



Color Of Change was founded in the aftermath of a flood, which was caused by bad decision-makers and turned into a life-altering disaster by bad decision-makers.

It was Hurricane Katrina, and Black folks were literally on their roofs, begging for the government to do something and left to die.

And the thing about Katrina and I think about so many of these moments that show deep failures in our system or show the ways our system was designed to do exactly what we're seeing. They illustrate the things that we already know.

And that in the situation of Katrina was geographic segregation, generational poverty, the impacts of what we've done to our planet, all the ways in which those systems have colluded because of systemic and structural racism.

But at the heart of it. No one was nervous about disappointing black people, government corporations, and media and when institutions are not nervous about disappointing your community.

It doesn't matter what kind of research report you have that illustrates all the facts and figures. It doesn't matter what you do in the court if you don't have the power to implement it.

And so I want to talk a little bit about all of that.

Today, talk about the road ahead and power because that's what we do at Color Of Change. And so, just a few years ago, we might not have all been in the same room.

But the destructive impact of today's monopolies is so clear and so widespread that it brings together an equally wide range of people. There is a rapidly expanding anti-monopoly community, and we're trying to prevent monopolies from continuing to be an unquestioned unaccountable norm that we are forced to live with the norm that people in power have irresponsibly let it become.

I say people in power because we should be clear that it is no accident. Politicians made decisions, news media made decisions, investors made decisions, a lot of advocates made decisions and made deals, elites, intellectuals economists, and some of whom are focused on the issue right now, not too long ago had better things to do.

Monopolistic corporate leaders had a vision of monopoly that they translated into action every single day, and every single day, a host of people, let them do it.

And so what is our vision of a nonmonopoly? And how are we going to translate that into a set of action necessary beyond a conversation like this, to bring about that vision?

It's important to remember that we come to this shared cause for different reasons and probably with different ideas about what we want to achieve, what success looks like, and how we actually get there. None of us want to be in this just in the same conversation five years from now. We want to be in a story of success.

But what is that story? We have all made different contributions to the same result creating more momentum than we've had in decades for orchestrating a mass rejection of monopolies through strong government action.

And we are trying to move that idea of monopoly from something to celebrate to something to question to something to regulate and defeat, but we cannot operate only in the realm of ideas.

And 2011 and 2012. The idea of breaking up the big banks was amplified exponentially as a loud cry coming out of Occupy Wall Street, but we did not see the kind of movement that we needed to convert that passion into policy. Today we are building consensus around the idea that big tech is out of control. And for some, breaking up big tech is necessary for holding together our democracy. So we have another chance.

But I want to be clear.

Racism is a critical part of this story.

And you know, we have seen the monopolistic tech industry amplify racism, recruit people into racism, such as extreme and disruptive ways, that sort of a wide range of people find themselves not being able to accept it anymore, and have turned against the tactic accepting of monopolies.

And since racial justice is one of the issues that has motivated people to rally around this cause of breaking up big tech, we need to make sure that racial justice is core to the outcomes of antitrust action, because it is what will keep people motivated not only to win a major blow against monopolies but to defend whatever we win, to prevent it from becoming undone.

Black people have a different relationship to monopoly. In general, what some may see as the good old days of antitrust, were the most monopolistic imaginable for black people. Every industry was a monopoly, a racial monopoly, as was the political system, the legal system, and every other system if monopoly is the concentration of power and decision-making in the hands of a few colluding,

people who manipulate the market to their benefit, then there is no better example than the owners, guardians and beneficiaries of structural racism. That is true for gender as well.

Monopolies are an economic expression of exclusion from power, and so many people suffer from that and personally know and feel the experience of the level of institutionalized exclusion. We need to be clear about that because we need to be clear that the solution here is not about going back to some kind of antitrust heyday of the back of the past. You know, as a black gay man, there is no time machine that I want to step into and go backward on maybe for clothes and music, but you know, I don't want to take us too off track.

Monopolies in this country have always used their power to steal from Black people, first and foremost, as laborers, consumers, family and inspire homeowners in every role in every aspect of life. That's one reason monopolies are so dangerous, and it requires a very deep and sustained commitment in order to defeat that level of racial injustice. It requires moving from an academic discussion focused on abstract principles to specific actions, targeting specific fixes that ensure that we can get very specific results in terms of racial justice.

If we get it right, we will see that racial justice is not just an outcome of antitrust legislation is a driver already seen that, in the case of big tech, and in other areas like Telecom, one of the most successful challenges to the telecom monopoly at the retail level has been the fight against telecoms exploitive profiteering in the criminal justice system, the way they drive families of incarcerated people into debt by charging outrageous fees for telephone access, just because they can just because they think that no one is there to stop them or regulate them because they have so much unchecked power.

Those are the kinds of monopoly realities that show up in people's lives that can motivate new people to action to join this cause to see it as part of their everyday efforts. So we want to rally large numbers of people against monopolies because that is what it will take to actually pave the way for government action that is meaningful and durable.

Then we need to start with where they are starting. We need to start with what monopolies mean to people, not what it means in theory, but what it means to life. So there are three things that I want us to remember that we have to get right.

Number one, we must be a grassroots movement, not simply an intellectual movement.

We are not going to win with that without a movement of real people rising up behind the idea of breaking up monopolies. We're not going to win in the back rooms of policy negotiation, unless we have people lined up banging on the front door.

Color Of Change - my organization runs these types of campaigns every day that channel those on-ramps that give people ways to connect and channel their voices and connect to the bigger systems and the type of changes necessary, whether it's us or others. The investment in people-driven action is the only way we're gonna get a return on the power we need to win major structural changes in our economy like antitrust. We often see people in our sector fall in love with the idea of people power, but then only fund ideas and conversation, not real action. Both are needed.

It's through campaigns and action that we are able to name villains tell a story about how people's lives will be better and to be clear about what we are fighting for and who we are fighting against, which is what we need to build the kind of

public pressure required to force change and to neutralize the voices who are trying to defend the status quo.

Number two, this kind of work takes some savvy and understanding of which buttons to push with which people you know many people hate the rich in theory, but admire them in practice.

You know, some of us like reality shows and all that good stuff. And it can be hard to turn people against the people that they admire and aim to emulate. Some people's status as rich or even as a billionaire represents the achievements of an entire community. It's not something people want to overturn so quickly.

In fact, breaking up monopolies is something that opens up opportunity for competition, which may mean fewer billionaires but probably means more millionaires capitalizing on that competition. So it's about creating an opportunity for people shut out and not just disciplining bad actors. That's another angle of how this affects different people differently and the different stakes that different people come into this fight for. It's not just the absence of racial injustice that we need to be working hard on, but it is the presence of racial equity. Antitrust can deliver on both but only if we focus on both those goals.

And number three, we can't hide from race.

Race will animate the debate and start up passions and actions we need. We can't run away from that just because the other side seeks to exploit it because fighting monopolies is about shifting power and racism. And it's an issue of shifting power that motivates people to action.

Racial Justice is our superpower, and our opponents know it, and it's why they attack it. People who fight racism, whose parents have had to fight racism, whose kids have to fight racism every day know that being right is not enough.

We've never had the luxury to settle a debate simply by being right, rather than we've had to build power that is required to overturn that debate. And we're seeing rising aggression against Black people and brown people, attacks that are violently coming at us in the education, in media, politics, in the economy, and our daily interactions, all facilitated by technology, and so many other systems, they depend on it.

So if this issue can be seen as a vehicle for shifting power in society, and fighting back against those attacks, a solution for ending those attacks, it will be motivating for people. But if the rhetoric and the focus of funding and leadership on this issue hides from race, it will not activate people at the level we need.

It's like benching your best player, just as you're starting to move things forward.

So right now, very few big tech corporations have had so right now, a very few big tech corporations have a near total control over online commerce, online content and online connections. As a result, people get hurt, not on occasion, but systematically. And at scale.

The tech platforms enable all sorts of back bad actors in society to make a joke out of federal law to hurt people for fun and to exploit people for profit. Those platforms provide a backdoor to laws aiming to protect us from violence, discrimination, misinformation, and organized plots to threaten our freedom and safety.

The result of this level of concentrated power and control of our tech industry, and the very technology that was supposed to move us into the future that is now driving us into the past is nothing we can ignore. Our movements should fight them, but we shouldn't be looking into the past but into the future, with more people working for antitrust.

The more people we engage the more people we on-ramp creates new opportunities to build a social consensus about the dangers of these consolidated forces and the action needed to break them up. And the more we can see opportunities for winning the type of structural change that will transform our economy and our democracy.

And so in the end, I don't think that racial justice is an outcome of our efforts to win on these issues. Racial Justice is our driver.

It is the most powerful force we have to motivate people in this country to take the type of powerful steps to make real change.

And it is the most powerful evaluative tool to actually know if the changes that we win are at the level and the impact and the type of ongoing we give us the type of results that will make us proud of our successes. We have an opportunity to win here, but winning requires us to actually focus on expanding our base, and evaluating our purpose.

Thank you all very much.