Juan Williams on the Rise of the America's Second Civil Rights Movement

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[00:00:04.5] Tanaya Tauber: Welcome to Live at the National Constitution Center, the podcast sharing live constitutional conversations and debates hosted by the center in person and online. I'm Tanaya Tauber, the senior director of Town hall programs. In this episode, New York Times columnist Jamelle Bouie joins award winning journalist Juan Williams to discuss Williams' new book, *New Prize for These Eyes: The Rise of America's Second Civil Rights Movement*. The book explores the emergence of a new civil rights era from the 2008 election of President Obama to the January 6, 2021 attack on the US capitol. Thomas Donnelly, chief scholar at the National Constitution Center, moderates. Here's Tom to get the conversation started.

[00:00:54.3] Thomas Donnelly: Thank you for joining us. Jamelle Bouie and Juan Williams.

[00:00:58.3] Juan Williams: Good to be here.

[00:01:00.2] Jamelle Bouie: Thank you for having us.

[00:01:00.6] Thomas Donnelly: And so, Juan, I'll start with you. Your book covers what you call the second Civil Rights movement. Maybe just to help provide us with an overview and a definition to make sure we're all on the same page. What do you mean by the second Civil Rights movement?

[00:01:15.7] Juan Williams: Well, Tom, I think that we as a nation, the USA, is going through a second civil rights movement and it's having an impact that rivals the impact of the first, the classic, classically defined First Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965. The subtitle of a book I wrote back in the late '80s was Eyes on the America: Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965, which would go from the Brown decision through the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. Today, my argument in this book, *New Prize for these Eyes*, is that we are going through a second movement that has a different agenda. But if you stop and think about it, its

impact, its power may actually be greater. I note that the kind of highlight of the first movement was the great March on Washington led by Dr. King. And it was in Washington, 250,000 people for one day. You think about what happened after George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis and you had thousands of marches across the country, even across the globe. I mean, you could have been in Paris, you could have been in London, you could have been in Buenos Aires and marched under the Black Lives Matter banner.

[00:02:36.8] Juan Williams: And not only that, it's 24/7, because so much of it is online, people coming to it, coming to each other, organizing online. So it is a constant conversation, the tweets, the memes, the messaging, and it's ongoing. And to me, this is the power of the second civil rights movement. And you know, I must say, as I'm going around talking about this book that people say, you know, I haven't quite put it together, but I think it's important that people see that they're living through real American history at this moment in terms of a fight over so much to do with race. And it's become even more obvious, I think, because of President Trump and his attack on diversity, equity, inclusion, and trying to diminish that. That fight is part of this second movement. You know, in some ways, you could say if there are two powerful forces at play in this moment, one would be the continuing power of the second movement in Black Lives Matter. The other would be the backlash, and the backlash would be Make America Great Again, Trump, and a kind of grievance aimed at the success of Black Lives Matter.

[00:03:58.3] Thomas Donnelly: Thank you so much for that framing, Juan. I mean, Jamelle, we'll obviously drill down into some of the details of Juan's book and the second civil rights movement, but maybe just begin with the broad question of, do you agree with Juan that we're currently going through a second civil rights movement? And if so, how would you describe it and how would you characterize its impact?

[00:04:19.7] Jamelle Bouie: Yeah. I think it's fair to describe the Black Lives Matter era as a second civil rights movement. This kind of periodization is always sort of interesting to try to do, right? Like, historians have begun to push the first civil rights movement back from the '50s to the '40s to the '30s. Right. Like, there's this question of when does something begin and when does something end? Is always interesting. But I would say that the Black Lives Matter era you can describe as a second civil rights movement. And I'd say that its substance, its substance is something akin to trying to realize maybe the more substantive visions of the first civil rights movement. As a quick parenthetical. You know, we're discussing our conversation before this started, and you said, Thomas, you know, I'm going to ask you some questions about the first civil rights movement. And because of the way my mind works, I'm like, oh, we're going to talk about the 19th century.

[00:05:17.6] Thomas Donnelly: Yes, mine too, Jamelle. So, yes, I hear that. Totally.

[00:05:20.3] Jamelle Bouie: I was like, oh, we'll talk about, you know, like, the 1830s and '40s, which is. There's a whole effort to realize civil rights for Black Americans during that period, too. But that's inside, I was just like, oh, that's not the other first civil rights movement, but the more substantive vision of that civil rights movement, you can see in, for example, the name of the March on Washington, which was the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, in that this movement was both a push for inclusion, equal inclusion in American life, but also a more substantive economic and social equality. Not simply, oh, we can apply for the same jobs, but also we can thrive in American society. We have access to the same kinds of benefits. And King and others envision a sort of more expansive social democratic state that would enable and facilitate integration and inclusion, these sorts of things. And I think in the, with this, with the second civil rights movement, what you see there is kind of that, a desire for that, right? I don't think it's an accident that it emerged during Barack Obama's presidency.

[00:06:45.8] Jamelle Bouie: In Barack Obama's presidency, you see sort of the conclusion almost of the success of some kind of formal equality and formal inclusion. But with the Black president, you also see sort of the limits of that in a very dramatic way. And I think the Black Lives Matter and everything that's followed is very much a reaction itself to the limits of that kind of formal inclusion, formal equality, without a more substantive base.

[00:07:23.3] Juan Williams: You know, I always want to pick up, Tom, on something that Jamelle was talking about, which is obviously reconstruction in the 1800s, that could be seen as a first movement. But the way that I defined, you know, in my life, Jamelle's younger than me, but in my life, when I was a kid, it was the first movement, was that tremendous movement. And I define it in historical terms as being about the end of legal segregation. Obviously, that's what took place in Brown v. Board and then trying to get the Congress. The point of the Great March on Washington was to get the Congress, the president, to support the passage of a Civil Rights Act and a Voting Rights Act. So Jamelle makes a key point about, you know, the fruit of that first movement is not just the passage of that. Those pieces of legislation, but in some ways it's the growth of Black political power. The idea was that you would have Black politicians who would do a good job of representing Black people and their humanity and their political rights and protecting those rights. And so those Black politicians would rise up in power and empower Black people as a result.

[00:08:40.3] Juan Williams: Two quick points here. One is obviously, here we are early in the 21st century, America is a very different place. Used to be 90% White during the period of that '54 to '65. Now it's about 60 plus percent White, Black people, no longer the second largest minority, now it's Latinos and Asians the fastest growing minority. But Jamelle was talking about hard to define when things start and end periods in history. So I'm trying my best as I frame the New Prize for These Eyes. I said, you know, I think part of the growth out of the first movement was the fact that here you have this young Black man from Illinois, state senator in

2004, giving a speech to the Democratic National Convention. So he's a politician and he's on the national stage. And he says in amazing terms that I think are in almost everyone's mind, we don't live in a Black America. We don't live in a White America. We don't live in a Latino and Asian America. We live in the United States of America. And it opens the door to conversations about a post racial period in American life. And it's very optimistic.

[00:09:57.6] Juan Williams: I was in the room and you know, I was near Jesse Jackson. People used to, Jackson Sharpton was coming into his own at that period. But what you saw there was a young man talking about America in positive terms, not about the debts owed to Black people given slavery, legal discrimination and the like. But here he was saying, "My story wouldn't be possible in any other country but the USA." And people were like, whoa, this is a, this is a you know, new horizons. And of course, he goes on to run for president. And his poster is hope, it's a different view. And I think, so Jamelle picks up on this and says some of the reality of the second civil rights movement is people seeing a Black man in the most powerful political post in America and yet feeling, you know what, schools in my neighborhood haven't gotten better, my job opportunities haven't improved. I still see violence in my neighborhood. Have the Black politicians delivered for me? And raising these questions about mass incarceration and the like. And to me, that too is part, an essential part of understanding a different generation and a second movement.

[00:11:18.9] Thomas Donnelly: I think that's great. And that places a lot on the table substantively about the relationship between the first civil rights movement and the second civil rights movement. I wanna drill down even more into that in a little bit, including President Obama's role in this broader story, the other, a few big contrasts that you make in your book, Juan. Another one is sort of an organizational/hierarchical contrast between the first civil rights movement and the second civil rights movement. Can you talk a little bit about that and sort of what the institutional structure and what some of the key organizations were in that first movement and sort of how it compares to what we see once we get to the second.

[00:11:56.0] Juan Williams: Well, you know, so one of the delights about having Jamelle here today is I feel almost like a generational conversation, right? Because I'm an old man, I'm 70 years old, and I'm just anxious to hear what he has to say on this point. But in the book, I make the case, Tom, that in the first movement, so much depended on tapes coming back from the south, from civil rights clashes, making it to New York, to big networks, to big newspapers like the New York Times, would they cover and, you know, for much of American history, the big papers and the big networks, as the networks came into being, even the radio didn't cover racial discrimination, racial bias, violence against people who were asking for equal rights.

[00:12:46.9] Juan Williams: And then you get, you know, the whole argument about, well, are we being covered fairly? Et cetera. That's the first movement. Here comes the second movement,

Tom. It's the Internet, as we were touching on earlier, and in that Internet reality, the constant conversation, but it also opens the door to a different kind of organizing. First movement, with the big White newspapers, especially putting aside the reality of Black newspapers for a moment. When you look at those people, they are saying, well, we have NAACP, Urban League, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, much of its leadership housed in New York or Atlanta.

[00:13:40.0] Juan Williams: And they have a clear set of leaders. You're thinking about people like Whitney Young, Dr. King, obviously people like John Lewis, I could go on. And then you have, coming forward from that, a clear agenda because they've put out messages or they respond to news events again through that media. But in the second movement that I'm depicting in the book now, you have people who are online and having conversations, and it's not clear who's the leadership, even though it was very clear, you had people like, you know, Opal Tometi, Patrisse Cullors and others who created the idea Black Lives Matter after Trayvon Martin's murderer was acquitted, saying that young man's life mattered. They really didn't want to replicate the kind of hierarchical, male dominated patriarchy of the first movement. And even to the point of their agenda, they said, you know, if you live in Cleveland, if you live in San Diego, you know, the civil rights reality on the ground, you create your own Black Lives Matter agenda. Now, that agenda broadly, we could discuss, I mean, things like mass incarceration, the police brutality, the George Floyd case, the Trayvon Martin case and others. We could talk about bad schools, anything. But you see, it's more dispersed. And it's not as clear, I think, in terms of the message coming through to the mass of news consumers in America. So again, no hierarchical movement and a more diverse or dispersed political agenda.

[00:15:26.7] Thomas Donnelly: That's a great way of framing it. So, I mean, Jamelle, Juan's placed on the table here some ways of comparing and contrasting the organization of the first civil rights movement, second civil rights movement. It's also placed on the table some key figures in both movements and compared and contrasted them a bit. I'd love your thoughts on some of these organizational differences, maybe even some of the observations Juan made about the role of technology in each movement. And even going back to things that I think you write so powerfully on. If there are particular figures you'd want to highlight in either movement for us to think about as major figures of influence. For instance, you've written powerfully about Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph in the first Civil Rights movement. Love for you to place those on the table as well.

[00:16:18.3] Jamelle Bouie: Sure. I mean, the thing that immediately strikes me, and I think Juan makes, I think it's correct to observe that the first civil rights movement is much more hierarchical and the second is much more diffuse and amorphous. In a lot of ways, I think some of that reflects sort of the environment in which they are operating. The second civil rights movement is operating in a world where there is at least sort of like a surface level commitment

to formal racial equality where there is, you know, for the most part, you know, people. There's some amount of like, fair opportunity for like many people, not all people, but many people. Right? It's not, it's a world where making first, like making claims about the existence of racism, you're making claims about sort of like structural racism. You're making claims about, you know, things that are a little harder to see directly as opposed to Jim Crow, but also sort of, the targets of police brutality, for example. There's no central police agency, right? Sort of, it's lots of police departments, it's lots of law enforcement organizations across the entire country.

[00:17:47.7] Jamelle Bouie: And it's being sparked by discrete events in different places in the country. So first of all, like the non hierarchical nature is just like probably a reflection of what is actually driving the activity. But also it seems that the goal, the end in mind, is a little more of a desire for a cultural shift, something that would push the nation to sort of culturally take seriously the existence of, like, legacies of racism and so on and so forth. That's very distinct from the first civil rights movement. And I'm thinking of a great book, Waging a Good War: A Military History of the Civil Rights Movement by Tom Ricks. That first civil rights movement is very much organized, like a disciplined campaign against a, like, discreet and well defined opponent. It's like the Jim Crow system is something very concrete, easy to perceive, with its own legible logic. In that movement, its organizations, its hierarchical structure is very much structured around how do we confront that in a way that will bring the kind of pressure that will undermine it and allow us to kind of wield federal power against it.

[00:19:17.0] Jamelle Bouie: And in that way, the first civil rights movement, as Ricks argues, is a lot like a military campaign and sort of operates according to the principles of a military campaign. The strategists of that movement, Bayard Rustin, for example, are thinking about where to stage demonstrations, where to try to generate media attention in a way not unlike a general deciding where to stage an engagement for maximum advantage and gain. So that's sort of how I see the difference there, that it's just, it's two sort of different goals in mind. And in the case of the second civil rights movement, in the case of the past 10 to 15 years, it's something much, much broader than simply trying to take down the government of Mississippi, right? Like, it's something a little more amorphous, frankly. It's like, if you can successfully persuade a lot of people that there is something called structural racial discrimination, and to the credit of sort of the Black Lives Matter movement successfully persuaded many Americans that there is something called structural racial discrimination. It's like, okay, you've done that. Then it's sort of like, well, what's next? What's the kind of concrete action you have to take? And I think that one of the downsides of the more horizontal organization, you might say, of the second civil rights movement is that having won a cultural victory, it was hard to consolidate that into, like, a durable political one.

[00:21:18.3] Thomas Donnelly: Absolutely. No, I think that's a great way of framing it, Jamelle. And I mean, I think it does give us a good sense of sort of the strengths and weaknesses of the, at

least as initial matter, the approaches of the first and second civil rights movement. One, as you said, you know, one interesting feature of this conversation is it's an intergenerational conversation about the long civil rights movement. And certainly one of the themes you've already drawn out and certainly comes out in your book is some of the intergenerational tensions within the Black community during the second civil rights movement. If you can maybe talk a little bit more about that and the role that that's played in how the second civil rights movement has unfolded.

[00:22:00.7] Juan Williams: Sure, Tom. So, you know, I agree with what Jamelle was just saying and in terms of describing with Rick's book and others, how this first movement was so strategically thought out and planned. The way I think of it, by the way, is almost in terms of pictures. You think back to that first movement and marches, and most often you saw people dressed in their Sunday best suits, ties, coats and hats. And I think very intentionally to suggest Black people as educated, thoughtful, caring, that this was not going to be seen as people who were not organized and not fully American and not fully respectful of each other or the society. And that was all part of the Dr. King and I think the church base of that movement, if you will, now you come forward in time. And I think part of that movement, as I've said to you before, is the growth, the explosion of Black political power in terms of Black people holding elected office. The cherry obviously being President Obama's election twice as president of the United States. But then what you see is the older generation. And here I would put myself in this category, maybe expressed best by the cover of Ebony magazine.

[00:23:29.8] Juan Williams: I think it was an '08, could have been '09 times. You know, it said, "Oh, my God, in my lifetime, there's a Black man as president of the United States in the White House holding the bully pulpit." And I never thought I would see that, didn't think it was possible. In so many ways, it was fulfilling. And then to see younger people, younger Black people say, okay, so what comes of this? What's the payoff? You guys were fighting for this. But so now is it the case that when Trayvon Martin is killed that you're going to see the Black president act in some very distinctive way as the Black president? Of course, Obama was saying, he's not the Black president, he's the president, of all people, he's the president of the United States. And when Trayvon Martin is killed and Obama's asked about it, he says, "If I had a son, he would look like Trayvon." And the response from the White community especially was, "Why are you making this a racial issue? It's a local issue. Obviously, you know, people have differences of opinion. But now you introduce race into it as if," you know. But from the Black perspective, especially from younger Black people, it was, "Why aren't you more effective in responding to this outrage? And why aren't you saying more about it?"

[00:24:52.9] Juan Williams: And I think we saw that also then subsequently, when Henry Louis Gates, the Harvard professor, had a confrontation with a policeman, he'd come back, he couldn't get in his house, left the key or something. And then the police come and he ends up being

arrested. And Obama's asked about it and says, "The police, the Cambridge police, behave stupidly." And people are like, the White American response is, "Why is he getting involved? Why is he raising race as an issue?" But you see, by the way, just very quickly, his approval numbers among White Americans never again exceeds 50%. It had a very daunting, difficult impact on Obama's standing. But Black America, and I think this is really important to grasp, especially among leadership people like Black Lives Matter, some of them were just frustrated with Obama. You know, why isn't, it's not only that the question was, why isn't he doing more? They wanted to know why a lot of these Black people in Congress and City hall hadn't made the big difference that the first generation thought was coming with more Black elected officials.

[00:26:01.5] Juan Williams: And for Obama, I think the idea that some of these leaders wouldn't even meet with him. Now, you stop and think about this, they wouldn't, they had such a distaste for politics and politicians of all colors, including Black ones, that they say, you know what? I'm not talking to that guy. You know, he's, it'll become a PR event for the White House and for Obama, you know, the first generation just wouldn't have seen it that way, you know, and still love Obama to this moment. So, I think there is a generational divide there.

[00:26:34.0] Thomas Donnelly: That's great, Juan. And you know, Jamelle, you sort of connect to Juan's reflections here on President Obama and some of the reactions within the Black community during his presidency. You certainly, throughout that period, wrote powerfully on the various episodes and violence that we saw during this period. Trayvon Martin, the Henry Louis Gates incident that Juan talked about here. I mean, if you were thinking more broadly, where do you see President Obama fitting into this second civil rights story? And what do you think about how he negotiated the issue of race during his presidency? And just connecting back to your previous response, Jamelle, I think you so powerfully encapsulated the mission statement of the first civil rights movement is, you know, going after a big enemy that was Jim Crow. And then, you know, contrasting it with the second civil rights movement in a more disperse agenda. If you could talk a little bit more about the agenda of the second civil rights movement, what sort of issues are being put, have been pushed by it and your sense of whether or not you think it was kind of inevitable that that second civil rights movement would be more dispersed or whether there would have been a way to crystallize it into sort of a broader and maybe more structured movement like the first civil rights movement.

[00:27:56.6] Jamelle Bouie: Yeah, I think one way of getting at this question is to just think about the overall political economy of say the 1950s and '60s and the 2000s. Well, in the '90s and the 2000s and 2010s. In the former, in the '50s and '60s, this is. The American economy is still one based on this notion that each household has a primary earner, that earner earns a wage that's like, you know, high enough to support a family there. It's robust government support for housing, at least for some Americans, not all Americans, of course, it's an overall, and in terms of global competition, the United States is still sort of the preeminent nation because there just

still really isn't much competition in terms of the production of consumer goods and all these other things. And so it's sort of like in that environment, it's like part of what, part of what is on the table for the civil rights movement is an attempt to be part of the bounty, right? There's this great bounty in American society, but Black Americans are excluded from it. They're excluded from political participation in much of the country, and they're also excluded from this great economic bounty.

[00:29:17.3] Jamelle Bouie: So part of the goal is to win inclusion into that as much as anything. But as we, you know, we jump forward a generation or two and it's a very different kind of political economy. It's one where the nation has transitioned to an economy where a service-based economy, an economy where so much of economic growth is being driven by the financial industry, by finance, where wages are generally stagnant and so on and so forth, but there's a growing and high level of inequality. And so in that world, enter Barack Obama. And Obama, who's running during the recession at the time, the Great Recession, another example of kind of like the very different political economy of the era. Obama is this great symbolic victory, but he's still operating according to the logic of the political economy of the era.

[00:30:34.6] Jamelle Bouie: He's not like a neo new dealer, right? Like, he is someone who does generally buy into the basic assumptions about a modest role for government, but not like an overweening one, like a commitment to sort of the American economy as it exists, not like a transformative vision. And so there's almost this irony that's happening where you have this figure who in some ways is this culmination of some of the aspirations of the first civil rights movement in terms of representation in the society, but who, by virtue of what the US Is structurally at the time, by the virtue of his kind of structural position, he is the leader of a major political party, which generally isn't the kind of position from which you are affecting massive transformation of the entire country.

[00:31:32.0] Jamelle Bouie: There are, like, real limits as to the kinds of things he can do and then additional limits imposed by the fact that although he is the first Black president, as Juan can suggest earlier, he can't really be the president of Black America. That's almost like the bargain, right? Like, I don't know how people may feel about this, but I sort of think, not sort of think, I do think that a Black politician who was a descendant of American enslaved people may not have been able to become president at that moment. And the fact that Barack Obama is mixed race and his father is from Africa, I think actually kind of made his rise a bit more viable precisely because he's not connected to this notion of an American original sin, right? He doesn't have the kind of direct ancestral connection to it. He's been acculturated into Black America by virtue of his wife, by virtue of the decision to live in Chicago, like, all those things. But if Obama had sounded like Jesse Jackson, I don't think he would be president. And that puts real hard limits on his ability to, like, act as a representative of Black America.

[00:33:00.5] Jamelle Bouie: As seen, right? In the fact that these two instances, the Skip Gates incident and then his remarks after Trayvon Martin's killing end up, you know, I see those things, and they're totally innocuous to me, right? Like him telling the cop, "Yeah, he kind of acted stupid by arresting this Harvard professor getting into his home," and then him saying, "If I had a son, he'd look like Trayvon." These things. Things seem completely inoffensive to me. But to many Americans, they were read as almost a betrayal.

[00:33:31.7] Jamelle Bouie: And I actually think it's worth going back and looking at the reaction to those things. They were treated as a betrayal, and I think they were treated as a betrayal, because they seem to be Obama saying, in effect, yeah, I am Black in the way that you maybe are uncomfortable with. I'm not simply superficially Black or aesthetically Black, but like, I live my life as a Black man in a way that you might be uncomfortable with. That reality puts limits on his ability to, the reality of that kind of backlash, that kind of reaction puts limits on his ability to act as a president for Black America. It kind of, I think, forces him to very, to constantly reiterate and constantly remind both Black Americans and Americans at large that he considers himself president of the entire United States of America. And it puts into even more, I think, even more stark relief the kind of limits of representation at that level, that it is a nice thing to have a Black American president, but a Black American president isn't necessarily gonna be able to alleviate the years of disinvestment in American inner cities.

[00:34:48.5] Jamelle Bouie: It's not necessarily gonna be able to unilaterally reduce the kinds of income inequality that have really hit Black American families hardest, and so on and so forth. So Obama, I mean, for me, Obama is this interesting figure in that he is both like the apex of representational politics, but also this transition figure away from representational politics. Because, you know, you sort of don't know, you don't know what is, you don't know the limits of something until you've actually experienced it. And there's probably a book to be written about, like, the cultural history of the Black president. Like, there are all these, there are all these visions of what a Black presidency might be in American pop culture. And then we finally have one, and it's almost kind of, it's almost kind of mundane. And then it's like, well, what next?

[00:36:02.5] Juan Williams: You know, what I was thinking as you were speaking, Jamelle, is that when Obama comes into office, as you point out, we have the recession really gripping the American political narrative as well as the American political economy. And the question is, what's he going to do? And then the argument is he bails out Wall Street too big to fail and the like, but then the contrary argument is he doesn't bail out Main Street, and what about middle income, poor Black people? You know, is there any special effort for them? Answer no. And then he goes on sticking to the, again, the economic outline Jamelle made. In my mind, he goes on, and his next step is his major legislative effort in terms of the Affordable Care Act, so called Obamacare. And what does that generate A Tea party backlash, overwhelmingly White. And part

of this conversation is that Obama didn't win the majority of White voters, but he won enough to win with an overwhelming support coming from minority, Black, Latino, Asian voters.

[00:37:16.3] Juan Williams: But suddenly there's a backlash of a Republican Party that is overwhelmingly White, more than 80% to this day. And they're saying with Obamacare, "Oh, you're going to take away my health insurance. You're going to disrupt the way that I get health insurance so that you can give health insurance to middle income, working class and poor, disproportionately people of color, and we see you as, in that moment, the Black president and we see you as not the President of the United States." In New Prize for These Eyes I say the kind of conversation I'm having here with you guys makes Obama, to me, the most misunderstood president ever. I mean people, I don't think impose the kind of frame we're offering today and trying to understand how the American people experienced Obama. So I was, it caught my ear when I heard Jamelle said, you know, maybe it's because he was of mixed race and didn't have that kind of background tied to the ancestral burden of original sin slavery, that he was acceptable to enough White people to win the presidency. I think that's exactly right.

[00:38:36.3] Juan Williams: But I also would argue that when he speaks in hopeful, optimistic terms, it does for lots of people who aren't locked in to the argument that had been coming from the Jesse Jacksons and the like. It's almost like they say, wow, well, maybe we can get out of that rut and have a different kind of conversation about race in America, only then to see that when he is actually president, we're back in that rut in some ways, and it's not only in terms of the Affordable Care Act, but of course then the emergence of people like Donald Trump saying "He wasn't even born in America, he's not a real Black American, he's not even a real American, and he should, he's illegitimate and shouldn't be in the White House." I mean, a tremendous assault insult that Obama, you know, at least to my surprise, actually responds to by producing his birth certificate from Hawaii. To me, again, this is all part of a very central aspect of the Obama presidency as it comes to define the backlash and opposition to the second civil rights movement.

[00:39:49.4] Thomas Donnelly: I think it's great. And Juan, I mean we've spent a lot of time on President Obama and rightly so, is a key figure in the second civil rights movement. I think the other most visible part of the second civil rights movement, or actors, is Black Lives Matter, who we've brought up a few different times in our conversation. But if you can give us just a little sort of a brief history of Black Lives Matter, sort of how it arose, and then talk a little bit about the relationship between Black Lives Matter, the organization, the movement, and the hashtag and kind of how that plays into the story of the second civil rights movement.

[00:40:24.7] Juan Williams: Well, you know, I must tell you, so many people, you know, interacting with me around this book don't have a clear sense of Black Lives Matter. A lot of people think Black Lives Matter came into being with George Floyd, you know, dying under the knee of that policeman in Minneapolis. And that's just not true. Obviously, they were there right

after Trayvon Martin's murder was acquitted in Florida. And what's interesting here, Tom, is that the women who create Black Lives Matter are not in Florida. They're in California, in Oakland. And what you see is Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tometi are online again, the new platform for the second movement. They're online and discussing how people are saying, "Oh, well, you know, he was wearing a hoodie, he's out in the rain, he's talking to his girlfriend," and they're like, and the response from these women and people who are following them is, "Wait a minute, that's a 17-year-old coming home with some candy and a drink. What is going on here? Black lives matter. I don't care how he was dressed. I don't care if he had his pants hanging out. He's a young man and his life mattered, Black lives matter."

[00:41:41.8] Juan Williams: That's the start. So you're going back here early in the first Obama term. I think Martin is killed in '12. The verdict comes in '13. So that's when Black Lives Matter starts. But then, of course, it continues to grow, Tom, because you have, you know, Tamir rice, Philando Castile, 2016, Eric Garner, Alton Sterling, famously in 14, Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and I mentioned that one at the very start of the book because this fits with our earlier conversation about Obama. The question is, okay, you got a Black president and you've got race riots taking place in middle America. Is the first Black president going to go? What could he do? What can he say? Maybe he can say something that will resolve this situation in a way that none of his predecessors, all White, could have done. Well, ultimately he doesn't go. But in terms of the story of Black Lives Matter, Black Lives Matter, some of the ladies that I mentioned to you actually go to Ferguson to try to help in that situation. And the question afterwards is, are we now seeing the emergence of an organized, centralized Black Lives Matter movement? And that's when they defer.

[00:43:05.1] Juan Williams: They say, no, each community can have its own chapter of Black Lives Matter. They can make their own decisions about their agenda. You know, and what happens, unfortunately, in some cases is a lack of transparency, a lack of accountability with regard to finances, huge amounts of money pouring after the George Floyd murder, you know, tens of millions of dollars, questions about how it's used, how it's spent. But I would just throw in here for all of the attacks, then, that allows it to take place on their legitimacy and on their agenda and their sincere passion. It's still the case that when the George Floyd Black Lives Matter marches take place, most of the people marching are White. Most of the money is coming from White America. And, you know, Trump and the others are trying to say, "Oh, these people are thugs. They're violent, they're threatening." Later, we can see from statistical analysis that's just not true, that 90 plus percent of these marches were peaceful, you know, but again, Black Lives Matter remains to this day. It's not as popular as it once was. Once it was like 2/3 of Americans, you know, thought about the world of Black Lives Matter and the idea of doing something about social justice and racial justice in America and asking questions about how we can deal with this.

[00:44:35.1] Juan Williams: But even with Trump coming in, belittling Black Lives Matter, caricaturing them in negative ways, arguing about Black history, you know, what is allowed to be taught to our children, including White children, Trump seems to be arguing, you don't want to make those children feel guilty or bad about themselves because of what happened in the past. Even with all that, Black Lives Matter still has more than 50% approval in this country, and I think lots of people lose touch with that.

[00:45:08.1] Thomas Donnelly: Thanks for that, Juan. And, Jamelle, I don't know if you have any reflections on Black Lives Matter, again, sort of as an organization, a movement, and/or hashtag, as part of this second civil rights movement.

[00:45:19.8] Jamelle Bouie: Yeah, I mean, the Black Lives Matter is, it's interesting to think about both as. Let me rewind. I think that when you look at Black Lives Matter in the years since Ferguson, for example, because that's when I would, like, pinpoint it, that's when it kind of really does emerge as a thing, to Juan's point about the positive view that Americans have of Black Lives Matter. Even still, I think it points to sort of the real success of the movement, the fact that it did produce a measurable change in attitude. It did produce some kind of policy gains in some places. Again, not in a sort of top down way, but in plenty of cities and localities, progressive prosecutors are elected. There are attempts to sort of do some serious criminal justice form at the very least. You know, under Biden, the Justice Department was, you know, still doing these pattern and practice investigations of police departments accused of discrimination. So there's that sort of thing. But the extent to which it did create this greater awareness of the legacy of racism in the United States, the extent to which it did, I think, and I think Juan is absolutely right about this.

[00:46:54.7] Jamelle Bouie: The extent to which it inculcated in young White people a more, a broader commitment to racial justice such that, yeah, many of those protests in 2020 were, it was just, it was just White people. I remember reading, there's a story I read in the Washington Post, I think, about a George Floyd protest on the Eastern Shore of Virginia that was just sort of like a bunch of White teenagers and there were no Black people there. I mean, there were hardly any Black people in the area. And yet a bunch of White 15 year olds were like, "I feel strongly enough about this to want to organize a protest." And that represents a real and powerful cultural victory. Cultural shift that I think Black Lives Matter is responsible for the larger movement, which again, because it's so horizontal and diffuse, it's hard to say that there are like leaders in the traditional sense.

[00:47:55.6] Jamelle Bouie: But this sort of, this cultural movement, I think was quite powerful and quite successful. And I will note that, you know, right now there is this crusade against DEI. But even now when you poll Americans, majorities say that they agree with DEI, right? Sort of, I think part of maybe the ferocity of the reaction is a recognition that most people think diversity is

good. Most people, like when you tell them there are these legacies of racism that still affect how people's lives turn out, they say, "Well, we should do something about that." Most people are actually pretty fair minded about these things. And it does take like, real effort to sort of, you know, push against them, which is what I think we're experiencing right now.

[00:48:51.9] Juan Williams: Yeah, I think, I think there's an effort to demonize people who, you know, to your point, I think it's just common sense, look at the history of our country going back to original sin, you know, slavery. But you stop and think about Trump, he goes after the New York Times for that famous, is it 1619 Project?

[00:49:16.9] Thomas Donnelly: Right.

[00:49:19.3] Juan Williams: Right. I mean, to this day, the whole idea that you would think about race and history, he finds it offensive. It's like, well, I'm not gonna get it, I don't want it to be political. But I'm just telling. I mean, it's common sense to me that most Americans think, yeah, you know, we should be honest about this conversation, about the impact that race has had on American society. You hear people talk about identity, especially people on the right, the Trumpians, identity politics, and you think, hmm, where have I encountered identity politics in America before? Oh, maybe it was a preference and advantage for White men, but that's not the way some people want to talk.

[00:50:08.6] Thomas Donnelly: Yeah. And I mean, Jamelle did, I think, a nice job of framing sort of some of the cultural influence that the Black Lives Matter movement has had on America. I mean, when we're thinking, as we wrap up here, Juan, we're getting to our last 10 minutes, and we want to think about the second civil rights movement's overall legacy. I mean, Jamelle gave us some good ways to think about it. How would you frame some of the achievements of the second civil rights movement, and what would you term some of the shortfalls, some of the work that certainly is left undone?

[00:50:44.8] Jamelle Bouie: I mean, achievement wise, again, there's this cultural victory. There are these policy things happening, especially when it comes to law enforcement and police reform and so on and so forth. I think that, I honestly think we're still, we still may be in, this goes to Juan's point that this is an ongoing thing. I still, I think we still may be witnessing, like, what the ultimate policy implication of this will be long term. Like what kind of political pushes we'll see as a result of 2014 to the present, because so many of the people who got mobilized in 2020, for example, are still around. Right? They may be running for office in the next five or 10 years. They may be trying to get involved in a more formal way in the near future. And so I think it remains to be seen what the ultimate policy impact of all this is going to be.

[00:51:48.4] Thomas Donnelly: Thank you for that, Jamelle. Same question to you, Juan. Just thinking about achievements and possible shortfalls of the success of the second civil rights movement.

[00:51:55.8] Juan Williams: Well, I think that the political discussion has shifted in a very important way to address something like police brutality. And you think back, you know, go away, I don't think it's way back, I'm not, you know, the start of our conversation, we were arguing about what's first movement. But you go back to Rodney King, remember him? And that's the 1990s, and the policemen who abuse him, you know, when he famously says, "Can't we all get along?" They're found not guilty despite videotape evidence, and they are found not guilty by a jury that's told there's a thin blue line that protects all of us and the civilization. But when it comes, you know, to 2020, you see White America picking up on what Jamelle was just talking about, saying, "Hey, wait a second. This is a. This is not right. This is that, you can't do that." Especially young White people respond in a way that I think is a little different. So you can see, I think Black Lives Matter had an impact there, and I think Black Lives Matter has also had an impact, you know, we think about police reform as part of that. Now, it couldn't quite get through the Senate, real police reform, but you've seen it on local levels and in state governments efforts to try to rein in the idea that anything the police do is to be allowed to protect, you know, the thin blue line or whatever it is, right?

[00:53:26.8] Juan Williams: The second thing I would say about this is when we think about hiring, when we think about school admissions, when you think about cultural representation as well as curriculum, on all these levels, Black Lives Matter has made a difference. And part of the political discussion would be about voter suppression. The Voting Rights Act has not been renewed in full by this Congress, again, Republican opposition and the like. But you've seen the emergence of people like Stacey Abrams, who fought against voter suppression in Georgia, and it led to the election of a Black and Jewish US senator from the state of Georgia. That's pretty good. And you think about President Biden coming in and he tried his best on police reform, he said, he said he tried in terms of, you know, dealing with income inequality, things like helping young people, disproportionately minority kids with high levels of debt from school tuition and the like. And of course, you also have Ketanji Brown Jackson on the US Supreme Court, a nominee by President Biden and approved by the Senate. To me, these are landmarks. I think they are points of progress and the larger cultural conversation, progress.

[00:54:52.8] Juan Williams: I think we have a larger Black middle class in the country, progress. But it's an ongoing struggle. And if you ask me, Tom, about areas that I think could be improved for a third civil rights movement, it would be that maybe some of the Black Lives Matter people who felt, you know what? I'm not talking to these politicians. Politics is a bunch of Junk. And, you know, they're very cynical, disinterested. They think it's not hip, not cool to say, you know, we got to win elections. Maybe now in the second term of Trump, they think, you

know what? We should win elections. Got to fight, got to fight that fight and get involved and talk to politicians. And if it's necessary to make compromises, well, maybe you gain 5 yards today, 10 yards tomorrow, you don't score a touchdown every time.

[00:55:36.7] Thomas Donnelly: Thanks for that, Juan. And Jamelle, Juan brings up the, you know, the image or the, you know, thinking ahead to a third civil rights movement. If you were, you know, what lessons would you hope that a third civil rights movement would draw from both the first and second civil rights movement that we've talked about today?

[00:55:55.3] Jamelle Bouie: That's a really good question. I think in terms of lessons to draw from the first civil rights movement, it is that, like, actual state power is important. Like, being able to put pressure on the federal government to act is important. I think any substantive goals of a third civil rights movement, it's going to have to be like reinvigorating the civil rights laws of the '60s, reinvigorating the Reconstruction Amendment, which in their own way are like civil rights laws. Right. Like reinvigorating the 15th Amendment and the 14th Amendment, especially. But then from the second civil rights movement, recognizing the power of sort of a horizontal organization and recognizing the power of, you know, broad cultural change, you have, you kind of have to merge the two, merge the focus of the first civil rights movement with, like, the broadness of the second to produce something new. But in any case, I think there was a real substantive agenda on the table. And you can kind of work backwards from, you know, court rulings, gutting the Voting Rights Act. You can work backwards from efforts to, like, weaponize civil rights laws against efforts to cultivate diversity.

[00:57:13.9] Jamelle Bouie: There's a substantive agenda. And so I'd hope that if there's anything like a third movement, it will focus on trying to reinvigorate federal power to protect people's voting rights, to protect people's civil rights, to try once again to put the country on the path towards something more egalitarian.

[00:57:35.1] Thomas Donnelly: And last question to you, Juan, just filling in anything else from the if we have a third civil rights movement, any other lessons you'd hope that it would draw from the first and the second?

[00:57:46.0] Juan Williams: Well, you know, I think the country is changing even as we speak, but the big change to me has been the demographic shifts that when we talk about race, I just think it's important to note, you know, that people predict this is going to be a non White majority country sometime after 2050 or so, I don't know, have the exact date in mind. And, you know, one of the realities that I'm coming into as I discuss the topic of this, you know, New Prize for These Eyes, the second civil Rights movement was people, is that they understand that you've got to deal with race. You got to talk about race. There's no like pretending, oh, you can just ignore the whole Black Lives Matter movement or demonize it or say, no, we need to talk about

race because America is already a big melting pot and it's going to be more racially diverse in the future. And to have this nostalgia about White dominance as the whole story and we're trying to restore White dominant, it's, you know, to me, I think more people, even people on the right understand there's a need to have this conversation because you can't stop the change taking place in America's racial composition.

[00:59:08.9] Thomas Donnelly: Well, we will end it there. Juan Williams, Jamelle Bouie, thank you so much for a wonderful conversation about the second civil Rights movement.

[00:59:17.0] Juan Williams: Well, thanks to the Constitution Center. Jamelle, thanks. I really appreciate your presence. Thank you.

[00:59:22.3] Jamelle Bouie: Oh, no, it's my pleasure. Thank you so much.

[00:59:26.1] Tanaya Tauber: This episode was produced by Lana Ulrich, Bill Pollock and me, Tanaya Tauber. It was engineered by Kevin Kilborne and Bill Pollock. Research was provided by Samson Mostashari. Check out our full lineup of exciting programs and register to join us virtually at constitutioncenter.org as always, we'll publish those programs on the podcast, so stay tuned here as well or watch the videos. They're available in our media library at constitutioncenter.org/medialibrary. Please follow, rate and review Live at The National Constitution center on Apple Podcasts or Spotify. On behalf of the National Constitution Center, I'm Tanaya Tauber.