

[press.snap.com /we-stand-together](https://press.snap.com/we-stand-together)

## We Stand Together - Press

13-16 minutes

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Dear Team,

As Lara shared last week, we had been planning on discussing the deaths of George, Ahmaud, and Breonna tomorrow morning at Snap in Focus, but as I grappled with the long legacy of racial violence and injustice in America, it felt wrong to wait. Every minute we are silent in the face of evil and wrongdoing we are acting in support of evildoers. I am sorry for waiting to share my feelings with you.

I am heartbroken and enraged by the treatment of black people and people of color in America.

I was made aware of the struggle for freedom, equality, and justice from a young age. My father served as the general counsel of the Christopher Commission (and, in a turn of fate, our general counsel Mike also worked on the commission), created to investigate racism and excessive force in the Los Angeles Police Department following the Rodney King beating here in Los Angeles in 1991. The commission found widespread racism and excessive use of force that had gone unchecked by leadership. The recommendations they made then, nearly 30 years ago, are still frighteningly relevant today.

Later in my life, I had the opportunity to work and study in South Africa where I had the privilege of meeting one of my heroes – Bishop Tutu. I witnessed the devastation of Apartheid and the legacy of racism, but also the tireless efforts towards progress and reconciliation. At Stanford, I lived in Ujamaa my Senior year, a dorm on campus that is dedicated to the black community (and in which the majority of residents are black). Even amidst the tremendous privilege at Stanford, there was plenty to learn about the everyday injustices of racism in our society.

I share this not to suggest any first-hand understanding of the black lived experience in the United States but rather to explain that for nearly 30 years I have personally witnessed or participated in the passionate and persistent, well-reasoned, and forceful appeal for justice in America and around the world. 30 years later, despite a chorus of millions calling for change, there is little to show in the way of progress. Economic inequality in America has reached levels unseen for nearly a century, people of color cannot visit a grocery store or go for a jog without fear of being murdered without consequence, and put simply, the American experiment is failing.

I share this because I understand that, in the words of MLK, “riots are the language of the unheard” and those that have been peacefully advocating for change for centuries have seen little, if any, progress towards the vision of freedom, equality, and justice for all that America has long promised. I understand why those who are rioting have felt unheard.

At the first speech I was invited to give after we created Snapchat, delivered at the Stanford Women in Business Conference in 2013, I declared that “I am a young, white, educated male. I got really, really lucky. And life isn’t fair.” I felt it was deeply important to name my privilege and acknowledge injustice in our society – especially in front of women business leaders who cope with these injustices daily. Acknowledging my privilege was an important first step for me because it helped me to listen. My experiences as a wealthy, white male are categorically different than the injustices experienced by our fellow Americans. Understanding the plight of those who are different than me has helped me become a better ally in the struggle.

The fundamental idea behind the creation of our country was the notion that the circumstances of your birth did not preordain the trajectory of your life. Our founders thought the idea that God chose one king was ridiculous – God chose *all of us* and loves all of us equally. They desired to build a society that reflected the love of God and the idea that God dwells in all of us. God doesn’t believe that any of us are more or less deserving of love.

Of course, the same Founding Fathers who espoused the values of freedom, equality, and justice for all – were predominantly slave owners. Their powerful vision of a nation created by the people, for the people was built on a foundation of prejudice, injustice, and racism. Without addressing this rotten foundation and its ongoing failures to create opportunity for all, we are holding ourselves back from

realizing our true capacity for human progress – and we will continue to fall short of the bold vision of freedom, equality, and justice for all.

Often I am asked by friends, team members, journalists, and partners what we can *do* to make a difference. Recognizing that I am in no way an expert, and at the ripe old age of 29 I have much to learn about the workings of the world, below I will share my own perspective on what is needed to create the change we crave in America. We cannot end systemic racism without simultaneously creating opportunity for all people, regardless of their background.

First, it is important to understand that, from my perspective, much of modern day America has been defined by the “big idea” put forth by President Reagan and others that businesses should be the engines for progress and the government should largely get out of the way. Indeed, tax cuts and de-regulation helped the American economy grow and the federal government has shifted the percentage of its spending from future-oriented endeavors like R&D to entitlements like Social Security. Of course, government R&D is a long-term investment, but it is one with considerable nearer-term benefits: it has helped create the foundation for many of the components in modern day smartphones which led to the growth and success of businesses like ours. Here is the rough (and imperfect) math on the Federal Budget – while we can debate where each line item belongs, the approximations reveal a substantial skew towards the past and present at the expense of the future:

	<b>FY 2019 Spending by Budget Function</b>	<b>% of Overall Budget</b>
<b>Past/Present</b>	Medicare	16.80%
	Social Security	15.79%
	National Defense	15.27%
	Health	10.50%
	Net Interest	8.45%
	Income Security	8.21%
	General Government	5.81%
	Veterans Benefits and Services	3.13%
	Administration of Justice	1.18%
	Agriculture	0.59%
<b>Approximate Total Present/Past</b>		<b>85.73%</b>
<b>Future</b>	Education, Training, Social Services	2.24%
	Natural Resources and Environment	1.05%
	Transportation	1.73%
	Community and Regional Development	0.88%
	General Science, Space, and Technology	0.56%
	Energy	0.35%
<b>Approximate Total Future</b>		<b>6.81%</b>

It is no secret that our country has put businesses first. We at Snap have been tremendous beneficiaries of these policies, but I believe now it is time to put the American people first.

I believe the first and most important step is to reaffirm our commitment to our founding values as a nation: freedom, equality, justice, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We must work together to create a shared vision for future success and define what we want America to look like for our children's children. This must be a process that involves all Americans and is "by the people, for the people." If we can define the nation we wish to become, we can begin to take action and apply our values to the vital decisions that must be made in order to make our shared vision a reality.

We will also have to begin defining our success in terms of the fulfillment of our values, rather than silly short-term metrics like GDP or the stock market. When your health care costs increase, regardless of

the value you receive, GDP increases. If a hurricane hits and knocks down a ton of houses so that we have to rebuild them, GDP increases. GDP is a fundamentally broken metric that does not reflect what contributes to real human happiness. The pursuit of happiness must expand beyond the pursuit of wealth.

We should establish a diverse, non-partisan Commission on Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations. We must begin a process to ensure that America's black community is heard throughout the country, investigate the criminal justice system for bias and prejudice, strengthen the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, and take action on recommendations for reconciliation and reparations made by the Commission. There is plenty to learn from those who have had the courage to undertake a similar process following atrocities around the world, and we should create a process that reflects American values and helps our nation to make the necessary change and heal.

We must restart the "Opportunity Engine" in America by investing in education, healthcare, and housing to make these basic ingredients of a free and fair society more accessible and affordable for all people.

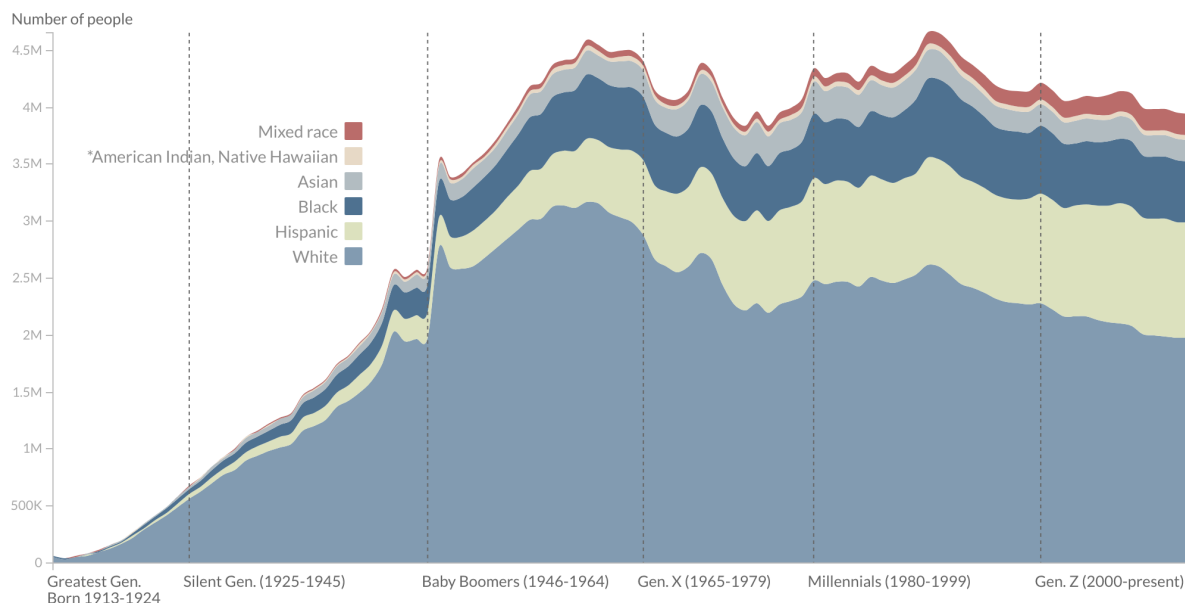
I believe that one reason entrepreneurship in America has declined so substantially since the 1980s is the lack of a sufficient societal safety net. Entrepreneurship depends on people being able to take risks to start a business, which is nearly impossible to do without some sort of safety net like the one I had. Today's would-be entrepreneurs are saddled with student debt and are subject to stagnant wage growth and rising expenses that make it hard to save the seed capital necessary to start a business.

Investing in the future of our country to benefit our children's children will be expensive. We will need to institute a more progressive income tax system and a substantially higher estate tax, and we will need corporations to pay a higher tax rate. While we are investing in the future, we will also have to reduce the federal deficit so that we are better prepared to meet any external shocks that may come in the future in our rapidly changing world. In short, people like me will pay a lot more in taxes – and I believe it will be worth it to create a society that benefits all of us.

Many of these changes could be "bad" for business in the short term, but because they represent long term investments in the people of our nation, I believe that we will collectively reap tremendous long-term benefits.

Why hasn't this change happened yet? I'd argue it's simply because the Boomer supermajority across all branches of our government has demonstrated little interest in creating a better future for their children. For decades our government has committed to a strategy of debt-financed tax cuts and entitlement spending to enrich their most important constituents: the Boomers. Indeed, Boomers hold nearly 60% of all household wealth in America. To put it in context, billionaires hold about 3%. With Social Security, for example, we finance a program that pays out benefits across the wealthiest generation in American history without any form of means-testing.

Some research has shown that when an older generation does not see themselves reflected in the younger generation, they are less willing to invest in their future. In America, the Boomer generation is about 70% white, and Gen Z is about 50% white. America's demographic change is inevitable. The question, therefore, is whether or not we can work together to create a nation that better reflects our founding values, heals the deep wounds of our past, strives to eliminate racism and injustice, and creates opportunity for all – no matter who they are, or where they were born.



Source: <https://money.cnn.com/interactive/economy/diversity-millennials-boomers/>

As for Snapchat, we simply cannot promote accounts in America that are linked to people who incite racial violence, whether they do so on or off our platform. Our Discover content platform is a curated platform, where we decide what we promote. We have spoken time and again about working hard to make a positive impact, and we will walk the talk with the content we promote on Snapchat. We may continue to allow divisive people to maintain an account on Snapchat, as long as the content that is published on Snapchat is consistent with our community guidelines, but we will not promote that account or content in any way.

It is never too late to turn towards love, and it is my sincere and earnest hope that the leadership of our great country will work towards our founding values, our *raison d'être*: freedom, equality, and justice for all.

Until that day, we will make it clear with our actions that there is no grey area when it comes to racism, violence, and injustice – and we will not promote it, nor those who support it, on our platform.

This does not mean that we will remove content that people disagree with, or accounts that are insensitive to some people. There are plenty of debates to be had about the future of our country and the world. But there is simply no room for debate in our country about the value of human life and the importance of a constant struggle for freedom, equality, and justice. We are standing with all those who stand for peace, love, and justice and we will use our platform to promote good rather than evil.

I know there are many people who feel that just because “some people” are racist, or just because there is “some injustice” in our society that we are “not all bad.” It is my view that humanity is deeply interconnected and that when one of us suffers, we all suffer. When one of us is hungry, we are all hungry. And when one of us is poor, we are all poor. When any one of us enables injustice through our silence we have all failed to create a nation that strives for its highest ideals.

Some of you have asked about whether Snap will contribute to organizations that support equality and justice. The answer is yes. But in my experience, philanthropy is simply unable to make more than a dent in the grave injustices we face. While our family has and will continue to contribute meaningfully to create opportunity for the underprivileged, and donate to the guardians of justice, these circumstances call for a more radical reorganization of our society. Private philanthropy can patch holes, or accelerate progress, but it alone cannot cross the deep and wide chasm of injustice. We must cross that chasm together as a united nation. United in the striving for freedom, equality, and justice for all.

We have a great many challenges in front of us. To confront the long legacy of violence and injustice in America – of which George, Ahmaud, and Breonna are the latest victims, with so many more unnamed – we must embrace profound change. Not merely a change in our country, but a change in our hearts. We must carry the light of peace and share the embrace of love with all humankind.

May peace be with you,

Evan