

MORNING DISCUSSION: ROUNDTABLE ON MINORITIES IN FRANCE



SEPTEMBER 15, 2010

**Briefing of the
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

Washington: 2014

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ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The Helsinki process, formally titled the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, traces its origin to the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in Finland on August 1, 1975, by the leaders of 33 European countries, the United States and Canada. As of January 1, 1995, the Helsinki process was renamed the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The membership of the OSCE has expanded to 56 participating States, reflecting the breakup of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia.

The OSCE Secretariat is in Vienna, Austria, where weekly meetings of the participating States' permanent representatives are held. In addition, specialized seminars and meetings are convened in various locations. Periodic consultations are held among Senior Officials, Ministers and Heads of State or Government.

Although the OSCE continues to engage in standard setting in the fields of military security, economic and environmental cooperation, and human rights and humanitarian concerns, the Organization is primarily focused on initiatives designed to prevent, manage and resolve conflict within and among the participating States. The Organization deploys numerous missions and field activities located in Southeastern and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The website of the OSCE is: <www.osce.org>.

ABOUT THE COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki Commission, is a U.S. Government agency created in 1976 to monitor and encourage compliance by the participating States with their OSCE commitments, with a particular emphasis on human rights.

The Commission consists of nine members from the United States Senate, nine members from the House of Representatives, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense and Commerce. The positions of Chair and Co-Chair rotate between the Senate and House every two years, when a new Congress convenes. A professional staff assists the Commissioners in their work.

In fulfilling its mandate, the Commission gathers and disseminates relevant information to the U.S. Congress and the public by convening hearings, issuing reports that reflect the views of Members of the Commission and/or its staff, and providing details about the activities of the Helsinki process and developments in OSCE participating States.

The Commission also contributes to the formulation and execution of U.S. policy regarding the OSCE, including through Member and staff participation on U.S. Delegations to OSCE meetings. Members of the Commission have regular contact with parliamentarians, government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and private individuals from participating States. The website of the Commission is: <www.csce.gov>.

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Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe Washington, DC

The briefing was held at 11 a.m. in the South Congressional Room of the Capitol Visitors Center, Washington, DC, Dr. Mischa Thompson, Policy Advisor, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, moderating.

Panelists present: Dr. Mischa Thompson, Policy Advisor, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; René Lake, Ltl Strategies, U.S.; Alain Dolium, 2010 Regional Candidate, the Democratic Movement, France; Rokhaya Diallo, President, Les Indivisibles, France; Khalid Hamdani, Director, Institute for Ethics and Diversity, France; Jackie Celestin-André, Director, Corporate Diversity, L'Oréal France; and His Excellency Pierre Vimont, Ambassador of France to the United States.

Member present: Hon. Diane E. Watson, a Representative in Congress from the State of California.

Dr. THOMPSON. Hello. I'm Dr. Mischa Thompson with the U.S. Helsinki Commission and I'd just like to relay my apologies from Congressman Hastings, the Co-Chairman of the Commission. Unfortunately, he's ill today and he will not be able to join us. I'm going to read his prepared remarks and then we're going to go ahead and begin the roundtable discussion.

One of the first things is just for the mic, you need to push the button and the light will come on. The red light will come on. In terms of the interpretation, on channel 2 there is English and on channel 3 there is French.

And these, again, are the remarks from Co-Chairman Hastings:

“Good morning. Welcome to this Commission discussion on minorities in France. I understand that a number of you have flown a long way to be with us—to be here with us today. And I'm pleased that you are here, especially the members of the European Diversity Caucus. I would also like to thank Ambassador Vimont for joining us here today as well from the French Embassy.

And as many of you may know, the Commission has long followed the situation of minorities in the 56 North American and European countries that make up the region of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or, the OSCE.

Increasingly, concerns around immigration, terrorism and national identity have elevated racial and ethnic minorities to the center of national debates in many OSCE countries. Recent events such as the opposition of the Ground Zero mosque, threats to burn the Quran and immigration laws adopted in Arizona and elsewhere are examples of how these issues have been pushed to the forefront in this very country.

Conversely, Roma expulsion, banning face veils and promises to deport 30,000 illegal immigrants in addition to other proposed changes to immigration laws are taking place in France.

While I perceive such events in both situations as wrongheaded political maneuvers, in particular in the case of the discriminatory policy of targeting Roma for expulsions, I would argue that there is a danger to politicians, the media and the public at large if we focus only on these issues.

Minority communities are part of the larger fabric of society and we are all put at risk when those who seek to divide for political and other gain are allowed to define conversations regarding our communities.

Both of our countries are host to vibrant racially, ethnically and religiously diverse minority communities that have made great contributions to our societies. Despite discrimination and continuing inequities, we have seen members of these communities rise to leadership roles in our societies. I am pleased that we have so many prominent guests here today who have done so in France.

As we discuss the situation of minorities in France today, we should remember to broaden our focus beyond recent negative developments to include some of the positives and how best to learn from both situations.

I am curious to hear how the French public has responded to the Roma policies but also what the status of President Sarkozy's plan for the suburbs is, following my visit to such a community in 2009, in terms of combating extremism or banning face veils or focusing on increased education and employment opportunities for Muslim and other minority youth, the solution.

Last, is there really a global "Obama effect" that has brought more minorities into politics in France and elsewhere in the world?

I hope that today's discussion will touch on some of these points and I look forward to the answers. I will now turn things over to Mr. René Lake, who will be moderating today's session. Mr. Lake?

Mr. LAKE. Thank you very much, Mischa. I want to remind everybody that the English channel is channel 2 and the French channel is channel 3.

So we're going to start immediately the discussion. I think it's going to be a very lively and a very interesting one, considering the actual situation in Europe as some of you may now. In fact, yesterday, the European Union has decided to engage into a legal action against the French Government on the issue of the Roma expulsion. So the Ambassador of France will be talking to us in about an hour. So he will be here on 12:10, so we will have a 20-minute conversation with him. I think it's going to be really interesting. And so we have basically an hour to engage in a conversation here among the panelists.

So I will suggest that Alain Dolium, who is a leader of the François Bayrou party's MoDem to maybe start the discussion and tell us what the situation of minorities in France—especially in the public sector, as Alain was himself a candidate for the Presi-

dency of Île-de-France recently, and it will be interesting to have his perspective. Alain, please.

Mr. DOLIUM. Thank you, thank you for the introduction. I'm going to speak in French to be precise and to keep the timing.

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Mr. DOLIUM. (Audio interference)—not to place these people into situations where they would only base it on their social ethnic origin or create the cliché that will improve their profile. The young people from the minorities are competent on issues much more than diversity or the neighborhoods. They're also capable talking about economic issues, budgetary issues, public health or environment. To be Black does not necessarily mean that you are a good minister for the sports.

Finally, to give a new impetus, democracy must favor the emergence of a local democracy, the only one which is capable of involving a greater number of citizens, regardless of their ethnic or racial group.

And the third key problem to which French society is confronted, in my view, is the definition and the implementation of a harmonious pension policy which is solidarity amongst the generations. This pension policy will only succeed if it is accompanied by a political economy policy that can create jobs.

We must favor the creation of small businesses by creating a special French-style small-business act. We have a need for entrepreneurial capitalism. We need to have entrepreneurs who come out of these minority ethnic groups. They have to have access to funding for their startup projects in the developmental phase and this is much more complicated for them than for other entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs can find investors here in the United States and they understand more than anyone else the value of a project before considering the pedigree of an entrepreneur.

Finally, creating a freely French-style small-business act will allow these companies to have—to public contract because often times, these companies are poorly located and these small businesses, whose manager often times has a foreign-sound name.

These three problems to which the French country is confronted have much of the solutions among most of the work force of the country. Without any more discrimination, multiculturalism is an underexploited asset. And this profile—these people represent as much as the other French, the future of our country.

Our country is, by essence, indivisible, whereas we are divided by a destructive class whose only ambition is oftentimes to be able to keep power and to do it with an unshared manner. Thank you very much. [Applause.]

Mr. LAKE. Thank you very much, Alain Dolium. Now, we're going to ask Rokhaya Diallo, who is the head of an organization who uses humor to deconstruct ethno-racial prejudice to tell us about her perspective on the debate on the situation of minorities, the situation of the issues of diversity in France.

Rokhaya?

Mr. DIALLO. Good morning, everyone. Thank you. I will try to make my presentation in English. Please excuse me for my English—[laughter]—in advance.

So I am the President of a French organization called Les Indivisibles, whose aim is to deconstruct ethno-racial prejudices through the use of humor and irony. Our organization seeks to address, in particular, those prejudices and stereotypes that devalue French identity for certain citizens for reason of their phenotype, their name, their origin,

either real or imagined religious affiliation. The name of the association refers to the first article of the French Constitution, according to which the French Republic is “indivisible.”

In the context of the European Union, the creation of Les Indivisibles was inspired by a German organization—sorry—[laughter]. So the creation of the organization was inspired by a German organization called Der Braune Mob, which means The Brown Mobilization, whose objective was to make obvious the fact that one could be at the same time Black and German.

So is it in France. So we aspire to deconstruct the automatic association that systematically links phenotypes to nationality and therefore presupposes that a non-White person cannot be a real French one.

We have drafted a charter that has been made available for you outside—and also on our Web site—whose first articles declare that being French is not a question of appearance; that being French is not something that one can see. And therefore, is not, for example, indicated by skin color or phenotype.

Today, in 2010, France seems to conceive of itself as a country whose inhabitants have White skins and are of Judeo-Christian background. White French are commonly referred as “French stock,” suggesting the idea of a purity of French national origin. Those who do not correspond to this racialized archetype are considered as foreigners or “paper French,” which constitutes a major difference from the United States, where skin color does not lead to an automatic supposition of foreign otherness.

So the work of Les Indivisibles goes well beyond a regular media watch. Last year, for example, for the first time, we organized the Y’a Bon Awards, a humoristic parody of the Academy Awards, that, with a banana skin on the guise of a trophy, honored those public personalities such as politicians, journalists and artists who authored the most racist remarks. [Laughter.]

So the name of the ceremony was inspired by the advertisement for a popular breakfast drink called Banania. The ads are notoriously racist and well-known in France and stick with the racialism—racialized, sorry, symbolism from the colonial age.

The phrase “y’a bon” is a pejorative attempt to reflect the Black dialect of colonial subjects, embodied by the famous Tirailleurs Sénégalais, who still graces the product’s cover who could not manage to say “c’est bon,” like we say in good French. [Laughter.] I’m sure it will be of no surprise for you that no one of the winners came to get his trophy—their trophy. [Laughter.]

The goal of Les Indivisibles is to fight against the trivialization of prejudice that are largely propagated and maintained by the media and public figures whose power inflict harm and disseminate disaccord toward French people. This power is great, given the considerable public exposure.

We aspire to confront the media and public figures with their responsibility associated with such power. So we point out the main sentences pronounced especially by our actual government by its specific politics against Roma people and people from Muslim background. So thank you for listening to me. [Applause.]

Mr. LAKE. Thank you, Rokhaya. Y’a bon de—(in French)—[laughter.] So now I’m going to give the floor to Khalid Hamdani who is going to maybe take a couple of seconds to tell us about his own background and the type of work he does in France and maybe have a few remarks on the debate.

Mr. HAMDANI. Thank you. First of all, let me thank you, all of you, for your kind invitation. And I'm going to speak maybe in between my friends Rokhaya and Alain. I start in English and I switch to French very quickly, I think. [Laughter.] And I apologize, of course, for my very low command of English.

The problematic of the status of minorities and in society, and I had a little experience of this situation by my grand academic background and my job in my institute, and also I had 7 years political experience. But the status of minorities I think in the long term of history is linked to nations and civilizations and their own experience.

But what we are talking about today, what we are interested by or involved in, is a dilemma, in fact. It's a dilemma of democratic nations and societies. The dilemma is this fragile equilibrium between liberty and equality. And how a democratic country can or could or should organize a fair and equitable equality, of course, for all the citizens?

Tocqueville, I think, spoke about that a long time ago—but in the formal and in the former democracy, the legal system is democratic, of course, but in fact, on the ground, it was and it's still—in France, of course, it's still, and in Europe in general, a system of domination: the domination of women, the domination of ethnic minorities. Well, all these groups are dominated.

And today, in the democratic societies of Canada, France or Germany or Great Britain, the question is how to be equal effectively without this existence of a kind of symbolic social hierarchy. The symbolic social hierarchy, I think, and I—in French—is the real problem in my opinion, I mean, the most difficult problem to solve because in the face of this challenge, European or American responses are definitely different according to their social frameworks of their societies—the frameworks of their society.

In France, the concept—and Rokhaya said that—of minorities or communities do not exist in the domestic political thought, in the legal system. This is a myth. Oh, yes, it's a beautiful myth but it's a myth, indeed, even if it's a French Republican myth, but it's a myth!

The reality is so different. The reality that every French can see in the street is that the minority exists significantly and the minority and the communities are there but we deny their existence. They exist without existing in the symbolic social hierarchies, they don't exist in the domestic political thought and in the legal system. So subsequently, there is no public policy for minorities. And so the question of minorities is reduced to a social-welfare issue. It's not a political issue.

So far, it's not a political issue. The minorities could not have the power—political power—voice, and could not share it. There is a huge discrepancy between what is safe and what is expected, and this discrepancy is the most important problem. And I'm afraid I'm obliged in the few seconds I have to switch now in French. This discrepancy is so awful that it obliges me to switch. [Laughter.]

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Mr. HAMDANI. The mode of access to the political class and the mode of reproduction excludes minority by their own design. The social, economic and cultural obstacles from a statistical pinpoint that encounters every person to reach the political level, and there are more symbolic obstacles. These are psychological obstacles and others. There's a real problem.

People who come from ethnic or racial minorities are more and more people who come from poor backgrounds. And they are perceived as being not members of the social corpus

and also of the national fabric. And what the French political leaders urge to the minorities that we represent, and Alain knows it very well—you come from a more modest background, Madame—they say, you must erase or even deny all of your differences between you are in the Republican universality.

But every time you try to run for office or each time you're endorsed for office, they are told, yes, but your differences will cause us to lose these elections. So we have consistently this contradicting urging which means that the three challenges that Alain mentioned, to which I subscribe, we'd have to have a complete overhaul of the educational system. We have to do that in order to inoculate these differences from the very beginning for the long term. The media system has to be completely overhauled to create an imagination of diversity and not just ad hoc, on-the-ground actions.

And we must target to build a French-style patriotism. Of course, it has to be very beautiful and very aesthetic, of course. A French-style patriotism in which you have local rooting because we have to acknowledge all of our regions: burgundy—in French—or cinamon.

We have to enshrine all of these regions, truly rooted in the local level; accept our history—the good, the bad and the ugly. We must be open toward Europe, which is our border that has to be constructed, and we have to be open to the rest of the world for political, moral and environmental issues. Thank you very much. [Applause.]

Mr. LAKE. Thank you very much, Khalid Hamdani, for this intervention and especially your question on institutional challenges we have in France. I'm sure that a lot of people would like to maybe ask you a question or comment on some of your statement.

So now I'm going to give the floor to Jackie Celestin-André who is going to give us, I guess, a private-sector perspective on the issue.

Ms. CELESTIN-ANDRÉ. Yeah. Good morning. My name is Jackie Celestin-André I'm Diversity Director for the L'Oréal Group. I will speak to you entirely in English because I'm an American living in France. [Laughter.] So I won't switch on you. I may though. Not knowing it, though.

So thank you, again, for this opportunity for us to talk about L'Oréal Diversity's policy as it relates to creating an inclusive environment for all diversities in France. So I'm here, as René mentioned, to give a private-sector example of how we are managing diversities and all the issues we have in France.

So first, to start, L'Oréal as a company has built its identity around strong values. Among them, diversity is a strategic asset for the group in terms of creativity, innovation and performance. As we are a cosmetics company, the No. 1—I'm not bragging—company in the beauty industry in the world, we understand that beauty and diversity go hand in hand.

Through various engagements, such as the group's code of business ethics, signing the global compact in 2003, L'Oréal has formalized its commitment in favor of non-discrimination. In 2004, L'Oréal was one of the first companies in France to sign the diversity charter in France. For L'Oréal, signing the diversity charter was important and coherent with the group's values. It was another impetus for us to continue to challenge ourselves to be an active participant in creating a climate of inclusion and equal opportunities in three areas: within the work force in the company, within the workplace in the company and outside, and especially in the marketplace in France.

So after signing the charter—we just didn't want to sign another charter just to sign a charter—a string of events took place, starting with at corporate headquarters in France, of which setting up a diversity team with dedicated members with resources, and developing a policy that covers six diversity areas—and I would show this to you but I have no screen.

So the areas include nationality, ethnic and cultural backgrounds; social background; gender; disability; and age. So with those seven criteria, of which ethnic and social diversity is one of our core areas that we're working on. It's important to note also that our North American division of L'Oréal in New York started earlier than we did in managing diversity with an office in New York, headed by the Vice President in charge of diversity.

So coming back to L'Oréal France, and the focus of this roundtable is minorities in France, I'll top-line just a few initiatives that L'Oréal has implemented in France. And it's important for us also, in my discussion to note when I say—when we talk about “visible minorities” in France, include, for example, populations from sub-Saharan and North Africans, Indians, Chinese and, increasingly, other European, Eastern European countries, who are suffering vastly from discrimination.

So as we all know, in the United States and other parts of the world, discrimination is perceived to be the single most important integration barrier to the work force. And in France, to counter this, L'Oréal has developed or participated in a number of internal-external initiatives with public and private stakeholders to promote equal opportunities in the workplace, work force and in the marketplace.

Unfortunately, I don't have enough time to go through all our initiatives, so I'll share a few of them. So in the work force at L'Oréal team diversity, a mixture of origins and backgrounds and talents are the keys to our company's success. Of course, we are a company, so we're looking for performance above all.

Diversity at all levels in the organization promote a higher level of creativity and a deeper understanding of our consumers. So when it comes, for example, to recruitment, L'Oréal has identified major avenues for identifying talent. Diversification of the group's recruitment challenges by setting up partnerships with associations targeted to different minority groups. Creating or participating in the recruitment fairs also dedicated to minority candidates who experience difficulties in a job market. And also, by—and it's really key—also by working and raising awareness of our partner schools so that they, themselves, develop a social and cultural mix amongst their students, providing the workplace with talents from different communities.

For example, L'Oréal joining the government plans called the Plan for Banlieus—a committed group to facilitating access to employment from candidates coming from underprivileged neighborhoods. And most of them are what we call visible minorities.

And so today, the group has approximately 9 percent of the new hires of young people under 26 coming from these areas. So we are increasingly including with the work force in France more and more ethnic communities.

Another example is working to promote equal opportunity in education. Education is a key to success in any society and it helps to overcome barriers that minorities face. Therefore, the group invests in education at different levels—high-school level, college, the post-grad levels—with very basic projects like scholarships and mentorship programs, creating a bridge between the private and the educational system, which is very, very new

for France, unlike in the United States, where we have that type of involvement for a long time.

We've also made our application process much more objective, recognizing that, as a group, we had our own house cleaning to do to make sure that we are not inadvertently discriminating in our application process. And we are currently testing anonymous résumés, which remove all identity from—to identify the candidate's origins. We're testing that to see if that's another type of action that we can use to prevent discrimination during the work force.

In regards to the workplace, for companies like L'Oréal, discriminatory attitudes, behaviors, the lack of awareness and of diversity issues are some of the biggest challenges for us to succeed. We have to make sure that our employees understand what diversity is and we need to be able to change attitudes and behaviors. To help us with this, since 2006, we've developed a specific diversity-training program aimed at about 8,000 managers in Europe, in 32 countries.

By the end of 2009, over 6,000 managers have done this training in Europe, of which 3,500 managers have done the training in France at all levels of management from the CEO down to product managers, for example in marketing. The next phase involves training the balance of employees in France that totals about 14,000 people. It's no small feat, but we believe it's necessary because changing behaviors of our employees is going to be a key factor of success to making diversity work for L'Oréal as a company.

My time is up, OK—[laughter]—one last thing. We are fostering—[laughter]—one last thing, though, we are fostering a climate of social inclusion of minorities in France through imagery. It was mentioned earlier that advertising is key, the media is key. So we are making a point of using models in our advertising that reflect the diversity of beauty.

L'Oréal, with brands like L'Oréal Paris and Maybelline, and Garnier, Lancôme, Softsheen-Carson, to name a few, help us to project imagery of minorities in France—we've fed the social diversity in France. We are not just using White models, but also Black, North African, Indian and Asian models in France.

So in conclusion—[laughter]—there is a lot we need to do to change, to learn in regards of managing diversities. We are continually challenging ourselves, checking our progress. We've developed the first diversity progress report. I will be able to list some examples for you that show where we—what we've done and where we are. And we have a lot more work to do. But we believe we are heading in the right direction. And for that, I thank you for your attention. [Applause.]

Mr. LAKE. Thank you very much, Jackie. Now, to close this first round of intervention from our panelists, I'm going to give the floor to Kag Sanoussi. And I think it's good that you are finishing this panel because you are going to be the common point between the public sector, the activities of community, government, people in the private sector as he is responsible of the charte de la diversité, which was just referred to as by Jackie a few minutes ago. So it will be interesting to tell us a little about this public-private partnership. You guys upgraded to the charte de la diversité—and maybe make a few remarks.

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Mr. SANOUSSI. Thank you for giving me the floor and thank you so much for this invitation. I am going to be speaking French today. Indeed, the charter for diversity in

France is the first charter within Europe which constitutes a commitment for companies. And through this, companies commit themselves to no longer discriminating.

There is an awareness of discrimination and thus this commitment aims to set in place various policies. The charter for diversity is implemented by the companies as well as by the public policies. This is something that is managed with the various public and private structures. And our aim is simple, and this is what I'm going to talk about.

Indeed, in France, there are two perspectives: Either the glass is half empty or it's half full. And a great author once said that we tend to make our difficulties greater than they are and our liberties smaller than they are. So many things are not going well, but we do have 3,000 companies that are committed to doing something. Indeed, the fight against discrimination and promoting diversity is something that is part of management. We can't just say it's going to happen.

Indeed, there are stereotypes that block things. There are certain representations that go all the way back to slavery. And they are often linked to very trivial events. You know, for example, you might not like a given person. And then you will just build your representation on that person and you will apply it to all other people. Thus, the 3,000 companies in France that are committed to this charter, including L'Oréal, have started training their employees.

Indeed, to fight against discrimination and in order to promote diversity, you need to know what you're talking about. A surgeon is not a moderator and a dancer is not a mountain climber. You need to know—you need to call a spade a spade and know what you're talking about.

And so here in France among our signing companies—well, we have about 70 companies that are commended. And they have already started working on their management process. How do we recruit employees? How can we ensure that when I'm recruiting somebody I'm simply focusing on their values and not on other factors?

And so in France, this momentum has started. And we want to ensure that people like Alain, Rokhaya or Khalid will be in the field. And we need to support them via the companies, whether these companies are private or public. And they need to incorporate the notion that including diversity is not something you're doing just because it's nice. You know, we need to really understand what's happening.

And we need to—we must not reject others. And by not rejecting others, that means that we accept ourselves. And in order to do this, we need to ensure that we are walking together hand in hand in order to create a unified momentum and show the way to others. And that's what's very important.

I'd like to conclude by calling upon you to exercise caution, whether it's in France or in the United States. We need to have these points of caution. And by that, I mean our own individual responsibility.

We often tend to say, oh yeah, this needs to be done; that needs to be done. And so you may say, oh, the state needs to do this; the NGOs need to do this. Or the NGOs say, hey, the company needs to do that. The minorities say, oh, the Whites have to change. The Asians are going to say, no, the Blacks need to change. The Arabs are going to say, no, somebody else needs to do it.

Let's face up to it. We all have our own responsible—individual responsibilities. Individualism is important. You know, what are we going to do here? We have been talking about diversity. What are we going to do afterwards?

We say it's bad to discriminate against others. But then we're amongst ourselves, you know, guys for example talk about—have very macho statements about women. Or sometimes we say bad things about homosexuals. And we really need to look at ourselves. We need to really focus on our own commitment within the societal issue.

Another point of caution: We need to say things correctly. In France we tend to perhaps disguise people. Rather than saying a Black person, we say a colored person. Perhaps in the United States, you don't say colored. In France, saying a colored person has zero meaning. You know, a Black man is a Black man and that should not be an insult. And a homosexual is a homosexual. That is not an insult. And we need to really incorporate these notions when we are talking about diversity.

Last point of caution, in my opinion, is the issue of selective forgetfulness. Of course, you know, we try to recruit people who look like us. You know, you come from a certain university and so you tend to focus on people who come from that same university. And so if I see French people, for example, sometimes I'm going to head toward them.

And so selective forgetfulness is something we need to be aware of. We need to remember this notion of representation. You know, we may be drawn to somebody, but that's not because—that's not a reason to recruit that person. You need to recruit people based on their skills. You need to open up doors.

So those are just a few words to talk about the charter for diversity in France. Our aim is so that together—and “together” is the key word—we need to ensure that our society can be something that we are proud to leave to our children. [Applause.]

Mr. LAKE. Thank you very much, Kag Sanoussi, for the intervention. So as I had mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, the Ambassador of France is here. He did join us when we started this conversation, Ambassador Pierre Vimont. He will be speaking in about 20 or 25 minutes. But of course, if you want, he is welcome to also answer some of the questions and interact with some of the people in the—(in French)—if some people have some specific question to him.

[Off-side conversation.]

Mr. LAKE. OK. So we have a surprise guest. [Laughter.] So I'm going to turn the mic to Mischa and she's going to tell us what the—who is the surprise guest and what is going to happen now.

Ms. WATSON. Good morning.

[Chorus of, “Good morning.”]

Ms. WATSON. I could not help but to step inside the room. I am Congresswoman Diane Watson, a former teacher way back in my other life, and I taught school in France. [Applause.] So as I was coming—I think many of you know that this is the week that the Congressional Black Caucus holds its forums and then on Saturday night we have a major dinner.

And so right now, we are in the Congressional Auditorium talking about our mission and how we can move from poverty into prosperity. And so it's very interesting—listen, I was trying to pick up a few words here and there. It was way back in the year 19—[laughter]—that I was there in France as an elementary-school teacher and I wanted to see how much of the French I could still remember. I got every 10th word. [Laughter.]

But I want to say to you, I think it's really essential that we discuss this whole issue of race. And I found full acceptance when I was in France as long as I did not criticize what was French. [Laughter.] I found France to be the most nationalistic nation I had

been in. So my friends, who were not minorities; they were the majority party. They would come in and look around and might say something that wasn't quite complimentary. And I would have to say, if you want to be put out of this place, change your conversation.

But we see France as a very strong ally, accepting of people from all over the world. But in this country, we need to have that discussion. And so to have the Commission raise the issue of France and race and those that go there and live there, I think, is essential. We should model ourselves off of the Helsinki Commission and have a discussion in America about race. It is that time.

And I want to say we just had a speaker and it was the Secretary of Agriculture. And you remember the Shirley Sherrod incident. Well, that's going to turn out to be a benefit because many of the poor farmers in the southern part of our country never got their 40 acres and a mule. And as we do the appropriations out to various departments, we have failed to compensate those that use slave labor to produce the products and the produce that America most desperately needs.

So thank you, Helsinki Commission; thank you, those who are witnesses. I want to say to the Ambassador from France, thank you for being here and acting as a model for us here in America because we are still a young nation and we have not perfected democracy as yet. We are working on it. And we are so pleased that America elected someone who is African-American. So this is a very timely discussion you're having, and really teach us how to perfect our democracy. Thank you for coming here. [Applause.]

Mr. LAKE. Thank you very much, Congresswoman Diane Watson. They were suggesting earlier, so we are going to open the floor to all the participants. And whoever wants to make a comment or maybe ask a question to a specific panelist or even, maybe, to the Ambassador of France, please do so.

There is a handheld mic somewhere around here. If you are sitting in a place where you don't have access to a mic, just raise your hand and we can give you a mic. So we are going to start—you want to—please, I suggest that you tell us your name and introduce yourself very quickly before asking your questions or making your comments.

Ms. GIVENS. Yes, I'm Terri Givens. I'm a Professor at the University of Texas at Austin and I have been studying these issues in France for many years. Most recently, I have been in France studying the issue of discrimination and I'm wondering, what is the current perception of anti-discrimination policy?

I know that HALDE seemed to be having some successes, the equality body in France, but was going to be pressured to become part of the Defender of Rights by the—I know it was passed in the assembly and it's being considered in the Senate. So I was wondering what the—first, the perceptions and then what the situation is with the equality body.

Mr. LAKE. Anybody want to take on that question? Khalid?

Mr. HAMDANI. OK.

Mr. LAKE. OK, please go ahead.

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Mr. HAMDANI. Well, there are several distinctions to make. So the preamble to the French Constitution is extremely clear concerning the notion—the principle of non-discrimination and the positive treatment. And that is clear and there is absolutely no ambiguity in terms of France's position.

We also have the law of 1992 from Plevin—a resistant—regarding penalties when somebody commits discrimination. And this is a penal fault. So we need to distinguish the evolution from the European framework at the 1997—and the Amsterdam treaty. And there is also all the other modifications that have occurred thanks to the directives, and so the legal framework, the regulatory framework, and of course, French public law is very important.

So the French legal framework, in fact, perhaps, overprotects real or supposed victims. That being said, we have this extraordinary framework which looks at civil and penal and public rights. But after that, we have reality in terms of the effective application of these laws and of the effective sanctions. And here, we have a huge gap, a huge discrepancy, and a lack of repression against discrimination in France.

And of course, there has been the creation of a higher authority against discrimination. And this is something that was implemented via European directives. And so the most symbolic is, of course, the British one. However, what you need to keep in mind is that the French framework exists in theory; however, it is impeded by mentalities. And so there is a huge gap between the law and the application of the law. And in fact, unfortunately, there are no radars that can really catch people who are committing discrimination fraud. [Applause.]

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Ms. DIALLO. I would like to add something to that. And in fact, we have discrimination against certain people. But we talk about the way people talk, and in terms of that, regulations in France are not very effective. In fact, our minister of the interior was penalized by a judge for uttering discriminatory remarks. Yet he has maintained his post, and yet, he was determined by the courts to have uttered discriminatory words. And so I think in France we really need to address this issue and this discrepancy in terms of the treatment.

Mr. LAKE. Comments on this—on the answer you got? Or any other questions? I see some hands there. I don't know if you could have a mic.

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Questioner. Hello, I have a question for Jackie Celestin-André. Earlier, you mentioned that L'Oréal was testing out an anonymous résumé process. And I'd like to know whether you think this procedure is effective. In fact, as all the speakers said, it's a very deep-seated problem related to economic and political conservatism.

And so I'd like to know whether this anonymous résumé is an effective procedure because all you're—what you're really doing is just delaying the moment when the job applicant will have an interview, a face-to-face interview. And so if those discriminations still exist then the answer will—it will continue.

Mr. LAKE. The same victim may want to take it. [Laughter.]

Ms. CELESTIN-ANDRÉ. [Laughter.] OK.

Questioner. Yeah, just a two-finger on this. I was curious—I mean, thank you for providing the business perspective here because of course we talk a lot about education, but if people are educated and there isn't a business community that is receptive to qualified minorities then, obviously, we have a problem.

And so I was wondering what kind of legal constraints there are in France to having an explicitly, positive discriminatory policy within a company? So if there are issues—seeing as how France has this policy of race-blindness, whether a company like L'Oréal

can be very explicit in its recruitment of minorities, or whether it might run into legal problems with lawsuits, et cetera? Thanks.

Ms. CELESTIN-ANDRÉ. To answer the first question on the—if anonymous CVs are efficient or not: We don't know. That's why we are testing it. We are testing all—we are open to testing all types of methods to help us overcome barriers to perceived—barriers to getting into an interview process. We know that in France, last names, origins of last names are very discriminatory in France.

We know that where a candidate lives, if they live in a good neighborhood, they won't have a problem getting an interview. But if they live in a bad neighborhood, they will have a problem getting an interview. In France, in résumés—photos are used on résumés in France. And we know that if you look at a photo of someone, you can clearly see where that person is coming from.

And so these are things that are process-driven. And we are looking at all kinds of ways to help overcome that. We don't know if it's efficient or not. The anonymous résumés were tested in different countries already. We tested it in Italy and the results are not conclusive. So we know that doesn't work in Italy, so we have to find other ways.

For us in the company in France, what we've done already in terms of objectively cleaning up our application process is that candidates can send their résumés through our Web site. And as when they do that, of course, all factors are there: name, address, et cetera. So what we decided to do was before the résumé filters down to the operational H.R. managers, we remove automatically the address of the person; when we can, we remove the photo. So we're already filtering the résumés to, again, provide a—to remove what we know to be barriers to getting into an interview process.

And in regards to—I guess the question—the second question is more, is L'Oréal setting quotas in terms of hiring? If I can restate your statement—your question is that, do we set quotas for hiring different types of communities? And no, we don't do that. It's pretty much illegal in France. So again, it's illegal. But we have to make sure that we are getting the right talent.

And that's why when we talk—when I talk about diversifying where we go to meet candidates, that's a key factor—a key action we're doing to make sure we are going to different schools, schools in different neighborhoods; we are not just going to the big campuses—(in French)—or Sciences Po, which historically L'Oréal has been going to, and we realized that we're getting the same profile of students. And so we're now going into universities—universities in France, they don't have the same image as they do in the United States. So we are going to universities. We are going to different types of campuses to try to meet the talent that we know is there. And we need to be able to reach out to them.

Mr. LAKE. Thank you very much, Jackie. Myself, I lived in France for a long time, several years. And I was there when the old debate started on the quota for a woman in the political list. So at the same time there is no quota policy in France, there was—France may have been one of the first countries in the world to bring a quota policy for a woman. And I think a lot of people thought that it was very progressive.

So it is interesting to know where we are now. That was like 15, 20 years ago. I mean, the Ambassador will certainly remind us. But I think that a lot of democrats around the world were very happy about that. But it is interesting to see that it is not

really translating in the minority world. But I think that Alain Dolium would like to say a few words. Alain, please.

Mr. DOLIUM. I would like to talk about society. We talked about quotas. Quotas are, indeed, one of the central issues that are being dealt with in the French Republic. And when I talk about the Republican space, what I mean by that is that by this expression, you have part of the answer when you talk about the problem of quotas in France because in fact, according to Republican values and according to our Republican constitution, we are told that quotas would indeed be outside of the law and that quotas would not be suitable in a Republican situation.

But we have a basic problem. Just imagine we are not talking about the diversity. We are all talking about the need to acknowledge a multicultural society in order to move toward a post-racial society that will allow us to live better all together.

But how do we do this? If you do not know at the startup phase, if you cannot identify the range of the problem, identify the people who are subject to this discrimination, identify the value of these policies, the effectiveness with which will, indeed, allow you to improve the situation, I don't know if you can call these quotas if—I don't know if you can call these measures, decisions.

At any rate, there is a quantitative element which is lacking in our system as it stands. So as it's considered upfront in France. And then I would like to talk about quotas once again because today, I had a career in a big corporation, that I won't mention—mentioned CBS and DHL are two large America corporations—because very quickly, they recognized two things. They said if they wanted me to become a senior manager, to become one of the CEOs, leaders of the strategy of the group, they said that it would be better if I went into North American companies.

Nonetheless, when I worked in these North American companies with their representatives in France I had—once a month, I was on a quota basis and revolving basis in the management board. And our role was mostly to be working with White men, 55 years old, who came up out of the great schools and of the great social establishment institution. And these people are no longer esteemed because it now—we believe that it's the fully normal and logical representation of the French elite.

The third point is the nature, per se, of this quota, which is a basic problem, which consists in saying, yes, OK, diversity, how can we introduce it? How can we measure it? How can we improve all of these things?

But I believe that there is something that we do not talk enough about. Namely, the positive contribution of diversity because today, we have to admit, in a company such as L'Oréal, which has market segments which are present all over the world, market segments which are targeted according to consumers, male and female who belong to different ethnic and racial groups, it would seem that it would be suitable and effective for the company and many other corporations, given the globalization of the economy to have profiles which represent all of the markets that the company is involved with. So I tend to believe that in order to improve the issue of diversity, you have to look at the economic benefits thereof.

Ms. CELESTIN-ANDRÉ. If you'd allow me to—just to add—just to comment on quotas. Just to note that in France, it is acceptable to have quotas on the hiring of people with disabilities. So in France, it is a legal requirement—I forget the size of the company that it has to be. Six percent of the workforce has to be people with disabilities.

There's a new quota that just came out. I think we mentioned it in terms of the Board of Directors where they are trying to get women, more women representation at a very high level, so it's now, I think, 40 percent of the board has to be women. So that's another quota.

And there's recently a new quota that's passed on terms of age because in France, there's a huge problem with age discrimination. If you're over 50 years old, employment—retention in employment, as well as evolution becomes a problem. And so with the weight of the social-security problem in France, they need to get—need to maintain all the workers in the work force, so now there is a quota that's put out.

So progressively, we're seeing where the government is institutionalizing laws to address issues. And so maybe 1 day—who knows—maybe there will be a quota in regards to ethnic representation.

Mr. LAKE. OK, Khalid, now, or—(in French).

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Mr. HAMDANI. Yes, we have to reform the constitution in order to establish quotas. Indeed, in terms of gender parity, that was done in the constitution. That was done. But all you need to do that is to reform the constitution.

Mr. LAKE. OK, thank you very much, Khalid. I know that there is a lot of people are—I think the debate is heating up here. So Reda Didi, maybe you want to introduce yourself very quickly?

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Mr. DIDI. Yes. Good morning. I'm Reda Didi. I am the Chairman of the section which works on working-class neighborhoods on these issues of discrimination. So the issue of companies has several points. In terms of elections and companies—recruiting: You have to know that we are in an area—we have legislation and labor laws in France which protect very much the employees. Therefore, hiring is much more complicated, and firing a person is also much more complicated in France.

So during the hiring process, you have to talk about this in a very vulgar manner. A hiring process is a challenge. It's complicated. So recruiters do not want to get it wrong about this person that they will hire because to fire that person will be very expensive.

So you also have to think of a second thing is that in France, according to recent studies which have been demonstrated, the mixing of persons and the mixing of marriages and people who blend together is the strongest in the world—mixed marriages. So people like each other. People do live together. People frequent each other. People get married and they have children. And in France, ultimately, we have a problem with a very small part of the elite—which is the case in all countries of the world—and they close the doors to power and they let nobody in.

And given that we are the visible markers of this diversity, finally, because this is basically due to a social difference, as my colleague said it very correctly—notably, Hamdani and Rokhaya Diallo—we are visible and we can see that we're not there. We're not in the Board of Directors, we're not represented in Parliament and we can see that we're not present in all spheres of power.

So what are the solutions? So the issues of quotas is interesting to me but it has to be limited to finding the good diagnostic of the situation. Within companies, you cannot give a position of manager and save it for this number of Blacks, Asians and North Africans because I wonder who's at the door and who's allowing people to enter. It's just like

a nightclub who lets you inside a nightclub. You let the person in and you have to allow people in who are compatible with your policy, so you have to be cautious there.

But this is a real issue, a real question that we have to ask ourselves about ethnic groups and have to come up with a great diagnosis because oftentimes, we attend conferences and we don't have the same diagnostic, but we have to come up with right solutions. For example, the HALDE, the committee to fight discrimination.

I find that a shame for issues of world competitiveness we have multiple competencies. I think our country can go much further if we indeed show our skills and we have to find, in the neighborhoods, these people who are very competent, who are very skilled and find them where we are.

But in this issue of competitiveness, this committee to fight discrimination—for example, let's take a country that is similar to ours—Great Britain: the same population, the same ethnic diversity. Their budget is different. They have to understand that. For example, I'm not saying that we have to work on affirmative action. We must first of all, work against all issue discrimination and sanction very strongly people who do not respect the law because many companies in my country play the game and they are advancing their logic, but there are other companies that don't allow us to reach the higher levels of management because at our level, we do mostly get by.

Mr. LAKE. I have you in the list: Aurelie Ganga. And please introduce yourself, and in a minute or two.

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Ms. GANGA. My name is Aurelie Ganga. I have just concluded a masters in management at Sciences Po and I've just created a company in Europe and this is the Caucus of European Diversity. Why did we create this group because we wanted to go to the world's greatest democracies and to transpose all of the tools that have been used to ensure integration of minorities in each country?

And the first debate that we're starting here is the one that we're having today in the United States. And we're very happy that our Ambassador honored us by his presence. And we're very happy that these companies are supporting us such as L'Oréal, la Charte de diversité les écoles, and other groups.

But I'd like to say that this is not a problem that is specific to France. And I believe we will all win together. Discriminations are not exclusive to one color of skin or exclusive to homosexuals or to handicapped people. And for example, in my university, Paris-Dauphine, we talked about the issue of handicaps because people who have handicaps have many problems in France joining companies. So what we want to do is observe, come up with tools that can be applicable, given our history.

France is a beautiful country. We love our country and we are happy, also, to be able to have these exchanges with you. But we want to let you understand that we have a lot to contribute too. Perhaps this might be the opportunity for another fact-finding visit where Americans can come visit our country, find out what we do in terms of health, education and on the treatment of young people. Thank you very much. [Applause.]

Mr. LAKE. Thank you. Thank you very much. I know there are a lot of people who would like to speak. I see some of those hands. But I just would like to remind you, we have just 20 minutes left and the Ambassador of France is supposed to do some closing remarks. In general, after the closing remarks is the end of everything.

But I understand from the protocol of the French Embassy that the Ambassador is interested in taking some questions after his remarks. So I guess we want to keep maybe, like, 15 minutes—so we have another 5 minutes, so I suggest that we make quick comments or quick questions and we go around and finish those with the panelists and give the chance for the Ambassador to speak. Please, sir.

Question. Thank you very much. I will speak French.

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Mr. RAMANAIOR. Yes, my name is Philip Ramanaior. I am here thanks to the invitation of Dr. Sephacle—Marilyn—to take part at this annual convention of the Black Caucus. Now, with respect to discrimination or affirmative action, this is a proposed solution, but I would like to talk about the work that various groups are doing in Guadeloupe because I live in Guadeloupe, which is part of France and Europe as well, but I'd like to talk about the work that is being done.

And here, what's at stake is working on the root causes, be they at the so-called Whites, and the problems that we have within our community. It is indeed true that our community does not really integrate itself because we have had a break of affiliation toward our history. And it's because—this is a treatment that exists. We must really understand why this break has occurred and why we have to work on ourselves. I'm not talking about French people, White people. We have a work to do on our own selves to figure out, why do we not project ourselves; we just live day by day; why we do not look to the future; why do we talk about diversity?

And many people know exactly what they're doing—everybody knows well what you're doing, but there are very few people from the West Indies who mobilize themselves because we have identity problems. We don't know exactly where we come from. And I think in the United States, African-Americans in the United States do not have this problem of break of their origins. American Blacks know exactly where they come from. But we, when we were freed from slavery, we were told we were just French and your ancestors were the Gauls. So we have an identity problem.

We went to Guadeloupe, but we have this major problem and we're trying to solve this. And this will go along with these problems of discrimination which are being dealt with here.

Mr. LAKE. Even in America, sometimes, the time can be extensible. So I just learned that we have 15 more minutes and so we can go until 12:45. So here's what I'll suggest: The Ambassador has to leave at 12:30, so if it's OK with all of you here, we're going to stop the exchange—the Q&A for a moment; give a chance to the Ambassador to make his remarks—I will not call them closing remarks anymore—and give you also a chance, maybe, to ask him three or four questions before he leaves. I think it is going to be very interesting.

So by the way, I'm very surprised that nobody really has raised in a very specific way the issue of the Roma riots or situation in Europe. And I'm sure that the Ambassador will take a minute or two to talk about it in his remarks. [Laughter.] So maybe a last comment and we'll give a chance to the Ambassador to speak. Please, go ahead.

Dr. SEPHACLE. I'm Marilyn Sephacle. I'm a professor at Howard University. And I am a French and American citizen, so I've had the opportunity to observe both societies with regards to the issue of race.

And one thing that I just want to point out in the French context is that there is—people are afraid of two things especially in the elite in France. They are afraid of a quote of statistics because the statistics refers to history, to a painful history of gathering statistics about the Jewish people, for example, for very nefarious aims.

And another word that people are very afraid of is “communautarisme.” It’s a very bad word in French.

So I don’t know whether the discourse has to change. But in order to diagnose a problem, you need to have statistics. For example, we all know that when it comes to wars, minorities in France are disproportionately represented among the casualties, whether it’s World War I, World War II or even now, the war in Afghanistan. So statistics, in a way, are important.

And there is a need, also, to change the discourse with regards to the word communautarisme. Communautarisme is a bad word in France, but there should be a way to approach it so that people feel comfortable talking about communautarisme.

Mr. LAKE. Thank you. I thought it was a specific question on the Roma, but I understand where you’re coming from in terms of communautarisme, which is a key issue regarding the Roma people.

One of the typical pieces of information—I’m sure most of you have it—is a couple days ago, the French Government had to change one of its administrative—I don’t know even the word in English; “circulaire,” we call it in French—affidavit, basically, giving some instruction from the ministry of interior and take out the word of “Roma,” which was specifically mentioned in that document.

And as I mentioned earlier, also, the European Union has engaged in a legal—in legal action against the French Government on this issue.

So I’m sure the Ambassador will talk about it when he makes his remarks or will certainly take some more of your questions. So I’m really pleased to have Ambassador Pierre Vimont take the floor now. Ambassador. [Applause.]

Amb. VIMONT. Thank you, Mr. Lake, and thank you for your very kind engagement to speak about the Roma community. [Laughter.] I will, I will. But before that, I would just like to say one or two words about what I’ve heard up to now because I think it was—I’m telling it really candidly and frankly and sincerely. I think it was a very interesting debate.

Typically, the kind of debate that we have to have on such difficult issues as the whole question of discrimination try to avoid heated exchanges or controversy as we can see here and there. And in other words, try to keep our nerves and try to understand, really, what it’s all about.

My second observation—and I would go totally in agreement with what Marilyn Sephacle just said—this is also a question of culture, very much so. I totally agree with you. There is something always a bit surprising when you hear that, in France, if you would like to have statistics, figures, legal figures about community, this is not allowed; this is illegal. And we cannot go along that. But this goes back to a long culture, precisely of what—as you said very rightly sir—what is in our—in the meaning and in our—in the way we think about our republic, what is at the heart of the French nation and what France is all about.

We’re moving along that way. What has been said about quotas slowly creeping in here and there and in our legislation, mostly for disabled, for women and some other

people. This is slowly moving. Again, what has been done, for instance, in the field of education with the institute of political science, which is a little step, I think, in the right direction.

The whole question, I think, is twofold—is, how far can we go and move slowly French society and French mindsets into the right direction? It takes time. It's a long-term process. And maybe we're quite impatient, quite often in France, but I think this is really what it's all about.

And the second point, I think, which relates to also another great characteristic of our country and that's why I was very interested in what was said to us about L'Oréal is that, usually, in France, everybody hopes that the state will do everything, that the government is going to do everything.

The government can do what was precisely said a few minutes ago: can put the framework, the legislative framework. But then it is also a question of the responsibility for each and every one of the French citizens to make the whole thing move in the right direction. Once again, it's a long process, but I hope and I'm quite definite—I'm quite sure about it that we're heading in the right direction.

Just to give one example which always impresses me very much in France. At one point, we had those difficult situations in the suburbs and people had the impression that we were going to see more and more difficulty and tension between what one could call the Muslim community and the rest of the society.

And to the surprise, I think, of many people and many observers in France, things have not gone in the bad—in the worst direction—for many reasons. But one of them is that the marriage between the different communities is growing. The number is growing, which I think is a healthy sign of the French society.

I think another feature of the French is they always like to criticize their own country. We're champions in that field. Let's look, of course, at the glass as half empty, but let's look also, from time to time, at when it is half filled.

Now, to the Roma community, if you allow me. [Laughter.] Here again, let's try to avoid heated exchanges as we have seen maybe and heard in recent days.

A few facts to try to help everybody to understand: First of all, in legal term, there's nothing—there is nothing as such as Roma community. There's nothing in legal terms as Roma citizen. Those people are citizens, quite often, from European countries—Romania and Bulgaria, for most of them—and they must be treated as such from a legal point of view.

Second, there is nothing like any kind of collective action against this so-called community. We're not targeting that so-called community because we're not allowed, by law. Not only French law, but European conventions. The Charter of Fundamental Human Rights that we have signed and ratified; the Convention of the European Council; French law, also, are forbidding any kind of collective expulsion. So it is not this problem that we're facing.

What we're facing is the question of taking measures against individual citizens from, as I was saying, mostly European countries that are creating a problem related mostly to public order or to other questions that have to do with sometimes with trafficking here and there, robbery, et cetera and that we have to deal with that. And we have to do it under our legislation and under the very strong constraint of great—very strong legal oversight and judicial oversight.

And I'm very, to some extent, not totally surprised, but very much interested that, as we've seen a lot of reports on what has been going on recently in my country, I haven't read anywhere that recently about some of those individual measures that have been taken—administrative courts in France have canceled.

It has been recently the case of two courts that have just canceled measures that have been taken there because every one of those European citizens have the right to go to the French courts and ask for the cancellation of those measures. And this is watched very carefully by our courts.

Last, another point, what we're doing, quite often, to help those so-called Roma members of the—Roma community to return home, we allow for—not insignificant allocations, financial allocations for them to go back home and to even reinsert themselves in their society. Something like \$400 to go back home and sometimes more than \$5,000, even more, to start a business or to set up their home when they go back there.

And what was very interesting recently when two members of the French Government went to Romania and tried to see how we could try to cope with the whole issue, our—their Romanian counterparts told them, it's not surprising that so many of our citizens come to your country because you're giving them great facilities in financial terms. So you should maybe think a little more about what you're doing. So you see, now, I think it is a little bit more complicated than what is usually said, I think.

And I would like to stop there because I hope the discussion can go on whether I am here or not, but I think what is really interesting is that we're facing, in fact, a major problem. The so-called Roma represent today 9 million citizens all around Europe with great difficulty of integration in their own national societies, whether it be Romania, Bulgaria or other country.

Every country to which they are going, circulating, around Europe is facing exactly the same problem as France. Not only Europe, by the way. Canada has recently decided to set up, again, the obligation of visas for people coming from that community, which means that everybody is facing that problem.

And the main problem I think we all have to face in a responsible way is, how can we help that community through financial means, through every kind of possible assistance? How do we help those people, at last, to settle peacefully and with a real significant degree of stability; to insert themselves and to integrate the society to which they belong? And I think that's the most important. This is where we have to keep on discussing with the European Commission and our European partners.

Let's be honest. France set up a conference when she had—when France had the Presidency of the European Union in 2008 about that issue. Many of our partners didn't show great interest into it. Spain did it again during the first half of this year—also set up a conference to discuss more about the whole issue about the Roma community. Nobody paid much attention to it. So I think we really have, all together, to be much more aware of the kind of issue we're facing there and to try to find a solution all together.

I'll stop here. I've been quite too long and I apologize. But Mr. Lake, it's all back to you.

Mr. LAKE. Thank you very much, Ambassador Vimont. I understand that you are willing to take maybe a couple of questions. I know you have about 5 more minutes. Is it OK? All right, OK. So I will suggest that rather than making comments because we don't really have a lot of time—the Ambassador has just 5 minutes, so we'll just take

questions and a few questions to the Ambassador before he leaves. Sir? Please introduce yourself, please.

Dr. BLAKELY. I'm Allison Blakely. I'm a Professor of European History at Boston University and I'm engaged in research on a history of Blacks in European history, primarily.

Mr. Ambassador, I'd like to first thank you for participating in this discussion. My question is very simple. I think you are correct in assuming that many of us do see the policy that's being pursued concerning the Roma as directed against a group and not individuals. I'm just wondering, is it your impression that the majority of the French public also sees this as directed against individuals and not against the gypsies and the Roma?

Amb. VIMONT. I would say it very much depends where you live. [Laughter.] You know, for a lot of French citizens who live in small towns and who have, in the suburbs of that town or that village, representatives from the Roma community stationed there, usually in an illegal position on grounds that can be either public or private, for those people, it seems that something is wrong there and that we should take the necessary measure against that group.

But for, I think, many other citizens who live far away from that reality, I think they are more of the opinion that we're talking about individuals. And I think that this is the whole problem that we're facing with discrimination in general terms.

It depends very much on the kind of awareness that you have to that issue: whether you see it in a rather abstract way and you're able to look at the different concepts and to see how you can try to solve that issue in a responsible way, and people who are living in a very much more practical way with that kind of issue and facing it day to day.

Dr. BLAKELY. Thank you.

Mr. LAKE. Yeah, one of the privileges of being moderator is you ask people to only ask a question and you don't do that, which is what I'm going to do just right now just to echo what the Ambassador said.

I was very surprised; I read this very good French newspaper, *Courrier International*, and there is a poll in Italy where 80 percent of the Italians asked for the expulsion of the Roma people. And 90 percent of them are Italian themselves. That just shows kind of the complexity of that issue in Europe. I know that the gentleman next to the professor would like to ask a question, too.

Mr. KHAN. Thank you. My name is Suhail Khan and I'm a Senior Fellow with the Institute for Global Engagement, a religious freedom think tank. And so my question is regarding religious freedom in France and the move to ban crosses, yarmulkes and headscarves for women.

I know that there are some who see that as something as a liberation for some, but of course, as Americans, we see it as a religious expression and freedom of expression. What is the status of that issue right now in France? Is there any possibility for change or reform?

Mr. LAKE. Ambassador, just before you answer, maybe we can take another question just because I'm looking at the time—I understand you're very tight on time—and so that somebody else wanted to ask a question somewhere here. No? OK. I'm sorry. So Ambassador, please.

Amb. VIMONT. Your question is a very interesting question and so I'm not saying that usually because I'm embarrassed by it but because I think you are at the heart of, really, the difference of culture between our two countries.

I think we both start from the same point, freedom of religion or freedom of speech, even, to a large extent. And we go exactly to contradictory conclusions. Just to give you one example before coming back to your point about the freedom of speech, in France, there would not have been any difficulties starting from the same principle of the freedom of speech, to stop that strange preacher from Florida who wanted to burn the Quran. We have everything in our French legislation that allows the government to stop him before he goes ahead, if only because his speech could create public disorder. And because of that, you have the right in France under clear legal framework to do something, which is totally different from yours.

With regard to the freedom of religion, I don't think there is much hope for the time being, at least, that we will change that legislation on scarves because in fact, everybody thought that, that would create a lot of tension and it will be very difficult to implement that legislation.

And to be honest, this has not gone too badly so far in France. Everybody has thought that. After all, it has been done in a very practical way. In schools, some schools, where they had some difficulty, they have tried to see how they could cope with it. But at the end of it, looking after a few years of the implementation of that legislation, people feel—and people who are in charge of managing our school system who didn't know how to behave with regard to that issue have found a clear path on which they can work. And I think this has not been too bad so far.

But once again, I agree with you. Seen from an American point of view, this looks like a kind of infringement of the freedom of religion. We see it as the possibility for everybody to live together in good coexistence, with the idea that the separation between church and state is really implemented at what we consider as mostly, before everything else, as secular society.

With regard to the burqa, I think—because I know that some of you would like to ask a question, I think this is a different issue, if only because from a religious point of view. And many of the Muslim leaders we have been able to talk to about the burqa do not consider the burqa as part of the precepts of their religion. It's something else. It's a tradition that exists in some areas of the Muslim world, but this is not a religious habit or even rule. And therefore, this is something quite different.

And it will be very interesting to watch how reaction appears in the Muslim countries now that that legislation has been adopted now by our two houses.

And mind you, we still have to go through, now, the constitutional court that will have to say also its opinion about this. But it'll be very interesting to watch and observe the kind of reactions you will get in Muslim countries. And we'll see.

Mr. LAKE. Thank you very much, Ambassador. I promised your staff that you will be leaving at 12:30. It's 2 minutes past 12:30—[laughter]—so thank you very much for your time. [Laughter, applause.]

OK, so I know there were more questions and comments on the discussion, including on the—some on the statement made by the Ambassador. So the audience is welcome to intervene. I know Khalid, you wanted to say something at one point; I know Alain; also,

Rokhaya. But if there is—in the public first, maybe a few question or comments. Please, Professor.

Dr. SEPHOCLE. With regards to the banning of religious symbols in French culture, in French life, I would take you back probably to the history of France. France has a long history of wars of religion, wars where the basis was religion, whether we think of the 100 Years' War, the 30 Years' War, the 7 Years' War. So these are—this is a long process of wars that have been fought in France and where the basis in part was religion; in part, or in whole, was religious.

So France has come to some sort of a *modus vivendi* where secularism is what prevails. And it's very dear to France. And *laïcité* is what they have—what the French have come up with. So it's very dear to the French, the separation of church and state.

Mr. LAKE. Thank you. Any other comments or questions? Please.

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Ms. BURNA. Thank you. Three quick observations. Well, first of all, I'm Maria Guiseppina Burna. I'm at the Paris-Dauphine University and I work at another organization, a nonprofit organization that works on diversity issues.

So first of all, we mentioned the impact of diversity on the performance of companies. It seems to me that when you're in France and when you're turning to companies, well, of course, the economic dimension is very important in order to make anything you say credible.

You want to promote minority and diversity; that's important. But you need to do more than that. Diversity needs to go beyond fighting discrimination and needs to go to a much larger reflection regarding an individual's social, moral performance as well as economic performance of the companies. In fact, companies that do not discriminate and that embrace difference are in fact more creative. They have far more innovation.

So not discriminating goes well beyond being simply a legal obligation. And we've talked about the strong legal framework in France to fight discrimination, but diversity is also a very important economic driver, provided this diversity is properly managed. So that's my first comment related to the comments on discrimination in France.

So in France, as we've said, we have a lot of—a very strong legal framework. But perhaps we are lacking this citizen-awareness and awareness on the part of victims to point out that there has been discrimination. And so people need to learn how to denounce discrimination and to go to the proper authorities in order to do this. Being discriminated against is a very strong violence that is committed onto individuals.

And so when we talk about affirmative action in France, of course, this goes counterparty to Republican values whereby all citizens are equal. And in that manner, France and United States are countries that were born out of revolutions, out of fights for emancipation, and thus, the notions of freedom and equality are extremely important.

That being said, diversity measures should not be confused with quotas. When you want to measure diversity, you're trying to measure discrimination, in fact, and it means having a very objective awareness. And here, there are various academic procedures that can be used to highlight, to pinpoint this discrimination as well as diversity, which is present, but which is often undervalued.

So three dimensions are very important and so I'd like to thank you again for this very interesting, enriching debate and which shows that there's certainly good ideas, both in America and France and I think it's important that we share those great ideas.

Mr. LAKE. Thank you very much. Monsieur?

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Mr. MONSTERLEET. I'm a Journalist; Chief Editor of a newspaper from Guadeloupe. I'd like to mention two points. We talked a lot about politics. We talked a lot about entrepreneurial willingness, but we did not talk about the power of the media. But the media, what are they? They represent the voters.

Just a quick example, in my newspaper this morning, we received a memo from a deputy political representative in Guadeloupe. And so something happened 100 years ago, something that is well-known in France. Nobody mentioned this event, though. And so Monsieur—(inaudible)—is a famous—(inaudible). And when he died, that was spoken a lot about. So it's not the same treatment for all topics.

And so I'm not trying to criticize L'Oréal because L'Oréal has certainly made a lot of progress, but I did read an article recently, and the article talked about that famous glass ceiling. Indeed, L'Oréal's policy—external policy—is fairly realistic in terms of a corporate policy. For example, in the United States, there are more Black people, and L'Oréal is putting a lot of Black people in the company because that's an economic advantage; whereas in France, that is not the same situation. And so here, we have the blue, White and red code—bleu, blanc, rouge—whereby people were recruited, basically, on their physical appearance. And so now, that has been exposed. And so I'm very pleased to hear that L'Oréal, now, has a much more adapted and inclusive policy.

Finally, to conclude, I just wanted to say you have laws but not all laws are applied. And there are a lot of populist strategies that are used toward voters.

Mr. LAKE. Thank you. I guess I'd allow Jackie to maybe react to that if you want to. You don't have to. If not, we can move to another question. Jackie?

Ms. CELESTIN-ANDRÉ. I'm not quite sure if I understood all your comments regarding L'Oréal, but just to put the facts straight. Why don't I say it in French?

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Ms. CELESTIN-ANDRÉ. It's really important in terms of what you said regarding discrimination. Well, we need to be very concise and precise in terms of what has happened. In fact, L'Oréal was denounced but that's because we're L'Oréal. But L'Oréal was not the culprit behind that situation.

First of all, we were not talking about recruitment in terms of the recruitment of managers. The situation occurred with a recruitment agency for hostesses for an in-store event. Thus, L'Oréal had not provided any recommendations whatsoever regarding the recruitment of a very specific profile. That did not come from us. It came from the recruitment agency. That being said, L'Oréal was criticized and blamed for the situation simply because we are L'Oréal. But that was not the actual situation. You need to get the facts straight.

But for example, in this particular situation, we were quite surprised, but we remained firmly convinced that our history, our background, is that we do not discriminate in terms of recruitment. Our aim is to move things forward and to move forward in a very proactive manner. And we wish to contribute to the progress of nondiscrimination and thus, L'Oréal remains clearly devoted to this aim and to promote the equal access for French citizens and citizens worldwide.

Mr. LAKE. Thank you. I think we all heard your comments. We give a chance to answer because her organization was directly question in your comments. So I suggest

that we move on. We have only 4 minutes. I know a lot of the members of the panel want to speak, but I suggest we give them the last couple minutes and maybe take a couple other questions. Please.

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Ms. LOUISA. Hello. I'll be speaking in French and I apologize for that. I'm Louisa—(inaudible). I identify myself as Franco-Algerian. I live in France. I own a company and I'm also Chairman of an organization that promotes diversity in the workplace. To go back to the metaphor of the half-empty glass, I would like to provide the following reminder.

It's good to delegate power, but you also need to take power, to seize power. For example, we have migrant entrepreneurship—that's what it's called in French. It's a real strength and there are many company directors in France that come from all areas of diversity. For example, 15 percent of currently created companies are created from—via minorities.

Therefore, in France, minorities have a real economic power. However, we are not well organized as you are in caucuses. However, in terms of statistics and in terms of numbers, it exists and the momentum is increasing, and there is economic power that is held by the minorities in France and I wanted to underscore that point.

Mr. LAKE. Thank you, thank you very much.

Mr. RHEAULT. Thank you. My name is Magali Rheault. I'm with the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies. This morning, we touched a lot on basically the diversity from a racial and ethnic standpoint. The focus of my research is more along the lines of religious diversity. This is, of course, a very, very challenging topic to discuss in a French context.

I am from France originally. I've lived in the United States for many, many years, and I do travel to France to brief policymakers and opinion leaders on this research. But I think it is a very, very important dimension that needs to be included in the debate on diversity in France and the challenges that many people—we can't even really use the word community in the French context.

But basically, one of the key findings from our research is that French Muslims feel French but the French don't embrace them as being part of the fabric of France. And this is something that we have a ton of research that I would be happy to be share with, you know, anybody who is interested in because it is a very important dimension in the diversity debate in France. Thank you.

Mr. LAKE. Thank you very much for sharing that. And I'm sure at the end of the conversation, a lot of people are going to come directly to you. So now, if there is not maybe a very last question before the panel can close? Please.

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Mr. COULANT. Hello. I'm Jean-Paul Coulant. I am in charge of academic relations in Washington. I'd like to emphasize two points. There was a Pew Center survey that demonstrated that France is a country in which minorities are best perceived by the local populations. For example, of all the countries in Europe, France has the best perception of Jewish people.

And I would like to go back to that notion of freedom of religion. I come from a so-called invisible minority. I am White but I am also Protestant. And in fact, in 1905, in France, we had the law on secularism where you have a separation of church and state but the church in question was the Catholic Church. And when this occurred, it triggered a civil war. A lot of people—a lot of army officers resigned. There was a lot of civil disobe-

dience, there were a lot of riots and that's because French Catholics could not bear the idea, the thought, that the French state was no longer going to represent the Catholic state.

There's an old slogan in France—Catholic and French. And so one of the main blocks in today's society, today's French society—and this is something that I really feel as a Frenchman—there's a fear that there will be a new civil war centered around Islam. To simplify what I'm saying: In fact, we already have a long history. We've already paid for that history and we don't wish to start over again with that same history.

And so secularism in France applies also to Catholics. And so for example, a fervent Catholic who works in the French educational system needs to really integrate himself or herself into his or her working environment and needs to accept certain restrictions. So that's just my personal opinion. It is not the Embassy's opinion, but it's an opinion of a historian, which is what I am.

Mr. LAKE. Yeah, so we literally have, what, minus 3 minutes, I should say? [Laughter.] So we're going to take, really, 30 seconds for each of the panelists who want to make a last comment. And I'm going to turn over the mic to Mischa Thompson from the Helsinki Commission. Rokhaya?

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Ms. DIALLO. I wanted to respond to this notion of the power of the media. There's a real disconnect between the media and political action. There's been a lot of talk about the problem about the Roma but it was actually triggered by an event that happened in France. There were some travelers who destroyed a police station in France. And so the ministry of the interior reacted by lumping together all of the Romas and demanding their expulsion. And so what happens systematically is that politicians use events in order to react.

Another thing that happened, President Sarkozy is contemplating taking French nationality from minorities. So for example—and this is because a young North African man had pointed a weapon at a policeman. And based on this event, the French President decided that there are real Frenchmen that would be punished by existing sanctions whereas there are other French people whose nationality could be removed, as if this French nationality was conditional.

And I think it's very important to emphasize this: Politicians use this hidden racism as a political weapon. You know, the Front national, extreme right group, has also reached a second round of elections in France. And this is an important fact that we need to keep in mind.

We've talked about the various veils. You know, 2004, no veils in schools. And now, another law: You cannot wear full veil even in streets in France. And this was something that was really—had a lot of media coverage. And in fact, in 2004, there was only about 100 women who wore veils in school, yet this was the front page on French newspapers for months.

And yet again, there are certain events that are showcased in the French media whereas most people in France are not confronted with women wearing veils. And so we need to keep in mind the fact that there's a perception that is really nurtured by politicians as well as by the media.

And the reason that there's a lot of emphasis on the Roma population is that because there's a politician in France who needs to distract attention from certain topics. And

media have a real responsibility in terms of their representation of minorities. In fact, minorities are overrepresented when they take part in negative news events.

Mr. LAKE. Thank you very much, Rokhaya. Alain?

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Mr. DOLIUM. Yes, thank you. I'd like to go back to what was said. And I agree with what—much of what Rokhaya has said. In fact, when I was talking about the current situation in France and the three drivers that we really need to use in order to move things forward and to really have a true multicultural and postcolonial society, well, I emphasized this idea that we need to have a new political class. But I'd like to go even beyond that. We need to have a creative class.

We need to have people who can rethink French society in a real breakthrough manner. And they need to be able to make these measures tangible. Among other facts, if I limit myself to that creative class and that political class, well, I believe that a political class in France—to which I belong—needs to stop having an approach that focuses on events, on news events. It's like a judge that enables politicians to create cleavage.

But we don't need segmentation; we don't need cleavage. On the contrary, we need national unity in order to build a society that is more balanced, more just. Because in France, we certainly need to move our debates and we need to stop focusing on media events, news items and trivial events.

Mr. LAKE. Thank you very much, Alain. Khalid?

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Mr. HAMDANI. I, of course, agree with much has been said by my colleagues. And of course, with Islam, people need to stop believing that Islam is a foreign body, a foreign culture in France.

Let us remember that the first two Crusades were not initiated by the British. The French decided that they needed to build their idea by recovering the St. Sepulchre. And so French culture is largely imbued with Islamic culture. I'm not going to provide a complete reminder of all those historical moments, but Islam and France have been—of course, had difficult relations for a long time, but they are linked.

However, you know, in France—France is extremely Catholic and something that's, particularly to with nonbelievers, you have atheist, Republican French people are in fact profoundly Catholic. You know, they confess continuously and they refuse to accept their acts, to take responsibility for their acts.

And now, to go back to the law of 1905, well, it put end to a war that had been started by republic that was called truant, but I don't think we need to go back to historical events. Clearly, Islam is not a threat to civil peace in France. On the contrary, Islam contributes to pacifying relations, you know.

The mixed marriages have been emphasized. That's important. And what is most difficult, to go back to the Roma situation, is the fact that people are evicted and then they come back. And so this is a legal detour that is quite difficult to understand. So legal experts understand all these matters.

But to go back to the Roma, what is most unbearable for me, of course, is significant funds are being given to Bulgaria and Romania, but these funds are not used properly. What's most unbearable for me is that during World War II—and this is not—I'm not trying to make a funny comment here. During World War II, the Roma, the gypsies were evicted. And so I find it unbearable and I really emphasize that term—unbearable. It is

quite “unbearable” for me to see how they are being treated yet again. They were sent to extermination camps. And so based on that historical fact, it is inadmissible for this matter to be taken lightly.

Of course, I find it very annoying when they come and wash my car against my consent, but that’s not the important fact, you know? Our everyday comfort—I apologize; I am being very passionate about this, but I feel strongly about this. You know, Romas and gypsies have already been exterminated and evicted by Nazi Germany and so we really need to make sure that we do not go back to that horrible imagery for those people. [Applause.]

Mr. LAKE. Thank you. Jackie?

Ms. CELESTIN-ANDRÉ. So my closing remarks are simple. It’s that as a company, we will continue to work on making our L’Oréal in France increasingly more diverse, with more diverse talent, people coming from different backgrounds.

Because we know after having done a study on the link between diversity and performance—we’ve done the first study in France, and probably the first one in Europe, where we’ve been able to conclude on not just social basis, but on an economic basis that for example, when you have a team that’s a better mix of men and women in a team versus a team that’s just men for example, the team that’s mixed with women is extremely more productive than just having just the male team.

We know that when we have people of disabilities working in a team, it’s extremely difficult for a colleague who has a headache to say, I’m not coming in to the office today. That person will come in because they see that the colleague who has a disability is coming in.

And so we have more and more facts and figures based on economics because at the end of the day, for a company like L’Oréal and maybe just for the society as a whole, sometimes—it sounds a bit cruel but it comes down to dollars and cents. And so we will continue to enrich ourselves with talent and promote that talent because it does bring value to the company. And as a whole, it will bring value to the society.

Personally, this is my personal point of view, I don’t think—personally think—we will be able to get rid of discrimination. It’s inherent for years—I mean, centuries. I think the goal is to make sure that in the environment that we are in that we can keep our thoughts, our behaviors that are discriminatory outside. And while we’re working and we’re working together that we can go through a common goal—for common goal, and that, basically, the focus is going forward and trying to work collectively.

At the end, if it helps society, that’s great. And I think that’s the bottom line. It would be great. But we need to move forward and work collectively.

Mr. LAKE. Wonderful. Thank you, Jackie; 45 seconds, Kag. You have the floor. [Laughter.] Kag, please, go ahead.

[NOTE.—The following remarks are delivered via translator.]

Mr. SANOUSSI. I’m going to be brief. First of all, in terms of employment, it’s a fundamental issue in terms of diversity. When you have a job, you have personal stability, you can integrate; you can insert yourself. And so being employed is extremely important. And that’s why it’s so important in France. And so that’s why we want companies to further commit themselves to that issue.

Next, we have this notion of commitment. When one commits themselves to signing the charter of diversity, we ask you whether or not you've done something. And if you haven't done something, then you're excluded. And nobody likes to be excluded.

For example, we did not find that the media were committed enough. And they have—we have only 20 media organizations in France that have signed the charter. That's very little.

And so I'd like to conclude by saying that the fight against discrimination and the promotion of diversity means not only respecting anti-discrimination laws, but it goes well beyond that.

I'm not going to—for example, it's not going into a—(inaudible)—and you have people of all different races and origins, men and women. But when you look at the organizational chart, what actually happens is that you have men who are in management positions, women on the bottom. And we need to change that.

I come from a region in France in which rugby is played a lot. And so the haka is the opposite of yakka. And unfortunately, we are often yakka. “Yakka” means somebody else should do it in French. So somebody else should do it. And so I'd like us to do a haka dance because when you're in the haka dance, you're part of the melee. You're working with others and you're moving forth diversity. [Applause.]

Mr. LAKE. Thank you, Kag. That was a great way to close this panel discussion. I just want—I'm sure most of you guys have received this note. There is going to be, basically, a prolongation of this conversation at Howard University tomorrow, Thursday, at the same time that we started today, at 11 a.m. at the Ralph Bunche Center and it's going to be a conversation around Blacks in Europe and the political process. So I am sure that you guys can continue the conversation there.

I'm going to turn the mic to Mischa Thompson. But also, I would like to thank, on your behalf, the Helsinki Commission for organizing this very interesting and very lively debate and maybe ask you, maybe, a quick applause for the Commission. [Applause.]

[Whereupon at 1 p.m., the briefing ended.]



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