Current state of the stock market and how it arrived there?

On the heels of the selloff in the back half of 2018 where the majority of equity indices finished in negative territory, the first four months of 2019 witnessed a strong momentum-driven rally. This bounce, although welcomed by investors, was less fundamentally driven and more of a reaction to the Fed and other central banks around the world reversing course on planned rate hikes given signs of slowing global growth. The Fed must tread carefully from here as it tries to find the appropriate balance in its effort to prevent a recession and/or rampant inflation. The exercise is as challenging as ever with investor sensitivity to either outcome at all-time highs. Today, late market-cycle dynamics coupled with the threat of trade wars has investors looking to move out of equities in favor of more defensive investments. The most recent slowdown and uptick in volatility is a far cry from the bull market investors have welcomed and become accustom to for the past ten years.

Safest places to park funds during these economic conditions?

In times of volatility, we often observe investors' penchant for seeking safety in government-backed bonds. While bonds are traditionally one of the more conservative, less-risk bearing ways to invest, Brown Advisory believes in crafting well diversified investment portfolios that can weather various types of market conditions and outcomes while meeting the needs and objectives of our clients. This is typically some mixture of cash, bonds, equites and alternatives—where appropriate. Our firm's long-term approach to investing allows us to focus less on the short-term gyrations and what we can't control, and instead focus on making sure we own good companies with strong fundamentals. Companies that exhibit superior management teams, good capital decision-making and durable business models often fare better in tougher markets—allowing for an element of downside protection.

How has the US Trade War affected the economy and stock market?

Markets and investors do not like uncertainty. The current trade war and lack of a resolution is no exception. Globalization has thrived and been a positive for the global economy as a direct result of the reduction of trade barriers between countries. A reversion to increased protectionism will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the economy and multinational corporations in particular. Certain sectors and companies are notably vulnerable to tariffs. The energy, technology and materials sectors each broadly earn more than half of revenues from foreign sales. We have already seen a number of companies initially sell-off on concerns about the ultimate impact of tariffs. Until there is a resolution, it is hard to gauge or quantify the overall ramifications to the global economy and stock markets.

Why America's minority population should invest financially in their future and the benefits?

Saving for one's future is of the utmost importance. I do not know of many individuals that plan to work their entire lives, and as such, it is essential to have a "nest egg" that allows you to sustain your lifestyle post one's professional career. The easiest way to start is by opening up a retirement account. The most common retirement account is the Individual Retirement Account (IRA). An IRA is a vehicle in which your money can grow and compound tax-free. The ability for this particular form of investing to compound over the duration of your career is the biggest advantage. Accordingly, it is best to set up a retirement account as early on as possible.