

CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS

**“THE 2004 ELECTION AND THE FUTURE
OF PROGRESSIVISM.”**

INTRODUCTIONS: RAJ GOYLE

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RAJ GOYLE: Good morning everyone and thank you very, very much for attending our panel, “The 2004 Election and the Future of Progressivism,” sponsored by the Center for American Progress. A quick housekeeping note: can you turn off your mobile phones or put them to silent or airplane mode or whatever it is?

My name is Raj Goyle and I’m a senior analyst at the Center and I helped organize this event, and on behalf of John Podesta, our CEO and president, we sincerely welcome you to the St. Regis for what will be – certainly will be an exciting panel.

Before I introduce our moderator, Ruy Teixeira, who will lead this morning, I thought it was at least worth noting that even though the topic of the panel of course is the election, we had planned this panel two months before today and had – but for scheduling reasons we would have had this panel and debated this topic before the election and before Tom Frank started getting very rich off book royalties on November 3rd or November 4th. And the reason, of course, is because this debate about the future of progressivism is a long-term debate and although the election unfortunately hastened this debate and interest in this panel, it obviously did not determine the need to have it.

And I should also say on a quick personal note, I happen to be from Wichita, Kansas. As I like to say, I’m the founding and only member of the Indian-American Progressive Caucus from Sedgwick County, Kansas and – (laughter) –

MR. : (Off mike.)

MR. GOYLE: Thank you. Thank you. And for progressives in red states – not only in Kansas, but across the country – I think what Tom Frank describes in his book is at least familiar and regardless of whether you agree with his analysis or not, it’s worth further examination.

At the Center for American Progress, we are proud to play a leading role at the forefront of this debate. We take our mission quite seriously of articulating and developing progressive ideas for a just, free, and strong America that will earn the support of the majority of Americans. And if you’d like more information about the Center, please go to our website, americanprogress.org. And if you go there, you will see the biography for one of our most distinguished staff members, Ruy Teixeira, who will moderate this morning.

Ruy is the author of five books, including the critically acclaimed *Emerging Democratic Majority*, which was published in 2002. He’s the author of a popular online blog, “Donkey Rising.” He is a joint scholar – a joint fellow at the Century Foundation and the Center for American Progress and a heck of a nice guy.

So with that I’ll turn it over to Ruy and our distinguished panelists.

RUY TEIXEIRA: Thanks, Raj. I guess what I'll do is first I'll introduce our distinguished panelists and then we'll hear from our distinguished panelists. That seems like a pretty reasonable plan.

First, to my immediate right is Donna Brazile, who is chair of the DNC's Voting Rights Institute and one of the leading strategists of the Democratic Party I think it's fair to say. She's frequently quoted in the press. She's on television a lot. She has her own firm, Brazile and Associates, here in DC. She's the author recently of *Cooking with Grease: Stirring the Pots in American Politics*, and we're delighted you could be here with us today, Donna.

We have E. J. Dionne here, the noted *Washington Post* columnist, senior fellow also at the Brookings Institution – probably a few other affiliations I don't know about. He's the author of *Why Americans Hate Politics* and most recently of *Stand Up, Fight Back: Republican Toughs, Democratic Wimps, and the Politics of Revenge*, and I think it's fair to say that book has at least some salience at the current time. We need a new paperback, I think.

E. J. DIONNE: (Laughter.) Definitely. It's coming right at you.

MR. TEIXEIRA: We also have with us today Thomas Frank, author of *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*. And, again, it's very hard to think of anything that would be more relevant to the kinds of things progressives are trying to think through at the current time. He's a founding editor of *The Baffler*. He's also the author of *One Market Under God* and *The Conquest of Cool*. And it says here he likes big steaks, barbecue, and most other meat dishes, so he's trying to sort of project that sort of cultural affect that will make him consonant with the great masses of red America so I think that's a good thing.

We have over here on our far left, inappropriately enough I guess, Will Marshall – (laughter) – who is president and founder of the Progressive Policy Institute and of course of the Democratic Leadership Council. He's the author of policy tomes, tracts, and editorials way too numerous to mention. Also a heck of a nice guy; I'm an old friend of Will's. I even actually hung my hat briefly over in his shop, as I have hung my hat in many shops around town as E. J. will no doubt remind me. And we're delighted to have Will with us today presenting his perspectives.

So maybe without further ado we'll just get started. I think we'll just move from – again, this isn't appropriate really – from Tom Frank at my far right to Will Marshall on my far left. So, Tom, why don't you hit it, as it were?

THOMAS FRANK: All right. Thank you very much, Ruy. And that's me, Tom Frank, and I should point out that I'm a newcomer in this town. I moved here a little over a year ago from Chicago – a very different sort of a city as I have discovered, and this is pretty much the first time in my life that any more or less official political group has ever

asked my opinion about anything and so I'm something of a novice at this kind of meeting. And I should say it's a great honor to move to city and then suddenly have everybody want to know your opinion about something and I hope you do this for everybody that comes here. It's wonderful.

Now, let me start off by telling you about who I am and the approach that I took in writing this book, *What's the Matter with Kansas?* I'm not a political scientist. I've never been one for polls or maps or electoral strategy or any of that sort of thing. My subject has always been cultural history and so I come to this problem of the culture wars from a slightly different perspective, and I hope it's a perspective that is useful to you all.

Now, the first thing you have to – or that I think that we all have to understand in the aftermath of this latest election – this latest electoral disaster is the nature of the forces that beat us. In my opinion, you can't really defend yourself properly until you understand the nature of the attack and the strategies of the attacker. In my opinion, it's not enough to just brush off red-staters as these kind of superstitious buffoons that we're never going to be able to reach. You have to come up with a better understanding than that, with a better explanation for why the other team did what they did.

And as you search for that explanation, I want to suggest that you have a lot to choose from. The culture wars have basically been going on in one form or another ever since 1968. That is to say that they have been going on for all of my life. Virtually every election in my entire life has been decided by wedge issues and Southern strategies and appeals to the silent majority. Now, I'm the first to admit that when I was writing *What's the Matter with Kansas?* I was not thinking that what I was doing was coming up with a practical handbook for what Democrats might do. That was not my goal, but I hope that I might have some things to say that are sort of helpful to you guys.

First of all, I want to point out that the power of the culture wars, and by this of course I mean the sort of conservative strategies in the culture wars – that the power of the culture wars depends on a particular central narrative, what we might call the backlash narrative, that runs through and informs each of the issues that the Republicans periodically drop on us. What the backlash narrative is fundamentally about, I think, is social class. It is a populist narrative. It imagines a sort of pure-hearted common people right out of the movies of Frank Capra beset by a class of haughty overlords, i.e., us, that they call the liberal elite.

Now, you all have heard this term before, right? The liberal elite. They drive Chevys, right? We drive Volvos. They drink Maxwell House. We slurp lattes. They are humble. We are arrogant, overreaching, puffed up with self-importance and all the big ideas that we got from books. That's what it's supposed to be about.

So liberals, see, are supposed to be a class unto themselves – a ruling class of intellectuals that are hostile to the values and the folkways of ordinary people and that lords it over the commoners from their positions within the academy, the media, the judiciary, and the other professions. This should be familiar stuff. I mean, I was just on a

right-wing radio show the other day. I do a lot of these these days. Don't ask me why. And the person that I was talking – you know, that was supposed to be opposite me constantly, repeatedly accused me of being an elitist. It just happens all the time.

Think of the book titles – the books that they propel up the bestseller list with such regularity – such alarming regularity. Think of the titles: arrogance, treason, bias. *Harvard Hates America*. Remember that one?

Now, the backlash narrative is extremely powerful stuff. I don't believe I've ever had a conversation with a conservative in which it hasn't come up – in which, you know, some liberal, usually me, is accused of being an elitist. Like I said before, this narrative is so powerful I think that it is capable of rolling over mere facts and of making distinctions where none really ought to exist and we saw a lot of this in this latest election.

For example, liberals are always supposed to be snobs, so you take these two candidates, right, who come from almost exactly the same corner of the American ruling class and yet one of the comes across as this arrogant snob with a mansion and a yacht who knows how to speak French and blah, blah, blah, and so on and so forth. Whereas the other one has – you hear all the time when you're out in the red states, the other one, George W. Bush, is one of us. That was the term that they always used – he's one of us, whereas John Kerry is supposed to be this distant aristocrat – this snob by definition.

Another example: liberals are supposed to be – according to this narrative are supposed to be traitors. Of course, always stabbing our GIs in the back, and so therefore even a war hero like John Kerry can be successfully smeared by these Swift Boat guys, right? When the facts point totally in the other direction, it doesn't matter. If a liberal got a Purple Heart, then a Purple Heart means nothing. And I was at that party at the Republican convention where they were handing out those Band-Aids with the little purple hearts on them. These guys were making fun of Purple Heart winners – right? – because a liberal had got one. I mean, it was disgusting – disgusting. I've got that thing on the bulletin board in my office back in wherever it is that I live.

So we're in a – (laughter) – this city; I can't figure it out – these angular streets and stuff. (Laughter.) So we're in a deeply ironic position today where Republicans talk about class all the time and where Democrats are basically afraid even to bring it up. This narrative is what allows Republicans to come off as the underdog – you know, as the party of dissent, and this is incredibly important. They come off as the party of dissent even when they control – effectively control all three branches of government because they hate the culture that surrounds us. They are angry at their position in the world. This is their source of power. They present themselves as the party of the alienated little guy.

Do you all know who Gary Bauer is? He ran for president back in 2000. He used to be the head of something called the Family Research Council, but today he runs something called the Council – no, I'm sorry, Campaign for Working Families. Okay?

He explicitly presents himself as a leader of the working class, and here's how Gary Bauer described the culture wars when the *New York Times* interviewed him a little while ago. Here's what he said: "Joe Sixpack doesn't understand why the world and his culture are changing and why he doesn't have a say in it." And when I read that, I – there's something very profound about that because that's something that Democrats used to be able to say. We were the ones that stood up for the little guy without a voice in a world that didn't give a damn about him or his views. We were the ones that railed against the high and the mighty; that fought to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. That was us.

Or compare the conventions – you know, there's what? Zell Miller? Remember that? They were mad as hell. They weren't going to take it anymore, right? And then you looked at ours and it was complacent almost to the point of smugness; this refusal to criticize. They came off as the party of the outsiders, as the party of the dissidents, the angry – you know, the angry people – the underdog.

Now, let me say one more thing about the angry pseudo-populist revolt that has been sweeping over this country for so long. It is an ideology that we underestimate at our peril. This thing is powerful on a deep psychological level. It allows millions of cranky suburbanites tuning in to Rush Limbaugh to imagine that they – they are society's real victims. It allows everybody to – everybody on the right anyway, to claim the saintly mantle of the persecuted. In fact, there's a book by Rush Limbaugh's brother – some of you may know about this – he's got one of these one-word titles that they love and that title is *Persecution*. The idea being that conservative Christians are subject to religious persecution right here in the U.S. of A. right now.

This narrative allows subscribers to *Reader's Digest* to participate in this fantasy that they are rising up in a kind of rebellion of the common people. It delivers states like West Virginia – you know, hardcore Democrat country just a few years ago. It delivers states like that at W's feet.

Now, populism of this kind packs a million volts and it will not be sated with conciliatory gestures here and there. It has to be fought, it has to be confronted, and it has to be short-circuited because as my friend Rick Perlstein (sp) has written, when somebody punches you in the gut, you don't just smile, stride halfway between his position and yours and then say that maybe that that guy has a point. You know? Doing it that way – you have to have a fighting faith, okay, and we just don't have it these days.

In fact, we've been doing exactly the opposite. We walk right into the buzz saw year after year after year. We – you know, we declare – you know, we decide that blue – that appealing to blue collar workers – this is a thing of the past of the, you know, dark Depression-era Democratic Party. We don't want nothing to do with that. Now we want to seek out cool new constituencies that are farther up the income ladder and contribute more. We openly embrace hip, '90s-style management theory. We imagine ourselves to be the metro party of cool billionaires engaged in some kind of cosmic combat with the

vogue millionaires of the – you know, the retro party, right? And so that is what it was all about: cool billionaires versus vogue billionaires.

I have an example – I was on a book tour back in June and I went to San Francisco and this was the moment that I knew John Kerry would lose – now, I like John Kerry and I voted for John Kerry and I really wanted him to win, I mean, like everybody in this room, but I knew he was going to lose when I opened up the *San Francisco City Magazine* and there was an article about these women who were raising money for Kerry by encouraging their wealthy society friends to forgo buying very, very, very expensive shoes and instead to give the money to the Kerry campaign. (Chuckles.) It's like, oh, let's rattle our jewelry for John Kerry. I was like, oh, my god, they're going to do it to us again – they're going to do it to us again.

Here's how the article ends. It's a quote from this woman who says her husband is a VC, and I don't mean Victor Charlie, okay? (Laughter.) And it says she's given \$3 million to – she's a very, very wealthy person. This is all about, you know, society people supporting the Democrats. She's given \$3 million to 527s mobilizing voters in key states and here's what she says: "I tell my girls I'm investing their inheritance." And I'll tell you what, with friends like that, you know, you don't need enemies. (Laughs.)

So what do I suggest that we do instead, okay? I mean, I don't really talk about this too much in the book, but Raj called me up and was so nice and polite and said, you know, come on, do it for Sedgwick County. So here I am; I'm going to give you suggestions. As I said, I'm no pollster. I'm no good at this stuff, but I'm going to try my best and I hope that the historical perspective has something to offer.

Here's what I suggest we do: we confront their fake populism with the real deal; we start talking one more time about the economic powers that really, honestly do make our lives what they are, and that really, truly do so without asking the say-so of average people. We talk about Wal-Mart, for example, and how their business plan is the exact opposite of, say, what Henry Ford used to do, the idea that you'll pay your workers enough so that eventually they'll be able to afford your product. Today, thanks to Wal-Mart the forces all push in the other direction and we should be encouraging people to wonder why that is and what they can do about it.

We should talk about what's happened to people who work and why. We should talk about Enron and how what they did was typical, not unusual. It wasn't just a matter of a few criminals here and there and a bummer accounting firm. This was going on everywhere across the economy. We should talk about Wall Street and the way that they operate and how they have restructured the world that we live in. And above all, we should talk about the free market, not as though it was some force of nature that we have to bow before or else, but talk instead about creating security from the whirling winds of market forces.

Now, talking this way I think will allow us to accomplish five crucial things. They said, Tom, when you go to Washington, DC, always give them bullet points, okay, so I've got five of them.

One, talking this way problematizes the culture-war narrative; it problematizes the backlash narrative and it strips them of the all-powerful "E" word. Now, when you talk about the Republican Party's traditional role as the servant of the business community, you talk about Republican policy in terms of the way it advances and is designed to advance the corporate agenda, it will instantly crumble their fantasy populism, okay? Compared with the real deal, I believe, their sort of fake populism of intellectual liberal elites pulling the strings – this will be laughable. This will be laughable if we talk this way. They won't get to call people like me – and I'm sure this has happened to many people in the room – they won't get to call you an elitist so easily. No West Virginia coal miner will ever be able to say that George W. Bush is one of them. It just won't happen anymore. We can complicate their populace and we can shatter their central narrative, okay?

Second of all, talking this way hits directly at the weakest point in the conservative coalition. Now, you've got to look at this strategically in the same way as they've done to us ever since the 1960s with their wedge issues and their Southern strategies and so on. They looked at where the Democratic Party, where the interests of its various members were in conflict and they stressed those points; they emphasized those points and they came up with these diabolical issues that split us apart, okay, and they did so very effectively and we have to do it back to them.

Now, look, the Republican Party right now is a coalition of two enormous groups that are kept together only by their shared hatred of liberals and the government, right? Who do you got there? The business Republicans, the sort of traditional Republicans and of course the values voters that we heard so much of from this election, and that's the sort of foot soldiers that provide the vast majorities. Now, economically speaking these two groups have almost nothing in common at all. On things like workplace issues, social insurance issues, minimum wage issues, their interests are diametrically opposed.

The number one contradiction, though, in their coalition, is this hallucination that they have, encouraged by the Karl Rove's of this world, that the culture we live in is controlled by all-powerful liberals, right, pulling the strings and making the puppets dance. That's how they look at the world around us. If we start talking about big business, start talking about free market forces, we bring those things back into the debate. This strips that away instantly – instantly.

It turns out it's Rupert Murdoch doing that stuff, it's Viacom, it's Sony, it's Madison Avenue that makes our culture what it is, not liberals, not free-floating moral depravity. It is the market that is the great disrespector of tradition and smasher of family values, not Democrats. By the way, this isn't – I know a lot of you are saying, goddamn, that guy from Chicago, he's got a lot of radical talk. This isn't radical talk. This is standard economics. You learn this at every business school in America. They call it

creative destruction. I wrote a whole book about Madison Avenue in the 1960s boasting about this stuff. We can talk about that later during the Q&A if you want.

Now, third of all – the third thing that talking this way does is in a demographic sense economic populism gives the working-class voters that have deserted us some reason to come back. If we don't talk about economic issues, we have no appeal to them at all. And as almost any study of these voters will tell you, these people may be conservative on the cultural issues, but they remain liberal on the economic ones. This is well known. Even a substantial number of evangelicals, it turns out, can be reached with such an appeal. I mean, Christianity is not the religion of devil take the hindmost. Jesus' message was not them what has, gets. Right? The alliance between evangelicals and the free-market right is much more tenuous, I believe, than anybody gives a credit for being – than anybody suspects.

And what's more, I think economic populism is basically the only comparative advantage that our team has. It's the only advantage that we enjoy with such voters. It's the reason they or their parents voted for us back in the day and it's our best shot, I believe, for winning them back.

Now, fourth – and I'm going to wrap up real quickly – this kind of politics has the power to energize the existing Democratic base, which didn't happen so well this time around, and it also has the power to expand the Democratic base, okay? Think like a Republican. We've got to build that base, not just constantly play the electorate as we find it and try to tailor a message that maybe 51 percent of the public is going to buy.

And lastly, we want to talk this way, I think, because economic security and fighting for the little guy is who we are. These are our core values and they are powerful ones. Standing up against exploitation, against a life of misery, pressed down on millions of people for the greater glory of the NASDAQ? This is deeply humane, deeply resonant stuff, and it also happens to be right.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. TEIXEIRA: Well, thank you, Tom. I don't think anyone can say they don't know where Tom Frank stands. Thank you for your provocative remarks.

Now, Donna, if you want to say some words.

DONNA BRAZILE: Well, first of all, thank you. That was a good eye-opener. I don't need as much coffee now. (Laughter.) It's good to be part of a distinguished panel with analysts and academics and activists and authors, and I must tell you, after listening to Tom's presentation I'm going to add more Cajun andouille sausage to my Creole seafood gumbo and perhaps drown myself in Tabasco in the process, because I'm on fire now. (Laughter.) Thank you, sir.

Like many progressive or liberal Democrats, of course I'm still facing the music and it's not harmonious. It's tough. Every day I'm now reminded that I was born in a red state, went to church once a week, and now all of a sudden I'm feeling somewhat blue, so I guess you can no longer call me an African-American or black anymore. But where I'm from, red and blue normally get along. We normally have red snapper stuffed with blue crabmeat. (Laughter.) So I'm trying to work this out in my head so that I can understand what we can do two years from now.

Let me just say this: going back a year ago, progressive forces understood that we had to do a couple of things right after the 2000 campaign where we came in first and lost, and then 2002 where we lost congressional seats. We understood that we had to mobilize like never before and we put the resources out there to ensure that we had a strong progressive movement. In many ways we did everything right in terms of getting out our vote, getting our message across to the people that we had to get it across, and we increased our vote totals like never before. John Kerry did manage to get more votes, Democratic votes, than any other previous nominee, but it wasn't enough to win the election and it wasn't enough, of course, to bring any congressional majority back into the fold.

So it's clear to me in moving forward what happened, and that is – and I think James Carville is absolutely right – our message wasn't compelling enough, it wasn't strong enough, and of course it wasn't a narrative, as Tom just mentioned, to reach those voters that we had to reach. That, going forward, should give us some pause on how we began to organize for the future.

There's no question that we have to expand our political terrain. A 12-state, 17-state strategy when we have enough resources – it's not an appropriate strategy for winning a majority of the country, but we also have to reach more people. And yes, my friends, I learned this in 2002 going home to assist Mary Landrieu in her reelection bid: we have to confront those who live in rural areas, exurbia, suburbia, et cetera, and we cannot totally leave them off the paradigm when we put together our message frame.

I was struck back in 2002 when John Breaux volunteered to go on not only Cajun radio, but Christian radio and Lindy Vas (ph) volunteered to go on those talk shows where people often talk about their co-called values. We won that election because we focused on quality of life issues, and two years later, of course, there was no money, no messaging put down in the South because we wrote off every southern state with the exception of Florida. That is a flawed strategy going forward.

Now, I want to focus – and I passed out some analysis we've done because there's been a lot of talk and spin – and God knows I know all about spin – about the black vote and what happened to the black vote. Every two years I find myself in this defensive posture where I have to tell people that the black vote did its part; that the black vote is like gravy or roux: you can do so much without potatoes or rice. And therefore it's important to understand that in 10 of the 12 battleground states where African-Americans

make up as much as 10 to 15 percent of the population, their numbers actually increased. Black voter turnout was up 25 percent and nationally African-American percentage grew by one percentage point from 10 percent of the electorate to 11 percent, representing more than 3 million new voters, many of them first-time voters and young voters.

We have to appreciate going forward that as we expand our electorate and expand the number of people we talk to, not three weeks before the election, but throughout the electoral cycle, that we can in fact achieve greater margins of victory if we include more people in our so-called recipe for victory.

George Bush was basically going back to what we call the Republican standard, which is 10, 11 percent of African-Americans supporting him and this is after the Republican Party for the first time in my lifetime put an unprecedented amount of money on African-American radio and they had credible in some cases – John King (sp) excluded – credible spokespeople from the religious community making inroads into the black community, talking to black churches, putting out their so-called voter guides. And so I'm amazed that despite all of this effort and all of the messaging that went across via African-American gospel radio, via the radio shows and the talk shows including the weather – you know, this message is brought to you by Bush-Cheney reelect. Can you imagine driving hearing that and worrying about what the traffic is?

But despite all of that, I think the African-American community, and especially in those blue states, kept many blue states blue and in those red states in many ways attempted to turn them into blue, and I'm including Florida and Ohio in that paradigm, so going forward we definitely need more and I'm a party person as well as a social activist, so in going forward the party must do more than find just another quarterback or a mechanic to try to fix what ails us at the ballot box. We have to, of course, make sure that we have a strong team and a strong bench and we expand our voices in those red states so that we're not faced with another election where America in the middle looked one color and on the coasts look another color. So I'll – I kept it brief so that I can spend more time listening to E. J. and my friend Will.

MR. TEIXEIRA: Thank you very much, Donna. Now, E. J., I'm sure you have some cogent remarks for us, so by all means hit it.

E. J. DIONNE: Thank you very much. I love the description of this organization's goal: an America that is just, free, and strong. And I thought only Democrats could spend weeks arguing about what order should those words be put in. (Laughter.) You know, free, strong, just? No, strong – you've got to emphasize strong up front. Also, when Will was introduced as being the far left, I had this thought sitting here, that maybe we really have changed so much that Will now is on the far left. (Laughter.) I'm grateful that he's here.

And see, unlike Tom and Donna – and thank you for those great remarks – I grew up in a red state. I am actually a Massachusetts liberal. I'm actually worse than that, I'm a French-Canadian Massachusetts liberal – (applause) – so it's a problem, although I do

hail from the part of Massachusetts that the attackers of Massachusetts don't talk much about: this great old factory town called Fall River, Massachusetts. And when people want to understand why Massachusetts has remained a Democratic state, it is not all those elitists that Tom described, it's actually working-class voters in places like Fall River who are themselves very religious, very churchgoing, who have held on to a vision that links that moral sense with a sense of economic justice, and I want to close on that.

I just want to make a few quick points. First thing, an election this close – and three points is close – you should be very wary of what any of us says about the election because almost any explanation for a three-point margin and, you know, 70,000 votes the other way in Ohio is potentially valid, which also renders it potentially invalid. John Kennedy famously lost an aide who had nine kids and had to go into the private sector to make some money to support those kids, and Teddy White had described this aide as coruscatingly brilliant and Ben Bradley was talking to his friend, John Kennedy, and said, “How are you going to lose an aide who is described as coruscatingly brilliant?” And as you remember, that election was very close and John Kennedy replied, “You know, what these guys don't understand is 100,000 votes the other way and they would all be coruscatingly stupid.” (Laughter.) And so that applies to us.

It also applies to any analysis, so I can imagine for example a million and a half votes differently in the popular vote, Ohio goes the other way, then the enclave we'd be describing is not that Democratic enclave on the coasts and the Midwest, but the Republican enclave in the Old Confederacy and the Rocky Mountain states, so we should be cautious, but having said that, I'll throw caution to the winds.

I want to talk briefly about what went right for both sides in this election. We usually talk at things like this about what went wrong with the losers. I mean, the first thing that went right for George Bush's campaign was that the relentless attacks worked. Now, I criticized them in my column. I criticized them right to the end. There's a real problem with that, I think, for the country, but it was a coherent, consistent, attack campaign that worked. Starting in March, the Bush campaign went on the air with some very, very tough advertising. The Kerry campaign went on the air in that period with some rather decent, positive advertising about John Kerry, particularly in the battleground states.

That positive advertising never could overcome the narrative. It would have helped if John Kerry had never said, “I voted for the \$86 billion before I voted against it,” which as somebody pointed out made perfect sense on Capitol Hill, but no sense anywhere else in the country. But nonetheless, you wouldn't have had this success without this sustained attack, and let's look at the Republican convention that Tom made reference to. The attacks at that convention clearly worked.

When you looked at the polls after the convention, George Bush had opened up a fairly substantial lead over John Kerry. It took an event as big as the debates simply to bring John Kerry back to even and it was in part because the John Kerry who appeared in those debates did not really match the parody of the attacks, but that was – even with the

reviews of those debates being almost universally positive for Kerry among voters and pundits, he still only got back to even and the attacks began as soon as the debates ended. And the Bush folks did a very clever job making the whole subject of the last debate John Kerry's comments on Mary Cheney; the largest issue confronting us as a nation no doubt. But they were very successful at it, so I think that thinking about the power of negative thinking is very important in analyzing what happened in this election.

Secondly, George Bush was very effective at simultaneously appealing to, if you will, conservative base voters, but doing it in a way, almost under the radar, that did not turn off the middle. John Kerry didn't lose this election on the religious right, and liberals sometimes get a kick out of blaming the religious right and it sort of – I guess it raises their moral standing in their own eyes, but that's not where Kerry lost this election. He lost it in the middle.

And just a few quick numbers: 38 percent of those who thought abortion should be legal in most cases went to Bush. Bush got 22 percent from voters who favored gay marriage; 52 percent among those who favored civil unions. And apropos of Tom's populace points, Bush even managed 16 percent among voters who thought the president paid more attention to the interests of large corporations than to those of ordinary Americans.

Now, yes, John Kerry did win the moderates in the electorate by nine points. The problem for Democrats is that at this moment in history, conservatives constitute 34 percent of the electorate and liberals only 21 percent of the electorate – God bless each and every one of them. But that means that a Democrat cannot win an election without winning a larger margin among moderates, and Bill Clinton did that and John Kerry fell just short. So I do think that we cannot forget about talking about this political center.

One of the good things that's happened in the post-election recriminations is that there have been fewer recriminations, and I think we've heard less of the old argument, well, the party needs to move to the left. No, the party needs to move to the center. We have a lot less of that, and I think in fact the notion that moderation and populism are somehow opposed to each other I think is fundamentally wrong. The example I would offer is the Colorado Senate race. And here is another thing the Bush folks did right that I think is worthy of study, which is their success at increasing turnout, not only in rural areas but also in exurban areas.

I was talking to a Democratic friend and at the end of the conversation I said, "Go exurban, young man; go exurban." The exurbs aren't odd places; they are new construction for folks who often can't afford housing in the near suburbs, which have gotten very expensive, and for various reasons don't want to live in the city or in some cases can't even afford the housing in affluent areas of the city. The exurbs are problematic for Democrats not because the folks out there are all right wingers, but because many of the traditional forms of organization that worked so well in the inner city areas in this election – trade unions, black churches, and the like, and we could go on – don't exist out there. And I think that a very serious look at what happened in the

exurbs and what forms of civic and social organization there are is very important, and I think Karl Rove did that, and I think that was the genuinely innovative aspect of the Bush campaign.

A guy who managed to overcome this is Ken Salazar. And I'm glad that a lot of attention is now being paid to those Rocky Mountain states – Colorado, Montana – where the Democrats did very well in the state elections – Nevada, Arizona, and New Mexico. These are very competitive states for the long haul. Ken Salazar grew up in rural Colorado. He had links to the land through ranching, farming, and as a state natural resources commissioner he had actually fought for the interests of rural Coloradans on the Western Slope against the interests of the folks in the big cities. And if you look at his advertising, it was simultaneously populist and moderate. He was against having a huge budget deficit in order to pay for big tax cuts for the wealthy. There was a way in which the two themes could go together. Salazar won by about 51-47; Kerry lost the state by about 51-47, and Salazar did it by winning big in Denver and Boulder, just like John Kerry did, but cutting the Republican margins on the Western Slope and in rural counties. So I think that's something to be looked at.

Two other quick points. I do want to talk about values here. And again, just to go to Colorado, this cultural contradiction of conservatism that Tom refers to I think was drawn particularly starkly in the Colorado Senate race because you had Pete Coors, who was trying to get traditional-values voters, having been the guy who invented the twins. Now, I'm sure this is too high-brow an audience; no one has ever seen those twins ads for Coors beer. (Laughter.) But there is something odd about this, and I think it goes to this question of whether those who favor traditional family values, whether their enemies are some leftover '60s hippies or whether what they're really mad about, and I think personally legitimately so, a kind of cultural commercialization that commercializes everything including sex and I don't think that's a right-wing view. I don't think you have to be in – you know, to go to a bible church to believe that, although God bless everyone who does. It's something that I think we need to talk about in a different way.

The New Deal I think was powerful because it did have a cultural narrative. I teach at Georgetown and I had to give an introductory lecture and so I chose as my subject – this may sound odd to some – what the movie *It's a Wonderful Life* had in common with the teachings of Pope John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris*. How do you like that?

I love *It's a Wonderful Life*. A lot of people think it's a corny, schmaltzy movie. I think *It's a Wonderful Life* is a perfect embodiment of what – not New Deal politics (alone ?) was about, but what the New Deal culture meant. And I think old-fashioned as it is, it's still very relevant to now.

Think about George Bailey and Mr. Potter. Now, George Bailey and Mr. Potter are both capitalists. They want people – you know, George Bailey favors what you might call an ownership society. He's a hero because he allows working-class people to rise up in the world, to become owners, and he is fair to them. Mr. Potter is an evil man because

he wants to make money exploiting them and wants to do nothing to lift them up. Then think about the linkage between cultural values and economic justice that this movie paints. Those of you who have seen it – I'd love to ask anybody not seen that movie in this audience.

At the end of the movie when you discover what would the world have been like if George Bailey hadn't existed, well, what happens to his town of Bedford Falls? Well, first it becomes Pottersville, but second it becomes an immoral, honky-tonk town. The dear, young woman whom George Bailey saves has fallen into prostitution. There's gambling on every corner. It's a mean and vicious place and it's an immoral place. And the message of that movie is that economic justice leads to a more moral and decent society and it seems to me we shouldn't forget that.

One of the most moving things I've heard in all these post-election panels came on a panel at Fordham University from former Senator Bob Kerry, and we were sitting up there on a panel and he was – Fordham had kindly given us all this apparel; this Fordham apparel – and he was looking at the hat and the hat was made in Vietnam. And Bob Kerry made the point that under the textile agreement we had saved a handful of textile jobs, but coming from Fall River, Massachusetts, I can tell you most of them are gone and they're going away.

And Kerry wasn't trying to make a point about free trade or protectionism; he was simply making a point about economic justice and he said, you know, imagine a young woman who works in a textile factory that happens to pay a decent wage and provides her with health insurance. Imagine that that young woman gets pregnant. What choice is she going to make depending on her circumstance? Is she more likely to choose to have that child if she knows that she will have health insurance right through the term of that child and after the child is born? Is she more likely to have that child if she knows that she will have a job and be able to support the child she brings to life on this Earth? That's the way I think we need to talk about moral issues, including abortion, and we need a different discussion in the country and I hope we get it after this election.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. TEIXEIRA: Another rouser. Thank you, E. J. Will, as our resident Bolshevik here on the far left, let's hear what you have to say.

WILL MARSHALL: Oh, thanks, Ruy, it's wonderful of the Center to have the Democratic Party in all of its glorious diversity represented on this stage from Frank to Marshall.

Let me make a few points about the election. I want to start where E. J. did, and that is that – you know, this has been a pretty good aftermath and there's no great recriminations and nobody is saying we lost because we didn't move to the left or the right enough. There's kind of collective sense, I think, that we put on a pretty good show

and ran a pretty good campaign and came pretty close to winning and have a pretty strong base from which to build on.

Having said that, there are a couple of points I do think that need to be made about the election. One is the limits of voter mobilization. We pulled out all of the stops on turnout, registration efforts, the famous 527 campaign. We spent hundreds of millions of dollars. We exceeded all expectations in places like Ohio and Florida in terms of turning out our vote, our base. We energized our base as never before and it all came up a little bit short. As Steve Rosenthal was quoted as saying the other day, "There were just more of them than there were of us." And it seems to me there's an important lesson there for the investor class of the Democratic Party, the people who poured millions into the 527s, that as important as voter mobilization and marketing of our message is, we better also attend to the essence and content of the message if we're going to be effective.

Secondly, I do think it's true that the Kerry campaign, which I strongly supported from the get-go, made a tactical and maybe strategic mistake, really, by accentuating the negatives in this campaign. Tom Frank thinks didn't fight hard enough or weren't critical enough, and I certainly agree when you're talking about the convention, although the rest of the campaign we didn't seem to be shy on Bush-bashing. But the point was that there just wasn't enough of a positive case there for a lot of persuadable voters to hang their hats on when it came to the choice between the two men. We did a very effective job of offering a litany of reasons why we ought to fire George Bush, but there just wasn't enough of a positive case as to why we ought to hire John Kerry.

You know, *The Onion*, my favorite magazine called Kerry's campaign "the one-point plan for America: we're going to get rid of George Bush." (Laughter.) Well, people needed a little bit more than that.

And so, the big lesson I take away from this is that ideas still matter most in determining presidential elections and the challenge for our party is to get better at persuading persuadable voters. There isn't this hidden cache somewhere of voters who are going to come out for us if we just turn up the populist rhetoric or unveil ourselves as loud-and-proud liberals or lefties. We keep trying that approach and it never seems to work. I do think we have to recognize that our job here is to change minds, to frame compelling arguments to people, change enough minds to start building a progressive majority and check the momentum of what is now a mild conservative Republican ascendancy in this country now: two straight elections where they have gotten over 50 percent of the vote.

The good news here is that we're liberating –

MR. DIONNE: Actually it's only one straight election.

MR. DIONNE: You mean '02?

MR. MARSHALL: The mid-term election where Republican congressional candidates got 51 percent of the vote. So I do think we're liberated by this defeat to think bigger and bolder, and above all to hone the kind of coherent governing philosophy that is going to be necessary for us to build a progressive majority.

Anybody looking at this map, I think, concludes quickly that you've got to have a heartland strategy. There are 31 states there. We've got go raiding there and we have to target states that are reachable for us. I looked at the map; there are 31 of those states, 14 went for Bush by over 60 percent of the vote, 17 by less than 60 percent, nine of them by a single digit. We've got to look at those nine states and a couple of others and bring real political strategies aimed at bringing these states over because we might change the 16,000 votes in Ohio, may have brought that state over and given us the election in the Electoral College, but we're never going to get back into power in Congress if we don't start taking some of those states away.

So a heartland strategy, it seems to me, ought to build on four key elements: my four-point plan for survival. The first is to make our party the insurgent party of reform. You know, we are in the minority now. We're totally out of power, and I think it's time to stop defending a programmatic status quo and think much more radically about what happens in public policy. I'll give you a counter example – a negative example. One of the most disappointing things in this campaign was to hear our candidate talk about Social Security and to use those old brain-dead terms, you know, we're not going to cut benefits, not going to raise the retirement age; we're not going to do anything to reform a program that everybody in America knows needs structural reform.

And so, in the vacuum, the Republicans can come through with an utterly phony privatization scheme because it looks like they at least want to do something and we are just saying no and losing the political initiative for that reason. I do think it's really important for us to get behind a radical program of political reform. Let's go to every state in the union and start pushing for nonpartisan redistricting to prevent the kind of outrage we saw in Texas this time that cost us a bunch of states, and to create a dynamic which will I think open up – make more competitive seats and help reverse the terrible polarization in our politics. But there's also obviously budget reform.

One issue we didn't exploit sufficiently in this campaign is the Republican policy of huge deficits. Entitlement reform. But the Republicans are now irrevocably the party of Washington, the party of special interest, the party of Tom DeLay and his K Street project, the party of corporate subversion of the public and national interests. We have to spend the next four years pounding that message home, but we also have to link it to an agenda for changing those particular public-sector systems and reforming them – modernizing them – education, Social Security, healthcare system – and not simply propose tired remedies that don't command much allegiance outside of our true believers.

Second, we need to become the party of growth and middle-class opportunity again. I think one of the worst signs here was Bush carried 97 of the 100 fastest-growing counties in America – a lot of those exurban counties. And what we have out there are

working middle-class families with children. And I agree with Tom that they are voting for Republicans largely on cultural grounds, but I don't think entirely on cultural grounds. They lean Republican also on security grounds and on economic grounds. They like tax cuts. They think they benefited from the tax cuts, and in fact, with some of the more progressive elements of the Bush package they did benefit from tax cuts.

And so I don't think that we can simply say that the backlash narrative is so powerful that all we have to do is come with economic populism and we'll get these people to miraculously discover where their true economic interests lie. They think their economic interests lie, unfortunately, to a significant extent with the Republican Party, which has been the party of anti-government populism, which has fed on their mistrust that Washington can do good things and the right things with their money. And we have to address that.

And again, I think the political reform agenda is part of that, but we also need to get behind pro-growth policies that speak to the aspirations of these rising middle-class families, not just a sense of grievance. And that's why I'm a little reluctant to say a kind of populist corporation-bashing message is going to take us towards – I'm with E. J.; we need to go toward a kind of Democratic capitalism: how are we going to make sure that these families share in the growth of this new economy?

The third is we've got to close the national security confidence gap, and I'm really surprised; I think it's the first reference to security on this panel. It was only the overriding issue of this election, if you ask me, and in fact for the last two elections. I think that 9/11 and the fact that George Bush was president on September 12th was the thumb on the scale of American policies. It's what's created a slight structural Republican advantage in national politics because for 30 or 40 years now, going back to the early '70s and the Vietnam schisms, the Republicans have been trusted more than Democrats to keep the country strong and to confront our enemies. That's a gap that's been there staring us in the face for four decades. We haven't moved to close it and after 9/11 it became politically salient again. It became the centerpiece of American politics as a result.

I'm told by pollsters – Ruy, I don't know if you'll back this up or not, but we ought not to look at the impact of the moral moms, but the martial moms. That's with a T. These were strongly – women concerned about terrorism and security were moved sharply into the Bush camp, resulting in a very much narrower gender gap in this election than what we've seen before. I don't believe that we succeeded in making this campaign a referendum on Iraq despite our best efforts, and in fairness I'm not sure if any Democrat could have really overcome the advantage Bush had simply by the fact that he was president on September 12th. But we've got to spend the next four years trying to figure out how we're going to dispel lingering public doubts about this party's toughness when it comes to using force as well as the other strengths and attributes we have in American diplomacy to make us safe and to succeed and offer an alternative vision for how we win this long-term war against Muslim extremism.

Fourth, and the point that we've all been talking about here, is that we've got to challenge the Republicans' claim to be the party of morality. And there are a couple of things I don't think we need to do here. One is we shouldn't embrace cultural conservatism. We've got to stand our ground as the party of tolerance, as the party that opposes the right wing's attempt to impose a certain moral vision on the rest of America. We've got to fight for things like stem cell research. We've got to fight what I assume will be an impending effort to stack the Supreme Court with an anti-abortion majority.

But another thing we shouldn't do is to tell people that they're wrong somehow to vote on their moral concerns. To me this is the height of cultural condescension. Most of us don't neatly compartmentalize our economic and ethical outlooks. They're woven together in the way we think about the choices we make in politics and in life. And I don't think we should demand that of the public. On the contrary, we need to do a much better job of developing a narrative that weaves them together.

I'll give you an example. In the '90s Bill Clinton quite effectively spoke to the moral and the economic interests of the middle class with his discourse about rewarding work, fighting against unearned privilege, about requiring work in welfare, about a tougher and more effective anti-crime policy, and about deficit reduction. Deficit reduction is a values issue. Remember that it was the number one plank of the Contract with America in 1994. To most Americans, it was a symbol of the irresponsibility of the political class that's willing to mortgage their children's future for current consumption on things they don't have a lot of confidence in. We've got to seize that issue back and make the Republicans pay for it.

But as powerful as that backlash narrative is, Tom, I'm struck by the fact that we were able to defuse it in two elections in the 1990s: in '92 and '96. You know, when Bob Dole tried to go back to the old liberal, liberal, liberal attack, he was punching at ghosts – you know, at phantoms because Bill Clinton had changed the reality. He hadn't governed in the old way and so Dole's attacks didn't get any traction, so the backlash narrative is – it's powerful, but it's not insurmountable. We've done it before and we can do it again. Let's remember that Clinton won a dozen of those red states in '92 and 11 of them in '96 with essentially the same issue positions as John Kerry had in this election, but it does require us to have our own cultural narrative that blends economic and moral concerns better than we do and we ought to do that around family. I won't get into that now because we don't have time.

But finally, I would also say that this is an issue in which we need to look for common ground. I'm not so sure that a strategy of cultural war and polarization is the right one here. I think in politics you win by maximizing support from your core supporters, but you also have to persuade people who are not already converted to your point of view and you have to diminish the hostility of people who are skeptical of you on, say, cultural grounds. We have to speak to some of the qualms people have on abortion or on the other issues – guns – and say that, well, you're not crazy. We understand your concerns, but we differ with you on the policy responses and here's why.

Again, Clinton did a good job of trying to find common ground on a lot of these issues, and making appeals to cultural swing voters. Yes, they do exist and, yes, we have to win them if we're to put together a winning majority, so I think that this matter of ending the Democratic Party's cultural estrangement from the very constituency that we need to win back – working middle-class families – is not going to be a matter of turning up the confrontational volume. It's not going to be heightening the us-versus-them tensions. We're going to have to make appeals that – to common values and engage in real dialogues and talk about how we apply those values differently.

Thank you.

MR. TEIXEIRA: Thank you, Will. It says here in the program that now I'm supposed to make some remarks, but I'm going to be – you know, keep this mercifully short because I know people want to get to their questions.

The thing that jumps out at me, though, that I would just mention – and I completely agree with Donna, I don't think the black vote was a problem for the Democrats in this election. In fact, if you look at the data, Kerry carried the black vote by more than any president – more than any candidate since Walter Mondale in '84 except for Gore in 2000. He actually carried the black vote by more than Clinton did.

The real problem was the white working class and I think that's what we're really talking about here and that's really in a sense at what Tom's remarks I think were directed at and probably a lot of other people's remarks as well. It looks like we lost – Democrats lost the white working class, whites without a four-year college degree by about 24 points in this election. That's up from 17 in 2000, and let's not forget that Bill Clinton managed to carry the white working class by a point in both of his election victories, so it's really about, in a sense, how you do you reach the white working class, and particularly in this election white, working-class women. That's where the erosion really took place I think.

And that's a reexpression of – the problem with the exurbs in a sense a reexpression of that because the exurbs are where there's an exceptional concentration of these kind of voters, but it wasn't just the white working-class voters in the exurbs the Democrats lost. If you look at the exurbs, depending on how you want to sort of operationalized that, it accounts for maybe 15, 16, 17 percent of Bush's net vote gain in the 2004 election. The rest of it came in metro areas, in rural areas, and it was probably mostly those kind of voters, but they're all over the place and if the Democrats can't do better among that group, it will be difficult for them and I think Tom is – certainly has a very clear perspective on how to do that, whether right or wrong.

The other perspectives here sound to me a little bit more complicated and it's a little bit more difficult to see how you would move forward with them, so – though they may be right for all I know. Maybe that's something we can discuss. But as I say, at least Tom's solution has the virtue of clarity. Maybe it gives us a fulcrum around which we can pursue some debate here today.

Do any of the panelists want to offer a remark or two before we get to the questions from the audience?

MR. DIONNE: Could I just elaborate on a – (coughs) – I'm sorry, elaborate on a point that Will made that it seems to me that the Bush campaign succeeded in making the election more about terrorism than about the war in Iraq and, you know, you just look at the exit polls: people who voted on Iraq voted three to one for Kerry, but only 15 percent voted on Iraq. People who voted on terrorism – 19 percent of the electorate voted 86/14 for Bush, and so I think that when you looked at one of the central kind of places of – locuses of competition in this election, they were very effective in pushing the election away from the specific problem in Iraq toward a more general discussion of terror.

There was great ambivalence about Iraq and in the exit polls only 52 percent of the decision to go to war in Iraq, but that is a small majority roughly akin to what Bush won by, but 52 percent also thought things were going badly in Iraq, so I don't think you can view this election as an endorsement of Iraq. I think in the end Bush won despite it rather than because of it, but the numbers on terrorism suggest that, yes, Democrats clearly need to use the word that Tom has injected here and all of us are embracing, a narrative on this subject as well as some ideas.

MR. TEIXEIRA: Anything else on the panel before we proceed to questions? No? Well, great, we're right back on schedule. That's what I like to see. (Laughter.)

All right. We will proceed with questions then. As a famous writer of the 20th century remarked, we're all equal, but some are more equal than others, so in that spirit we'll first ask for questions from reporters if there are any in the audience.

MR. DIONNE: This is biblical. The last shall be first.

MR. TEIXEIRA: Okay, I see a reporter back there that looks a little bit familiar. Nick?

Q: I've actually been trying to get a couple of these panelists on the phone for an article this week. This is very convenient for me.

MR. TEIXEIRA: That's why we set it up.

Q: Exactly, and now I've got you cornered. I want to sharpen some distinctions here, because the panelists are being very nice to each other, and get some more intra-party combat going.

Tom was saying that values voters don't like liberal elites, but we also know they hate government and they hate taxes and are very skeptical of how Democrats spend their money. So my question is: the only models we have of Democrats winning these voters that everyone's talking about are politicians like Bill Clinton, Mark Warner, et cetera,

who convinced voters we're not going to misspend your money on layabouts and cheats and lazy people, we're going to keep taxes as low as we can, and basically to assuage that distrust of government that is still very, very strong among this group of people, which I think gets into the other part of it, which is are distinctions between economic and cultural issues really that useful? Is security not in a sense a cultural issue? Are taxes in a sense not a cultural issue? Can we really achieve a lot by examining things in those terms?

MR. FRANK: That's for me, Nick? All right. Let me say, yes, of course there are – you know, when you look at it in the big picture way everything is cultural. I remember I was at a different panel discussion in another country and I was talking about advertising. I used to write about advertising and art and stuff like this. Now I write about politics. Don't ask me why. And – yeah, and you come to a point where people are like everything is culture; nothing is culture.

Anyhow, okay, that doesn't matter. Yes, there are – I'm going to furnish you with examples of cases where it worked. Now, I want to point out one thing about Clinton's victory as being the great example for the Democratic Party to follow, and since I moved here to DC, I've had this – people have told me this many, many, many times. Look, Clinton won. We have to just keep doing what Clinton was doing.

Okay, since, as I said, I'm not a pollster, I'm not a – you know, one of these guys that looks at the maps and figures out which – how to hit which demographics with which issue, I just want to ask one thing. What about Perot? Wasn't that – in '92 and '96 wasn't Ross Perot also running and didn't he – you know, I think especially – now, Bob Dole – I'm from Kansas. I liked Bob Dole, but I'll tell you something. That was one hell of a weak candidate. It was awful, but something about the Perot – the contest in '92 is you had a three-way populist – you know, three populist guys bashing each other.

Now, George W. Bush, or H. W. Bush was the weakest of those populists. Remember the pork rinds and the bullshit with the electric guitar? You remember that? Lee Atwater. God, he was awful – awful. Perot looked so much better. Perot actually did very, very well in Kansas, oddly enough. And then you had Clinton's populism, which was also very compelling in its own way, but I just want to point that out – that in those two elections you did have a candidate running who took huge amounts away from the Republicans and I don't know if that's recreatable. Okay? If we can get – if we can get a guy like Perot to run every single time, hell, we could win with anybody, you know? Anybody.

MR. TEIXEIRA: Ross, (are you listening ?)?

MR. FRANK: Yeah, let's bring him back, man. But listen, examples of issues where the economic populism is very effective: there's some really good ones from this election. I was thinking of in two states liberals put ballot initiatives having to do with minimum wage issues – I think it was in Nevada and in Florida and in both cases they

passed with huge majorities and these were explicitly set up by the people that wrote the ballot initiatives as wedge issues to split the Republicans.

Now, unfortunately while the initiatives themselves passed with flying colors, they didn't help out Kerry all that much and that's a different story. There's a number of politicians of an economic populist bent who were successful this time around. I would point you to the governor of Montana, who won in this election on – you know, and probably more importantly to Barak Obama, who was my state senator when I lived in Chicago and who is one of my heroes. And here's what he said. We're talking about people who hate government and this kind of thing. Here's what – one of the things that he said: "Government can help provide us with the basic tools we need to live out the American dream," and this guy was celebrated from one end of the state to the other. He won all over the place and it wasn't just because it was Alan Keyes on the other side. I mean, that helped – (laughter) – but you had a showdown between two – anyhow, I love Obama and that's basically where the guy comes from. That's the kind of guy he is.

Taxes. One of the things that I always – you know, and taxes come up when I talk to conservatives as I do so very, very often, taxes always come up. They say, how can you say that – well, I should take a step back. You know, one of the arguments in my book is that conservatives haven't served these working-class voters who go to them on values issues, they haven't; served them economically very well at all and there's any number of statistics that you can trot out to show why conservatives have been bad for working-class people. It's a really, really easy case to make.

But the response that I always get is, "What about taxes? They cut our taxes, damn it." And I want to point out two things. First of all, that one of the most important tax cuts in the early days of the Bush administration was something that was pressed on him by Democrats – those checks that they mailed out. Wasn't that something that Democrats can take credit for? Am I right about that?

It's – thing two, this is one place where there is a historical distinction between the parties – that Republicans are traditionally in favor of – well, let me start with the Dems are traditionally in favor of progressive taxation that weighs more heavily on people who earn more, whereas the Republican policy towards taxation is precisely the opposite. In fact, under the – in the Bush years, he's gone after the estate tax, taxes on dividends, capital gains, and now he wants to restructure the entire tax code and either flatten it or give us a national sales tax.

These things – the ultimate effect of these things is to not only make taxes weigh more heavily on working-class voters, but to actually make it to the point where only, as Paul Krugman pointed out in the *New York Times*, only work is taxed – only labor that people do is taxed. Money that you earn from the stock market – hey, that's free. Free money. Excellent.

Look, this isn't – taxes are an issue that we can win. We can beat these guys with this, in my opinion. What do I know? (Laughter.)

MR. TEIXEIRA: Just any other – E. J.?

MR. DIONNE: Real quick. You know, Bill Clinton raised taxes on the wealthy and promised he would do so in the '92 campaign. That was a promise he made and it – now, yes, Clinton got 43 percent of the vote. I do think it's fair to raise that, although every – (unintelligible) – study I've seen suggested that if Perot hadn't been in the race he probably would have gotten to a majority, so it does seem to me it is possible to deal with that issue in a fairly straight up way and I also – sort of to go to Tom's point, John Edwards talked a lot in the primaries about the shift of the tax burden from wealth to work, and I do think that is a central argument that has to be made. It doesn't make you some radical big taxer to talk about where the locus of taxation is supposed to be, but the last point – I think you're totally fair to say a lot of middle-class voters still view taxation with great mistrust and worry.

Michael Sean Witter (sp) is in the room here somewhere. He ran a congressional campaign in Connecticut and thought that some of the – (unintelligible) – for the Democrats and some of the most effective Republican attacks were on the tax issue, so you should find Michael in here somewhere. And I think that is a fact, but Clinton's experience does suggest that, A, it is possible to talk about reforming government – you know, Al Gore's reinventing government initiative I think was underrated, but that it's possible to say we can want to have a progressive tax system and to win an election and say that.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, look, I'm just very skeptical. It's neat and it's – (unintelligible) – but I'm very skeptical of the thesis that the Republicans succeeded and instilling a kind of false consciousness out there in all those red states where they're beguiling these voters with cultural and anti-government themes and keeping them from recognizing their own best interests.

You know, people hear that from liberals and they don't like it. I don't blame them. It's insulting and condescending and it's also wrong because first of all they're telling us that they are defining their economic interests differently than we're defining their true best interest. They're telling us that taxes matter. They're telling us that they don't have a lot of confidence in a party that's going to roll back tax cuts but then spend it on old-fashioned, bureaucratic, top-down programs, but we don't have the other side of the equation.

You know, I'm all for rolling – I'm all for progressive taxation but E. J. beat me to the punch. We pushed hard for raising taxes on the rich in '92. That was a staple of Clinton's message and we had – (unintelligible) – support the progressive taxation. We ought to roll them back, but what else are we going to do? How else are we going to change this code?

We ought to be cutting the payroll tax – the tax on work. Here I agree with Tom. And shifting the burden to a tax on waste and we ought to roll back the death tax – you

know, the estate tax, but we have to have a positive agenda, not simply a litany of grievances about what they've done to pander to the rich because what aspiring middle-class people want to hear is what this party's going to do to help them realize their dreams, not how we're going to punish the rich.

And then secondly, I just have to restate the point, you know, security matters. I mean, the most salient reality in the country today is that this country is the object of a terrorist conspiracy. People are plotting to kill us and our kids. By one analysis – Graham Allison has gone on the al Qaeda websites and found a lot of literature about the four-million-person debt that we owe – that they feel like they have a moral and religious right to exact four million deaths from America. So this is a reality and it's kind of the elephant in the living room. How can we talk about the cultural estrangement between the party and the working and middle-class voters, and particularly white men – white working-class voters and not talk about the security confidence gap? It's got to close.

So, again, just turning up the volume and getting bigger amplifiers isn't going to make the music any sweeter to those folks out there in the red states.

MS. BRAZILE: I just want to make a point and that is, I guess, traveling across the country over the last four years and making it to 46 states – in fact, I just got invited to Wyoming. I'm still anxious to become Miss USA without the bikini by hitting all 50 states. (Laughter.)

But most Americans view Democrats as godless and gutless. I mean, the truth of the matter is just that the party has an extreme image problem. My father said to me the other day that the party is not dead, it's just gone fishing. He doesn't know what the bait is anymore. We have a serious problem out there. I mean, Bill Clinton flipped the script. He was seen as someone who could bridge all of the different gaps in this country – cultural, racial, you name it – and thereby, I think, win in more states and being able to appeal to a different type of value that most Americans look upon when they choose their candidate, so you have – he was magical, I mean, and so often when I hear people talk about Bill Clinton and the fact that he talked about the bridge, he talked about shared responsibility, shared opportunity. He was a different kind of Democrat.

So I can say this: most people that I talk to, and I talk to a lot of people, didn't know John Kerry. In fact, often I would make things up just to make people feel a little bit – you know, do you know it? I'm like, yeah, I know it. (Laughter.) Well, what do you know about him? Well, he's a great, you know, legislator and just go on and on and on. I mean, we had fill that gap because they didn't know John Kerry and they didn't know where John Kerry would lead them, and because they received so much negative information about John Kerry, you were often beating back the negative.

What amazed me, and I'd do my share of Christian radio too. I call it my combat hour – (laughter) – being a different kind of Christian I figured out. When I was on the shows, they'd often say, "Well, you know, John Kerry's rich." I'm like, "George Bush is rich too." "No he's not." (Laughter.)

The point is that we didn't get out enough information about our candidate, our values, what we're fighting for, who we are. We allowed the opposition to define us and if we don't begin to stand up and value how we are and what we believe in, then we are going to continue to lose national elections. That's as plain as you can possibly make it.

(Applause.)

MR. FRANK: (Inaudible.)

MR. TEIXEIRA: Briefly.

MR. FRANK: The question has come up a million times since the book came out: is it arrogant and condescending to tell people in middle America or to talk about people voting against their own interests? You know, the problem is if you think that's arrogant and condescending, you've got a problem with history. You've got a problem with historiography – with every historian that ever lived.

You say, for example, if it is not allowable to talk about people doing things against their own interests, then you can forget about the works of Sigmund Freud – you know, just forget it. This is – okay, first of all that's an attitude that is deeply anti-intellectual and second of all it's against persuasion. If you're going to persuade people – if you're going to talk to people, the first thing you have to tell them is why what they've been doing might just be wrong. It might just be wrong.

Now, when I talk to those people in Kansas and when I go on those radio shows, I don't accuse them of being stupid. I don't accuse them of having made some kind of blunder. I point out where – you know, what the situation is and let the – and try to persuade them of my view. Yeah, I agree that if you go out there and tell people that they're dumb, they're not going to like you. That's not how it's done.

MR. TEIXEIRA: Okay, well let's go to the audience here. It's hard to know who to call on. Maybe the gentlemen there in kind of the fourth row there. Yeah, you. You're fine. I mean, it's random at this point.

Q: My name's Aaron Hurtis (ph). I'm a student at George Washington University studying political communication and interning at the Center for Policy Alternatives – kind of a corollary for CAP in the states.

My question has to do about we've talked about this issue of persuasion a lot and getting the message out to people and I think one of the things we've learned about this election is that people aren't necessarily going to get the correct facts and information and in fact that's not what they based their votes on. We have 72 percent of Bush supporters believing we already found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

What can the Democratic Party do to improve the emotional and the arguments of credibility that the Bush campaign was so good at? Because that's ultimately what I think gave them the win. When you look at the personality numbers for Bush, there were 20-point gaps between him and Kerry on issues of trust and charisma and leadership and things like that – these intangibles that perhaps Clinton was better at. What can the party do with its message to connect specifically to peoples' values and emotions, which is really where they're basing their voting decision anyway?

MR. TEIXEIRA: That seems like an interesting question because really a lot of what our panelists are saying is that progressives need to do that and it's somewhat less clear how you do it, so does anyone want to tackle that?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, let me throw out two examples. One thing that drives me nuts is that we lose with families with children. The marriage gap is bigger than the gender gap – much bigger. It doesn't make sense to me that we should – it's one thing with the white men, they were hard enough to crack for us for historical reasons, but it seems to me that the Democrats should be able to reclaim progressive family policy by talking to the cultural and the economic strains on America's families – by talking about creating a safe, livable world for them to raise their kids in.

And yes, it's all the stuff – and I'd agree with Tom, you know, I mean, it's healthcare and it's social policy, anti-poverty policy, more support for working families and more income support for them, but it's also talking about the cultural strains on families; talking about teenage pregnancy and out-of-wedlock births, super high divorce rates still. And if we had a more comprehensive narrative that spoke to both sides of the equation, I think we would be speaking to the comprehensive views of these voters.

I guess my point is this is got to be a full-spectrum party. You know, we can't just try to press our economic advantages with voters. We've got to speak to all of the things that motivate them when they go into the voting booth. And one area where I think we might have an agreement here is on sort of the impact of trash culture on kids and families trying to shield their kids from corporations that are now dramatically raising their advertising budgets – (unintelligible) – kids and obviously deluging all of us with sex and violence all the time.

You know, it always struck me as odd that liberals would go after every corporation in America except for those who purvey popular entertainment, which happens to spend a lot of money on – to fuel Democratic campaigns. I'm not talking about launching a jihad on Hollywood, but we ought to be a little more forthright about boundaries and guardrails that the creative class ought to respect vis-à-vis parents trying to raise kids in a healthy, sane, moral environment. So maybe that's an area of populism where we can all agree.

Secondly on security, you know, I hate to say this but the Republicans have been allowed to appropriate the symbols and the emblems of national pride and patriotism, and we don't do as good a job speaking to that. And one way to deal with that is to distance

ourselves from somebody like Michael Moore. One of the emblematic moments of this campaign season came to me in the debut – the premiere of his movie here in Washington where all these Democrats fell all over themselves and gave – to get tickets. I gave mine away, and then only to find some of the elected officials – that they were (pilloried ?) in classic Moore fashion in the film as sort of a spectacle of self-abasement in addition to linking up with the kind of an argument that drives people away from our party to put it bluntly.

MR. DIONNE: Just real quick, you raised a question about information. I mean, first I think that liberals believe some weird things, too. It's not – conservatives don't have the monopoly on sort of believing certain things that aren't true and that I think what you've got is a change in the media culture where people are operating in their own niches in a way that wasn't possible before, and that does make it much more complicated to have an argument based on the same set of facts. You know that old line, you're entitled to your opinion. You're not entitled to your own facts. And yet we seem to be in a world that creates facts.

A second quick point. I am sympathetic to Tom's argument, but I always dislike kind of false consciousness notions because somebody is judging someone else's consciousness to be false and it seems to me that it is perfectly reasonable to make a case against – (unintelligible) – someone that they are voting against their economic interest, but I think it's a more effective case if it is actually linked to the moral concerns that bring – that they genuinely have.

I mean, I ran into voters who do feel passionately about stem cell research and abortion or about gay marriage and these views, some of which I disagree with, have integrity on their own and they have to be met.

The last point on the patriotism business; I've been sort of arguing for a long time, and I'm not alone in this; I think a lot of people have made aversions of this, is that the Democrats really need to rediscover the GI Bill and that the country needs to rediscover the GI Bill. The GI Bill to me – bless you – represents a kind of progressive patriotism where it's sort of two things at the same time that I think most Americans agree with. On the one hand, we do have an obligation to each other, to our communities, and to our nation to serve, and government has the capacity to lift people up and to give them opportunities they couldn't have otherwise.

I've started using the word liberal more and more because it's been trashed so much that I kind of want to rescue it and, you know, my definition is simply that the other guys are for people who are already up and the liberals are for people trying to get up. And I think that's historically true and I think a GI Bill kind of politics allows you not just to recapture the symbols of patriotism, but actually to embrace patriotism – and I'm not saying Will wants just symbolic – wants to do it symbolically, but to embrace patriotism in a real way and I think give it more content than it now has in the discussion.

MR. TEIXEIRA: Okay, well then right over there. Yes, you.

Q: My name's Amy Christianson and I was running a group called Environment 2004 and I just have to say that it is time to fight and I feel like one of the biggest opportunities missed in this election was not running from fear on the environment and thinking that that was going to make John Kerry seem as a liberal. And it's an issue that people didn't know about Bush.

I was going door to door there for those last weeks. People didn't know about his record. They didn't know about the effects on their health and their quality of life and their kids' health. And we did polls with Greenberg Quinlan of our specific undecided voters we were reaching out to in Wisconsin and Florida and what we found is actually this issue, when you talk about it in terms of health or pocketbook it was as powerful as Iraq, terrorism, prescription drugs, or outsourcing in raising doubts about George W. Bush, but the public didn't know because nobody – the party, Kerry – they weren't talking about it and I just feel like it's a huge missed opportunity in terms of narrative. This is a story about whose side you're on and when Frank Luntz says something is George Bush's biggest vulnerability, I think it's something we should have at least gone after a little bit instead of just boutique 527 operations like ours.

When we made – we raised this issue in New Hampshire, we split that state and when the RNC does a mailing on clean air, you know you're making a talk about (spin ?) and so I think it had a lot of potential that was missed and I was just hoping some of you either push back or talk to that a little bit. That would be very helpful.

(Applause.)

MR. TEIXEIRA: Comments on the environment as a missing issue in '04?

MR. DIONNE: I've been surprised – just one sentence – that it has not been used in a broader way because it is one of those issues that actually combines a certain amount of populism with a great interest of the broad middle class. I mean, there are specific problems you had in West Virginia the last time with mountaintop mining. I mean, it's not a costless issue, but it's – you know, in terms of you lose some votes as well, but I do think it resonates on the whole. I agree with your point that it has sort of appeal to a rather broad segment of the electorate.

MS. BRAZILE: Earth in the balance. Remember that one? The truth of the matter is that polled in 2000 at 4 percent. I'm sure it polled in 2004 at 4 or 5 percent and because it doesn't poll in the top three or four, it's not a part of the conversation that a presidential campaign or party focuses on. That's the truth. That's why these driving issues that really motivate people at the grassroots level must be carried on by the organizations like yourself.

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. TEIXEIRA: Ma'am, could you wait for the mike?

Q: Sorry, but NAACP Voter Fund stood with us at an event in Florida about global warming and hurricanes and these issues so impact these minority communities that – and yes, we have a lot of work to do at the grassroots level to inform the public, but I just feel that there is a certain responsibility to speak the truth and not be afraid of speaking the truth because it does resonate so much and just because – yeah, people say am I voting the environment? Okay, it's not the number one issue; it's 4 percent, but it is an issue that people don't know about, so they're not going to say they're voting on it when they're not concerned about it. They're concerned about terrorism and war and I agree with you there's a lot of work in the environmental community and the –

MR. TEIXEIRA: Yeah, well, we need to get some other questions in here.

Let's see, over there. How about that gentleman with the – in the glasses and – you, you're fine.

Q: Thank you. I'm Doug Winefield (sp). I'm an environmental consultant and policy analyst. I could weep and the reason I could weep is that my values lead me towards Tom Frank and E. J., I believe, and what I like the most is what I'm hearing from Will and I'm really concerned –

MR. MARSHALL: You don't have to weep. It's okay. (Laughter.) I'm not that terrible.

Q: And I'm really – thank you. I'm really concerned – I'm very concerned that what we have here is more of inside-the-beltway echo chamber because what I'm only hearing touched on tangentially is something that goes back – if you want to talk historically, Tom – back to Aristotle, the dramatic triangle of ethos, pathos, and logos.

I'm hearing a lot of logos here: here's the programs we need to get out, here's the arguments we need to make, but you have to start with ethos. You have to start by establishing trust. And I would put to you that the reason that John Kerry lost this election is because he and we did not establish trust in that great middle body of voters.

Could you address that please?

MR. TEIXEIRA: Okay, a question of trust.

MR. DIONNE: I mean, first of all, I often find myself attracted to Will's views, so it's okay. I don't think we have –

(Cross talk.)

MR. DIONNE: He's a reasonable guy.

I don't quite know how to address it because the – it doesn't seem to me that you – if you believe passionately in a set of positions or even in a group of people – you know, people left out in the society, that does not automatically dictate some sort of extremist policies. I mean, the earned income tax credit for example is a good sort of middle-of-the-road program, but actually it is at some deep level one of the more radical programs government has ever adopted because it transfers a lot of money directly to the poorest people in the society and it does so consistent with peoples' values.

Now, is the EITC a centrist policy or is it a radical policy? Well, in some ways it's both, but it seems to me a perfectly – one model for what needs to be done. Or the GI Bill transferred a lot of money to people who needed and could use the help and actually helped create a great middle class. Is that a left policy or a centrist policy? I mean, it doesn't bother me – yeah, go ahead.

Mic Handler.: Actually, we need to get to one more question and then we're going to have to close the event.

MR. TEIXEIRA: We are?

Q: I own every book you've written. I agree with what you're saying. The point is –

MR. FRANK: God bless you. (Laughter.)

Q: The point is, how do you get that across to folks that –

MR. TEIXEIRA: But does he have my books?

Q: – didn't vote for Kerry? How do you on an emotional level establish the trust? How do you establish the rapport? (Inaudible) – going to take their interests to heart and act in their own best interest?

MR. TEIXEIRA: Okay, does the panel want to comment?

MR. TEIXEIRA: I want to – well, maybe not. (Laughter.)

MR. TEIXEIRA: Okay, just a little overwhelmed.

(Cross talk.)

MR. DIONNE: No, there's a point and that's the job of a candidate, too. I mean, I don't say this to knock Kerry, but there is – you know, four points could have been shifted in this election with a greater personal connection and it just – it didn't get there and some of the attacks got in the way of that.

(Cross talk.)

MR. FRANK: The next candidate has to be from Kansas. That's the answer.
(Laughter.)

MR. TEIXEIRA: How about the one way back there? Yeah, you. Yeah, you.

MR. DIONNE: A Frank-Marshall ticket.

MR. TEIXEIRA: Sounds like they're going to be shutting us down pretty soon, so we better talk fast.

Q: Okay, I'll try to talk fast. I'm Debbie Taylor (ph). I'm with the – is it on? I'm with the Center for a New American Dream. I've actually been on Rush Limbaugh. We challenge commercialism and consumption, so we bridge, but I just wanted to – Tom said that we can't know how to do a defense or do a strategy if we're not really clear about our reality, and E. J. said don't rush to conclusions, and it's my sense that a lot of people are rushing to conclusions. It was rigged or we actually did it perfectly; we just needed to do a little bit more; or it was the narrative – the message. But people are rushing and moving.

And I guess I wanted to raise two things that I think there are – I'd like the panel to comment on two taboos about our current reality that it seems to me might be central to why we're not able to say what we really want, and I specifically want to talk about what the rest of the world is talking about and that is that on the one hand one taboo that nobody talked about is our role in the world. It's really hard to talk about it, but of all the military spending in the world we spend half. Maybe 1 percent of the American public knows that.

The rest of the world is seeing us as empire, but the Center for American Progress focuses on restructuring forces and Bob Borosage won't touch it at Campaign for America's Future and you can – it's taboo. It's hard to talk about, so we pick the word strong to make sure we're not –

MR. TEIXEIRA: Okay, try to be brief. We're kind of running out of time here.

Q: Okay, so I'd like people to speak to that taboo. And the other taboo is the growth economy. And both our candidates spoke to the need for more growth and at the same time there's all kinds of evidence that that's not sustainable, so I'd like to know if that's part of why we're stuck – that we keep trying to find words that will tell how we'll have a safer future without actually addressing these two taboos.

MR. TEIXEIRA: Right, well I guess my view is if the Democrats had run against growth and a strong military it would have been a little bit less close than it actually was, but that's my view. Maybe other people here differ.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I mean, these are choices the party has to face and that's what I was saying – you know, trying to in terms of Michael Moore and national security. Are we an anti-war party or are we a party of the old muscular liberalism of Jack Kennedy and Harry Truman? You know, my prejudices are pretty obvious there. We've got to be the latter if we want to represent the American people. If we want bear a kind of moral witness against the war, that's another thing, but to me we're a – one of two mainstream political parties trying to represent and govern in this country and you've got to reflect the broadly held views of the electorate, and so those don't seem to me to be very serious choices. I guess I would echo Ruy's point.

MR. DIONNE: It seems to be you can be – maybe we just have a disagreement on this. I think you can be for sustainability and a clean environment and be in favor of economic growth. In terms of military, I do think military spending has gotten to such a point that even Republicans like John McCain are starting to be willing to speak up against a kind of military pork and – in other words, that I'm not a pacifist and therefore I do sort of support the idea of a strong military. On the other hand, I think it's gotten to the point where a lot of people are going to say, given this budget situation, if you put the entire military budget off the table for debate, you've got a real problem.

And I think the one change that you may see in the next four years in – modestly in the direction (I'd ?) like to go in is that all military spending will no longer be sacrosanct as it has been since 9/11.

MR. TEIXEIRA: Okay, thanks. We only have time, I am told, for one more question, so it has to be like an extremely good question. Okay, right there. Yeah. You're the final question. I'm sure it's going to be a –

MR. DIONNE : It was the first hand up, so –

Q: I weep for my children and my grandchildren because what happens when a democracy and our country, the will of the people is thwarted? There's – and no one wants to talk about it? There's evidence that abounds that the election machines were not accurate, that there were – that the count between the state and the counties and the precincts were not accurate. No one wants to talk about it. Why is that?

MS. BRAZILE: I think in large part – I mean, it's because people feel that it won't change the outcome of the election, but I still believe that there needs to be a healthy discussion around the problems that still exist at the ballot box.

We thought after Florida that Congress and the states would work together to really fix our dysfunctional democracy, but the president's fond of saying that freedom is on the march. Well, if it's on the march it should stop by those precincts where people stayed in line for eight to 10 hours to vote. (Applause.) It should stop by those precincts where the machines malfunctioned or where people were told they needed IDs when we didn't need IDs. We have a lot of work to do in reforming our system.

Just because it won't change the outcome, I still believe that we need to have a healthy discussion about the next steps in election reform and we need to do it now and we need to take the partisanship out of it so that people understand that our elections are free and transparent and that they can be assured of the results once those results are tabulated. (Applause.)

MR. DIONNE: Amen.

MR. TEIXEIRA: Okay, well I guess we've got to shut it down here. I know there are a lot more questions and perhaps the conversation can continue afterwards. Thanks to you all for coming. The future of progressivism is assured I think – (inaudible) – conversation. (Applause.)

MS. BRAZILE: Thank you for all you do. Thank you for filling that gap for us.

(END)