

CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS

“HOW CHARACTER COUNTED: PERSPECTIVES ON THE 2004 ELECTION.”

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MELODY BARNES: Thank you everyone for coming to the Center for American Progress today. We also want to thank our partners, *The New Republic*, for sponsoring today's program. We are going to begin. I'm going to open with some brief remarks and then introduce our – the distinguished panel and then we will have presentations by the panel and then an opportunity for Q and A.

Presumably, character has always mattered to the American voter, so why did it resonate so critically this year? Before the election, the media (posed ?) a character issue and the so-called “God gap.” John Kerry was often painted as a flip-flopper, while President Bush, prone to change his mind on key issues like the Department of Homeland Defense or the 9/11 Commission, deftly avoided that same label. People with religious views were generally categorized as both churchgoers and Bush supporters. Progressives were commonly described as secular and rarely, if at all, motivated by religious beliefs.

Election night, the media told us that the pre-election prognostication was in fact accurate. I remember one commentator saying, “If you voted economics, you voted for Kerry. If you voted for morals and values, you voted for Bush.” For many, and particularly religious conservatives, the election proved that character counts and character is often seen through a lens of conservative religious theology. With a perceived win in its pocket, the red nation is motivated to push back our progressive policies, judges, and values.

But is it all true? Is the character issue fact or fantasy? Can we accurately divide the nation neatly between conservative believers and progressive secularists? Our progressive goals seem devoid of values, and for the progressive faithful, theological support. And what do Americans really expect and want to hear from their leaders?

A new post-election poll of over 10,000 voters conducted by Zogby International and cosponsored by the Center for American Progress, Pax Christi, and (Respublika ?), sheds light on the influence religion and faith have on the 2004 election and challenges much of the conventional wisdom.

First, there is a new silent majority in America and it is comprised of religious moderates, religious progressives, and other non-traditional religious voters. This block of religious voters constitutes 54 percent of the electorate and holds very similar moderate to progressive views on domestic and national security issues. In contrast, religious conservatives make up only one quarter of the electorate.

Second, religion and values did not matter to a broad segment of American voters, but progressive religious issues mattered more to voters than socially conservative ones. Sixty-four percent of voters chose either greed and materialism or poverty and economic

justice as the most urgent moral problems facing America, compared to only 27 percent who said abortion and same-sex marriage.

Third, conservative voters – conservative efforts to focus on abortion and gay marriage had little impact on voter decision and appeared to have motivated more people to vote for Kerry than Bush. Fifty-one percent of voters said the conservative focus on social issues made no difference on their vote and 56 percent of catholic voters said efforts to make abortion and gay marriage, quote, “non negotiable” had no influence on their vote.

Fourth, a majority of Americans want a president who is faithful, but not intrusive. Fifty-two percent of voters said they want a president who’s informed by faith but does not impose those views or others through public policy decisions.

And finally, a critical finding in the poll is that religious conservatives were much better at reaching voters and disseminating their messages than religious moderates and progressives.

Today’s panel will sort through these issues. Did the election turn on the issue of character broadly defined or religious values tied to a specific policy agenda? Why was President Bush perceived to have greater character and to be a better communicator of values? What are the morals and values that matter to American voters and how are they defined and by whom? And how did the media handle these critical issues?

As I said, we will hear short five to seven-minute presentations from our panelists. Then we will have an opportunity to engage in conversation from the front of the room and then we will look forward to interacting with you and have Q and A with the audience. Now, I’d like to introduce the members of the panel.

To my right is Jonathan Chait. He’s been with the *New Republic* since 1995 and is currently a senior editor at the magazine, where he writes about the policy and politics of taxes, health care reform, the federal budget, and many other issues. Prior to joining the *New Republic*, Jonathan was an assistant editor at the *American Prospect*. He also writes a weekly column for the *Los Angeles Times* and has written for the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

David Frum, to my far right, is currently a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. In the early years of the Bush Administration, 2001 and 2002, he was special assistant to the President for Economic Speechwriting. Based on his experience in the White House, David wrote two *New York Times* best-sellers, *The Right Man: the Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush* and with Richard Perle *An End to Evil: What’s Next on the War on Terror*. David writes a daily column for *The National Review* Online and contributes frequently to the editorial pages of the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

To my immediate left is Reverend Doctor Robert Edgar. Dr. Edgar is the General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., a coalition of 36 Protestant, Anglican, and Orthodox member communions working worldwide. He also served six terms as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, where he was the first Democrat in more than 120 years to be elected from the heavily republican Seventh District of Pennsylvania. In Congress he led efforts to improve public transportation, authored the community Right to Know provisions of the Superfund legislation, co-authored the new GI Bill for the all-volunteer service and supported environmental goals.

And finally, to my far left is my colleague Ruy Teixeira. Ruy is a joint fellow at the Center for American Progress and the Century Foundation. He writes a weekly online column, *Public Opinion Watch*, and has written over 100 articles, both scholarly and popular. He is a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution – I don't know how you find time to do all this Ruy – where he wrote *The Disappearing American Voter*, now a standard reference book on voter turnout. In 2000, Ruy published *America's Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working Class Still Matters*, a widely cited and controversial work credited with being a strong influence on the Gore campaign and elected as one of the best books of the year by the *Washington Post*.

So I'd like you to welcome all of our panelists and we will start with Jonathan.
(Applause.)

JONATHAN CHAIT: We've heard a lot about the post-election returns and what issues motivated the voters. Was it values? Was it not values? The conventional wisdom has kind of flipped back and forth on this. What I suspect motivated voters most is the personal views of the candidates and this is something you can't measure by asking people about issues because it's not – it's not an issue per se, but my first – my only real moment of thinking that Kerry was a goner before the election – and I didn't think he was a goner. I actually thought he was probably going to win, but my real moment of doubt came when I read, the day before the election, his personal ratings versus Bush's. And Bush's were up in the fifties and Kerry's personal rating was something like 41 percent or he even dipped into the 30's at times. It was just abysmal. And I thought, how are people going to vote for this man to be president if they have such a low personal view of him?

And I think to understand what happened – to put it in the values box I think misses it, but the Bush campaign had this seamless red that was all driven by character. It was positive views of Bush's character, how Bush would protect us and protect your values, and how Kerry personally didn't have values. Kerry wasn't a strong enough man to protect you. Kerry was a flip-flopper and you couldn't – and you didn't know where he stood, so even if you agreed with him on an issue, you could – he could have slipped off the next day, so you couldn't really be sure of what he stood for.

Now, you have to wonder why this happened, and John Kerry is an abysmal politician in my opinion. He's just almost totally lacking the skills you would need to be president and I think it is fairly amazing he got this close to being elected president in the

first place. But I think if you only look at this as a function of Kerry, who he is, and Kerry's skill as a politician, you're missing the bigger story of what is going on and what has been going on in politics over the last decade or so.

The Center for American Progress compiled a list of flip-flops by George W. Bush and in this article I did for the New Republic I compared that list to the list of Kerry flip-flops. It's not something you can gauge scientifically but I tried to be as fair as I possible could. I don't think you can actually conclude by looking at the evidence that Kerry has flip-flopped more than George W. Bush even though he's been in public office much longer. Bush has a fairly substantial list of flip-flops. He ran, I believe, in favor of abortion rights when he ran for Congress in 1978. He changed his mind on that. He changed his mind on campaign finance reform. He said he'd go to the U.N. Security Council and hold a vote on Iraq no matter what and then decided he wasn't going to have a second vote. Homeland Security, as mentioned before, et cetera.

So I think I would argue that it is actually something systematic going on that would make people see Kerry as fundamentally a flip-flopper in such a way that this was actually disqualifying for being the president. And people didn't think anything like that of Bush. In fact, they thought if anything the opposite extreme: that he would never change his mind no matter what, which just isn't true.

I think there's more evidence for my thesis. If you look back on recent campaigns, Al Gore was painted as a flip-flopper and people thought of him as that, as did – (unintelligible) – Bill Clinton. One of the last great dramatic gestures that George Herbert Walker did – Herbert Walker Bush did in 1992 was to go to the Waffle House in 1992 to dramatize that Clinton was a waffler. If you remember, Garry Trudeau – to think of Clinton as a waffler. This was the one thing people knew about him. Before they knew he was an adulterer, they knew he was a waffler. I think – and of course, you know, he was an adulterer. There were certain character problems here, but I think – here's what I think is actually going on: I think it – one of the things that American journalism does is it takes small incidents and it draws large conclusions from them about a candidate's character.

About when Ed Muskie had a snowflake or didn't have a snowflake. May have shed a tear or not have shed a tear and this was devastating to his candidacy. Everyone – (unintelligible). When Dan Quayle read from a cue card that was misspelled and so he was ever reduced to he was too stupid to be president.

These incidents are, I argue, random and often completely unfair and have massive effects on people's perception of a candidate's character. I think what the Republicans figured out was this doesn't have to be random. You can sort of (game ?) the cycle. They were articles in early 1999 about how they had plans to turn Al Gore into a figure of ridicule and they did it very successfully. There are themes to the kind of attacks. Flip-flopper is the main one and I'm going to argue why that is in a minute. Another one is manliness. You hear little jabs about Kerry in his wind surfing, his relationship with his wife. You heard – you know, Republicans leaked out this line about

how John Edwards reminds them of the Breck girl. He looks like the Breck girl. And then I think they have a sense of how this gets picked up. It was someone like Maureen Dowd who would put it into the column. It will sort get into the ether.

And I think they understand the way that popular culture is a very, very powerful haven for transmitting these views of candidates and that these images are much more understandable to voters than our policy positions. People who don't know that much about politics and policy, which is a very large share of the electorate, especially the swing electorate, will know some vague image of him. So if they only know anything about John Kerry, they know he's a flip-flopper and that's a pretty devastating indictment in a lot of peoples' view.

Why has this happened? I would argue that there has been a need since Bill Clinton, (Wayne Coop ?) has him in 1992, wasn't it? I would say before Bill Clinton, Republicans had a pretty powerful list of issues that they can use against the Democrats. They had crime, they had welfare, they had middle-class taxes and spending, and they had the Cold War, and they had the Republican advantage on defense. Then the Cold War went away and Clinton basically co-opted every issue where the Republicans had a demonstrable advantage over the Democrats. And so this left the Republicans in the position of basically having to run on character and they very effectively figured out that this is something you can do to get people to vote for you even if you don't agree with their positions.

And George W. Bush has – (unintelligible) – with a lot of unpopular policy positions, but his huge character is really compensating for him. In fact he said something that almost explicitly makes that case. He said during the campaign – he said, “Even if you don't agree with me, you know where I stand.” So then that's a way of bringing people in to vote with you who don't necessarily agree with your platform on the basis of your personal appeal.

So I think part of what's happened in American politics is there's been kind of machinery of personal virtue on the Republican side that hasn't really been matched on the Democratic side. And, of course, there are two aspects, there's a positive and a negative of it. A sort of cult of personality has risen around Bush if you see the kind of books and articles that are written about him, you know, portraying him as sort of Churchill and Lincoln all wrapped into one. You know, it's almost reminiscent of the evil, communist bloc, socialist realism art. You also – and on the negative side, they kind of figured out how to sort of take these incidents and try to launch them into popular culture. And one example I mentioned in my article was cheesesteak. As ridiculous as this was, I remember about a year ago in July John Kerry went to a cheesesteak place and asked for Swiss cheese on a steak. Now this was taken as a metaphor for everything about John Kerry, his pompousness, his lack of touch with popular culture. This instant was mentioned in the news over a hundred times. It became a quick – it would not be a decisive moment in the campaign, but one that could make the late night talk shows and could make the Sunday morning shows.

And I counterpose that with another incident. This was reported in the *Newsweek* House election issue of 2000 and I counterpose it because I thought they were vaguely similar in a certain way and – (unintelligible) – was aboard the Bush campaign plane. There is apparently a special peanut butter and jelly sandwich made for George W. Bush, but what someone didn't realize it was for George W. Bush and ate it before the cart got to Bush. And so Bush apparently was (calling out ?) "Who ate my peanut butter and jelly sandwich?" And then when he found out someone else ate it, he returned to his seat to pout. That apparently is the story.

Now I don't find this a particularly meaningful story either; no more meaningful than the cheesesteak story, but I think it plays into what Bush's critics think of Bush's character in the exact same way that the cheesesteak story played into what people think of Kerry's character. This story actually was not repeated anywhere. It didn't get picked by anywhere. It didn't make the leap into popular culture and I think that because Democrats haven't figured out how these character narratives play out, how they influence the presidential race, and how they have to be deliberate about creating narratives focused on character about their candidate and about the other candidate, and how you circulate and repeat them and try to give them a chance to launch into the popular culture.

So I would say one way to sort of (predict ?) whether what I'm saying is true, is we don't know who the Democratic candidate is going to be in 2008 and we don't know who the Republican candidate going to be, but I would say the Republican candidate will be thought of as having higher character and personal values than the Democratic candidate; not knowing who they are, just simply because of the kind of structural forces that are in place between the two parties and how the two parties use this issue. I mean unless Democrats sort of figure this out and do something to match what the Republicans are doing, when people go to vote 2008 – when they're voting on character, they will be voting for the Republican.

MS. BARNES: Great, thank you. David?

MR. DAVID FRUM: Thank you very much. When I was in college I had a particular beloved history teacher, who's just died in fact a few weeks ago, named Conrad Russell, son of the great philosopher Bertrand Russell. He taught 17th century English history and one of his feats – he was one of the most radical opponents of the idea of pre-determination I have ever encountered. He used to hold up a book that was on the reading list by a historian named (Lawrence Stone ?) called, *Causes of the English Revolution: 1527 to 1642* and he would say, "Why don't they make it 44 BC?"

I think that one of the things that happens after an election like this is that we – this election is like a battle. It's like a party. It is a million events which come together and cohere. And we then looking back on it impose a kind of narrative unity on it that we did not see in advance. I was there. I think most of us were there for some of the other elections. I was there in 1998 and 2000 when issues of character did not work so well. And issues – in 2000 they worked well enough to sort of haul our candidate just beating

and gasping over the finish line, but not a moral victory anyway. I mean in 1998 obviously Republicans did very badly and although Bill Clinton was (hit ?) as a waffler in 1992 I seem to remember it not working too well back then.

These issues of character and morality, I think, get overanalyzed in that the voters step out of the voting booth. They are accosted by people with clipboards who ask them a series of questions. It's like the Oracle at Delphi. And they say character, and they say values, and they jobs and then hundreds of political professionals go to work on these inscrutable statements and infuse them with meaning. It's like the way Rashi (ph) would take a comma in the Torah and fill it with a vast theological construct. I think we have to be very careful about all of this. That – (unintelligible) – that you care, here are a couple things that I suggest we ought to keep in mind.

I think it is first of all true that the Democratic coalition has been for a long time a much more ramshackle coalition than the Republican coalition. It's harder to keep it together. It's harder to please everybody. That means that Democratic candidates end up being a much more evasive and cunning bunch than Republican candidates.

(Inaudible) – this way. Is the sound fading in and out bothering people?

That means that Democratic candidates have to be, in a way, a more evasive and waffling sort than Republican candidates do because otherwise the Democratic coalition is just not going to work. I think in some ways this problem is becoming worse as the Democrats do better and better and better at winning votes at the very top of society. I mean, it's an interesting trend that we – (to this trend ?) we had a wonderful lunch that we once had. I think if you came to a Democratic think tank in 1956 the lunch would not nearly have been so eloquently prepared and the room wouldn't have been so nice, but it symbolizes something that is happening to the Democratic Party. Is the party in a way – (inaudible) – of the American extremes? It is the party of America's richest people and of America's poorest people. It's the party of the East Coast and the West Coast, of the best educated and the least educated, of both the most religious group in American life, the African-American, and the most secular of faculty at the University of Wisconsin.

And holding all of these folks together is a much bigger problem than holding together the Republican coalition, which is the coalition of middle-income, middle-education, middle of the country. So the Democratic candidates are exposed to extra stress. Well, Democrats also have another problem and that is – I think that in my view the character issue is about – (inaudible) – I think yes, it is certainly true that the kinds of things that most Washingtonians and New Yorkers think of when they hear phrases like social issues, abortion, same sex marriage, these play their part. These play their part. I think they played their part very largely, especially the same sex issue, because of events about handling it. If the Massachusetts Judicial Council had been a little bit more careful, if the mayor of San Francisco had not chosen this particular year to launch his career as an international media star, or if John Kerry had responded to these events in a more decisive and clear way I think they would not have had the impact they did.

But for me, in my mind, as I think about this, I think so much of it was called character and values are in fact – should be thought as defense issues.

MR. KORB: There's a new movie coming up shortly. (Laughter.)

MR. FRUM: Judy thought it was defense issues. Jonathan mentioned the literature – the – (unintelligible) – literature about President Bush and I contributed a little bit to this literature myself, so I think I have some insight into what motivates our – (inaudible). The narrative that the positive books in the stores about George Bush tell is that this was a man who was not on his way to a very successful presidency in the summer of 2001 and that his program has not been tremendously coherent. His administration wasn't working very well. It exhausted its political impetus. They are trying to run the government by bluffing the Democrats into thinking that you have more power and more of a mandate than you did. Got him through the tax cut and that was it and then he – (inaudible).

That he had run into trouble that summer and that 9/11 is the decisive – was the decisive event in the history of the Bush presidency. I think was decisive in this election. There is a big, big difference between changing your mind about whether the best way to do homeland security is through a special White House office, the existing bureaucracy, or a new department. It's a big difference about being unsure whether you need one U.N. resolution or two before proceeding with your plans. There is a big difference between those kinds of changes of mind and a fundamental inability to answer the question. First, what will you do to defend the country? And second, how committed you are.

I think John Kerry's core problem in this election – yes he was stiff, yes he was awkward, yes he had too much money that he had acquired through marriage rather than by hard work and all of those problems, but his core problem was that 1971 testimony – that this was the year that the Democrats nominated as president a person who had been a member of the antiwar movement that had sapped so much American military effectiveness in the country's last protracted and difficult military conflict.

And I think the question for many people was, will this man have the tenacity, have the determination to fight the war – you can't hear me? I'm sorry.

I'll try this again, and forgive the squeaking then. The key issue in my mind that many voters would have had when they said character was that 1971 congressional testimony. This was a bad, bad year to nominate a former antiwar protester because the question that that raised in many people's minds was will he have the tenacity to see this war through? And there were many people who believed at the time that this was perfect. You had someone with a war record and he was an antiwar protester: he could straddle that gap, and that's the point about the instability of the coalition.

Well, Vietnam was a gap that cannot be straddled in American life. You are on one side of it or the other and if you recollect your history books, the McGovern side didn't do very well even when the war was on TV and it's done a lot less well in the

popular memory since. John Kerry was on the wrong side, from a political point of view, of that divide a long time ago and it left people with questions about how determined and how committed he was.

The George bush narrative always allowed for the fact that the president was a man who had had in fact a gigantic change of mind about in the middle of his administration. That was the point of the George Bush narrative. The George Bush narrative also told how this man that had a gigantic change of mind about his whole life in the middle of his life. The problem was not that George bush had changed. The problem was not that he's changed his mind. The issue about George bush is not that he never changed; it was on this great challenge he had a constant purpose. Not constant tactics, but a constant purpose.

Once you have that, I think the American people forgive you a lot. One example that I've – because I'm interested in speechwriting – that has always been a sort of favorite of mine – is the story that Robert Sherwood tells in his great book about Roosevelt and Hopkins. Franklin Roosevelt was a president with character problems of his own. I mean, there was a lot. (Unintelligible) – but at the head was the fact that he was a terrible, terrible liar and Sherwood tells this story: that Sherwood had come to work for Roosevelt in the summer of 1940 to replace Harry Hopkins, who got sick with cancer. Sherwood came on to write Roosevelt's speeches, and Sherwood's politics – he was a red-hot interventionist in World War Two and that was why he gave up his very successful career as a playwright to come write speeches for Franklin Roosevelt.

Well, through the campaign with the very primitive polling that was available to them in those days, they'd become aware that the interventionist position is really unpopular and that they are losing to the Republicans the – Wilkie was also an interventionist, but was pretending quite credibly to be an isolationist – they were losing to Wilkie and so Roosevelt came to the conclusion that that's where he had to put himself, and as they built up to the gigantic Saturday night rally in Madison Square at the end of October, which was the last grand event the Democrats always had in those days before the Tuesday vote, Roosevelt prepared for this by dictating to Sherwood the key paragraph of a speech he wanted to give. And the key paragraph, you'll remember I am sure, contained the line: "Your heroes are not going into any foreign wars." And as Roosevelt dictated this line, Sherwood gave Roosevelt this look of mute reproach. I'd given you nine months of my life for this war – for the war. What do you mean your boys aren't going into any foreign wars?

And Roosevelt caught Sherwood's eye and said, "When we are in, it won't be a foreign war." (Laughter.) And yet Roosevelt – I think history has given him a pretty favorable grade on the character question because he knew what he was doing. He knew what he was after. He had even before the war a vision not only of the way, but of the kind of postwar settlement he wanted. And with guile and cunning and a lot of unscrupulousness and a lot of lies, he led the country in a direction that history judged correct.

I think that is, when Americans look back on their great presidents – I’m not suggesting that other presidents have been as dishonest as Roosevelt or could be, but what they – in times of war when countries look back on its presidents and it judged them and said did you have the constancy of purpose and the clarity of vision?

I think the great challenge the Democrats have, and one of the reasons I am here is because I am interested very much in hearing from people how have been through the shock and we’ve all been on the side of losing elections and it doesn’t – you know, one doesn’t get any personal – and it doesn’t reflect on one that the – (unintelligible) – of American people did one thing rather than another. We’ve all been on the losing side of these things, but I’m very curious as to watch how do Democrats respond to the garbled and mysterious information they’ve just gotten? How do they – do they say, look, what we have here is fundamentally a communications problem, a media problem, and image problem, an advertising problem?

Or do they say at least this year and maybe in the future questions of national security have returned to American life with a vengeance? They are back. They are back bigger than they were even in the 1980s; certainly than they were in the 1970s. They are back and Democrats need to have a clear and committed answer to how they would do and talk about things that Democrats find uncomfortable. How they will keep the country safe by military power. How they are ready – how they acknowledge that the country’s surrounded by enemies and how they are prepared to do whatever it takes, including the application of violence, which means death and suffering and killing, including the death and suffering and killing of people who turn out to be innocent.

Are the Democrats – do they find it in themselves again to be the kind of party that Americans can trust with national security? If they can, I think everything else – that’s all details and everything else then becomes subject to normal competition and you will win elections as you’ve lost them.

Thank you.

MS. BARNES: Thank you.

Reverend Edgar?

BOB EDGAR: I wish that I had about three hours to respond to David and to some degree to Jonathan’s comments, but I have five to seven minutes to do some reflection and I thought I would do two things. One, first wear a political hat and then take that off and wear a religious hat since I was both a member of the United States Congress for 12 years, but also have been a lifelong clergyperson reflecting on the issues.

If I was going to use a title for my conversation, it would simply be “In a Dark Time, the Eye Begins to See.” And I’m moved by the fact that we’re gathered here in this space, which is about 100 yards from New York Avenue Presbyterian Church across the street. In February of 1968, I was a senior at theological school and invited by a

group of laymen and clergypersons concerned about the Vietnam War to go across the street and to think about the issue of war.

William Sloan Coffin was the organizer of the event, chaplain at Yale and later pastor of Riverside Church. A young preacher was there to speak. His name was Dr. Martin Luther King. This is February, 1968. Dr. King walked down the center aisle and took the podium and talked about morality and values; talked about the issue of poverty, and talked about it in terms that startled many of us in a very positive way.

In order to get into that church we had to cross a picket line. The Jerry Falwell of that day, a guy by the name of Carl McIntire, was carrying signs that said “kill a commie for Christ’s sake.” Because of that experience, both crossing the picket line and being inspired by Dr. King, some of us were led to believe that morality involves things like caring about the least of these our brothers and sisters on planet Earth; that morality involved holding fast to civil rights and civil liberties and human rights and women’s rights and people’s rights; that morality was very deeply entwined in our theological positions.

So it was a bit startling after this election to hear some of these private piety issues and minor or maybe even shouldn’t use the word minor – other issues like abortion and homosexuality and civil marriage as being the sum total of morality. And some of the spin doctors didn’t spend very much time spinning definitions for those words, and some of us were startled by how narrow the response in this last election.

I wonder how different this forum would be had there been 70,000 votes different in Ohio and had the election turned around the other way. And for those of us who come out of a moderate to progressive political base, I hope we’re not too disheartened by this election. John Kerry won 400,000 votes more in Ohio than Al Gore did. The whole community stood up and in 11 states they did have a reason to call out the religious right and I think it’s important for us to recognize that while we’re suffering from post-traumatic election stress disorder, we ought to spend about 48 hours lamenting the outcome of this past election and asking ourselves the same question Dr. Martin Luther King asked in his book, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*

Dr. King said we’re now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. And he goes on to use a phrase which I think is important for those of us who are moderate to progressives to be thinking about, and that is the term “the urgency of now.” My hope is that all of the people who stood up and spoke out clearly in this campaign, but fell short, will find a way to mobilize; that young people on college campuses and young adults who got engaged in this campaign for the first time will not lose heart and that we’ll find some people to step forward and run for public office.

One interesting thing about me is that I got elected to Congress by accident. One year after looking the word democratic up in the telephone book. Because of Richard Nixon’s firing of Archibald Cox I moved from being vice chairman of my son’s parent

teachers organization to a member of the United States Congress. I had no political experience and no political history. I think this may be a time for people who are moderate to progressives to think about what it means to engage in school board elections and step forward and define that word morality and values by putting one's integrity and life on the line and stepping forward and being active in the public arena.

Now, the definition between public morality and private piety need to be raised. And I think to do a good definition of morality, we have to talk about immorality. I happen to think – and maybe I'm just one of many – think that first-strike foreign policy is immoral; that we need to be a superpower, but we need to use our superpowerness with restraint and we need to work with other brothers and sisters around the world to lead ourselves forward. I think it's immoral that we have a prison camp on Guantanamo and I would hope that John Cain (sic), a former prisoner of war, and people like Terry Waite and other prisoners might appeal to the president to shut down the prison camp and abide by the Geneva Convention because I think it's immoral for us both to have a prison camp and not to think about our young men and women who might be prisoners in the future and why it is important to have international law focused.

I would also think it's immoral for nine million of our children not to have healthcare and 45 million Americans to be outside of the healthcare network. I think it's immoral for us to pollute the air and the water. I think there's some real questions of morality in terms of public policy.

Now, just back on history just real quickly and then I'll make what I hope will be an important final point. I got elected in the Watergate baby class of 1975. In April of 1975, we shut down the Vietnam War. Maybe that's a high water mark for progressive politics because shortly after that there was a civil marriage between the religious right and the Republican right. I hope you look at the history trends that made Jimmy Carter the bad guy and Ronald Reagan the Christian; where the religious televangelists used a television database to say if you send a dollar, we'll pray for you. They were more interested in the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the persons than the money that was sent.

What the religious right was able to do in a very effective way was to begin a long-term organization that has been 35 years or more in the making. Now, it took Moses 40 years to get his people out of the wilderness. The religious right has been working for 35 years in a – (unintelligible) – narrow set of issues, and what they do better than the religious left is they put their egos aside – they have egos, but they put them aside to brand a narrow set of issues to focus on.

The religious moderate to left fell asleep in the '70s and '80s and '90s. If you look back at history after World War Two, our churches were filled, our youth programs were active, the liberal voice in the religious community was very much engaged, but starting in the early '70s we shut down a lot of those programs. We started coasting in a number of ways and frankly it's not been until the last two and a half years that moderate

to progressive religious leaders have begun to organize, have begun to put aside their egos and work in common cause.

I saw the first sign of this when shortly before the invasion in Iraq, 3,500 religious leaders gathered here at the Washington Cathedral and marched from that cathedral to the White House before the war ever started. It took 55,000 body bags in Vietnam to get the religious community to stand up and object to the Vietnam War, but prior to this war most of the religious leadership was there.

If you go back and look at the civil rights movement of Dr. King, you discover that the rank and file in the pew took a long time to come around and see that it's leadership, both black and white, committed to civil rights were on the cutting edge of a change in the way we think. Only in the last two and a half years have a number of moderate to religious left progressive religious leaders begun to organize, and in this campaign, we organized and registered more than two million voters in the campaign. We had a marriage of a number of entities including Children's Defense Fund, Interfaith Alliance, Call to Renewal, Sojourners, Riverside Church in New York, Let Justice Roll campaign with events in places like Seattle and Portland and Eugene.

And the point that I want to make is that I have a great deal of hope that coming off of this election many of us will stay engaged in these public debates. Many of us will recommit ourselves to the issues of fundamental morality and values; commit ourselves to the planet on which we live and the care for its environment, the people who live here, particularly the poor; the 80 percent of the world's population who lives in substandard housing; the 70 percent that can't read or write; and the 50 percent who go to bed tonight hungry. And that we'll recommit ourselves to what we've done to the least of these, our brothers and sisters.

And finally that we'll recognize that in the biblical text, which we hold true, people like Jesus say things like blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be the children of God. He talks a lot about loving neighbor and enemy and caring for the least. And I think that if we reenergize ourselves and commit ourselves to a new tomorrow, a new agenda, a new focus, a new vision, we can bring hope to this fragile planet we call Earth.

I'm not going to give to the religious right or the political right the content of the word morality or values. I think we hold that content. And I'll say this just in closing, maybe there's only one political party in this country: big R's, medium sized R's, and little R's. And maybe it's time for us to define if we're going to call it a Democratic party maybe it has to define itself, maybe it has to stand for a progressive set of issues and not try to waffle. I think candidates that hold a clear position and own that position can in fact get elected in this environment and I think it's just a matter of time for us to work through that process and to stand firm for what we think is justice and peace. (Applause.)

MS. BARNES: Ruy?

RUY TEIXEIRA: Thanks, Melody. I guess I want to talk a little bit about what I see as the myths and realities of 2004 as a values election and based on that maybe just raise a few questions at the end about what it all means.

So let me start with the realities of this as a values election. First of all, you know, Bush did get elected and he did run mostly on values. This was not a particularly issues-driven campaign from the Republican perspective. He talked constantly about values. I really think the war on terror is properly viewed in many ways as a values issue. It was much less about foreign policy the way it's evolved and then much more about patriotism, resoluteness, determination, and so on. And he did get elected, so in a sense you can say it's what economists say is revealed preference. You know, people voted for the values candidate as he was self-defined.

Another indicator of how this may have been a values election is where did Bush get his additional votes? He had a gain of about four million net votes. He improved his margin by about three percentage points. If you look at the data, it's apparent that almost all of the votes come from people without a four year college degree – the non-college educated. He went up to about from two to about six points among this very large group of voters in terms of margin. That's kind of a – (unintelligible) – right there, and who were these non-college educated voters? The data again strongly indicate that these were white working class voters.

His margin according to the Democracy Corps post-election poll among white working class voters, those without a four-year college degree, was about 24 points. That's a pretty big margin. And depending on which poll you look at from 2000, that's a five to seven point increase among this very large group of voters. If you further try to break it down as best you can with the available data, it looks like it was primarily white working class women. So it's not a stretch to think that these are the kind of voters for whom some of these values concerns as articulated by Bush might have loomed fairly large.

Let's look at – there is some direct evidence from the Democracy Corps poll that's useful to take a look at. Basically they asked people, well, why did you vote for Bush? What were the doubts you had about Kerry? And it looked like the reasons to support Bush – the top three reasons were the response to 9/11, and the war against terrorism, his religious faith, and so on. Another top issue was of course Kerry is a flip-flopper, which Jonathan mentioned.

But if you grouped the reasons to support Bush together, the two top issues were terrorism, which as I say is in some ways kind of a values issue, and cultural issues. And then if you look at the Bush waverers – the people who supported – were thinking about voting for Kerry, but wound up voting for Bush, arguably the decisive group of voters, the top issues for them were again terrorism and cultural issues. And if you look at the doubts that the people had about Kerry, the top set of doubts about Kerry, both overall and among these key group of voters – these Bush waverers – were a sort of cultural

liberalism set of issues: gay marriage, abortion, (too liberal ?) – for the country, restrictions on guns, and so on.

So I think those are some of the realities of this election that suggest in important ways it was driven by values and driven by values in the way defined by the president, but let me address after these realities some of the things that I think were kind of misconceptions about the election and how it's viewed as a values election.

The first misconception is it was driven by a tidal wave of evangelical turnout – of evangelical support for President Bush. In fact, the evidence for this is quite shaky and if you look at the data, basically there was no increase at all in the percentage of voters who said they went to church weekly or more. And if you look at the level of support by how often people went to church – their sort of level of religious observance – where Bush actually picked up votes was not among the most observant voters – not among those how attend church weekly or more. It was actually among those who attend church, you know, once or twice a month, occasionally, (whatever ?). These are the people among whom bush made three to four point gains in margin, which was again enough to give him a narrow victory, so there's a kind of finding that at least puts a question mark towards this concept that evangelicals and evangelical turnout put Bush over the top.

Also, there is some – probably the big stylized fact about evangelicals from this election is people say that their turnout, but if you look at the exit polls by this measure of being a born-again Christian went up from 14 to 23 percent, but those were two entirely different questions. What they say is that people who defined themselves as members of the right – religious right in 2000 were 14 percent of voters. In 2004, they asked the question completely differently. They asked are you just a born-again evangelical Christian, nothing about the religious right, and that – you know, not surprisingly you ask the question that way and you get more people who are defining themselves as white, born-again voters. It goes up to 23 percent, but it is completely without meaning in terms of trying to understand the level of evangelical turnout and how it might have changed between the two elections.

So those are some interesting things to keep in mind. Another thing that I just took a look at that I think is kind of intriguing is sort of heavily linked to this question of evangelical turnout. It's a concept that is a tidal wave (of ex-urban ?) voters, right – in these sort of growing communities outside of the big metro areas. You know, Warren County, Ohio. Like it must have had – you know, reporters like plagues of locusts descending on this poor county with all these evangelical voters for Bush and the little kind of get-out-the-vote operations they set up.

Well, the problem is if you actually look at ex-urban areas overall, it is true that Bush increased his margin more there than most of the rest of the country by about six points – seven points. That by itself only accounts for maybe 13 or 14 percent of Bush's gain in votes – his net gain in votes between 2000 and 2004. (Unintelligible) – gains he made in large metropolitan areas or in small metropolitan areas.

In fact, you know, while Bush does well in these areas, there's a temptation just because he did well in these areas to sort of ascribe a causal role to voters in particular areas that is in fact not there. If you break down the counties in the United States in a very elaborate way by sort of going from most urban to most rural, in fact Bush actually made two, three, four, five point gains in margin in almost all of these categories of counties. So it's a bit of a myth that his victory was driven by these particular type of religious voters in particular communities in the United States.

Now, let's look at the question of the issue – the idea that the Republicans have a monopoly on those values voters or moral values voters and they had that big advantage on their side. According to the data, it is true that slightly more people selected moral values from a list of issues in the exit poll than selected, say, other issues like Iraq and the economy and jobs. However, this is a bit of a problematic question because we basically gave people six policy issues and then moral values, so – and that question was not asked that way in 2000. I mean, when they asked about a list of seven actual issues, so we don't know the extent to which there are more moral values issues and most of that moral values vote is in this election, but in the last election all we know is that they did very well and they got 80 percent of the vote among voters for whom if you presented them with a list of six issues and moral values would select moral values rather than any of the six issues, and that's a somewhat different statement than the previous one.

And if (we refer ?) to the Zogby poll that Melody brought up – in fact, if you ask voters what was your – you know, what is your top moral values or moral concern issue in this election, in fact it's not things like same-sex marriage or abortion. It's actually the war in Iraq, which was – it's like a heavy plurality – about 42 percent I think – of voters who were given this list of potential moral values concerns in the election.

So it is not that the Republicans got what – the only voters who voted on issues – on moral values; they got a certain type of moral values voters and the Democrats got their type of moral values voters as well. It's just it wasn't picked up by the way the question was asked. People who said, "Iraq was my top voting issue," voted very heavily for the Democrats. I think 73 to 20 or something like that. And this was probably a moral values issue in many ways for these kind of voters.

And the fact that there's – (unintelligible) – about the questions also is shown by the Pew Research Center – duplicated the exit poll six issues and moral values question in the post-election survey and sure enough moral values performed pretty well in that one too, but then they asked it open-ended as well. In other words, you know, just – (unintelligible) – what is your main issues you voted on in this election? Only 9 percent mentioned moral values. More people mentioned Iraq and the economy and stuff like that.

So let me try to sum up, then, what I think. You know, this was a – yes, it's a values election, but it's not quite a values election in the way that it's typically summarized in the press. It's way more complicated than that, and I do think it raises a

series of very interesting questions that progressives have to value with – have to grapple with in this next period of time.

The first is that Democrats, as I said, have their own values issues. Just because someone voted on the basis of the economy or Iraq doesn't mean they weren't voting on the basis of values. The problem is they probably underperformed in terms of those kinds of voters. It would have been better for the Democrats if more people had selected the economy and jobs and the (voter ?) issue or Iraq. That didn't happen.

And there's just a fascinating finding in the exit poll. When they asked people basically who do you trust to handle the economy, Bush or Kerry? You know, they asked it of Bush and then they asked it of Kerry. In terms of Bush people, maybe 49 percent said they trusted him; 51 percent said they didn't, which is bad for an incumbent president. The trouble is when they asked the same question about Kerry, 45 percent said they trusted him and 53 percent said they didn't – to run the economy.

So I think this suggests the Democrats have some difficulty framing their issues and arguably their values issues in a way that voters found compelling, clear, and would motivate them to cast their vote on that basis.

A second thing these findings tell us is, well, okay, there are certain values issues that are obviously better for the Republicans that mostly have to do with the war on terror and the sort of the so-called social issues, so the challenge for the Democrats is how do you address these issues in a way that peels off some of those voters away from the Republicans; that doesn't allow them to run up their margins as high as they did among – (unintelligible) – working class voters. How do you appeal more to that set of concerns in a way that voters find plausible, find compelling?

You know, Brad Carson had a very interesting article in this issue here that's been passed out in *The New Republic*. He's the guy that got defeated for senator from Oklahoma. Basically, he ascribes it all to being on the side of modernity. It's kind of like the Democrats arguably think it's unproblematic that the – you know, the world has been modernized; America's been modernized, becoming more diverse, more tolerant. You know, the forms of the family are changing. Culture is evolving. And his kind of view – and it's an interesting one, is for a lot of voters they find that unacceptable and scary. And the Democrats, even if they want to be more on the side of modernity than the Republicans, they've got to find a way to support modernity and support – (unintelligible) – in fact the culture is evolving I think, without appearing to embrace it uncritically. I think that is a word he used: without embracing it uncritically. So that's a tough balancing act, but it may be something we all have to think about.

Yet a third issue is – (unintelligible) – this set of values, concerns that the Republicans ran on and ran on successfully, (how can they ?) possibly win with a candidate like John Kerry? I think that's something, you know, progressives will have to think about. I mean, Gore and Kerry, however they were unfairly treated by the press, they were relatively easy to sort of pigeonhole in a certain kind of way. I think your

typical white working class voter found it difficult to trust these candidates and feel comfortable with them and that's something that I think Democrats will have to think about moving forward.

And what kind of candidate can you nominate who is going to have a relatively easy time getting through the door with these kind of voters? You may not want to nominate someone like John Kerry who is sort of coming up to bat with two strikes against him with these kind of voters.

Finally, there's the issue of 9/11, which David raised eloquently. The issue about – and I find it hard to believe that Bush wins this election without 9/11. Now, David describes it not just 9/11, but the incredibly competent and (sterling ?) performance of Bush and Iraq as just part of the war on terror and so on – it's kind of a big package. I don't see it that way. I do think the war on terror has become in some ways a values issue that he used to motivate his voters and his performance on the sort of real life foreign policy war on terror hasn't been so good.

But there's an overhang of that issue that bled into this election. The question for progressives is, okay, well then squeeze one more election maybe out of 9/11, and I mean, there's an argument to be made that almost no matter what the Democrats did it is going to be hard this close to September 11th, 2001, for the Democrats to unseat the incumbent president.

But if it's the case that the farther away we get from September 11th, 2001, the less power that issue will have – that political capital will have, then Democrats need to think about well how do you start turning that situation in their direction. And I think that that was not done very successfully, maybe couldn't have been done successfully, in this election. Clearly just focusing on Iraq and how it's a big mess wasn't quite enough to sort of push the whole foreign policy area back far enough in the Democrats' direction, but I think there is some possibility that we really did just go through the last sort of 9/11 election that's really defined by 9/11 and now we're moving into a situation that's more fluid, that's more complicated and in which Democrats will have to figure out a way of staking out their own clear approach to the challenges that Americans face in this pretty perilous world, but a world nonetheless that gets farther and farther away from September 11th, 2001.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MS. BARNES: Thank you. I think what we'll do is just talk a little bit – a few minutes about the religion and character issue here and then want to open up the floor to questions from the audience.

In talking about religion and character, and I think as we've discussed here and as others discuss it, they are not one and the same. I mean, character as it's been defined from this table includes the flip-flopping issue, conviction around the war, whereas religion at least as it was defined during this last election – people often perceived it as

having to do a lot with issues of gay marriage and abortion and as Reverend Edgar points out, not everyone defines it in that way, but certainly the media did.

In thinking about that, one, how did religion and character affect one another? And also Jonathan points out in his article that oftentimes the media really enjoys talking about the character issue because, as you describe it, they don't necessarily want to talk about policy issues. If that's the case, is the American electorate prepared for the policy agenda that could be rolled out in front of them as religious conservatives believe they have a mandate and are pressing the White House to activate their agenda?

And then finally, just going to a point that David made about the diversity of the progressive bench or the progressive community, it would seem as though particularly after this election, that President Bush has a similar diverse base. There are fiscal conservatives. There are cultural conservatives. And how does he hold together an agenda that appeals to that base and doesn't have the same problems that you described progressives having? And in fact, I think James Dobson was recently – I found this quote this morning – he was asked on *This Week* recently whether Bush would fail evangelicals and he replied, "I'm sure he will fail us. He doesn't dance to our tune." So how does President Bush make that work?

Anyone?

MR. FRUM: Let me take that last point. I've heard a lot – you hear a lot from Democrats after this election who said, you know, there were problems getting the message out and a lot of it has to do with the media. No political party could ever ask for more favorable press than the Democrats got in this election. That doesn't mean that they were all like working for you, but it's not going to get any better than this. You're not – CBS' *Sixty Minutes* planning to have hit pieces on the president – the incumbent president the night before the election. You're not going to get better than that, so you just have to work with this as the baseline that the idea that there is maybe some way that the press could be more helpful to you – I don't think that was going to happen.

On the point about the Republican coalition, again this is a story – I get a call from a reporter about – the lead-up to the election about once every two days about the instability of the Republican coalition and the things – it's like a Barcalounger. It's really stable. And if James Dobson feels like taking a run at President Bush, I know who is going to win that battle. It is not going to be James Dobson. And James Dobson also knows that and so he'll grumble, he'll remind people that he is there, he'll pick up things, but it's a very coherent coalition for a lot of reasons.

Let me just pick up one thing that Reverend Edgar said because I think it's very important. I actually – if I were to say what was John – what was the one thing – I mean, a lot of things about John Kerry you would change if you wanted him to win, which I didn't, but if there were one thing he should have done that might have made a difference, I think he actually did not flip-flop quite enough. There's one flip-flop that he

ought to have done that he never did, which is to give a speech about what he learned from his opposition to the Vietnam War and how he made mistakes.

And he could – the thing that tripped down memory lane that you heard about Vietnam and the churches and the ministers and how all these Lutheran and Presbyterian and Episcopal ministers joined together against the war back when there were Lutheran and Presbyterian and Episcopal ministers who actually had congregations, as opposed to now when they don't – that that was the problem and that John Kerry – he came from that planet. That was the sense one took away. He never said – this is – I wrote this at the time and – after the – in the national Review Blog, what should his speech have said at the Democratic convention.

What he ought to have talked about is what I learned from Vietnam. And it could have been all the negative things that President Bush (will want ?) to do, and then what I learned from the antiwar movement and how that was wrong too. And had he said we made a mistake back in – and that April 1975 was not America's finest hour and that losing Vietnam was not a thing that Democrats should take pride in, it was – and that how he has learned that the country does have real enemies and he's taking – that that is the thing he took away and that how the kind of mistrust of the nation's purpose that you began to hear from some segments – not like sort of beyond the Democratic Party, the Michael Moore fever swamps how dangerous all of this was and how much as a Democrat he repudiated it. That's what Lyndon Johnson would have done. That's what John Kennedy would have done. That's what Truman would have done and FDR. The winners: that's what they would have done.

MS. BARNES: Thank you.

Reverend Edgar?

REV. EDGAR: David, just a comment about your last comment. I hope you'll write a speech for George Bush about the mistakes that he's made over the last four years because I think one of the failed issues over the last six months has been the president's inability to say publicly and honestly what he – what mistakes he made and what he learned from those mistakes. So your advice to Kerry is good advice. I hope you give that same advice to George Bush.

MR. FRUM: I give so much advice nobody listens.

REV. EDGAR: Let me say this, and I'm talking anecdotally about six elections in the most Republican district in the nation to have a Democratic congressman. My district had 210,000 Republicans and 90,000 Democrats and yet I got elected six times, being the first Democrat since 1858 to win an election – maybe the last Democrat to win in that district. I was elected by fiscally conservative Republican men who were pro-environment and fiscally conservative Republican women who were pro-choice.

I think the president does have a challenge to hold his coalition together. It's not as great a challenge as one might expect, but it is a challenge because if he has two or three appointments to the Supreme Court he's going to select some people and if he makes the wrong selection he can turn off what I think are moderate Republicans who are part of that coalition and supported him.

I think the religious right has an agenda. Dobson is one, but Jerry Falwell, Franklin Graham, Pat Robertson, and the president has a difficult challenge of moving forward without angering that constituency. I remember when the Moral Majority first organized. They were hot to trot in each of the presidential and congressional elections for a while and then they got disheartened by politics because the politicians didn't support them 100 percent.

I think all of us are hurt by our religious fundamentalists, whether they are Christian, Jewish, Muslim, throughout the world, but particularly here in the United States. I think the president does have a challenge to hold the coalition together if in fact some of the religious right – Bob Jones and others – think that they have a mandate for a particular direction. Most Americans I think are middle-of-the-roaders. I think the president won by what I call middle church: those people who always do what their doctor tells them and normally do what their presidents tell them, have not a lot of depth in terms of foreign policy or domestic policy, lean in the direction of the incumbent. And those persons I think will get turned off if the president goes too far to the right.

MS. BARNES: Thank you. I'm sorry, Ruy, did you want to say –

MR. TEIXEIRA: Yeah, just – I just wanted to add to what he said, that it's not just that they think that they've been important – the right-wing social conservatives, the evangelicals – it's just the congealed conventional wisdom about the election actually, I think, considerably overstates their importance and that's great for them. I mean, they won't argue about that. I mean, if the press tells them that evangelicals were an absolutely critical part of the Bush reelection machine, they say, oh, yeah. That's right. It was us. We were there.

And I think that does make them a little bit more difficult to negotiate with. And I just think in general Bush is going to have a hard time moving to the center on either social or economic issues because of how this election was won and who it is perceived put him into office and that could cause trouble down the road because I think the voters who really did elect him, as I tried to say in my presentation, were moderately observant, moderately conservative, white, working class voters who just aren't with the program of the people who control the Republican Party and are perceived to have been the most influential components of it.

Thank you.

MS. BARNES: Okay, why don't we take questions from the audience?

MS. BARNES: If you could say your name and where you're from, that would be great.

Q: I'm Robert Marus from Associated Baptist Press and I want to ask specifically David Frum about that question. If the numbers are correct and the religious right didn't really increase the turnout in this election, but nonetheless as we see with Arlen Specter this week, they're exacting their pound of flesh right now, and is Bush going to be able to keep those voters and still keep, for instance, 23 percent of gay voters who still voted for him this time around despite all that he's done on that front? I mean, it seems like a more difficult coalition to hold together than would be the case.

And a second question for the entire panel goes back to the idea that we might not be sitting here if some pollster hadn't decided to create moral values as a separate category from the war on terrorism and economic justice, or the war in Iraq and economic justice, which also seem to be moral issues to me. Is the media and is the polling industry somehow complicit in this dichotomy between gay marriage and abortion rights being the moral issues, whereas Democrats seem to think they have a problem talking about all moral issues or using the moral vocabulary to talk about things like war and peace and economic justice.

MS. BARNES: Who wants to tackle that one?

REV. EDGAR: I guess David. David has the first, but I have the Arlen Specter comment.

MR. FRUM: I think it is not going to be the glaring problem that a lot of people who ask the question think it will be. There is a long distance from Jerry Falwell to Ralph Reed in terms of understanding how coalitions work to being able to negotiate effectively about what you must have, what you would like, what you can live without. I think any coalition manager has to keep faith – has to keep faith with the different members of his coalition, and successful political leaders. It's a hard – that's why it's a hard job, but I think President Bush has kept faith with religious conservatives on a number of issues that they care about the most.

He kept faith with them on stem cells despite overwhelming polls that suggest this was a very unpopular position. He has kept faith with them on same-sex marriage, which was an issue he didn't put onto the national agenda, but was put there by courts and by the mayor of San Francisco, but where his supporters had strong views and he kept faith.

On the other hand, you know, if you listen to Ralph Reed and – not to make him like the pope of the evangelicals, but as sort of a smart and representative guy, they also understand that that doesn't mean that you get 100 percent of your way on everything, and there are issues where you can settle for less. That's coalition discipline and I think it is something that has been deeply absorbed by the members of the Republican coalition. There are probably many more things to say about that, and I think what happened with Arlen Specter, and it is probably some jockeying for position. You're going to see, I

think, quite a lot of judicial appointments. I don't know how many of them will be on the Supreme Court, but they will be – I mean, taken together they will add up to a center-right bench: some of them more right than center, some of them more center than right, but I think you will see that most of the people who are involved in this coalition will understand you evaluate this president's judicial nominees in total, not one by one.

REV. EDGAR: I'd just like to thank the voters of Pennsylvania for not electing me to the United States Senate in 1986 when I ran against Arlen Specter. I jokingly say I could unseat Arlen Specter now for that position by endorsing him.

I think that it's interesting that within 35 seconds of Arlen Specter making an honest comment about and sending a message to the president and others to do the middle center as opposed to the right-wing appointments that might have been on the mind of the president, the religious right and other ultra-conservatives came out and are trying to cut the legs off of Arlen Specter. I for one who lost a Senate race to him thank god that Arlen Specter is there standing between all of these federal judge appointments and some who would put pressure on – to undo basic law.

We live in really interesting times. We live in times when I think the administration needs to be concerned about five Republican senators: the two Maine senators, the Republican Senator Chafee from Rhode Island, John McCain is not going to be a blank check for the president, neither is Arlen Specter. So I don't think it's quite as done deal as some would suggest and I think over the next few months and years I would have to agree with David here. I think we're going to be much more in the center-right as opposed to the far right.

MS. BARNES: Great. Why don't I – I'll go to the back of the room since it often gets neglected.

Q: My name is Martin Gensler. I was formerly with Senator Paul Wellstone. I was interested in the exchange on 9/11 as being crucial to Bush's reelection. This is a bit of Monday morning quarterbacking, but it's something that I've believed for at least a year or more – I mean, since the 9/11 report came out. I thought that Kerry could have used 9/11; that is, the day 9/11.

On that day, if you read the 9/11 Commission report and the staff reports that accompanied it, it was very clear that Bush was derelict in his duty as commander in chief. It was the first time and the most important time when he could have demonstrated his ability. Instead, in addition to the seven minutes – the famous seven minutes that Michael Moore depicted – he was also notified of a first plane hitting the World Trade Center by Karl Rove who was with him down in Florida.

If you read the report carefully – the Commission report and the staff reports – you realize what happened was entirely unconstitutional. The order for a shoot-down came from Cheney who was not in the line of command. The president wasn't any more incapacitated than usual. He was never out of communications. So therefore, the man in

the chain of command was Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. Now, when did Rumsfeld hear from the president? An hour after the earlier event – after the Pentagon had been hit. It was a brief discussion and there was no discussion of scrambling airplanes or anything else.

Moreover, the allegation that in fact after Cheney gave his first order for planes to scramble that he later at the advice of his chief of staff when he was in the White House – (unintelligible). He later touched base with the president. If you read the 9/11 Commission report, there is no documentary evidence of that. In fact, his wife was sitting next to him in a bunker and his chief of staff have no recollection to a phone call to the president at all.

So why this is a crucial issue was that throughout the campaign Kerry's ability to serve as commander in chief was being questioned. The last time, I think at a Cheney speech in Ohio where he talked about nuclear terrorists or terrorists bringing nuclear weapons into American cities and suggesting that Kerry would be incapable of dealing with it as a commander in chief, so in essence what you had is a commander in chief who demonstrably failed in his responsibilities, a vice president who acted without any constitutional or other authorization, and a defense secretary who wasn't consulted until after the fact and did nothing in fact.

This could have easily been exploited in the campaign. I don't want to boast, but together with a friend of mine – we both served in the CIA – we spell this out for the Kerry campaign, but nobody reacted then or before.

MS. BARNES: Is there any comment to the comment?

Ruy? I'm not going to have to go to the gym this evening, that's for sure – back and forth.

MR. TEIXEIRA: May need to work on this sound system thing a little bit. Yeah, I have no idea where – whether any of that stuff would have played. Well, let me revise that. I don't think it would have played that well. I think it was difficult to impugn Bush's credentials as the president of 9/11 and as I suggested in my remarks, that was precisely part of the problem. We were still close enough to that event that Bush could exploit that in his reelection campaign in a way that the Democrats just couldn't quite take enough edge off of.

I mean, look, if anybody had said in 2002 to Democrats it's going to be a very close election in 2004 – Bush would almost lose – people would have laughed at them because people thought because of 9/11 it was such an Earth shaking event that the Republicans had a simply insuperable advantage. You know, it would be a wipeout in 2004. It wasn't a wipeout. It was quite close. It was – partly it was quite close because there's been a sort of decay of the influence of 9/11 as a determining issue pushing people in the Republican direction ever since 2001.

You know, it just hadn't decayed quite far enough by 2004, but they still couldn't derive a lot of advantage out of it. You know, this little vignette of the war on terror versus all the dumb things they did since, like the war in Iraq, the net was still positive I think for the president and I think the Democrats pushed as hard as they could to try to convince people that the problems of the war in Iraq were emblematic to a mistaken approach to the war on terror. I think they convinced a lot of people. They just didn't convince quite enough people. And I think, again, you shift a point and a half of the popular vote in this election and you get a tied ballgame. I mean, they're not – the Democrats and the progressives were not that far away and I think that, again, as we get farther away from September 11th the openings to try to reconfigure that support for the president will increase.

REV. EDGAR: There's a lot that can be said about your comment, but let me go to a point that's alongside of your comment and that is I think one of the real tragedies is the squandering of world opinion that took place after 9/11. The *New York Times* said there are two superpowers: the United States and world opinion. In lots of ways some of us were chaplains to world opinion and I think as we move forward the real question is how do we bring Germany and Russia and France and Canada and Mexico and other nations that split apart from our country and its foreign policy back into the family of nations?

I for one as a religious leader am frustrated with all of us using the language of war to relate to terrorists. If we think we can get terrorists by bombing capitals, we should have bombed Oklahoma City when we had two terrorists, or bombed Washington, DC, with two snipers. If terrorists are in 60 nations, we need all of those nations working on an international police effort, not a military effort. And I think what the president successfully did was convince America that you really can get terrorists by bombing capitals and let's pick Iraq first and then we'll go a first strike policy against others. And I don't think the world buys that argument and I think we're on pretty shaky grounds thinking we're going to get terrorists by making it a war effort. We're going to have a very violent century.

And my hope is that we can lower the rhetoric, talk about an international police effort, and then go on some of the root causes of terrorism around the world, and we're going to need our brothers and sisters in all the nations to work with us on that.

MS. BARNES: So we can end on time, I'll take two more questions – try to get two more in.

Q: Hi. My name is Maude Chaps (sp). I'm a sociologist. I think maybe Jonathan needs something to talk about. So you – I know –

(Cross talk.)

Q: And it might be nice to talk about culture, so I know your comments on cultural images were about the candidates themselves, but I find myself wondering when

I think about what do Dems do now to create a new set of issues that can create a viable progressive majority we go back to the roots that Reverend Edgar largely talked about of social justice and care for those on the margins and addressing poverty as something that we all have an investment in.

Do you think those issues conceivably can lend themselves to, to use the word launch, you know, a launch of cultural images that could support that kind of policy agenda?

MR. CHAIT: I don't know. I haven't thought about that, but I think the kinds of character issues I'm talking about aren't as directly connected to policies like that. It's much more at a gut level kind of creating a story about a person – a sense of who a person is. It's related to a candidate the way you relate to movie stars. I mean, you know who Clint Eastwood is, right? He's the strong, tough guy and Tom Hanks plays a certain kind of character: the really sensitive, nice, sweet guy. You know, those characters have probably some bearing or some relationship to what those people are actually like, although not 100 percent correlation. But I'm sure Tom Hanks yells at his butler or if you put a – if someone mugs Clint Eastwood, you know, he'd probably be pretty frightened actually, et cetera.

I mean, I think the same thing with George W. Bush. The character that George W. Bush plays has some relationship to who George W. Bush is, but he set out and he created a character and I don't think it had a whole lot to do with his platform, or it had nothing to do with his policies, but it was – you know, he went out in 1999 and he moved from the exclusive place where the high society in Houston lived and bought a ranch in Crawford and he got a pickup truck and he got photographed on the news all the time with a pickup truck and clearing brush.

And I'm not saying that has nothing to do with who George W. Bush is, but I'm saying that character is not the entire view who George W. Bush is. And there was an understanding – I think there's a particular intelligence there, especially if you're going to have policies that are so aligned with very rich people, it's particularly crucial that you – that the character you are in the public's mind is the average guy – is the cowboy, the guy who lives on the ranch.

So like I said, I think it – I mean, I guess I'm pretty cynical, but I think the character issues just don't work on that kind of level, so my answer I guess would have to be no.

MS. BARNES: One last question.

Q: Michael Calebrese, New America Foundation. It seems that most of the post-election recriminations on values have assumed we're talking about social issues, character issues, but once upon a time Democrats were pretty good about turning economic issues into values issues and projecting a whole different set of dimensions. I think Bob alluded to this a little bit. And in fact if you think about Bill Clinton, put

people first – I mean, that had of course its intellectual origins more in Bob Reich’s ideas – you know, that human capital is rooted here whereas other inputs of production are footloose, but he turned it into more of a values question in the election, and of course being the man from Hope at a time of stagnation certainly helped.

I’m not saying that Kerry necessarily came from a place like Hope that would have been very persuasive, and we had all these overwhelming national security issues, as Ruy said, but I’m wondering what you think about for the next election. Can Democrats turn economic issues into values issues that are – again, that are equally as powerful as these social issues, or should we instead be sort of tacking and pandering on the social dimensions?

MS. BARNES: (Off mike) – start and work our way through.

REV. EDGAR: I like the way Hubert Humphrey would answer that question. He said the moral test of government is what we do to those in the dawn of life, our children; those in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those in the shadows of life, the poor, the sick, and the disabled.

I guess I want for the party and for the next candidate to be authentic and to believe passionately in a vision for what the United States ought to be and to tell that story. And I think John Kerry got close to it in his concession speech. I want that to be in his announcement or her announcement speech.

MR. TEIXEIRA: Well, I’m all for a little tacking and pandering on social issues since some of them might go a long way, but I basically agree with Mike that yes, the Democrats have to figure out a way to talk about the issues that with which most closely identified in a way that, you know, your typical voter – your typical white working class voter – finds compelling and they understand how it’s framed in value terms.

Clinton did a good job at that. I mean, Clinton had this elaborate putting people first and it had a lot of policy proposals, but nobody read the damn thing. All anyone knew was that he said put people first and he said, you know, reward work and he said stuff like that and that’s what people remembered. That’s what people knew. You know, what did people know about what John Kerry stood for in terms of his economic and other programs? Basically nothing. You know, it never got through.

I mean, there’s – a plug for *The New Republic* again – Ryan Lizza has a piece here: “At the post-election boozefest, John Kerry informed his former campaign workers that their message still resonated throughout the country,” but most of them had no idea what that message was, so if they didn’t know I assure you the voters didn’t know either. I mean Kerry had an elaborate list of policy proposals; many of them quite good. I mean, if you went to the website and read them, which nobody did, they were pretty good. But his 25 words about what he proposed to do for the country, with the country, where he was going to take it, and what his values were absolutely never got through if in fact it existed at all.

MS. BARNES: David?

MR. FRUM: I'm not in the business of giving advice to Democrats and if I were, they wouldn't take it. I have enough trouble persuading Republicans to take my advice, but let me just say if there were one thing if I were a Democrat that I would take away from this conversation or any other – I think it is striking that a conversation about values has turned so much on national security. Democrats have to become credible again on national security.

And with respect to what Jonathan said, the way you do that is not by acting. If someone would do oppo research on Clint Eastwood, he had – and it turned out he really did get frightened when people took his wallet, you'd know about it. This is a very competitive business – the business of becoming president of the United States. People are looking at you very hard. Your opponents are trying to trip you up. If you want to seem credible on national security, you have to begin by being credible.

And if I were a Democrat, beginning the process of hunting for a standard bearer in 2008 I would be looking at which of these candidates out there seems to be the most committed to getting a strong reenactment of this – the law that is that going to have to replace the Patriot Act, much of which expires in 2005. Who has got a strong vision of what to do about Iran? Who has a strong vision about how to make a failing alliance system that has been failing since 1991 because it became obsolete in 1991 – make that alliance system work again. Who really is committed to finding and killing America's enemies before they find and kill Americans? That person – that's your candidate.

MR. CHAIT: Yeah, by your definition, I think, of who would be the most credible on national security, which I think is probably what you – synonymous with hawkish and I don't entirely disagree with that. That candidate is Hillary Clinton. I mean, she's the most hawkish potential 2008 contender out there for the Democrats.

Now, could she be a credible nominee? No, because of who – because of her image in the media and in the populace, right? I mean, what people think of her. She's culturally polarizing. She's not someone who will act and seem on television like a credible commander in chief, so I'm sorry to be a cynic, but it's not just your positions and it's not just even what's in your gut, but there's a lot more in the mix than that and politics doesn't work as perfectly as we'd like to think it does. And I'm sorry to be cynical, but that's just the reality as I see it.

MS. BARNES: Great, well clearly there are a lot of unanswered questions and more questions to ask, but we're going to conclude right now. I want to thank our partners *The New Republic*. Thank you for coming and we look forward to having you back at the center. Thank you, everyone. (Applause.)

(END)

