

Dr. Browne: Welcome to this special episode of the Health Disparities podcast, which is brought to you by the National Medical Association in partnership with Movement is Life Caucus. I am Dr. Doris Browne, and it is my pleasure to host the podcast, today. I am the owner of Browne & Associates, LLC, a small business that manages programs addressing national and global health inequities. I'm a past-president of the National Medical Association, and I also retired from the division of cancer prevention at the National Cancer Institute, NIH, where I managed the breast cancer chemo-prevention portfolio. I should also say that I retired as a colonel in the US Army Medical Corps. I have had a lifelong passion for medicine and scientific research, especially diversity and inclusion within that research. I've become increasingly interested in the important intersection of environmental justice and climate health and equity. Many people say that bringing about real lasting and sustainable changes in social and environmental justice will require leadership that is leadership from our younger generation. And so, if you want to get a great example of how young people today are organizing themselves, you will hear as part of this podcast, a young woman who is the founder and executive director of Sol Nation. And she is also part of Think 100% organizer. You can find that on Google. Nakisa Glover is bringing about awareness, engagement, and activism with an emphasis on creativity. The Sol Nation program works to equip historically marginalized communities with education, training, and resources to address injustice specifically in the areas of

climate, environmental and economic impact. Nakisa Glover is really a climate and environmental justice practitioner. She's a thought leader, a technical advocate, and a community engagement expert. She actively developed strategies across activism, films, music, and podcasts to help engage the active and to activate millennials, Gen Z artists, entertainers, community leaders, entrepreneurs, politicians, and other climate experts, even old people like myself. So, welcome, Nakisa. Could you tell us a little bit about your focus and responsibilities at Sol Nation and other programs?

Nakisa: Thank you, Dr. Browne. It's such a pleasure to be here with you today and your audience and the guests that we're joined by. I am excited to have this conversation with your audience and with you, specifically around environmental and climate justice. I'd like to start by just having an opportunity to have a common language. And when we talk about climate justice and we talk about environmental justice, are we using the same understanding of what that means? And for me, my work across the board, no matter what hat I'm wearing, for me, my definition of climate justice is rooted in the understanding that climate by definition is the condition of our land, our air, our water, and our people. Our mainstream makes you think climate is just the weather impacts or the environment that exists around you and how the temperatures change. But we also know how to talk about climate from the perspective of our political

climate, our educational climate, our climate for health, right? And so, in being able to be grounded in that definition of climate, being the condition of our land, our air, our water, our people, it gives us the opportunity to make that strong connection of why the environmental movement and the social justice movement, both meet each other. They both need each other because the most harmful impacts are impacting the same communities across the board; no matter if we look at the air that we're breathing or the digital divide that exists. The communities that are most impacted by these issues tend to be black, indigenous, and people of color communities. And we will not address these issues without addressing them, simultaneously. So, thank you for having me here today, and I'm excited for this wonderful conversation we're going to have.

Dr. Browne: Thank you, Nakisa. It is really important for us to have a common language. Thank you so much for that. Our second guest today is Robbyn Lewis. She is the first African American woman ever to represent Maryland's 46 district, an area that covers most of Baltimore's famous waterfront communities. She previously worked for the greater part of her career in global public health, serving with programs as far-field as South Africa and Haiti, mostly leading initiatives dedicated to women's health. And again, we have that intersection in terms of our careers, public health, women's health. So, thank you. She's retained her interest in public health

as a public servant with additional priorities for sustainable transportation, greening our cities, and making our streets safer. Welcome, Robbyn.

Robbyn: Thank you so much, Dr. Browne. It's a pleasure to be with you. I look forward to our conversation. My name is Robbyn Lewis. I am a state delegate representing Maryland's 46th district. As Dr. Browne kindly mentioned, I like to refer to myself as the first black woman representing the whitest district in the blackest city in Maryland. And what that means is I feel a certain duty, a historic, and maybe even a genetic responsibility to represent the interests of people who've been left voiceless, people who have lost the opportunity to see themselves in their elected leaders in this district. So, it's a heavy responsibility. One that I take seriously, and one that is an honor to carry. I trained in public health and worked in international health on infectious disease prevention in 14 countries around the world, but I was also a Peace Corps volunteer. And I think knowing that tells you most of what you need to know about me, which is that I am not afraid of immersing myself in challenging environments. I have a heart for all people. I speak a couple of different languages that helps me get closer to people who are different than I am. And most of all, I have a sense of responsibility to my neighbors to make our shared environment a better place. When I became a state delegate four years ago, after having spent a career in international health, I brought all of my experiences with me as a black woman and an African American, as a

health professional, and as a resident of Baltimore City, which is a classic example of the living impacts of historical racist ideology and racist public policy and living here in all of those intersections has been a perfect confluence of factors, like I was born for this. I was born in the immediate aftermath of the passage of the Civil Rights Act. My family benefited from the passage of the fair housing act in 1967 so that I was able to grow up in a mostly white suburb in Indiana. And we know that the most powerful force opening doors for development is access to housing. And the black middle-class in America became possible, in part, because of the fair housing act. I'm a beneficiary of that. So, I really feel a sense of responsibility to serve. And the timing was just right. So, I look forward to talking with you more.

Dr. Browne: Thank you so much, Robbyn for such wonderful comments. We had the first discussion, a podcast that was about the impact of climate and environment on health, Episode 101, and our Florida physician, Dr. Cheryl Holder and Elise Tolbert from the Climate Action Campaign explored some of the devastating ways that climate change is exacerbating health disparities. We've learned how a warmer climate makes it harder, but in a community that relies on air conditioning to maintain a healthy environment and makes physical activity outside in the summer months, unbearable, particularly for our older residents. And we know and have the feel of that, that just happened this year with the trends

in the South, in the Pacific Northwest, as well as even here in our areas. And so, as we discuss how a hotter climate in an urban environment reduces our air quality, it exacerbates asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases.

Dr. Holder made the case that every physician and healthcare stakeholder should consider environmental determinants of health as an integral part of the social determinants, as well as health outcomes. And I would say not only environmental determinants and social determinants, but sociopolitical determinants, because we know our policymakers' impact very strongly our health outcomes based upon where our people live and work and play and pray. So, today we're going to focus on the importance of our grassroots and community interventions and share some examples, which our guests have been involved in, as to the great impact of the environment on our health. Nakisa, I know you are very much engaged in several grassroots programs that are focused on environmental justice and working very much from the bottom up to combat the structural racism that is often baked into our environmental justice issues. So, could you give us a couple of examples of initiatives where people have organized around to dispel these programs?

Nakisa: Thank you for that question, Dr. Browne and, you know, I sit with the term bottom-up and what that really means, and who's on top when we say

that? I'm really, appreciative of what Robbyn said when you identified your community as your neighbors. And that's what we are all really are in our existence. We are neighbors in this human experience. We are a part of a community. And so, I think being able to even look at what that narrative says when we're organizing from the bottom up, or we're engaging from a place, sometimes it can be misconstrued as a place of less than, and really, it is a place of underinvestment under resource, lesser access to the infrastructure, resources, power, and education to really be in being a sustainable and regenerative community. So, I start my response with that is in challenging everyone to think about when we say a bottom-up approach. Who is on top if it's a bottom-up approach and where do you exist and fall into that paradigm? Right now, people are picking up the pieces of their lives in the wake of Hurricane Ida and Hurricane Ida left a trail from Louisiana all the way up to New York. What needs to be said about that is that it's not a naturally occurring event. It is an extreme weather-related event exacerbated by a changing climate. When we talk about environmental justice issues, unfortunately, our communities are not dealing with these issues in isolation or one at a time because that same community that is dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Ida is also faced with the toxic pollution that exists in Cancer Alley in Louisiana, also known as the home to the petrochemical industry, which produces plastics and it increases the levels of pollution in the air that community members are living next door to. And so, that is a huge fight in the wake of a pandemic,

in the wake of a devastating hurricane and that's not the only story. I'll speak more local to my home. I'm in Charlotte, North Carolina, and earlier this year, Colonial Pipeline made the news. Hopefully, everyone remembers because we get so much news that it's one extreme event after the next. But if you'll remember earlier this year with Colonial Pipeline, they were in the news because of a ransomware attack. Everybody knows about Colonial Pipeline in the news and the gas shortage with people not being able to stock up on gas to fuel their cars. Well, this same entity while they were faced with this public-facing ransomware attack is the same entity that was leaking and has been leaking in my back door. It's not even a 15-minute drive from my home, personally. And so, if we're talking about environmental justice, I think this is going to be the key, the real sticking point, environmental justice is social justice. Environmental justice is directly related to your work and everything that you do day in and day out as you are making diagnoses occurring in a patient. We've got to talk about it from a cumulative impact perspective. We've got to talk about it from the social determinants of health and the environmental determinants of health. And as you said, Dr. Browne, the sociopolitical determinants of health, because we have people playing politics with our lives. People are making political decisions in the interest of financial outcomes instead of our livelihood. And so, what does it mean to embrace your gift? As people, apart from the medical community, embrace what that means for the community and to be able to

connect the dots and translate that's the gift that I would say, being able to be a translator of the symptom and the connection to the issues. Of course, I'm going to have cancer if I'm faced with multiple polluting industries and my city council says yes to the next one that offers the promise of jobs in the community. We need our medical professionals and our people in the medical industry to advocate for our health more than just when you see us inside the doors of your office or the doors of your hospital.

Dr. Browne: Thank you so much. Clearly, the challenges are there, and as you talk about the environmental, social, and sociopolitical impact, it is really, an economic issue. Talk to me a little bit about organizations that are there trying to make a difference in stimulating our legislators to bring about change. We recognize the complexities of the issues, and we know if we are not able to sit at the table, and I think it was Congresswoman Chisholm that said we may not have a seat at the table, but we have to bring our own chair so that we can be there. So, can you give us an example of any existing environmental organizations that are helping to challenge the colonials of our community?

Nakisa: The thing about it, Dr. Browne, is the reason why you probably, if you're listening and you can't think of one, it's because these groups are often doing the work, they're under-resourced underpaid, and overburdened

with the number of issues that they're focused on. It wasn't a direct path to engage in environmental justice. Having come from a corporate background, having come from after leaving corporate into a more of a big green-type organization, it wasn't the easiest thing to navigate, again, because the big green organizations of the world, have a lot of resources and a lot of money and they're the ones that are seeking out the smaller organizations that are actually doing the work to achieve their goals. So, those organizations are going to be, and I, again, appreciate Robbyn mentioning the term neighbors in this conversation because these are our neighbors that are doing the work that is not necessarily who you see when disaster strikes like every one of the big organizations, in many ways they serve a purpose, but if you're talking about direct on the ground relief or direct on the groundwork to plug into, it's going to be those lesser-known organizations like Down East Coal Ash Coalition or Black Voters Matter. Although, Black Voters Matter is gaining prominence, not everybody in my circle knows about Black Voters Matter, but they're directly addressing policy in their work. It is the hip-hop caucuses of the world. It is the Sol Nations of the world. What I like to reference is that sweet spot. I'm not sure for you all what kind of hours you're keeping if you're listening to me, but let's go with the traditional, oh nine to five. I don't even keep a nine to five anymore, but just for this example. Many of us were taught to go to school, get a good job. When you get a good job, you get a great family, and you get a house and that's the end of the story.

You're living the American dream. What happens in that sweet spot between the time you get off and the time you get home, is where change is happening, is where people are asking and needing your voice and your gift in these spaces. Your expertise is needed and wanted. And so, what are those communities in your neighborhood that are speaking out on environmental justice issues? And if you can't find any of them, then there may be an opportunity for you to be the one to create it. But there's a whole community of people that are committed to environmental justice work, are committed to climate justice work, and are really, engaged in real solutions for climate justice and environmental justice. And one more that I want to make sure I mention as a great starting point of where people can plugin if you're excited about this conversation around environmental justice and how to go further because that was me. I was excited from the beginning and wanted to know more and wanted to know how to plug in and best be of service to my community. And one example that I would start you off with would be the Red Black and Green New Deal. They had a summit earlier this year that is putting forth a black climate agenda. And this black climate agenda is rooted in six pillars. And those pillars are of water, of energy, of land, of labor, economy, and democracy. And with this particular one that I'm plugging, it is a commitment to life, and it's a commitment to real solutions and being aware of the false solutions and dispelling the myths around false solutions.

Dr. Browne: Thank you again, very exciting. And no, we're not leaving Robbyn out because she has been involved in things, and as a legislator, she is out there stirring up the good trouble. So, Robbyn, I understand that you have been involved with an initiative called Livable Streets Coalition in your own residential area of Baltimore. So, could you tell us how this initiative came about? What changes have they been targeting? How have you been engaging with different parts of the community for this effort?

Robbyn: Thank you, Dr. Browne. While Nakisa was talking, something, she said reminded me of a saying my father was fond of. My father used to quote Booker T. Washington. What he liked to remind us, was that no matter where our dreams might take us, and no matter how far I wanted to travel in the world, he said, lay down your buckets where you are. And that was a famous quote from the great Booker T. Washington, who advocated for black people to take their lives and their destinies into their hands. I think what my dad was trying to say, don't cross an ocean to look for people to help. Go outside and check on your neighbor. And that's what he did in his 44 years of medical service. He was a physician and a Meharry Medical grad. And that's what I tried to do as a delegate.

So, here's what happened, Dr. Browne. I looked outside my community, I listened to my neighbors and what I heard was a very loud and persistent

cry for changes in the conditions on our streets, with regard to walking and accessing transit. What I heard from my neighbors was we don't feel physically protected walking on our sidewalks or crossing our streets. And this is not about crime, which a lot of people like to obsess about when they talk about black folks and black cities, which Baltimore is, it is not about that. It's about the sense of enclosure and physical protection and confidence you have in moving from space to space. My neighbors are crying out for the traffic to slow down. The same cry was coming from neighborhoods that had different complexions, by the way. Now, the Livable Streets Coalition is a network of neighbors, organizations, and advocates that are affected by high-speed traffic that rushes through densely populated city neighborhoods, neighborhoods that are predominantly African American and Latino.

The reason that these high-speed roads race through these densely populated historic neighborhoods more than a hundred-year-old neighborhoods is why, because of the history of racial segregation policy in Baltimore City, the vestige of racial redlining, the high-speed streets in the area where I live, Fayette Street and Orleans Street are literally the physical vestige of a racial red line, a designation that separated one neighborhood from the other on the basis of race. That difference in racial population was codified in laws that said that black people can't own property where more white people live. It also excluded Jewish people and

Native Americans and Latinos, but black people were the focus of the purpose of those laws and policies that were invented here in Baltimore City. They were piloted, tested, and perfected here. And here I am a hundred years later living in a neighborhood where my black and brown neighbors are getting hit by cars at a greater frequency than white neighbors. Why? Because of this vestigial historic shadow. The reason I decided to form the coalition was that neighbors who were asking for help, who were asking to slow down traffic and make our streets more walkable, had different, how do I put this, different drives and different senses of agency and power. On one side of the red line where the neighbors are predominantly white and college-educated, the cry for pedestrian-friendly streets came in a very, you know, organized, grounded, and assertive manner directly to me. On the other side of the red line, were African American families predominately. I had to go to them to ask how they felt. So, rather than do what's normally done where the squeaky wheel gets the grease, where residents who are most politically active and organized get the most attention. I wanted to make sure that if I were to engage in an effort to improve street conditions that I would do so with a full understanding and buy-in of everyone affected. So, I crossed the streets. I crossed the highways that divide these neighborhoods, and I did a door-to-door survey, knocked on over 400 doors, talked to over 200 neighbors, African American neighbors, and I asked them if there's one thing you could change about the street where you live, what would it be? Some

people might expect that I hear about crime. Some people might expect they yell about schools, but no, the number one most frequently cited answer was slow down these cars. That set me on a path with black folks asking me to slow down cars in a city with high rates of lead poisoning, disproportionately affecting black children, with the highest rates of pediatric asthma in the State of Maryland, underfunded schools that these black folks said to me, do one thing for me and that's slow down these cars. I decided that was what I had to do in doing so it required me to figure out a way to bring these disparate, somewhat alienated neighborhoods together to stitch across the racial red line, that historic divide, the highways that harm us and bring people together so that they understand, number one, you all want the same thing. You all want better street conditions. You want safe places to walk. You want your children to walk to the local public school. You want your granny to get over to ALDI's without being mowed down, which literally happened to a neighbor of mine, an 80-year-old African American woman was mowed down crossing the street. You all want the same things. So, if you join your voices and use me as an instrument for your will, you're more likely to get what you all want. So, I created the coalition, really forced neighbors to come together, drew in various partners, local, small nonprofits, big nonprofits, like the AARP that has a national livable streets program that's connected to their aging-in-place initiative. You can't age in place, if you can't cross the street to get to the ALDI's, right or whatever grocery store. AARP brought in the

National Federation of the Blind, their partners, because accessibility to safe sidewalks, bus stops is essential to the independence and self-determination of people with visual impairments and others. And local schools, elementary schools are like, we want our kids to be involved in transforming their own streets, their own community. So, coalition, we start meeting, we start talking, people who've never seen each other sitting across the table, pre-COVID, looking each other in the eye and listening to each other's stories and deciding that, in fact, we have the power to change our streets by expressing our will, you know, elected officials willing to hear us and she's bringing on other elected officials as well and all the partners.

So, what we've got is what I hope will become a movement. What I hope will grow and has the promise of growing into some things citywide. What we want to do are a couple of small projects to build on the tools we already have at hand, the policies and structures that we already have and allies we already have; slow down traffic, make intersections safer, prioritize bus stops, and put in the hands of residence, of our neighbors, the tools to change their physical space. But this is radical, Dr. Browne, because what this means is, in a city that's been crushed by the weight of history, where black people have been denied self-determination where black and brown folks today, we have so many immigrants in our city, where they are denied the ability to live in healthy spaces, where all of a

sudden now we may have a mechanism, we're turning that completely around. We have an opportunity to untangle the cumulative impacts that Nakisa was talking about. Its policy, its economy, its culture, it is the environment. All these things tangled together in a web that denies black and brown people. The right is a healthy lie. We do that by starting with the street.

Dr. Browne: Thank you so much. Let me just ask one question. This is a fantastic idea that you have joined neighbors from across the red line to address an issue that is really, important. Can this complex issue become sustainable in working on maybe other issues from the environmental area, maybe cleaning up parks? Is that something that you might be able to address in terms of sustaining this and making it wider?

Robbyn: Yes, that's a great question. The sustainability of these sorts of grassroots initiatives is always the question. I think Nakisa touched on this also because the people who are most affected tend to be so heavily burdened with, you know, doing the work of transformation. How do you sustain that? Well, I have a couple of ideas. Number one, we need more people like Nakisa running and winning elected office. I wasn't going to say anything Nakisa, but you need to run for office. Even in Maryland, the sensors result, just released told us that even in Maryland, where we are number four in the country for racial diversity, we still do not have racially

representative elected officials. The State legislature's pretty good. We have a healthy representation of African Americans in line with our population, close to it. But in city councils, county councils, local governments, we don't have the racial representation that we need. So, that's an essential requirement for the kind of transformation we need to be sustained because I could pass a law this year to fund pedestrian safety, and someone could come behind me and undo that. We've got to be represented in the rooms where decisions get made.

The other aspect of sustainability is really capacity building and people who work in grassroots and nonprofits are always talking about capacity building. It's more than just adding a black phase to your board of directors though. It's really, about putting the tools for revolution in the hands of the people who are most affected. It helps to start with young people, and everybody says that, but it's really true. Start with the littlest ones that you can, who can sit still long enough to listen to you, and what you do with them is affirm the reality that they see. So, kids in my neighborhood are really concerned about trash in the streets and so they need to be involved in cleanups and they are, but we need to do more of that. We teach kids in our schools about recycling and so they go home, and they know that they have to talk to their folks and their granny about it, but we have to you know, make sure they have access to a recycling camp, like give them the tools so that they can change and lead. The other aspect of

sustainability really is about policy. I didn't mean to dismiss the importance of passing legislation. I give you a great example. In Baltimore City, in Maryland, we do not measure racial and ethnic data in non-fatal vehicle crashes. Now, we know that during the last 12 months fatal vehicle crashes have increased almost, I forget the statistics, but they've increased significantly. More people were hit and killed in car crashes during the pandemic, our first pandemic year than in the years before. And we know that pedestrians are more likely to be hit and killed, but what we don't talk about as much is the non-fatal injuries, the crashes that happen, where people don't die, they may be maimed, they may be disabled, unable to ever work again. We don't really talk about those people, and they are far more numerous than those, unfortunately, who died about 30 or 40,000 Americans die in vehicle crashes every year, far more are injured and left to carry the scars. So, we know nationwide that African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos are more likely to be hit by cars while walking and yet in Maryland, I couldn't tell you how many African Americans, Native Americans, or Latinos were hit because we don't collect the data. So, I introduced a piece of legislation that would require the State of Maryland to start doing that, to join the ranks of most other states in saying that what we measure matters, black lives matter. We're going to measure where those black lives are harmed and that bill, I tried for two years to pass it. Ultimately, what I ended up being able to do was enshrine the requirement to measure racial and ethnic data in non-fatal crashes,

enshrine that in the state budget. So now the State Transportation Department has to figure out a way, to measure that. So, what I did, why this matters sustainability, what that says is from this day forward, the State of Maryland gives a hoot about black lives about brown lives and is measuring the impact of crashes on our people. Once we have those numbers, we can do something with that information. We'll see the disparate impact. We will apply our statewide health in all policies, our statewide health equity principles to tackle and dismantle the harm. So, those are the three things required for sustainability, Dr. Browne, and I'm happy to be a part of the movement that will, I hope, make them happen.

Dr. Browne: Thank you. And I'm glad you added the economic impact because that's what gets things done. You have to put that to it. Let's just switch gears a little bit, because I know both of you have a focus on women and girls. And so, let's talk about Nakisa, another initiative that you support, which are girls who code, and some people don't even know what coding is. So, can you talk about why coding specifically, and technology, more generally, are both important to the environmental justice movement?

Nakisa: I'll start by giving this example. I was at a conference and the speaker gave the analogy of the soap dispenser. Have you ever gone into the bathroom and tried to get the soap dispenser or the water, the automatic ones, to turn on or give you your soap and it does not recognize you,

right? Whoever created that technology, that lens on that technology is the same lens that's creating the technology that we're all using, down to the recording technology we're using to be on this podcast today, down to the cell phones we all have, and there's not enough diversity in tech. It is primarily a field that has been dominated and the rules have been created around white men. And although technology has brought us some awesome feats, it has hit us with some blind spots, as simple as us being able to get the soap and the water out of the dispenser, because it's not recognizing other skin tones. And so, that same technology that drives that soap dispenser and the water dispense when you go into the bathroom is the same technology that is driving self-driving vehicles. So, bringing that back home to the conversation around transportation. When you look at the data around whose getting hit, who is being recognized inside of the driverless vehicles or self-driving vehicles, it's something important to look at. It's important to make sure, I love how you said it, Robbyn, that the tools for revolution are put in the hands of those who are most impacted. I believe in that. I like to say it as communities need to own their own solutions and technology is one of those solutions. And so, with the work that I've done with girls who code and others as a tech advocate, I might not be the one that's actually doing the coding, but I'm the one that has the big mouth like I like to say. I was brought into the work because I got a big mouth and I love amplifying good stuff. And so, the programs that make it accessible and actually seek out historically

underrepresented groups to get inspired by technology. It's important that it's complemented with a sense of purpose and through our conversation around environmental justice, what does it look like to pair the two? We talk about the issues and the threats in our communities, but we also then talk about how you can be the one that creates that solution for change, and you can own that solution and you can inspire the next generation of solutionaries in your community. So, I think it's incredibly important that we think about the ways in which we approach our solutions and our issues in the environmental space with a holistic lens and really lean into solutions like livable streets. We need to, and I thought that was so inspiring hearing you talk about it, Robbyn, is that we're actually organizing our community around solutions. And I think that's where I get inspired in my work as a tech advocate because I'm organizing my community around solutions and providing that entryway into an actual tool that can address some of our community's greatest issues.

Dr. Browne: Thank you so much. And I know this is just such an exciting conversation. We have a little bit more to go, and these are very important points. So, Robbyn, I know Maryland is one of the most prosperous states. So, when we look at Maryland and what it's doing with these environmental justice issues, does it have the resources to deal with the environmental issues that you think are important?

Robbyn: That's a great question. So, some smart person once told me that a budget like the state budget, which is a \$40 or \$50 billion budget, is more than just a spreadsheet with numbers. It is in fact a moral document that our public budgets express our public priorities. So, when it comes to resources, the question really isn't, do we have enough money or how do we [44:19 inaudible]. The question is really, are we willing to apply the resources we have to get the greatest benefit, the greatest good for the greatest number? And you're right, Maryland is one of the wealthiest states in the Union. We have one of the highest per capita incomes in the country. We also have some of the most neglected, underserved, and abused communities in the country as well. In terms of environmental justice, just, for example, do we have the resources? Well, we've decided in Maryland that since we're a state that's overall growing in population, we need to generate more energy so that we can power our businesses and schools, and hospitals. And yet, where do we choose to build power stations? We choose to build them dirty, you know, power stations in places where black folks have been relegated to live. And in Prince George's County, in the Brandywine community, there are four power generating plants. There are high rates of ground-level ozone and all of the associated health impacts you'd expect to see. We chose to use our resources to locate power generation in places where people can't fight back. And they're already overburdened with cumulative impacts of other environmental and social harms. So, do we have to do that? No, we do

not have to do that. We could have chosen to use our resources in different ways. What we have the opportunity to do in the next few years is really expand community solar. Community solar farms are big places with lots of solar panels that generate electricity and feed it into the grid that can serve lots of people with very low environmental impact. We could choose to put our resources there and I hope we will. When it comes to setting priorities for where resources go that's in the public policy domain, and that's where elected people come into play and why, again, we need representation at every level of government. We'll find the resources if we have the right people making decisions.

Dr. Browne: Thank you, again. So, I want you to think about one of the closing issues that we would say to the listeners, what are some of the things that they need to do? And I'm hearing you say that we have to elect the right people. You're one of those right people and we need to get more people like you, but just think about that. I want to go to Nakisa, right now, to have her give a summary of some of the actions that our listeners could get involved with to advance environmental justice, starting off with the younger generation. And before I segue into that, I want to say that from the health community, we recognize that climate is really a public health issue, and we stand ready to address that. We are making changes and I'm so proud that this administration just named the first office in the

department of health and human services that's going to address climate and health. And that is really, important.

So, we are beginning to make little steps because we know in another 10 years with global warming, the way it is, it's all of our responsibility. So, everyone listening to this must take action. We must decide that we are not going to let this planet go to waste because we can't afford to get in one of those space things and go out someplace else. So, again, Nakisa, can you just sort of summarize a call to action for our listeners in terms of something that healthcare stakeholders and others that are involved in advancing in environmental justice can really take action. What is an actionable step?

Nakisa: Absolutely, this has been such a very rich conversation. Thank you all for the opportunity. And I'm going to say, get off the sidelines, that's the first thing. You're listening, right and you have heard some things that resonate with you. You've heard some things that you agree with. I'm going to say start by getting off the sideline. Work within your sphere of influence, as well. So, as Robbyn was mentioning, it's not going overseas or going across the country, it is right there in your neighborhood happening every day. How many toxic industries are in your community and how many of them are you advocating for them to not be in your community any longer? And it's also important that you engage, and you use your sphere of

influence. You use your platform as well because you have an important voice. You have gifts that are needed, you're needed in this work. So, if nobody has told you, let me tell you right now, if you can hear me, you are needed in this environmental justice work. The groups that I mentioned earlier in our conversation, they have been doing this for so long, on their own, independently, and they need whatever resources, whatever time you can give. It's that sweet spot that I was telling you about earlier, when you get off work and before you get home, it's that sweet spot of time, or maybe it's that sweet spot of time after the kids go to bed that you're able to engage and lend support. All support is welcome. Much like they say in southern churches, you know, come as you are, you don't have to get dressed up. You don't have to put on a Superman cape for this or anything you are needed in the capacity in which you bring. And if you can't show up, donate and there are a number of different organizations that you can donate and lend your financial resources to. But then there are also other easy ways that you can advocate for the change in the policy that we need in our communities. And in closing, I'll just leave you with a couple that I work with that are near and dear to me. Of course, there's Sol Nation. Sol Nation, you can find a series of Sol stories that connect deeply the relationship between environmental justice and social justice.

Environmental justice is education equity, environmental justice is a racial justice, and so on. There's a whole campaign around our environmental justice Sol stories. There's also the Red Black and Green New Deal that I

mentioned to you earlier. I'd say that is an immediate place that you can leave and depart from our conversation, right now, today and get a full immersion in what's happening in the environmental justice and climate justice framework that is directly connected to a piece of legislation and policy that people are organizing around. If you're not black, when I say Red Black and Green New Deal, there is space for you also in the Red Black and Green New Deal, and that platform is open to everyone to actually go and see what ways you can plug into the work of Red Black and Green New Deal. And then hip-hop caucus, I want to also mention is another place to plug in with the coolest show. We release episodes most Mondays, and I've heard it described as a masterclass on climate and climate justice. So, those are a couple of places that I'll direct you to. Feel free to find me on LinkedIn as Nakisa Glover. And I'm happy to continue to have these kinds of conversations and point you in the right direction because sometimes you just need an arm ramp to engage.

Dr. Browne: And so, now, Robbyn, in closing, can you give us some things that we need to see happen to make our cities healthier, more livable and how can the listeners participate?

Robbyn: Well, thanks again for the opportunity to join you Dr. Browne, and Nakisa Glover such a wonderful, inspiring conversation. I'm going to cheat and I'm going to tell you two calls to action. And I think as a physician, you'll

appreciate the first one, Dr. Browne. The most radical thing you can do to change the world is to take care of yourself. My dad, again, who was a physician used to lament that the average black man doesn't live long enough to enjoy the social security benefit that he worked his life to pay into. That's real. We saw Michael Williams, the actor from the Wire passed away this week, who wasn't even 55 years old. Black folks die too soon. Latinos work themselves into the ground. They work in dirty, dangerous injuries and die before their time. Native Americans we know have been burdened so egregiously that their, you know, DNA has been changed. You know, like we all have these marks and genetic marks of historic genetic harm. So, you're no good to anybody if you are falling into pieces, if you're aorta burst, you know, you are no good to anyone if you become a nervous wreck. Take care of yourself, treat yourself with gentleness and care because the road ahead is long, and we need each other. If the pandemic didn't teach us anything else, it should have taught us to be gentle and kind and take care of ourselves. So, that's number one, Dr. Browne. Number two, I think join in solidarity with people who are different than you are. That's kind of radical, too. I think it's needed. One of the most enriching experiences I've had as a human on this journey is joining in fellowship in allyship with Latino, undocumented immigrants. And, you know, I've lived in lots of different countries and made friends around the world, but right here in my backyard, my neighbors who are undocumented and living in terror reminded me of my ancestors, who

escaped from slavery on the Underground Railroad to Canada. They were helped along the way. They would never have made it. And there were strangers and who knows, who helped my ancestors survive. And I think that's what we're also here to do is join in the struggle with those who look, sound, seem different. That's where transformation will happen. It involves some risk. It involves some humility in empathy, but that's my call.

Dr. Browne: Thank you both for joining us today for such a rich discussion. I think for me, there were a couple of take-home points, actually more than a couple, but I would sort of giving a quick summary to say, we can all get involved. We have to contact our legislators and we want to push for legislation to make our communities more livable. Young people, our future depends on you and your involvement to make our planet safe from environmental hazards and sustainable for generations to come. Going back to an old adage that Booker T. Washington said, and what was taught to Robbyn's father, lay down your buckets, where you are. That is part of what really started the National Medical Association, based upon that speech that Booker T. Washington made at the Cotton Exposition in Atlanta, way back one hundred and twenty-six years ago. And those physicians decided to start the NMA.

The other point that was important is to get off the sidelines. Nakisa, you hit it home, get off the sideline. We can all work within our sphere of

influence, and I know that you've all heard about NIMBY, not in my backyard. We don't want this. If we had been saying that about those hazardous plants and other companies that were coming in and putting toxic waste in our community, just as our other neighbors have been doing, they will protest, not in my backyard, and things will happen. But we have to work as Nakisa indicated within our sweet spot of time. I like that sweet spot because yes, we say we are exhausted. We know we have to take care of ourselves. Our mental health is important, and if you have three jobs and a family to take care of, and you only have a little time before you put your head on that pillow, work within that time to make sure that you can get things done and then own our own solutions. It's up to us. We don't want a handout we want to be a part of that solution. So, the communities must work together to do that. It's a holistic point of view, and I certainly want to thank everyone for listening. Please join us soon after for another episode. And you can subscribe to this by going to nmanet.org as a part of the information gathering process and follow the National Medical Association on its social media pages of Facebook and Twitter and I'm going to advocate for Tik Tok because that's where the kids are getting things. And then, we can do a little environmental justice dance that's really, going to improve our climate and health and we are continuing to push that health as a public health issue because our health outcomes depend on it. Social, political, environmental determinants of health will take us to the next generation to live a longer, healthier, and

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prosperous life. Thank all of you and thanks to our listeners. Have a good day.

(End of recording)