

Male Speaker 1: Dennis Sobin

Male Speaker 2: Rodney Red Grant

Female Speaker 1: Denise Rolark Barnes

Female Speaker 2: Cecily E. Collier-Montgomery

Female Speaker 3: Muriel E. Bowser

Female Speaker 4: Stacia Hall

[O/V]: Overlapping Voices

[U/A]: Unintelligible audio

[00:00:00 START RECORDING DC Mayoral Debate Hosted by the Office of Campaign
Finance]

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Denise Rolark Barnes: Good evening and welcome to the first of two general election debates
hosted by the DC Office of Campaign Finance. I'm Denise Rolark Barnes, publisher and
owner of The Washington Informer and I will serve as the moderator for tonight's debate.
Tonight, we will hear from

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Denise Rolark Barnes: four candidates competing for the office of mayor of the District of
Columbia. We encourage members of the public to submit questions via the website at
dcdebates.com, that's dcdebates.com, and to participate online using the #dcision22.
That's D-C-I-S-I-O-N 22. Before

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Denise Rolark Barnes: we get started, let's hear from the Director of the Office of Campaign
Finance, Cecily Montgomery.

Cecily E. Collier-Montgomery: Good evening. Welcome to the 2022 DC fall debate. I am Cecily
Montgomery Director of the Office of Campaign Finance. The 2022 DC debates are the

third slated debates under the fair elections program. Started in 2018, the FEP is a voluntary public financing program

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Cecily E. Collier-Montgomery: operated by the office of campaign finance to support candidates for local political office in the District of Columbia. All FEP participating candidates for citywide races are required to take part in the debate. It is our hope that these debates will help the public to learn more about the candidates, their positions and policy platforms.

We want to take a moment to thank our partner organizations

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Cecily E. Collier-Montgomery: and the candidates for participating in the process. Thank you for joining us in our mission to help inform DC voters about the fair elections program candidates and their positions. To learn more about the Office of Campaign Finance or the 2022 DC debate please visit dcdebates.com. The debates will remain on the website through election day

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Cecily E. Collier-Montgomery: November the 8th for those who could not watch or listen live this evening. Thank you for your support and with that, let's meet our candidates.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you Director Montgomery. The candidates for tonight's debate are Muriel Bowser, who served as mayor of the District of Columbia since 2014; Stacia Hall, a small business owner in ward 3; Rodney Red Grant, who is a DC

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Denise Rolark Barnes: born comedian and executive turned politician; and Dennis Sobin, current director of Safe Streets Arts Foundation. Here are the ground rules for tonight's debate and you all should know that I really lobby for a little bit of longer period of time to have

your questions answered, because we want people to really hear what your positions are as it relates to the city and what the impact of your

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Denise Rolark Barnes: governance will have on them. So, the candidates will have 2 minutes for an opening statement and 90 seconds for a direct answer to a question, 30 seconds for rebuttal. Each candidate will then have 2 minutes again for closing statements. If candidates wish to respond to an opponent's answer, we ask that you raise your hand, and we will be sure to call on you as time permits. With that we will move to opening statements

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Denise Rolark Barnes: and we will start with Mayor Bowser. As a reminder Mayor Bowser you have 2 minutes.

Muriel E. Bowser: Oh, well, thank you Denise and thank you for hosting tonight. I want to thank the Office of Campaign Finance as well for hosting and for doing exemplary job running the fair elections campaign. My name is Muriel Bowser. I'm the democratic nominee for mayor. I was proud to win a very competitive primary just this past

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Muriel E. Bowser: June and I am proud to be your mayor and I have served as your mayor since 2015. Since 2015, we have been working on the big issues that affect DC and DC residents. On top of people's minds as we know are public safety, how we're going to bring back our downtown, how we're going to bring back our kids from the impacts and effects on COVID, and how we will continue to provide excellent government.

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Muriel E. Bowser: services. I know that what this election is about, and it is about who do you trust to lead the city in the district's come back and for the last eight years I have

delivered for DC residents. I keep my promises. I do the things that I say that I'm going to do, and I go out across all eight wards and work with individuals and community groups on the things that matter to us. So, I'm running for election

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Muriel E. Bowser: again to lead the best city in the world and to build on the progress that we have made and putting Washington DC at the forefront of many of conversations, including the delivery of affordable housing. One of the things that I'm proudest of in our last eight years is keeping a commitment to invest more in affordable housing that has ever been done in the history of the District of Columbia, to focus on and reduce family homelessness

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Muriel E. Bowser: and to make sure that we are putting more DC residents on the pathway to the middle class. Certainly, there is more work for us to do and I'm looking forward to working with DC residents to get it done.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you, Mayor Bowser. Next, we will go to Ms. Hall.

Stacia Hall: Thank you, Office of Campaign Finance for having me and the other candidates on your panel to address the voters.

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Stacia Hall: My name is Stacia Hall. I am the Republican candidate for mayor of DC. I am a mother of two, a grandmother of two, and little bit about me, I came from government assistance. I experienced homelessness, lived in housing projects to now a part of the working class and a founder of a small business. And so,

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Stacia Hall: yes, I am down with the OPP that means solving other people's problems, and so I say that it is time for a new and stronger leader. The current leader needs to sit down for

it is time for a reforming problem-solving mayor, one who will give us better schools, safer streets, a growing economy, a smarter

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Stacia Hall: budget and a mayor that will not keep over 40% of our students out of school because of the COVID vaccine, which is not FDA approved. And so, I say that if on November 8th, the voters are ready to clean up the trash and clean out DC and start again on November 8th vote Stacia Hall for DC mayor.

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Stacia Hall: It's time to be fearless DC. Thank you.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you, Ms. Hall. Now we'll go to Mr. Sobin.

Dennis Sobin: Yes, good day. I am Dennis Sobin, and I am running for mayor on the libertarian ticket. If you're not familiar with the Libertarian Party we are the ones who spearhead a lot of things that you take for granted now. Going back some decades ago, not too many decades we were out there on behalf of the gay community

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Dennis Sobin: trying to get the police from arresting and imprisoning gays, and we succeeded with the help of a lot of other people in DC. When it came to marihuana decriminalization, we were spearheading that. Libertarian party is the freedom party, and we believe that the current public safety issue and concern has to do tremendously with the

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Dennis Sobin: war on drugs, which we are trying to end, at least make less racist, because if you go to the DC jail, you'll find 99% of the people there are black, even the murder rate in DC is overwhelmingly black, largely because of the drug war. The police enforce it in the black community, but not in the white community. Of course, if you try to butt drugs in

the white community, the wealthy areas of Washington, the police will end up probably out of their

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Dennis Sobin: probably out of their jobs and certainly won't get an advancement. So, these are very discriminatory things. The war on drugs is the number one safety issue. The other day I was at a campaign rally or really a debate with other candidates and I raised my hand to say, "How many people in the audience use recreational drugs?" There were several hundred people there, nobody raised their hand, maybe one person, half raised it and I said, "Oh, I'm surprised."

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Dennis Sobin: I raised my hand." I was the only person and I said, "I'm surprised because there are so many recreational drugs, you have wine, beer, alcohol, any kind of alcohol; you have..." [O/V].

Denise Rolark Barnes: Mr. Sobin, your time is up. I'm sorry. I have to interrupt you.

Dennis Sobin: Okay.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Maybe you can get back to that a little later.

Dennis Sobin: Okay. Okay.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Mr. Grant?

Rodney Red Grant: How are you?

Denise Rolark Barnes: Good. Thank you.

Rodney Red Grant: First of all I want to thank the OCF for having me tonight. I want to thank you, Ms. Denise Rolark

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Rodney Red Grant: Barnes for being the moderator tonight. This is a very important debate that we're having, and I just want to say that I am Rodney Red Grant. I was born and raised in

Washington, DC in DC general hospital, graduated from Sousa Junior High School, also graduated from Dunbar senior high school where I was a scholar athlete, went on to Savannah State University to play football with the great Shannon Sharpe and came back

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Rodney Red Grant: home at 19 to attend UDC. So, I'm a firebird for life. I started working for the Department of Parks and Recreation, where I coach kids and develop programming. A lot of my kids still call me coach to this day. I'm a person that understands and believes in management. You know, a lot of people know me for being on TV, but that was only 10% of my life. The other 90%, I'm a humanitarian, a philanthropist, a businessman, and an executive

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Rodney Red Grant: and, you know, my goal right now is to make sure DC is a place where our young people are afforded the life to succeed, you know, our seniors are incorporated back into society. At this place returning citizens are shown the love, care, and respect that they deserve, and our city is safe and affordable to live in again. You know, my career has taken me a lot of different places and I've seen a lot of different things

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Rodney Red Grant: and I experience a lot of things that some politicians haven't, that's why I'm running as an independent, you know, this right here is a crucial race and we have to understand that we need a leader that will, on day one, be able to implement the programs that are proper, make sure that people are put first and we got to get our city back to a place where our leaders make real decisions [O/V]-

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Grant.

Rodney Red Grant: -so this is a time for us to save our city.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Grant.

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Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Grant.

Rodney Red Grant: Thank you.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Your time is up. The next question will allow you an opportunity to elaborate because we want to know why you decided to run for mayor of the District of Columbia and what do you bring to this position that you haven't shared with us already and we'll start with you, Ms. Hall.

Stacia Hall: Thank you.

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Stacia Hall: When I moved to Washington DC several years ago, Washington DC was a great place for raising a child and it reminded me of like a promise land, because it was in extraordinary condition and the talk was about schools and the opportunities, and

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Stacia Hall: now, when I look at DC I see no remembrance of that time, the metrics, the benchmarks of DC have gone in the complete reverse. Right now, DC requires and there is no debating this, DC requires a leader who knows what it feels like to have their

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Stacia Hall: five figure income, much of that go towards taxes. DC needs a real person to stand in the gap for them and their residents. And so I saw that. It was time for me to stand up and do this. I have a teenage daughter who attends a DC school. I live, work, and worship in the district. I represent the district, because

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Stacia Hall: I know what it feels like for most of your income to go towards high paying rent and you can barely buy food to put on the table. Changes have to be made immediately. DC stands as number 9 among 10 states with the highest poverty rates. [O/V].

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank You, Ms. Hall. Thank you, Ms. Hall. We're going to move now to Mr. Sobin.

Dennis Sobin: Yes.

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Dennis Sobin: The reason I ran for mayor, and I've been very active politically over several decades is because there are certain issues not being raised in the campaign. As I was saying before at this meeting, where I asked people to raise their hand if they use recreational drugs and no one did. I said, well, you know, I'm glad you didn't raise your hand because it's not my business. It's nobody's business and it's not the government's business either.

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Dennis Sobin: How people enjoy their private time, how they interact with other consenting adults is their business and their business alone and we have many police in the district that are devoting their lives to trying to entrap people who are nonconformists rather than focusing on real crime and this is the major reason why I'm running for mayor. Frankly, I think the existing mayor has done a great job.

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Dennis Sobin: She is experienced, and I know she is probably very likely to win the election this time, the district is with her, but I think she has to reconsider whoever is going to be mayor, the problem of law enforcement and how to use police in uniform engaged in helping people, protect themselves and not trying to entrap people and send them to jail, which are overcrowded

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Dennis Sobin: anyway now and as I say predominantly black, it's racist. So, this is the main reason [O/V]

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Sobin. Thank you, Mr. Sobin. Can we go to-

Dennis Sobin: Thank you.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Mr. Grant?

Rodney Red Grant: Thank you so much. Well, I'm running for mayor because DC is in a place where it's suffering right now. I was called to run for mayor three years ago and when I came back to DC, the people in the city were telling me how they're suffering, how they need a new leader in our city,

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Rodney Red Grant: because our current leader is not caring about our city. She has given the city away. She doesn't care about the real people of Washington DC, and this is the truth. The crime is up, for the last six years crime is on the rise, and our current mayor has no comprehensive public safety plan to stop it. Homelessness is up too, we're number one per capita in the world. Our education system is

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Rodney Red Grant: failing our students here in Washington, DC. The park scores just came out on Labor Day, Friday around 4:50 in the afternoon or in the evening where they were trying to hide, you know, the numbers of what's going on in our school system, but with black and brown children, 9 out of 10 are below average in math, 4 out of 5 are below average in English, and this is a shame for our city to be like this. We just

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Rodney Red Grant: got a deterrent that they said that Washington DC is the worst run city in America. It's embarrassing to have our city be the worst run city in America under Mayor Bowser and we have to have [O/V].

Denise Rolark Barnes: So, thank you, Mr. Grant.

Rodney Red Grant: [O/V] now.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Grant. Ms. Bowser, Mayor Bowser.

Muriel E. Bowser: I ran for mayor, Denise, in 2015 because I knew that our city needed a good

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Muriel E. Bowser: and ethical government and they needed a leader who was going to be bold and focus on the things that would help more Washingtonians participate in the progress and the growing progress that we experience in this city. Washington DC is among the best front cities anywhere in America. Our financials, even with the hard hit that we have taken from COVID are strong, which is going to lead us to our comeback. Our

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Muriel E. Bowser: schools, the types of investment that we put in our schools, our teachers and our buildings, and our programs will position us better than any place in America to bring our kids back from the learning losses that were suffered during COVID. So, some of the things that my friends here have mentioned that are affecting major cities across America, like rising crime and children having lost ground during COVID is a part of the problem of experiencing

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Muriel E. Bowser: a two-and-a-half-year response to a pandemic, but DC residents know that they have the right person in the seat, not only did they come out during the primary to say so, they say so across all eight wards. They want a decision maker that is experienced. They want someone who can moderate between lot of different ideas, but at the end of the day make the decisions that help the most people the fastest and that's what I've been doing for my career in DC government.

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Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you Mayor Bowser. Mr. Grant, I'm going to go to you because you mentioned comprehensive safety plan. Earlier this year residents were asked to identify

their top concern that they would want the new mayor or the mayor to focus on and of course one of the priorities was crime, violence, and guns. What new ideas do you have to fight crime and address safety in the District of Columbia.

Rodney Red Grant: Well, you know, my background right now,

Denise Rolark Barnes: Mr. Grant?

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Rodney Red Grant: I'm sorry, my background right now is, I deal with young people all the time.

My programs like don't shoot guns, shoot cameras, and beyond your block are showing young people how to live their life in a different way. I feel like we have forgotten about our young people in our city, in the city of Washington, DC. When I was growing up we had programs that stopped us from being involved with violence and right now, you know, when you take out

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Rodney Red Grant: the recreation centers, you take out trades in schools, you know, this is why we are at the problem of where we are right now. You know, we can't shut down our schools and we can't shut down our trades in our schools. You know, people all don't want to go to college. Some want to just be a part of just the workforce, and we have to train our young people for the workforce. We also have to put financial literacy back in our schools to teach our young people how to deal with their

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Rodney Red Grant: finances and understand what it's going to be like in the future. You know, I feel like right now that crime is at a high because we have forgotten about our young people and if you look at the numbers, you know, 17 and under our young people are committing a lot of crimes. So, we have to deal with that number and it's a real number and we have to deal with it now.

Denise Rolark Barnes: So, Mr. Sobin we will come to you next because we want to know if you become

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Denise Rolark Barnes: mayor of the District of Columbia, what new ideas would you introduce to fight crime and address violence in the District of Columbia?

Dennis Sobin: Well, that is my number one concern, as I have mentioned and what I would do is all the police that were now using out of uniform I would put in uniform, get them into the community and I would instruct them no more out of uniform police work, no more entrapment of citizens

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Dennis Sobin: and I believe if we create this situation and we will gain more respect for our police officers, they will be considered to be friends of the community rather than in many communities, enemies. Mayor Bowser used to call the police the army of occupation and in some ways that's true and it's unfortunate. We should have the police here to represent and help all of us not try to put us all in jail.

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Dennis Sobin: The current mayor can easily change the situation, not by legislation, although that would be helpful, but by directing the police, just calling up the chief of police and say, "Look, get these guys back in uniform, these guys back in uniform, no more entrapment of citizens," and I think that would go a long way to public safety improvement here in the District of Columbia.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you.

Dennis Sobin: And I... You're welcome.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Mayor Bowser let me ask you,

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Denise Rolark Barnes: since you've been in the driver's seat and confronting these issues, what would another term, a third term of – provide district residents when it comes to fighting crime and addressing violence in the District of Columbia?

Muriel E. Bowser: Well, Denise, I think that we are very focused on driving down all manners of crime from adults and juveniles and we have to be very concerned

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Muriel E. Bowser: and I agree with what was said about the young people who are engaging in carjackings and robberies that are really terrifying the neighborhoods that they live in and terrorizing neighborhoods across the city. Our plan is a comprehensive plan, but it does include the police. And so, what you will get from me is the ability to go to the council, get the resources we need, put the right people in place in from policing,

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Muriel E. Bowser: to prevention, including the violence interrupters, to public health professionals and, to Mr. Sobin's point, the mental and behavioral health professionals that we need to focus on substance misuse in our communities that don't rise to the criminal level. So, that is our comprehensive plan, and we are slowly seeing programs work, including our violence interruption efforts that will

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Muriel E. Bowser: drive down gun use, and I can talk about that a lot, but we'll also hold people accountable who are committing crimes in our city.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Ms. Hall.

Stacia Hall: Yes. So, I'm concerned with something the mayor said earlier, like, I'd like to know where her numbers come from, where she gets her numbers from that things are down where they

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Stacia Hall: should be in terms of crimes, in terms of education, because this is not the information that many of the voters receive. I'm sure they'd be more encouraged to see those numbers, but from what I understand the voters are saying there are people OD'ed at bus stops, guns go off in the night all the time. Police are overstressed, overworked, so can't respond fast

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Stacia Hall: enough and shoplifting is causing small stores in ward 8 to go out of business, which is one of the places people get their goods. So, the crime is up, it is growing, and it is not going down, and in order to know the truth, I think we need to go to the voters and hear what they have to say, and I think we should go into all eight wards, especially the wards that are

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Stacia Hall: riddled with crime and hear their voices. We're letting our children down. They are our future. Just like the song "I believe the children are our future" is real. They are the ones that will lead this nation and this city. So, we cannot [O/V].

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you, Ms. Hall. [O/V]. Thank you, Ms. Hall. Thank you. And Ms. Bowser and I'll come to you in a second, Mr. Grant, because Ms. Hall directly asked you a question, excuse me, in her response

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Denise Rolark Barnes: about where you're getting your numbers from. I will give you 30 seconds if you would like that to respond.

Muriel E. Bowser: Very quickly, Denise, I get my numbers from the Chief of POLICE, and we also participate in the criminal justice council where all the members of our public safety committee sit. These numbers are publicly available and at no time did you ever hear me say that I'm satisfied with where we are with gun crime,

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Muriel E. Bowser: robbery, or carjacking in our city, but in fact we are seeing the programs that we put in place working to drive down the gun-

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you. Thank you Ms. Bowser. Mr. Grant, you had your hand raised.

Rodney Red Grant: Yeah, I did. The problem is we have a crisis, a public safety crisis in Washington, DC and everybody [O/V].

Denise Rolark Barnes: I think you've answered the question.

Rodney Red Grant: No, but I never answered the question.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Mr. Grant, we will come.

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Denise Rolark Barnes: back. We'll come back.

Rodney Red Grant: [U/A] [O/V].

Denise Rolark Barnes: We're moving now to the next [O/V] we're looking for solutions, Mr. Grant. So, we're going to move on [O/V] because we've got a lot to cover this evening and we have time to come back to talk about that if you'd like. Also one of the other questions that was asked, and residents were concerned, a second priority was about affordable housing and tackling the issue of high rents in the District of

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Denise Rolark Barnes: Columbia. Mr. Sobin, I'll start with you. How would you tackle the issue of high rents in the district in making the city more affordable for its residents?

Dennis Sobin: I would hire the mayor to advise me on that point because I don't have the experience that she has and I would have to research it and as I say I would speak to the mayor, even hire her as a consultant to work with me on this issue. It's a very difficult issue.

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Denise Rolark Barnes: Alright, Mr. Grant, I'll come back to you and that's the question about rents, if you want to address that?

Rodney Red Grant: Okay. Yeah. Well, I think we have to deal with our MFI here in Washington, DC. You know, our MFIs been shattered because people in Washington DC do not make the money that people in Louden County, Montgomery County, Fairfax County are making, and we're using that MFI. We have to [U/A] right now to be able to get our MFI

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Rodney Red Grant: at a place that is real and we also have to put checks and balances on these developers that are here in Washington, DC, because if we don't put the checks and balances on the developers, that the mayor's given money to every day that are not making our city affordable and are not building affordable housing, then we're going to have the same problem four years from now and we're going to run so many people out of this city. It's 20,000 people have left this city since Mayor Bowser has been in office and she is

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Rodney Red Grant: just waving to them "Bye-bye, see you later. Don't come back, never come back to this city because you won't be able to afford it." That's her plan about affordable housing, but we have to get it together right now to slow this process down. So, people who are from Washington DC can live in Washington DC again, eat their crabs in their backyard, eat their crab legs and let us be DC again, stop pushing people out.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Ms. Hall?

Stacia Hall: Thank you and so I agree with Mr. Grant,

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Stacia Hall: you know, we are a district, we're not a state. So, the way in which our housing, the market in DC, it needs to be regulated differently. More legislation need to be presented

for that, but 42,000, almost 43,000 residents are using more than 50% of their income to pay

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Stacia Hall: their rent. I thought it was 30%, but more than 50% of their income to pay rent. Yes, DC is number nine, along with Mississippi, Alabama, and some other states whose minimum wage are far less, their cost of living is way less than DC, but DC is number nine as having the highest poverty rate. So, these things can't be ignored. We need a problem-solving leader. We need a

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Stacia Hall: leader who's a reformer, a leader that is proactive. You got to see the ending and the beginning. So, there's been a lot of time to study the system and to know it well enough to be proactive and so we need to, rather than give these builders more work to do, we need to take the housing we have, the empty buildings we have, restore them, reform them, make them affordable housing, and we need to do better for our residents, especially our base. People have grown up

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Stacia Hall: here and they're out of here now. They live somewhere else.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you. [O/V] Thank you, Ms. Hall. Mayor Bowser?

Muriel E. Bowser: Denise. I am very proud of the work that we have done with building housing, with investing in housing and with keeping our promises. The truth is there's no jurisdiction in America that has done more per capita in investing in affordable housing units and at a time where people are

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Muriel E. Bowser: moving and want to be in DC and wanting to start their businesses in DC, even with COVID, we're going see those trends of migration back into the city getting

stronger and stronger from month to month, and what is important is that we tackle the affordable housing issue as we have done with making sure we produce more units, increase the supply, making sure we're investing in preserving units. So, the naturally

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Muriel E. Bowser: wonderful affordable housing that we have across all eight wards is maintained, that what the council has done from a policy perspective and making sure that it maintains rent control and it has done so legislatively, thanks to Anita Bonds and make sure that our rent control has been extended another 10 years, but we also have to be focused on people's incomes. We're never going to be a city where the housing

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Muriel E. Bowser: prices are low. It's because of the amenities that we have here, that the high wages that we have in this city is always going to make housing more expensive than some places that have been mentioned. [O/V].

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you, Mayor Bowser.

Muriel E. Bowser: [O/V] raise the incomes as well of our residents.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you. Thank you. You know, one of the issues that has impacted the district and continues is this relationship with the federal government

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Denise Rolark Barnes: as well as now other state governments. Over the past few months we had thousands of migrants from Texas and Arizona that have come to the District of Columbia. Some that are staying here and some that are going to other places. We don't know when this is going to end. In the meantime, if you were elected mayor and I'll start again with you, Mr. Sobin,

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Denise Rolark Barnes: what direction would you give the Office of Migrant Services and other agencies to plan for these new residents?

Dennis Sobin: Within the budgets that we have I would direct them to just be as considerate and as helpful as possible, and certainly help them find gainful employment even if it's on a volunteer basis, something to give back to the community for the help that we would be giving them.

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Dennis Sobin: I don't have a lot more to say about that because we have professionals in that capacity who can do a better job than I can as far as making the day-to-day decisions, but I would be as supportive as possible.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Mayor Bowser.

Muriel E. Bowser: Well, as I have done, Denise, I am dealing with a crisis that's not of our making and making sure that we are living up to our values while at the same time making sure

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Muriel E. Bowser: that our programs and services that we work so hard to invest in for DC residents can withstand this crisis. So, I put in place a public emergency, have an emergency piece of legislation in front of the council now that will allow us to provide, create a new infrastructure, a new framework to help people who are here temporarily, get the services that they need to reset their lives in the United States.

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Denise Rolark Barnes: Ms. Hall.

Stacia Hall: Hi there. So, I know that the mayor put in place a migrant care in DC that is about 10 million dollars to deal with the problem. I totally disagree. Migrants should not be

bust here by the Texas governor, neither should our president be flying migrants here. So, both are wrong and

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Stacia Hall: they both got to be equally addressed. So, sanctuary city, I would end the status because, for these governors, sanctuary city means that DC is a city that allows for these migrants to have a rest stop, to have a temporary place to live and there is almost 7000 DC residents that are homeless

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Stacia Hall: that need to be taken care of first. And so, I'm not in agreement with anyone bringing migrants here and so federal government or the Congress has to help to get these migrants onto their next stop.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Alright. Thank you. Mr. Grant?

Rodney Red Grant: Well first of all, we're talking about relationships. Our current mayor has made some of the worst relationships in DC history.

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Rodney Red Grant: She can't get along with the council. She can't get along with the AG and she can't get along with the federal government. So, we have terrible relationships. See, we have a problem here in Washington, DC. They can have temporary shelter, but we have people in our city that are residents that deserve that money to go to them, so they can have a housing situation. We have the problem here. We're talking about the migrants; we have to deal with our problem here. We know what's going on with the federal government right now,

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Rodney Red Grant: we know that the Texas governor is sending people here, but we can't afford to have anybody here other than the people that are residents in Washington, DC. We got

to deal with our own problem. Our residents are the people that we should be putting the money into, our residents are the people that we should be focusing on, but we're focusing on the wrong things and our residents are out in the street homeless right now with no place to live and I go out there all the time and I speak to our homeless

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Rodney Red Grant: population and they tell me directly “The mayor has to go because she's not helping us. It's a bunch of fluff that she's giving you guys,” and that is the problem, relationships.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Alright. Thank you. We're going to move on to education. Mayor Bowser, you mentioned early on that the issue of learning losses. There's also the issue of supporting teachers. What measures do you feel need to be put in place

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Denise Rolark Barnes: to support children that have fallen behind? And secondly, what can you tell teachers they can expect from your administration to support them going forward?

Muriel E. Bowser: Well, I'm very proud of the work that we have done to support the Biden administration and getting the ARP through the Congress and getting 750 million dollars that was owed to us from the CARES act. So, when my friend mentions my relationships

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Muriel E. Bowser: I get things done for DC residents at all levels, at the Congress, at the White House to deliver. That's why we've gotten our fair share of emergency funds that have allowed us to put in place high impact tutoring, have allowed us to put in place enrichment at DPR, that's allowing us to put in advanced technical internships for our students that some people think of is the contemporary vocational training where we're allowing

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Muriel E. Bowser: our students to go to school and go to work and get paid at the same time and be prepared for college and career. So, those are some of the things that we can do with regard to learning loss. On the question of our teachers, we're proud to have the best paid teaching force in this region, highly qualified, great teachers in our classrooms. I'm looking forward to us resolving our labor issue. I think you've seen all of the labor agreements

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Muriel E. Bowser: that I've negotiated with our work partners and I'm looking forward to the teachers coming to the table as well.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you, Ms. Bowser. Mr. Sobin, we'll come to you next.

Dennis Sobin: Regarding education in the district I would, my children have gone to both public schools and private schools in the District of Columbia and when we lived in some of the poorer areas of Washington and

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Dennis Sobin: they went to public schools there, I accompanied them to breakfast in the morning and the other students were sitting around and we all talked and so many of the students were talking about the problems in their community that had nothing to do with education, an uncle being killed the night before or a father in prison, a mother doing this or that and I realized that

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Dennis Sobin: we were in a war zone here and how can children be educated when there's gunfire going off all the time, when relatives are being taken away either temporarily or permanently. So, I became committed at that point to having the police be friends of the community and protecting people rather than engage in this nonsensical war on drugs that we keep on going. I agree with the mayor when she says

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Dennis Sobin: that we need to have programs that help people who are addicted to drugs, but throwing people in jail because they use drugs either recreationally or by addiction does not help them and does not help their families. So – [O/V].

Denise Rolark Barnes: So, thank you, Mr. Sobin.

Dennis Sobin: [O/V] Thank you.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Sobin. Mr. Grant.

Rodney Red Grant: Well, we all know we have a problem when it comes to our teachers. Our teachers' contract has been on the mayor's desk for the last

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Rodney Red Grant: three years. Our teachers need to be paid what they deserve. The housing market has gone up and we still haven't gave them a raise. Also we have to get them trades back in school, so our kids will be learning, and we have to have attention of our teachers, so they'll want to be here in Washington, DC. You know, they're leaving our city right now to go to other places to work. We want to retain our teachers here in Washington, DC. We have fabulous teachers in Washington, DC.

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Rodney Red Grant: My daughter goes to school, they all went to school last year at Johnson Middle School and I want to see all of our kids have the best education and hire the best teachers here in Washington, DC. So, we have to continue to give to our teachers because they are the people who are looked down on the most and they work the hardest, the principals also. So, we have to give it back to the people who are dealing with our kids on a daily basis right now and give it back to them now. [O/V].

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Rodney Red Grant: and give them their contract please.

Denise Rolark Barnes: You got a couple seconds left. The question had two parts. The other part was, as mayor, what would you do to address the learning loss that students experience due to COVID ? And you've got about 10 seconds to answer that.

Rodney Red Grant: Well, you know, COVID was big on all of us, you know, the learning laws, you know, some of them went from virtual to back to in-school learning. You know, we have to implement a program so they can get back into school and learn the best way they can. It's our young people.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Okay.

Rodney Red Grant: We got to give them the opportunity to be

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Rodney Red Grant: great. Period.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you. Ms. Hall?

Rodney Red Grant: [U/A]

Stacia Hall: Education really by now we should know, you know, if you're a parent, if you have nieces, nephews, education is not a one size fit all and the signs for that have been in our face for a long time. So, we have to restore vocation and trade in schools, especially we see the difference in the behavior and the attitude by the time the kids get

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Stacia Hall: in about middle school. That's when we should know, we got to start addressing some life skills and start addressing some emotional issues with our children and so we can also with that budget, that budget that is not transparent. We need to take some smart money and we need to invest it in our children. Our children like nice things. They want to eat; they want clothes and so we should offer

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Stacia Hall: incentives for our children to show up to school, be accounted for and get the grade. They should be motivated and excited because they just received an award payment instead of taking the money and spending it on, say, the education budget that increases by another 10 million and we don't know where the money is going. I agree with teachers being compensated. So, we've got to give our parents a voice.

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Stacia Hall: We cannot take the parents' right. DC government or the teachers' union don't make the better choices for their children's health or education. So, parents and teacher [O/V] [U/A].

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you, Ms. Hall.

Stacia Hall: [O/V] together.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you. Thank you.

Stacia Hall: Thank you.

Denise Rolark Barnes: I want to move to another subject. One that Mr. Sobin brought up before dealing with the issue, and the mayor, brought up the issue of drug misuse. DC has a fentanyl crisis

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Denise Rolark Barnes: as do other cities. And the numbers are extremely high as it relates to the number of overdoses this year, but particularly they are increasing as it relates to fatal overdoses that are fentanyl related. Substance abusers and programs are crying out for assistance including the need for more long-term programs to address the problem. What is your answer to this growing fentanyl crisis in the District of Columbia and how would

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Denise Rolark Barnes: you address it as mayor? Mr. Grant?

Rodney Red Grant: First of all, you know, when we have our residents dying off fentanyl that should be a sound the alarm type of situation because our residents are in the park sitting, dying and no one's checking on them. You know, fentanyl has been killing so many people around our city. They're putting it in it everything. They're putting it in all of the

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Rodney Red Grant: drug. So, no one is safe that even uses drugs. So, we have to attack the situation from a public safety standpoint and get this fentanyl out our communities now, because it's coming from somewhere and we got to find out where it's coming from, you know, and we got to get our residents help. We got to get them some help right now to get them into drug rehab centers. We got to open up drug rehab centers that have shown the love, care, and respect for our residents. Our residents want

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Rodney Red Grant: to be healed, we got to heal them. We have to reach back down and pull our residents up from this stronghold of fentanyl right now and do it immediately with the public safety issues and bring them in. We need more mental health professionals out there checking on our residents and showing them the love and pulling them into these programs. You know, we got to open up more programs that's going to help our residents. So, my job as mayor

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Rodney Red Grant: would be to make sure we have the mental health services; we have the drug rehab centers that they need and someone out in the community that actually cares about the people and the residents that are on drugs right now.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Grant. Ms. Hall?

Stacia Hall: You know we're not enforcing our laws. We're not providing rehabilitation. I think I heard the mayor say about four or five times that she is proud of her record

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Stacia Hall: when it comes to these different things, but can we please get back to the people?

What about the needs of the children and of those that are suffering in drug abuse, those have mental illnesses, you know, in order to bring down crime we've got to stop pretending this don't exist. We've got to honor and address our faith leaders, get them back involved. We need our faith leaders. We need our

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Stacia Hall: police. We need our people to come together and as Mr. Grant said, heal this community because, you know, that's like not very important to some people and we think that we've got all the answers, but why not work together as a community and form communities within communities to bring healing to our district and it's just that simple because you can't

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Stacia Hall: do it alone. You need the help of the faith leaders, because they're connected to the God of Heaven and Earth and we need the police, we need to support our police and our people need to be shown that they don't need to be afraid because everybody backs them and our children, [O/V]-

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you. Thank you.

Stacia Hall: [O/V] remember our children are the ones that we are losing.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you Ms. Hall. Ms. Bowser, Mayor Bowser.

Muriel E. Bowser: Well, I agree with Ms. Hall on several points

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Muriel E. Bowser: in her last response and that is the government cannot do it alone and I will say this a thousand times on a number of issues, but on the issue of safety and on some respects with mental health and behavioral health, it really does take the village to stand

in the breach and make sure that the safety nets that we create, that the government creates that people are connecting to them and that they work.

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Muriel E. Bowser: We have a program for almost everything that has been mentioned here, but that doesn't mean that there is somebody in the government that is walking you through every step of the way to be able to engage and embrace those programs. So, we have created some of that with navigation services, for homelessness, for work, for life coaching, you name it we put highly qualified individuals in place to help our residents who are the most vulnerable,

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Muriel E. Bowser: who need the most help and have trouble navigating the system to get the help they need. Healing I think is also very important. I think I've heard that a couple of times here and that is a big community spiritual faith that is a combination of all of us working together to make sure that people who are experiencing trauma are getting the help they need for our part and the government making sure that our staffs

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Muriel E. Bowser: have the trauma informed training that they're dealing with, that our residents are dealing with [O/V] all sorts of trauma [O/V].

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you, Ms. Bowser. [O/V]. Thank you, Mayor Bowser. We have to go to Mr. Sobin now.

Dennis Sobin: Yes. It sounds like "We have to go to him," like we don't have much choice in that.

Denise Rolark Barnes: No, I didn't [U/A].

Dennis Sobin: [U/A] was talking, Denise.

Dennis Sobin: At any

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Dennis Sobin: rate, not too long ago I was in a community well known for its open-air drug usage and all of that and I ran across a couple in a car and there was emergency and I think it was the one, the woman was being held by the man and the woman was going into seizures and some serious problems, which I assume were drug related, at least

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Dennis Sobin: I got that impression, and I said to the guy, I said, "Let's call an ambulance, let's go." They said, "No, no, no. She'll get arrested. We don't want the police involved, we don't." And I think that's the crux of the situation here. We have a situation where people are afraid to get help because of the illegality of it. If it was [O/V] decriminalized, we wouldn't have that situation. We tried during the

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Dennis Sobin: last century to make alcohol use illegal, possession of alcohol was illegal, trafficking in alcohol, and it didn't work. It created a situation like we have with fentanyl where people were getting impure alcohol then and were creating more problems, blindness, there were other ailments coming up. So, I think [O/V].

Denise Rolark Barnes: Mr. Sobin, we're out of time. We're out of time.

Dennis Sobin: Yes. Thank you.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Sorry about that.

Dennis Sobin: That's okay.

Denise Rolark Barnes: We're almost really out of time.

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Denise Rolark Barnes: I wanted to get question in here about the environment and the movement towards a green economy in the District of Columbia, initiatives that one will lead to an

improved environment, but more importantly to jobs. Can you share with us or the viewers how you would promote green jobs in the District

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Denise Rolark Barnes: of Columbia? Where do you see those opportunities? Mr. Grant?

Rodney Red Grant: Well, first of all, you know, we have to build our city back in a green level.

Right now you, you can ride down the street and see the haze in our city again and we have to clean it up immediately. We have to clean up the Anacostia River. We have to do better, give people jobs to do that. We have to clean our city up, period. You know, you know, our city is becoming a

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Rodney Red Grant: big trash, like a lot of trash. My Howard students called me the other day and they were like, "Mr. Grant, can we do a cleanup of the neighborhood because there's just so much trash out here in the neighborhood." We have to find a way to make it green again. We have to put, you know, solar panels on roofs. We have to make sure that people are working in those spectrums, and we got to make sure that our people are breathing the freshest air that they can breathe in Washington, DC.

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Rodney Red Grant: We got to get our electric cars back on the road. You know, I believe in electric cars, and I also believe in regular cars, but I think we need to push for more electric cars in our city and make it affordable for people to have electric cars where, you know, we're not paying as much electricity on our situations when we plug up. So, those are some of the ways that I would start by helping our citizens become job ready for our new chains and also give our citizens and our residents

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Rodney Red Grant: the first jobs that come out.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Mr. Sobin, your thoughts?

Dennis Sobin: I think what we've been doing in the city to help the environment has been good and I would like to see a continuation of that policy. I happen to be a bike rider. I also own a truck and a car, but my bike is my favorite way to get around the city. I use the other vehicle if I'm going out of the city and the bike paths are wonderful and I think

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Dennis Sobin: they're helping quite a bit. I'm also the owner of an electric outboard motor. So, I boat on the [U/A] and I use electric for that. The candidate who said that there should be more electric vehicles in the district. I didn't hear him say that he himself owns one, but I guess maybe that's in the future. So, that's my answer.

Rodney Red Grant: I do. I do own one. Yeah, I do own one.

Dennis Sobin: Okay. Good.

Rodney Red Grant: Yeah, I do.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Very good. Ms. Hall?

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Stacia Hall: We need all jobs, not just green jobs, and so, my concern is will the mayor shut down the open-air market on Good Hope Road? And I just feel like, I know that certain things are legal in DC, but I do feel like they affect the environment and the set of them are too, it is a lot to bear and so we have some

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Stacia Hall: bad water and we need to compost. We should partner with our grocery stores to give the leftover food to those that are hungry and to our families that need it rather than throwing it away. Alright? So, the composting would truly help greatly and so those are just

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Stacia Hall: some of the ideas that would really help to improve the environment.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you. Mayor Bowser.

Muriel E. Bowser: Thank you. So, we have done quite a lot in our city in partnership with the council to make us one of the greatest cities in America. We've recommitted to the Paris climate accords and we set some very aggressive goals for reducing carbon emissions by 2050, and we're working hand in

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Muriel E. Bowser: hand with our community groups, including the Sierra Club and others to make sure that we stay on point with those goals, and they are aggressive, and it is going to take us working together to make sure that our residents, our businesses and our infrastructure can get us there and we're very focused on that. We're looking at ways to deploy the bipartisan infrastructure dollars to help us improve our infrastructure and make it more sustainable

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Muriel E. Bowser: and one focus that we will have is on electrification to allow more people to buy electric cars and have the ability to power them up at more places anywhere in the city. So, we're looking forward to that. We have created green jobs already. I'm very proud of a partnership that we have with DC water and wind and DC government, I'm very proud that I created the DC Infrastructure Academy, where we're not just training people, but we're training

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Muriel E. Bowser: them for actual jobs that exist among our utility companies and putting them to work. When I became mayor only rich people were, people at more affluent neighborhoods could get solar panels and have monthly savings, but we have solar for all now that allows them to access those savings.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you, Mayor Bowser. The time has gone by quickly. We started a little late, but we got the end on time. So, each of

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Denise Rolark Barnes: you will be given two minutes for your closing remarks. I will start again in the reverse of how we started at the beginning. So, Mr. Grant, I'll start with you. Mr. Grant, we don't hear you.

Rodney Red Grant: So, I just want to say, thanks so much for moderating this great event.

Denise,

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Rodney Red Grant: you were wonderful and fair to all of us. People in our city are afraid right now, filing crimes have risen for the last six years and our mayor has no plan, and the plan she has is not being managed properly. It's not fair to the residents of this great city, throwing money at everything is not a plan. My comprehensive plans will keep us safe now and in the future, I'm ready to implement this comprehensive plan on day

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Rodney Red Grant: one. We have to focus on our police resources, on public safety and not our police officers as catchall agency. Our police should be responding to crimes, getting out into the public and to the community, patrolling, and solving these cases. We can't blame the police for crime and the increase of crime, that falls on the shoulders of the mayor and the mayor has not been responsible for her own mismanagement of

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Rodney Red Grant: this city and its problem and I am that leader that's going to recognize the problem and align myself with the solution. So, on November 8th make sure you go out and on the fourth spot of the ballot hit Rodney Red Grant. Make sure you keep your

party, but keep your thoughts independent. Thank you so much for having me tonight.

Thank you so much to all the people that are here.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you Mr. Grant, and Mr. Sobin, we go to you next.

Dennis Sobin: Yes. Thank you

01:07:00

Dennis Sobin: for this evening of conversation, which I have frankly found quite depressing. We have a mayor here who is in quite a bit for the city, and I don't think we've shown her the proper respect and I want to thank her for her years of service, and if you win the election then four more years of service. I hope she won't go beyond that point because I think we should have a change of leadership at least at one point, but her. As far

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Dennis Sobin: as voting for me, I can look at me as being the peace candidate, the candidate who wants to stop this war on drugs, the candidate who wants to use all the wasted money we're using for incarcerating people and the police that are entrapping people, money that we could use for real programs that will help our young people, that will help our addicts, etc., and that is why I want you to vote for me, The Libertarian Party Camp and thank you

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Dennis Sobin: again.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Alright. Ms. Hall?

Stacia Hall: Thank you very much. I enjoyed speaking with the voters tonight and I believe that the mayor sets the tone for this city. So, if the mayor says, "This will be the case in terms of keeping crime, we're down, bringing it down", the mayor sets the tone and the people

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Stacia Hall: will listen. The crime is up over 21% from last year and we are seeing it continually increase and with it we are losing more of our children. Our children go out for a weekend celebration, a holiday celebration, and they don't come back home. They are the ones that we are losing

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Stacia Hall: and this is very sad that we are not going after this issue right away. As mayor, I would make sure I establish a strong relationship with the Attorney General as the Attorney General is the office that handle the juvenile justice. That area needs much tighter reform because it is our youth who are being used

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Stacia Hall: to carry out the majority of the crimes because they go in and they come back out and they carry on. And so, we need to save our children, make education worthy and exciting that they have a zeal to learn, give them an incentive to come to school, keep them physically active and we must address this poverty issue. There has been no welfare reform and it's just all willy-nilly. Everybody just

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Stacia Hall: get to do what they please, but we're getting stronger people in our city that's helping to build our city and they're leaving our city just as quickly, [O/V][U/A].

Denise Rolark Barnes: Ms. Hall, thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Stacia Hall: [U/A][O/V] skills.

Denise Rolark Barnes: So, we will now move on to Mayor Bowser for your closing remarks.

Muriel E. Bowser: Well, thank you, Denise, and I want to thank all of the residents who took time this evening to watch and to listen and to send in their questions, many of

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Muriel E. Bowser: whom voted for me in June, and I'm asking them and others to take this election very seriously and come out and vote on November 8th for Muriel Bowser for mayor. Also, they're very important council elections on the ballot, including the at-large race where you have an opportunity to vote for two candidates. I'm the Democrat running for mayor and just in listening to this conversation today, I,

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Muriel E. Bowser: you know, my spirit tells me just to say this, running from mayor is not a joke. It is very serious business. We live in one of the most important cities in the world. We have a 20-billion-dollar budget that requires expertise and finesse to manage and implement each and every day. We have to have courageous leaders that have demonstrated an ability to stand up to power even if it's Donald Trump, even if it's the Congress of United States,

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Muriel E. Bowser: even if it's leaders in your own party, you have to have that, and I have demonstrated that in my 15 years of service to the residents of the District of Columbia. My leadership has been tested to the core in the last two and a half years, where I had to make tough decisions related to COVID that I know saved lives. I'm very proud of the work that we have done that has been progressive and aggressive and effective in dealing with our affordable housing issues in the District

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Muriel E. Bowser: of Columbia We also saved our economy. I did two budgets in the space of like three months during COVID to make sure that businesses didn't close, and that people could pay their employees and I have a real plan for our comeback. What I didn't hear tonight was any plans for what's next for the District of Columbia. How do we make sure that we get our downtown revived, that our agency [O/V].

Denise Rolark Barnes: Mayor Bowser, your

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Muriel E. Bowser: Thank you.

Denise Rolark Barnes: time is up. Alright.

Muriel E. Bowser: Thank you very much, guys. Thank you all.

Denise Rolark Barnes: Thank you. That concludes our debate. To learn more about how to vote

in this election visit dcboe.org, that's dcboe.org, and remember to visit dcdebates.com.

Again, that's dcdebates.com, to watch this debate and others in their entirety. I want to

thank all of you, all of the candidates, our community partners, and the Office

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Denise Rolark Barnes: of Campaign Finance for hosting tonight's debate. I wish you all a safe

evening and good night.

[1:14:25 END RECORDING DC Mayoral Debate Hosted by the Office of Campaign Finance]