

CHARTING A FUTURE FOR INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY

This was an eye-opening workshop presented by Dr. Sylvester Johnson with critical information about the intersection of racism, technology and democracy.

Dr. Johnson laid out stark facts proving that access to the benefits of democracy has been denied to a huge swath of our African Americans and Latinx citizens through legalized and systemic racism. He cited one Supreme Court decision after another that unapologetically condoned patently racist policies. These policies led to a huge wealth gap between whites, on the one hand, and Black and Latinx citizens, on the other.

But, he held out hope for dramatic change!

According to Dr. Sylvester, digital tech will be the most important driving force in creating new wealth. It will be so powerful that digital tech **alone will double the world's GDP in 10 years!** It is possible, in his view, that digital tech can change our patterns of inclusion and, thus, access to all the benefits of democracy.

This can happen by adopting policies giving many, many more of our citizens - white, Black and Latinx - access to excellent education, jobs and wealth. Technology doesn't have the boundaries that we have used in the past to structure our lives. Witness the rapid change brought on by Covid-19 that relied in large part on technology. Working from home for many is not only permitted; it is required. Technology can make the pie bigger and easier to share. Just think about it, a six year old can access the world using an iPhone and knows how to use it!

All during this excellent presentation, I couldn't help but think about all the years of work by our Social Justice Committee to pave the way to do so much of what Dr. Johnson was advocating. It is stunning to think that digital technology could multiply the reach of those efforts exponentially in ways we have not even yet imagined.

Jean E.Burke