

Center for American Progress



A SCREENING AND DISCUSSION OF THE FILM:

THE EDUCATION OF SHELBY KNOX

MODERATOR:

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FEATURING:

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**SHELBY KNOX,
STUDENT ACTIVIST**

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MELODY BARNES: (In progress) and Rose, who are sitting to my right, and then Shelby Knox, who is obviously the star of the movie. And right now she's at the University of Texas and getting ready to start – next year will be your junior year? – at UT. And as the movie indicated at the end, she continues to do a lot of the good work that she started when she was in high school in Lubbock.

So do you all have questions for Marion and Rose? I know I've got a few, but I want to give you all an opportunity first. Great, we have a woman in the pink. Hold on one second; let me come to you with the microphone, and why don't you tell us who you are.

Q: My name is Sonia Fuentes. I kept wondering as I saw the film, did you photograph it as those things were happening? And how was that possible or was it reenacted? That's what – one of the things that interested me.

MS. BARNES: Yeah. Marion, Rose, do you want to answer that question?

ROSE ROSENBLATT: Oh yeah, right. I forgot I had a microphone. (Laughter.) You know, when you're doing a documentary, you always want to be there when everything is happening, and you try to be. And a lot of times you are, and sometimes you're not. And what's also true with this film – you know, it would depend on which scene you're talking about. A lot of it we were there.

Some of the things – like Shelby and her family, there were times when Shelby would call us up and say, you know, this just happened, you should have been here. And so – and you know, she understood that we wanted to be there, and we wanted – you know, it was an important part of the film because she knew what we were doing, and she was really working with us. And we would go down and these things, for instance the arguments or the struggles that they were – the parents were having with Shelby, they were ongoing. So we would come down, and we would say, Shelby told us that you were talking about this last week, and you were arguing about that. And they – you know, can you tell us a little bit about it, and they would start telling us, and somehow they would get into an argument again, and we would be there. And I think Shelby helped facilitate that, I think. (Laughter.) But it's – you know, so it's real, and then a lot of times that's how you have to work.

Certainly, when we went into the parking lot with Ed – I mean, Ed said to us – you know, as we got to know him and got him involved in the film, he said, you know, I do this thing called witnessing. I go into parking lots. And he told us what he did, and we said, well, we'd love to go with you, that would be great. And so, he helped set it up, and so then we would have to – like, when are you going? And our schedules didn't always coincide, but – enough of the time that we would get that, so that was really what

happened. So it was a mixture, but most of the time we're getting what's really happening.

MS. BARNES: Great. Do we have another question?

Q: Hi. I was wondering –

MS. BARNES: Could you tell us your name?

Q: Oh. My name is Amber Mahon. And I was wondering how Ed and Corey is his name? Your competitor or – (laughs) – how they reacted to the film and what types of reactions you got from other members of the community in Lubbock?

SHELBY KNOX: (Off mike.)

MS. BARNES: I'll turn it on.

MS. KNOX: Thank you. The scariest thing is that it hasn't premiered in Lubbock yet. June 7th is the first Lubbock screening. And so that will be the first wide reaction. Corey Nichols has seen the film and his reaction – I think that they prepped him. It was, from my point of view, and it could be – you know, he might not like the way – and he actually didn't feel too bad about it. He thought that it was a fairly accurate representation from my point of view, and I think was relieved that I didn't call him anything terrible on national television or anything.

Ed Ainsworth has not seen the film. I would like for him to. I would like for him to come to the screening on June 7th, but I'm not sure if that will happen, but I would be interested to know his comments when it happens and I'll be interested to see the reaction of the Lubbock community when it does.

MS. BARNES: What do you think the reaction will be? Just trying to guess what will happen after the screening on the 7th.

MS. KNOX: You know, I'm leaving the next day, if that's any indication. (Laughter) I'm going to New York for a month. I know that a lot of people in Lubbock – it is a very vocal minority that are really for the abstinence-only sex education policy and there were so many people – adults that came forward and said, if I had known that this was going on, I would have been active on it before, so I think that the reaction most of all will be favorable. Parents will say, "I didn't know this was going on. What can I do to help?" There will be the vocal people in the town and in the state of Texas that say, you know, call me a bleeding-hearted liberal and all of these other things that I'm sure will happen. But I think that that's just the very vocal minority and they're scared because it is a message that's getting across.

MS. ROSENBLATT: She met Wayne Weisengerwig this morning on the plane, the guy – the elder who said you're not –

MS. KNOX: That I'm not a good Christian? I saw him on the plane this morning. He was not pleasant. (Laughter.) He definitely remembered me. And I said, "You should see the film. You should try to come." And he said, something like, "It was nice seeing you. Goodbye." (Laughter.) I was like, "Oh, okay. Nice to see you."

MS. BARNES: Here we go. Great. Thanks, Theo.

Q: Hi. I'm Margaret Lee, and I'm just wondering how the partnership between you, the filmmakers, and Shelby Knox came about.

MARION LIPSCHUTZ: It happens any time you make a film with your subjects. When you do long format, which means we – I always tell people – you know, I first allay people's fears: we're not Geraldo. Not even Geraldo, you know. We're not Jerry Springer. We're not Geraldo. We're not (unintelligible) because people have a lot of misconceptions about what being on television is. Then nor are we a magazine show. We're not going to come and do a segment on you, but we're going to be in your life for a while, and we are. It takes a long time to make a film like this. And most of our films have taken a couple of years, often because of funding, but often because we're following an unfolding story, so it evolves pretty naturally out of that.

Q: What turned you on to (off mike)?

(Cross talk.)

MS. KNOX: Like, it's a story about how you –

MS. BARNES: Yeah. Become aware – how did you become aware of her and her story?

MS. LIPSCHUTZ: We had been looking for about a year for a story on sex ed, and it was in 2000. We had been rejected for a major grant by somebody who said – we'd gotten some funding from some foundations to do something on the controversy between abstinence and comprehensive sex ed. Another organization turned us down, saying the culture wars are over. (Laughter.) (It's not?).

So, this wasn't an issue that people were getting very excited about on the grassroots level. It's been an issue since – really, for close to two decades. And so people who do work around sex ed knew it was important. It's why we were funded. But on the grass-roots level there wasn't that much happening, so it took about a year of looking to find a story active enough to sustain an hour show.

MS. BARNES: Can't hear back there, right? Is your mike – are you on?

(Cross talk.)

MS. BARNES: Let's see. She may not be on.

MS. LIPSCHUTZ: It's on maybe. Maybe.

MS. LIPSCHUTZ: How's that? It's me. (Laughter.) Is that working? Okay.

So it took about a year to fund the story, and then we came down to Lubbock and Shelby was part of a group fighting for sex ed. She had just been appointed the spokesperson, and she was a natural, so that's how we found her. Once we were down there, it was pretty clear that Shelby was – she was already changing when we met her and very, very passionate about sex ed. Her family welcomed us with open arms. So, that's another thing. You know, you – the person whom you choose or the story – if somebody's really welcoming you, it's a lot easier to follow the story, so –

MS. BARNES: We've got two – well, three questions over here.

Q: Hi. Marty Truestofer. You referred before to the vocal minority, but it seems the impression is that vocal minority is very much in control of what happens in Lubbock and maybe Texas generally. The impression is that maybe it's not a minority or at least that minority has a lot of the power.

MS. KNOX: I think that it's all tied in Lubbock to religion and the Baptist Church, which runs a lot of the town. And what I mean when I say vocal minority, and I'm actually borrowing the phrase from someone in the film, Dr. Chester Galite, who I really like, because a lot of people aren't aware that there is a problem with sex education. My parents – your generation – got better sex ed than we are getting now. It was more liberal. It included more things. And a lot of parents don't realize that their kids aren't getting that. So the vocal minority is those I'm speaking about who are sort of aware of what's going on. They want to make sure that that keeps going on. So that's what I say when I refer to that.

In Texas, I live in a very liberal part of Texas. I live in Austin, the liberal oasis of Texas, the only place you would want to live there. And I see that a lot of times people either don't understand the issues, or that the Republican Party in Texas has such a scare-tactic hold that if you don't go out and vote or if you don't give money, then the gays are going to take over the world and they're going to kill your babies, and all these terrible things that I've actually heard said, that it's really, I think, in Texas, a scare tactic to keep these very few people in power by scaring people who don't understand the issues.

MS. BARNES: Okay, we've got a question, the man back here in the mustard-color shirt.

Q: (Off mike.) My name is Bill Neil. And I was curious what the – what are – what is Lubbock's explanation to itself since conservatives are obviously – and religion and the dominant cultural node there, but they have this – something that they would attribute to New York City: the high pregnancy rates, STDs. I didn't quite catch their

own explanation. It's the liberal media that's seeped in through the airwaves or what (laughter) –

MS. KNOX: Probably. No, I think it's they're not religious enough. All these kids are terrible kids. They're on the path to hell. The ones that are having sex, it can't be my kid because it's certainly not my kid that goes to school every Sunday that's having sex. It's that other kid. It's always blamed on someone else. I've heard people in Lubbock blame it on a minority. I've heard them blame it on a certain zip code or a certain school. I've heard it blamed on Texas Tech University, which isn't true. If you take that out of the equation of the statistics there's – the rates are still as high. They really don't have a coherent answer for that except that it's not my child because my child is good, my child is religious and on the path to heaven.

Q: I think that cultural wars – we'll go back (off mike) conservative cultural (off mike) more so than in other parts of the (off mike) they're having problems. Yeah.

(Cross talk.)

MS. KNOX: They do. And I'm not sure if they're very good at hiding them. I think that that's one thing; that this stays hidden a lot in Lubbock. There are certain news stations that won't talk about this. Now Lubbock Independent School District will not comment publicly on their sex education program. So I think that they are very secretive about this; making sure that nobody finds out.

MS. BARNES: We have another question here. Shelby, I actually want to ask you a question. We were talking a little about the confluence of politics and religion. And as you were going through this experience and working on the Youth Commission, did you find that there's a larger progressive religious community there than you thought? Is it a silent majority there that is waiting to be awakened? I mean, what's your impression on that? It's certainly a topic that everybody's talking about right now.

MS. KNOX: We worked with the Catholic dioceses on the sex education issue in Lubbock, Texas, which is very surprising. We also worked with the Episcopal Church, the Unitarian Church, the Methodist Church on this issue. And as I've traveled around with the film and been asked that question, I realized people come up to me and say, "Very few Christians are those extremes. And they're giving our religion a bad name. They're making it seem like we're all the fundamentalist Christians, which is not even – it's – that's a political philosophy. That's not a religion at all. That's a political philosophy." So I think that there are a lot more progressive Christians than we think that there are. And that should be – the Democrats are inclusive to everyone and that should be a group that Democrats open their arms to and say, you know, this needs to become a more open thing because it's all right. You can be a Christian and a Democrat, as I've been trying to convince my parents and my parents' friends for a long time. (Laughter.)

MS. BARNES: Thank you. I know we had several other questions, and we'll loop back around up here.

Q: I had a question for Shelby. In the movie you were struggling with the – what you were taught in the church about homosexuality and what that pastor was saying about homosexuals are evil, et cetera, and your own sort of intrinsic sense of wanting to be more tolerant. How have you – as you've gotten older, how have you sort of reconciled that? Or have you made any progress in sort of reconciling for yourself your Christian upbringing with your views on homosexuality?

MS. KNOX: I think that whatever a person believes is private to them, and it's not my place to judge anyone for whatever my religion may perceive as being a sin, which I've read things now, and I don't even believe that the Bible actually meant – or the way that it was said was more of a reflection of problems at the time that they were having; not things that Jesus actually said. So I've even read things that said the Bible doesn't condemn homosexuality, which is very good for me. I like that idea. But also that it's not anyone's place to judge whether or not – and you should not be thinking, oh, they're going to hell, or they're a bad person because of that because in reality you should be worried about yourself and only yourself and just try to love others and create a connection there.

MS. BARNES: Great. Actually we'll take a question here, and then we'll hit this next question in the back.

Q: Yeah. I was –

MS. BARNES: Will you tell us your name?

Q: Yeah. I'm Will Armatruda. I was curious what the policy of the University of Texas is with regard to the university health department dealing with sexual issues. I speak from the experience of having been at UCLA in the 1970s, and I can tell you that they did provide contraceptives to students, basically at cost, no questions asked. I was also at Yale, where I was a classmate of George W. Bush, but that was before the school was coed, so I won't get into that. (Laughter.)

MS. KNOX: About a month ago – I'm in a group called Voices for Choice, and we stood on the west mall, which every student has to pass to get to class, and had dildos and condoms and were showing them how to use them, giving them free condoms and lube. You can get three free condoms a day at the University Health Center. And they have a great sexual healthcare educator program. They train students to go and give lectures to any classes that want them to go out into the community and do things like that. And then the Student Health Services Center is also very good about having whole classes on what kind of birth control method is right for you. They have special classes for contraception and homosexuals, things like that. So it's actually a very good, very liberal program. And I'm hoping to be a part of that later as a sexual healthcare educator there.

MS. BARNES: Do you know, is there any political pressure pushing back against universities as they have such a comprehensive sex education program?

MS. KNOX: No. Not in Austin, there wouldn't be. Now, I can't imagine the same thing would be allowed to survive at Texas Tech in Lubbock, but in Austin – as I said, it is the liberal oasis, and with 50,000 students they realize that they could have a major STI outbreak and that they should prevent that before it happens.

(Cross talk.)

MS. LIPSCHUTZ: (Off mike) organize (off mike) to the local level of the school boards, you know, in the 80s, which is when this abstinence-only sex ed came in. (Off mike.)

MS. BARNES: (Unintelligible) why don't you go ahead?

MS. LIPSCHUTZ: In the – and I think this speaks to why a lot of universities remain progressive, but this abstinence-until-marriage sex ed is actually very pervasive. My son's school, right outside of New York City, teaches it as well – a form of it – so it ain't just Lubbock. He's in – I think, going into – he's in eighth grade, and they're not allowed to talk about abortion. They're not allowed to talk about contraceptives. They get a very, very limited introduction in health class.

In the early 80s, there was a relatively – I don't know how organized it was, but there was a big effort to get people who had conservative values onto local school boards and no – people don't really – the school board isn't like a plum job – it's unpaid, takes a lot of time, you're there at night – and they were very effective. And so there are a lot of school boards across the country that have pretty conservative people sitting on the boards.

The other thing that happens is once you're in, it's hard to unseat you, again, because it's not like an incredibly important position within a community.

MS. BARNES: At least not perceived that way.

MS. LIPSCHUTZ: Perceived that way. It's incredibly important, as you see. The upshot is that you get all kinds of, in our book, bad policies being applied.

MS. BARNES: Let's see. Oh, right, thank you. And then we'll come back around.

Q: Hi. My name is Tucker McDonald, and I'm actually a Lubbock Democrat, so

—

MS. KNOX: Yay! There are two?

Q: Next time I'm home, I'll go by and say hello to your mom.

MS. KNOX: Okay. (Laughter.)

Q: But my question is for you and for all of you: did you like growing up in Lubbock?

MS. KNOX: Um. (Laughter.)

MS. BARNES: You could be mayor one day, Shelby.

MS. KNOX: Yeah, I know. I could. No, I did. I'm proud that I grew up in Lubbock because it's taught me a lot of things. It's given me the experience of being – I mean, I don't know how to articulate some of this, but two very different people: going from having a very conservative belief and following along with my parents and whatever they said, and then also coming out and being myself and realizing that I had my own ideas. I come from a very – like, I have a – there's a lot of values in Lubbock, and I'm not talking about the family values that the Bush administration is always talking about. I'm talking about politeness and things like that that I suppose that I'm glad that I had, but then I'm also – sometimes I think it's more difficult for me to do what I want to do in the future coming from a place like Lubbock. It's hard to run for political office for a place like Texas. It's also – there's a stigma to politicians from Texas, and I'm sure there is a reason for that. But I have a respect for Lubbock. I'm living there right now for the summer. I will never live there again. Like, I can't live in that town. And I will always go back to see my family and my friends, but I can't live there.

MS. BARNES: How was it for you growing up there?

TUCKER MCDONALD: For me? You know, I loved it. And then granted, I also left. And my family is still there and pretty much a large majority of my friends. And it is a very complicated place and it – it's – it does have this overbearing kind of conservative point of view at times, but at the same time it also kind of has this air of being still kind of this frontier community where people stand up for what they believe in, and people respect you for that. If you – like she did, in the movie, believed in what you're working for, a lot of times people just respect that because in West Texas people don't like compromising people. They don't always agree and it used to be a lot more civil, I think, than you've seen in recent times, but the upbringing that I got while I was there has definitely benefited me throughout my life.

And, now, I was raised probably in somewhat of a different household in that it was more liberal, but at the same time my father and my stepfather were both Presbyterian ministers, so I was also raised in a very – a home with a lot of focus on faith in the church. But I loved it and I enjoyed it.

What did you think when you were there, both of you, for filming?

MS. LIPSCHUTZ: People –

MS. KNOX: They stayed at the Koko Inn. (Laughter.) No one knows what that means, but –

Q: (Off mike.) It's a lot better place. (Laughter.)

MS. LIPSCHUTZ: Here, you can answer that. (Laughter.) No. What I was going to say is actually people often – you know, I feel like people anticipate the answer which is, well, look, I – you know, I'm a Jew from New York, what do you think? In fact, it wasn't – it's not that backward. There are people – (laughter) – if you look at – no, people would ask me, you know, you must think we're really backwards.

MS. ROSENBLATT: Hicks is what they say.

MS. LIPSCHUTZ: And in fact, you know, that the map that has – you know, or purple everywhere (off mike). Even in a conservative place, you find people who agree with you, who respect what you're saying, so I didn't have – now, other people may have thought we were other, but I didn't – that wasn't overwhelmingly my experience. It was hard to do this story because we were talking about kids and sex, so that would be hard anywhere.

MS. ROSENBLATT: It was my experience though, feeling very other –

MS. LIPSCHUTZ: Oh, you have the mike.

MS. ROSENBLATT: Oh, I have a mike, actually. But it was actually interesting what you said; it had sort of provided an insight because people were – you know, we had an opinion. We had a point of view. We had a stance, and I wonder even to this day, like, you know, we had – I mean, people were very friendly and hospitable and kind of let us do our thing. And I thought, well, that's because they don't really know what we're doing. (Laughter.) And they're kind of not taking us seriously. So – and it was hard to parse it out because I – the pastor in the church – in the family values – not family values, but the radio station, Family Life radio station, he tried to convert me. (Laughter.) So that was – you know, there was all this going on –

(Cross talk.)

MS. KNOX: I tried to convert her, too. (Laughter.)

MS. ROSENBLATT: And she tried to convert me. (Laughter.) She thought we were going to go to hell because we were Jews, and she cried about that. So it was kind of very confusing, but it was a lot more prosperous than I thought.

MS. KNOX: They're not going to hell, at least for that. (Laughter.)

MS. BARNES: I guess that's the next movie. (Laughter.) I actually have a question for you, Shelby. We've been talking about family and community. I thought this the first time, and it hit me again: I was really struck by your parents' experience in the film. I mean, obviously parents tend to be supportive of their children, but it seems as though your parents also were having a transformative experience as well. I mean, I don't know if I'm misperceiving that, but can you talk a little bit about your parents' reaction not just to the film, but to what you were doing and their perceptions of what you were doing?

MS. KNOX: They – my parents, first of all, were always for sex education. They always thought that that was a good idea. They were always appalled by the STD rates.

They were always scared of what would happen to me when I got up in a liberal community and started talking about sex – or in a conservative – wow. In a conservative community, they were always concerned what would happen when I got up and started talking about sex. How would that hurt me in school? How would it hurt me in my extracurricular activities? That's when they were concerned.

When I started to become more liberal and move away from their ideas, I think that they went through what a lot of parents go through, which was a sort of separation. And as I did that, they realized that to be supportive of me, they needed to start trying to learn what I believed and why I believed it. And we still disagree. We still have political fights. I just ended one on the phone to come in here. But it's like they're more understanding now because they understand where I'm coming from and we can disagree, and I think that that's very special, but I'm not sure if it's unique. A lot of people say, you know, my parents and I don't agree, but we can talk, and I'm very glad about that.

One thing that my parents did have a sort of turn around on was the gay rights issue, which was – they were completely against it at first. And I don't think that either of them had ever met a homosexual. And when they did, they were like, you know –

MS. LIPSCHUTZ: Knowingly.

MS. KNOX: Knowingly. Yeah, knowingly. And they were like, they're wonderful people, and they don't deserve to be discriminated against and this isn't fair, and – but of course, in Lubbock, they were still scared of, well, if she talks about gay rights and everyone is going to say she's a lesbian, and then she has no career options. It was still that, but it was – they were more understanding, and I'm very grateful for that because they've allowed me to become my own person and have my own opinion, and I think that that's what makes – part of what makes them great parents.

Q: Okay.

MS. BARNES: Thanks. I know we've got a question here, here, and one back there.

Q: Hi. My name is Diresha, and I was just wanting to comment on that scene where you're on the porch and your parents are talking about, you know, how did she become like this in a house full of Republicans? And I guess it's a two-part question. One, what do you think the difference was between you and other people who grew up in a similar family and didn't sort of change course? And two, from your perspective, what is the best way to respectfully engage people who are coming from that background and to try to like reach out to people without coming up against that barrier? Or is there a good way to do that?

MS. KNOX: (Laughs.) I think that I – my views started changing – well, actually, that isn't true. I was always different. And I think it came from I always questioned why I had what I had, and why am I the way I am, and things like that. And I – my dad has it completely correct, although I don't like his phrasing: I was always for the underdog. And I always wanted to make sure anyone who wasn't represented, anyone who didn't have as good a chance as I did in society, I wanted to make sure something was done about that – always.

And I think that as I started to learn more about political issues, which I became very interested in in about 10th grade, that those sort of tendencies made me fall on the side of the Democrats, and my parents weren't always understanding of that. They were like, you know, you are who you are. You're privileged, and we raised you to be a Republican, why are you not? But I wanted to see a different way that maybe some people weren't or that I could do something to change things, to approach people that have different opinions.

I would say, that you always have to say, I know that I'm – I have a different opinion than yours, and neither of us might be right, or there might be a compromise in the middle because I think that, even though I hate when Corey says in the movie, compromise is everything. On some things you have to say, okay, and you might be right about that, but here's this point. And I think that that's important that they don't feel like you're attacking. I think there's a terrible book that's like, *How to Talk to a Liberal if You Have To*, or something. And I don't think that it should be if you have to. I think you should engage in discourse with anyone, and when you do, be respectful of their views, share yours, and have a stimulating debate. That's the only way that we can get rid of this terrible divide that's ripping apart our country.

MS. BARNES: I think we had a question right here?

Q: I was – oh, my name is Eric Tyers. I was wondering about more of the back story before the movie. How – where – when you first got involved, how that sort of developed in you? And also, how you personally dealt with the changes that you've been experiencing. Like, are there any times – like when you were saying, you tried to convert

them and thought, you know – it's like, how do you personally deal with those things where you're like, did I say that? Did I think that?

MS. KNOX: Well, the first question was about what happened before we started. In about ninth grade, I really started noticing that there were a lot of girls disappearing. They would get pregnant and be sort of forced to go to an alternative school for pregnant girls in Lubbock, and I didn't think that that was fair because nothing happened to the guys.

And I – so I started talking to these girls and they were talking about how – oh, well, my boyfriend does enough drugs it kills all of his semen, or it was my first time, I couldn't get pregnant, or he doused his penis in Coke so I couldn't get pregnant. You know, this is what he told me. And I realize that this misinformation was causing these girls to get pregnant and get STDs and things like that, so that's when I decided that I wanted to be vocal on the issue.

I was on the Youth Commission at the time and it came up as sort of a fringe maybe-we-should-work-on-this. And when we started talking in the Commission we realized no one was untouched by this. Someone had a friend that was pregnant, had an STI who had impregnated someone, so we overwhelmingly voted to follow it as an issue. And I had been doing it for about a year until they came along. And I was like, all right, just stay over there in filming. You can do whatever you want. (Laughs.)

MS. ROSENBLATT: And she had also pledged.

MS. KNOX: Yeah. Yeah. I'd already done that.

MS. ROSENBLATT: And she was –

MS. KNOX: And then – I forgot what – oh yeah, the things that I believed. I think that everyone goes through a period of believing in exactly what your parents want you to believe, and following only what you've been taught and not looking further for that.

There are some things that I did. I am still a Christian – a liberal Christian. I no longer identify as Southern Baptist or any denomination because I think that that holds the church back. But there are other things that – my suppositions about Jews or homosexuals and things like that that I do regret. However, those things have taught me more, and I have more of an insight into maybe how my Republican friends are thinking when they're making those arguments. And I think that that makes me more effective when I'm doing things around people that are of the other party.

MS. BARNES: Great. And we have one last question. The person in the blue shirt.

Q: Hi. My name is Colin. I really enjoyed the movie. It was a great production; a great story. My question is, I wanted to get back to your point about the religious left that you guys were talking about earlier. Obviously, the religious right in this country has a lot of power politically and commands the media very well, and at the same time, you know, you're a testament to the fact that there is a very passionate religious left, and we're seeing this more and more.

Last week at Calvin College when President Bush spoke the commencement speech, over half the student body and a third of the faculty wrote a letter of protest, even though – excuse me – it's an evangelical college. My question is, why isn't the religious left more powerful or more active? Why haven't they had the same success? And is there a movement towards that? Is this Calvin College a glimmer of hope? And where can we move towards in the future?

MS. BARNES: I definitely want to speak to that –

(Cross talk.)

MS. KNOX: Well, I believe it's because the right has stigmatized us once again. You can't be a Democrat and a Christian. They've made it seem like that. And so I think that a lot of Christians are afraid to say, "I have more progressive views," because they might be ostracized from their church, especially in Lubbock, Texas. I was.

And then a lot of Democrats have that same view, too, but it's really – it's not true. It's another one of those Republican propaganda – they say we have the liberal media. Well, let me tell you, they have their conservative propaganda, and I think that it's something like that. I do think that it's becoming more organized though – progressive Christians – because we're realizing we have to be. As the religious right sort of comes into power, we realize that we have to come up as an opposition to that and say, "We're religious too, but we're not using that to define our politics or define other people's lives," and that's how it should be.

I'm sure you can answer that better.

MS. BARNES: Oh no, that was terrific. I just wanted to speak to your comment about the growing progressive religious movement. And one, I would – I guess the first thing I would say is that that movement has always been there. I mean, it's certainly a long part of our history. You look to abolition and the civil rights movement and antiwar movement and others, and it's always been a part of who we are as progressives.

I think if you look at the history, you can see why the religious right has grown and become more powerful, particularly after the 1964 elections. But in recent months and, well, even longer than that, people have started to come together, I think, as Shelby has mentioned, to raise our voices and to amplify our voices.

The Center actually has an initiative – our Faith in Progressive Policy initiative – that is about as old as the Center. It's not something that we started after the election. It was something we started at the very beginning because we believed that it was very important that we work in concert not only with those who are secular and progressive, but those who are also religious and progressive because we're all moving in the same direction. We're trying to pull our wagons in the same direction.

So through our policies, through our work with a broad network of an interfaith network, we're working together to talk about these issues and also to broaden the discourse. I mean, it's beyond just a narrow set of issues, but to talk about the economy, to talk about faith and science, to talk about bioethics and stem cell issues, a whole range of issues from a variety of perspectives, including those of the progressive religious movement.

So I think you've definitely put your finger on something that's important to us as a Center and doing this in – within the parameters of the Constitution because we have strong feelings about that, but I think that it's something that's really a part of a growing movement in America.

Q: (Off mike.)

MS. BARNES: Okay, sure.

Q: I was wondering if Shelby and (these people?) are so wonderfully tenacious, and I was wondering if perhaps someday you wouldn't think about taking on corporate America and the media so that we can get some truth. (Laughter.)

MS. KNOX: That sounds like a good idea. (Laughter.) It sounds like something that's been done in film a lot and definitely needs to be done more in politics. I think that one – briefly – thing that I'll say to that is that politics is so tied up in corporate America, and we need to try to disentangle the two and realize that there can be a political discourse in this country without everything being about Fox News and CNN.

(Cross talk.)

MS. KNOX: I have one. (Laughter.)

MS. LIPSCHUTZ: I have one bit of business, which is if you liked this, to find – find WETA, the Washington public television station. I don't know what their address is, but I'm sure it's online, and let them know that you'd like to see this aired on Point of View in the Washington area, that you saw it, liked it (off mike).

MS. BARNES: Great. Well, a couple of things in wrapping up. First of all, I want to thank Shelby and Rose and Marion for coming to Washington and for participating in our conversation, and actually in bringing this movie to us. So thank you so much for –

(Applause.)

(END)