered a new stadium for DC United (Major League Soccer) and a new arena for the Mystics (WNBA) that includes a practice facility for the Wizards (NBA);
- deployed the first major city body-worn camera program;
- collaborated with leaders from C40 cities around the world to advance the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement;
- led diplomatic and economic development missions to China, Cuba, Israel, Canada, El Salvador, and Ethiopia; and

- spearheaded the 2016 voter referendum on DC statehood, with more than 86 percent of voters approving of statehood.

Prior to becoming Mayor in 2015, Bowser served as the Ward 4 Councilmember on the Council of the District of Columbia – first elected in a special election in 2007 and re-elected in 2008 and 2012. As a Councilmember, she served as the Chairwoman of the Committee on Economic Development which created more than 5,000 units of affordable housing, passed legislation to build the new soccer stadium, and secured from the federal government the best portion of the Walter Reed campus for DC. She also led her colleagues to pass comprehensive ethics reform and increased transparency in government contracting.

Mayor Bowser earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Chatham University and a Master’s degree in Public Policy from American University and received honorary doctorates from Chatham University and Trinity University. With more than 20 years of experience in local government, she first entered elected office as an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner in the Riggs Park neighborhood.



George Lambert
President and CEO
Greater Washington Urban League

Community development executive George H. Lambert was born on May 12, 1951 in Washington, D.C. to George Lambert, a general laborer, and Arnitha Green, a nurse’s aide. He graduated from William Penn Senior High School in York, Pennsylvania in 1971. Lambert earned his B.A. degree in urban studies from Virginia Union

University in 1975.

Lambert’s career with the Urban League began in 1990, when he became the president and chief executive officer of the Northern Virginia Urban League in Alexandria, Virginia. He served in those positions with the Northern Virginia Urban League until 2002. He also served as a senior regional consultant to the National Urban League. Lambert worked as a senior director for resource development for the United Way of the National Capital area and as vice president of public affairs for Issue Dynamics, Inc., as well. He later served as president and chief executive officer of the Lorain County Urban League in Elyria, Ohio from 2011 until 2013. Lambert was appointed as president and chief executive officer of the Greater Washington Urban League in 2014.

He served as a member of the National Urban League’s Association of Executives, the Academy of Fellows, and the Executive Committee within the National Urban League’s Association of Executives. Lambert was also a member of the Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria,

Virginia.

Lambert lives with his wife, Bernadette Curtis Lambert, in Washington, D.C. They have five children