

FRAMING THE ELECTION

with George Lakoff

ARSHAD HASAN: My name is Arshad Hasan. I'm the Training Director for the DFA Training Academy. Before I get into the nitty-gritty, I'm going to explain what this is, how this works who you are, and who we are.

First off, DFA Night School is the online component to DFA's Training Academy. The Training Academy's mission is to focus, network and train the grass roots. We always say, "You have the power." The DFA Training Academy helps you figure out how to use that power. We provide this service for free to you, and continue to do so because of your generosity to DFA. That's code for "We're going to come back to this topic later."

So how does this work? Well, the presenters are going to go through the slides or the pages, depending on how you're viewing this presentation. We'll be listing off the page numbers of the slides as we go through, so you shouldn't be too lost. We'll have a couple sections where we're going to actually pause and open up for question and answer. As you can tell, there are so many people on this line that we can't just hit the un-mute button and ask you guys to chime in. If you were around before, when everyone was giving their city and state, you could hear exactly how chaotic that is. So we're moderating it through an e-mail process. You email your questions to training@democracyforamerica.com, and then we've got a few staffers in the back who are going to help out.

Anna Louise going to be the one who sorts out the questions and figures out what questions people are asking the most. We'll try to answer as many of your questions as possible, but we know that we'll get literally hundreds of questions, and we hope to. So we're just going to try to group them together. If you still need to know where to download the presentation, how to view it over the web site, or if you're just calling in and want to know where to go to print it, you can go to www.democracyforamerica.com/night_school. You can view the presentation on your web browser or you can download it on a PDF. All the pages are numbered in either presentation. So I want to go over a little bit about not only what this is but who you are.

JIM DEAN: Folks I just want to thank you for taking valuable time to be on this. I understand there are about 3200 people signed up, which is just incredible. And it just shows the power that we have and how effective we're going to be in this coming election. So I really appreciate your being on. I want to also extend a very heartfelt thanks to George for being on this call, and for taking your valuable time out with us. This is a great group, and I really appreciate your being on here also as well to avail us of your wisdom and knowledge about framing.

You know, we've always talked in our training sessions about the "27/9/3"—27 words, nine seconds, and three points. And we go through these exercises in training on

how to best do that. And frankly, there isn't probably a better person on this planet than George Lakoff to help us with that. So we're very, very lucky to have you, George, with us tonight. I really appreciate it, and I think we're going to get a lot out of this.

So again, we've got a lot of great stuff going on. We've got a great election going on today in Massachusetts. And hopefully that's going to go for Deval Patrick who we're supporting. And, as you know, we've got a bunch of other stuff going on in November to the tune of about a couple of hundred races that we're involved in and many more to come. So let's get ourselves a lot smarter and try to get ourselves a lot more effective and do the best job to take our country back in November. So again, our thanks; and Arshad, I'll give it right back to you.

AH: Thank you, Jim. That's Jim Dean, the chairman of Democracy for America. Jim is right. There are actually now over 3300 people signed up for this call, so it's a pretty massive event. Let me explain a little bit about who we are. We're Democracy for America. If you're on the call, you already know about that. What we're going to do for the next hour is go over framing with George Lakoff.

My name is Arshad. I'm the Training Director here at Democracy for America. If you go to the second slide I guess there's a picture of what I look like in action. There's also a much better picture of George Lakoff, who is a professor at the University of California at Berkeley. He's also a senior fellow at the Rockridge Institute. Hi, George!

GEORGE LAKOFF: Hi! Great to be here. And thanks for inviting me.

AH: No problem, no problem. We're all happy to have you here. Alright, let's just get right into it. Let's go to the next slide. Everyone, we should be on slide #3 right now. If you're viewing it from the web presentation, you'll see it at the bottom center. If you're viewing it from a printout, you'll see it just on the paper itself. So what are we going to go over on this call? What's going to be the topics that we're going to take away at the end of the call?

Well first we're going to understand the importance of using fundamental values in our discussions. Next we're going to use these fundamental values, figure out how to do that, and motivate voters. The order that we're going to go over this presentation, first we're going to go over the importance of values and valuing discussion. We'll talk about what framing is and what framing is not. We'll take a look at the different world views that shape how different people see the same political issue. We'll figure out whose perspectives can change, and how we go about exactly doing that. Finally, we'll go over some upcoming current issues and analyze the underlying values and construct some new and progressive framing before we wrap up.

When we wrap up, we always wrap up with some homework questions. At two points during this session we're going to be taking your questions. We're going to do that near the middle of the presentation and again toward the end of the presentation. We

know that there will be a couple hundred questions asked, so if your specific question isn't asked, don't worry about it; we're trying to get the most representative questions possible. When you do submit your question, please include your name and your city and your state, so we can do a little shout out for you.

Okay, let's move on to the next slide; we're on slide 4. This whole presentation is going to really get at how to have a discussion with folks. Not just people who are the undecided, but also people who are the Democratic base; also people who are in the Republican base or the conservative base. The point of having a political discussion is not just to go over the nuances but to get at the real values of how we want to lead this country, what direction we want to take it.

The person who really understood this instinctively is known by many as "the great communicator," Ronald Reagan. I think he was an excellent example of somebody who was ahead of the curve and saw that he needed to talk about people's values. Not only did he realize this, but Richard Wirthlin, the chief strategist for the former President Reagan, made this discovery. His training classically was as a political pollster. And so he was actually quite surprised by Ronald Reagan's appeal. He knew from his own profession that Ronald Reagan had huge approval ratings. People trusted him. People saw him as authentic.

But at the same time, Ronald Reagan did not represent the views of most Americans. Ronald Reagan's policy initiatives and the nuances of what he was doing did not jibe with what people thought during that period of time. Nonetheless, people saw him as authentic and as somebody to trust. When we go back and analyze his speeches and his discussion with folks, we saw, well of course he's a good communicator; he's a good speaker. But perhaps even more than that he concentrated on talking about values—values perceived to be as deep American values—more than specific policy questions. So we said, "Wait a minute, what's really the underlying issue here?" and saw that Reagan was really talking about values rather than specific policy proposals or issues.

This is how he was seen as being authentic. Because he said, "This is what I believe in," people believed that he had a real stance on the issue. Even if they didn't see that this billion dollars or that billion dollars wasn't allocated properly, that's not what they were paying attention to. They were paying attention to the fact that they could trust this man; this man represents our values. And on that level he connected with people because he communicated well. He appeared authentic because he believed what he said, or he seemed to believe what he said, and because he was talking about his values. And because of this, he had an air of authenticity and of trust.

So, of course, the Republican base saw this right away. But so did much of the rest of the country, huge swaths of the country, except for some of us who are hard line against Reagan or what Reagan believed in in the first place. We're going to talk about these different world views as we go on in this presentation. So this is what we call the Wirthlin principle, getting at the values that are underneath these issues.

This is not to say that the issues aren't important. In fact, issues are very important. And we want to be able to talk about them. But the way that people approach these issues is sort of the heart, the base, of how we can get into that front door and get that discussion going. They're not going to listen to us if we throw a bunch of numbers at them or throw a 30-page treatise on them about why we believe the way we do because of this number or that number. Let's move on to the next slide. George, why don't you take it from here?

GL: Okay. When I start teaching about framing, the very first thing I do is ask people not to think of an elephant, which is where the title of the book comes from. And, of course, nobody can do it, because the word "elephant" evokes an image and knowledge about that image. That's what a frame is. A frame is a mental structure that allows people to understand reality as they perceive it and to organize knowledge.

If I have a very simple word like "bottle," a bottle is understood in terms of a frame. It's a container. It has a certain size and shape. It can usually contain liquids. You can pour things into it and pour things out of it and sometimes drink out of it. You do certain manipulations with it with your hands, and that's about all. A very simple frame for something like "bottle." And if I mention the word "bottle," that will be invoked in your brain. And the main thing to remember is you think with your brain. And you don't have any choice; that's what you've got. And every frame is in your brain. And every word evokes a frame in your brain.

What you learn from "don't think of an elephant" is that negating a frame evokes the frame. That's what Richard Nixon found out during Watergate when he went on TV before the nation and he said, "I am not a crook." And everybody thought of him as a crook. This lesson has still not been learned by many people in the Democratic Party. A few weeks ago during the "cut and run" discussion in the Senate, Carl Levin was being interviewed by the Washington Post, and he said, "This is not a cut and run proposal," evoking a cut-and-run proposal.

So it's important to understand that you can't just negate something that you disagree with, because then you just help activate it. So this is extremely important, and those are very basic principles of framing. Now it's important to understand that framing has to do with ideas. It's not about messaging. A frame is not a slogan, though slogans do evoke frames.

But frames come at different levels. There are deep frames and surface frames, and the ones that occur with words are the surface frames. They're the simple kinds of cases. And we're going to try to give you distinctions between surface frames and deep frames. For example, on slide #8, take something like "tax relief." If you look at the frame of "relief," it has a structure. There is an affliction, an afflicted party who's harmed by that affliction, and then you have a hero who takes that affliction away. He's the reliever. And if somebody tries to stop him, they're a bad guy, a villain, because they want the harm to continue.

If you add “tax” to “relief” to get “tax relief,” what happens is you understand taxation as an affliction. And anybody who’s against cutting taxes or against tax relief is for continuing that harm, that affliction. That’s what that says, and this is repeated from the first day that Bush was in office for years afterward every day: “tax relief, tax relief, tax relief.” Every time it was said it evoked all of that structure in your brain. And brains change. That is, the more that a structure, a frame, is evoked in someone’s brain, the synapses change, they strengthen, and they become part of your common sense. And people start of thinking about taxation as an affliction that should be relieved. And that’s a very important application to politics.

Now you might ask, “What do you do instead?” And the point is, we don’t have... In order for “tax relief” to work, you have to have a deeper frame that the conservatives have worked on for years; namely, that the government takes money out of your pocket when they tax you. That is their frame. It’s your money, and they’re taking it away from you. But there’s a very different understanding of taxation that came with the beginning of this country. Before the American revolution, the king used to impose taxes. And when the king taxed the Americans, he took their money and property away, a proportion of it, and kept it. It was for him. After the revolution they didn’t get rid of taxes. What they did was something different. They formed commonwealths, like the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Virginia and Pennsylvania. They took the same money but they put it together for everyone.

They formed a common wealth that allowed them to build an infrastructure like roads and schoolhouses and public buildings and hospitals that everybody can use. And today our common wealth—that is, our tax money—has been used to build an interstate highway system, for example, that everyone can use. And it was used to develop the internet and to develop the communications satellites. But it’s also used to back up our banking system with the Federal Reserve. It’s used for our court system, which upholds contracts. It’s used for the SEC that allows us to have a stock market. In fact, you can’t start or run a business without using the common wealth. You need the banking system to get loans. You’re going to need a stock market to issue stock. You’re going to need a court system to uphold your contracts.

No business and no businessman makes a dime in this country without using the common wealth. And what taxation really is is building a common infrastructure that allows individuals to seek their own goals. That is, if you’re pursuing your dreams, you are using the common wealth, though you may not know it. And if you make money at it, if you make a good living at it, you owe paying it back to perpetuate that system for others.

That’s what progressive taxation is about, and we haven’t been saying it. And we need to tell a story like that because we haven’t been telling the other story. The other guys have been saying, “The government’s got their hands in your pockets.” That’s a different story than the idea of the common wealth. So we’re going to need to be telling

this story. It doesn't take very long—it takes a half a minute or so—but it's very important to understand taxation and what it's about.

Now if you're going to go out and talk to people who are either conservatives or progressives or people who have some of each view, you have to understand what those views are, what the other worldview is, what your worldview is, and so on. And what I found when I was researching the book called Moral Politics is that we understand the nation as a family, and there's a natural reason why.

Think of your first experience with governance. It's in your family. That is, you were told what you could do, what you couldn't do. You were protected; you were supported; you were expected to do certain things; you had duties. That was governance. So you grew up learning that institutions that govern you fit the family. And you get a metaphor out of this of the nation or governing institution as a family. And it's not just in America. You have mother India, mother Russia, the fatherland. I was just in Canada last week, and there Canada is called "the mother country." It's very important to understand that this metaphor is all over the place. And we have it in things like "George Washington was the father of our country." You know, every second grader understands that. And we have things like "the founding fathers" and "Daughters of the American Revolution," and so on.

Now there are two very different understandings of the family in this country, and they are models. They are things that we know by living in the culture. Your own family may have had some mixture of these or have been one or been the other. But we understand what these models are. They are a nurturing parent family and a strict father family. And the metaphor of the nurturing parent family maps onto progressive politics, and it tells us about it. And here's how it goes.

In the nurturing parent family, you have two parents, and it's not a gendered model. That is, both of them have the job of nurturing their children and, most importantly, raising their children to be nurturers of others—really important. Secondly, nurturance has two parts: Empathy—you identify with your child. You understand what all those cries mean and so on. Is it a wet diaper? Is the kid hungry? Is the kid scared? And so on. And in addition to that, you have to be responsible. So you have empathy and responsibility. And you can't take care of someone else if you're not taking care of yourself. So you're required... Taking care of yourself, responsibility for yourself, and responsibility for others. In addition to that, you have to be strong to be a parent. You know, parenting is not for weaklings, for any of you who have had children or who have children. And that is extremely important.

Now as soon as you see that, you can see that this is the opposite of raising children to be indulgent, because you're raising them to care about other people, to take care of themselves, and to be responsible for others—the opposite of indulgence. This is what responsible parenting is about. And there's no question that the parent is responsible; the parent sets limits, the parent explains why things have to be the way they are. And what a nurturant parent does is say why this isn't safe. "Don't touch the stove.

Here's why: you get burned. And you listen to me because I know and I care about you." It doesn't mean that you give up and let the kid do what they want, which is the opposite of nurturance.

Now from that you can immediately see a logic. If you care about your child, you want to protect your child. And that shows up in progressive values, which is protection: worker protection, environmental protection, consumer protection, and safety nets. Those are amazing, important parts of progressive politics. Other values that come out of the nurturant parent model: You care about your child. You want your child to be treated fairly, so fairness and equality come out of that model. You want your child to be fulfilled in life, so fulfillment is there. But you can't be fulfilled unless you're free, so freedom is a crucial part of that model. But you can't be free if there's no opportunity, so opportunity is part of progressive values. And you don't have opportunity for everyone unless you have general prosperity, so having a prosperous nation for everybody to prosper is part of that model.

There's also a part about community. You raise children in a community. Well, what's a progressive community? Very simple. You want leaders who care about you, who are responsible. And you want individuals who care about each other, neighbors, who take care of each other when they're in trouble. And, in addition, you want people who do community service. That's what a progressive community is about. In order for that to happen, what do people have to be? They have to be cooperative. In order to cooperate, they have to have trust. In order to have trust they have to be open and honest. Those are the progressive values, and that's it. It takes about a minute. You can explain what a progressive value is. But all of those come out of our values. And any progressive legislation has always been about fulfilling those values.

Now what's crucial about a strict father model is it's very, very different. In a strict father model, you assume that the world is a dangerous place. And, in fact, it can be a dangerous place because we need to do protection. But you assume that there's evil out there in the world and they need a strict father to protect the family from evil. And only daddy can do it; mommy can't. This is a gendered model. You need a strict father to compete in the world, and to win those competitions to support the family. And only daddy is good enough to do that; mommy can't do that.

In addition, it's assumed that children are born bad and that there's an absolute right and wrong. And children don't know right and wrong when they're born. They just want to do what feels good. And if they do what feels good and it's wrong, then it is the duty of the strict father to punish the child whenever they do bad. And the punishment has to be painful enough in this model—and, by the way, James Dobson is very explicit on this point in his version of the strict father model—it must be painful enough so that the child will have an incentive to do right and not wrong, and to develop internal discipline to do right and avoid doing wrong.

And if the child develops that internal discipline and becomes a moral being—and the assumption is that's the only way a child can become moral—if they develop that

discipline then they can go out in the free market, use their discipline, and become prosperous. If you read the cover of Time Magazine this week, you have a discussion about “Does God want you to make a lot of money?” A very important question now among conservative Christians.

Now in this model, there’s a logic. What happens if you’re not prosperous? Well, if you’re not prosperous in this land of opportunity and in the free market, that means you’re not disciplined enough to be prosperous. But if you’re not disciplined, then you can’t be moral so you deserve your poverty. That is part of the logic of the strict father model. Another part of the logic, applied to politics, concerns social programs. It says social programs are all immoral. Why? Because they give people things they haven’t earned. And that takes away their incentive for discipline. And if they don’t have discipline they can’t earn a living, but they also can’t be moral. So it is doubly immoral to have social programs, and so they should be eliminated.

The strict father model also says something else. It says what’s important is individual responsibility, not community responsibility or social responsibility. But every individual is responsible for himself. So it’s about individual responsibility. And there’s an assumption that the market is both natural and moral. That is, as Adam Smith said, if everybody pursues their own profit, the profit of all will be maximized as a law of nature by the invisible hand. What that means is that it is natural for people to pursue their own profit, and that’s a good thing; it’s moral.

So that is built into a strict father model the way it is done today on the conservative side. And that is part of the basis for conservative politics. In addition, the strict father is seen as a moral person. That is, he knows right from wrong; he’s inherently good; and he has power because he is a moral person and should have power. And morality is obedience to the strict father. That is, the strict father is, as George Bush said, “the decider.”

Now that is the family model, and you can see how it would apply to let’s say foreign policy where Bush is seen as “the decider” about not only how the United States should behave, but how the world should react to the United States, namely follow whatever the United States says. This is part of a strict father approach to foreign policy. And if you read Moral Politics you’ll see about 500 pages of detailed application showing how this works.

Now if you turn to side #12, you see the notion of “biconceptuals.” And that’s very important, because if you were raised in this culture, then you have learned both models. Even if you are nurturant in every part of your life as a nurturant person politically, in your family, with your friends, in your communities, you still have a strict father model that you use passively. So if you can see “Rambo” or an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie and understand it, you might come out of the theater and get it and not say, “What was that about?” Then you have a strict father model at least passively.

And what we have found is that there are a lot of people who have both models but use them in different parts of their lives, use them actively in different parts of their lives. For example the “Reagan Democrats” were blue collar workers who were strict fathers at home but nurturant in their union politics. So what Reagan did was use metaphors from the home to get them to use their strict father values from the home and apply them to politics. Reagan never used metaphors from their union life to apply to politics. Very careful there. He understood by “family values” strict father family values, not nurturant family values. And that is what the code word “family values” stands for in the conservative tradition. It’s strict father family values, not nurturant family values.

Now biconceptuals are people who have both models and use them actively in different parts of their lives. And what we have found recently is that there’s a certain systematicity to this that had not really been paid attention to much before. If you look at people who on polls will call themselves conservatives or moderates, what you actually find is that they’re often biconceptuals. That is, they are conservative in some parts of their lives, but actually progressive in others.

And this was even true of Barry Goldwater, the father of the conservative movement. John Dean, in his recent book called Conservatives Without Conscience, which is an attack on the Bush administration, was a Goldwater conservative. And he observed that Goldwater had what we would call a strict father model for the military and foreign policy. He wanted to use American strength and nuke the North Vietnamese. And he had a strict father model for the use of the market in financial matters. He was against social programs and so on. But when it came to things like racism, he was an anti-racist. When it came to the environment, he was in favor of environmental programs. When it came to governing, he was for open and honest governing. And it turns out that Goldwater was actually a biconceptual, and so were a lot of the early conservatives and many of the current conservatives.

So there are many people who identify as conservatives, but they love the land. This is what Brian Schweitzer found out in Montana, and one of the reasons that he got elected there. That is, there are a lot of self-identified conservatives who love the land. They like to hike; they like to go hunting and fishing; and they’d like to be able to eat their fish. They find the land beautiful and they love it. But they would never call themselves “environmentalists” or talk about sustainability or biodiversity. Instead, they just have the same moral attitude toward the land that environmentalists do.

Take another example. There are many conservatives, or people who identify themselves as conservatives, who are actually progressive Christians. Well what’s the difference between a progressive and a conservative Christian? A conservative Christian is one who believes that God is a strict father. That is, God says, “Here are my commandments. You follow them, you go to heaven. You don’t, you go to hell. Well, I’ll give you a second chance with my son. You accept him as your savior but now if you follow the commandments you go to heaven; if not, you go to hell.” It is a punitive system, very much like a strict father morality.

But progressive Christians understand God as a nurturant parent. God offers grace; God offers forgiveness; God offers protection; God tells you how to become a moral person, and so on. And grace is metaphorical nurturance. So progressive Christians actually believe that the meek shall inherit the earth; that you should take care of people who are poor; that you should heal the sick, and so on. There are a lot of conservatives who are progressive Christians.

Then you have self-identified conservatives who really want to live in progressive communities. Something I noticed when I lived in the Midwest for four years was the remarkable progressive community spirit among people who were otherwise conservative. So they want people who care about them running cities and their communities. They want neighbors who care about each other and help each other. And they want people who do community service—very much a progressive communitarian idea.

Then there are a lot of self-identified conservatives in business who run businesses as if they were progressive business people. That is, they're honest; they treat their workers well; they would never do anything to harm clients or customers or the public or to pollute. They run their businesses pretty much as if they were simply progressives. The same is true of civil libertarians. There are a lot of conservatives who care a lot about civil liberties and who don't want the state spying on them. They don't want their freedoms taken away, and so on, by the state. And they're very much like members of the American Civil Liberties Union. People like Bob Barr for example, who's a conservative on many, many things, but a progressive on civil liberties.

So these are important things to understand. When you're talking to people who identify themselves as conservatives, they're often biconceptuals, and you can talk to them on that basis about that. And there's a very simple way that you find out. When you talk to somebody who identifies themselves as a conservative or as a Republican or whatever, what you do is you ask them what they care about. They may care about the land; they may care about their community; they may care about their business, and so on.

And if they care about it, you say, "What are your responsibilities? How do you exercise those responsibilities? Who else do you know who's like that? How do you feel about it?" And you get them talking about the nurturant part of their lives. Because in those cases, they share your values. And then there are all sorts of issues that can be brought up and talked about with such people. So when you're out there, those are the folks you are most interested in talking to. They are the people who you can actually make some headway with. And that's extremely, extremely important.

AH: Can we pause for a moment? A number of questions are coming in. And since this is the midway point, let's see if we can answer just a few of these to review some of the information you've already given us.

QUESTION from Wayne in New Jersey: Where do you draw the line between framing and sloganeering or the Madison Avenue ad copy? Is framing a form of distillation of an issue, or is it dumbing down more complex issues?

GL: No. Framing can be used badly or well, and it is often necessary if you're going to tell the truth. So the first question in framing is understanding are you communicating what you really believe? Are you communicating your values and your principles first, because your strict father model vs. your nurturant parent model are forms of framing. The idea of using the common wealth for common infrastructure for everybody's good is a form of framing. In addition to that, sloganeering can express something you really believe. So conservatives, when they use "tax relief," really believe it. They really believe the government is taking money out of their pockets.

But there are other cases where you can hide things. So, for example, "war on terror" is a metaphor and a slogan that was used to take advantage of 9/11. Because there wasn't really a war, and you can't have a war against terror. A war is something where you have two armies fighting against each other over territory. That wasn't happening with the so-called war on terror, with terrorism, and you can't fight terror. Terror is an abstraction and a feeling, and it can go on forever. With a real war you can have a peace treaty, for example, not with a war on terror.

So what you had there was a metaphor that framed the situation to the advantage of the president, who could then claim war powers. And once he claimed war powers, he got domestic power and was able to do all sorts of things that he couldn't do had he talked about this in terms of crime. So very, very important to understand that. Secondly, it's important to see that framing is often necessary for truth. So take Iraq for example. The war in Iraq was over just when Bush said it was, in 2003 when he stood on the carrier and said, "mission accomplished." At that point they had defeated Saddam Hussein's army and marched into Baghdad. War over.

What happened was an occupation began. But they didn't call it an occupation. Because if they had, Bush would no longer be a war president, he'd be an occupation president. You can't win an occupation. All you can do with an occupation is leave and hope for the best. So what they did was say, "Well this is still a war, and this is now the front in the war on terror." And that allowed them to keep war powers, and to keep the country in fear, and to justify remaining in Iraq. In short, if you want to tell part of the truth about Iraq, you have to talk about an occupation and not just accept war.

QUESTION from Trevor in Redwood City, California: How do you define the difference between deep and surface framing, and can you give one example of how the former reinforces the latter.

GL: Okay. In the case of deep framing, tax relief was a good example. Tax relief is a surface frame. The idea that taxation is an affliction is a surface frame. The deep frame has to do with the idea that when you work, everything you get is simply the product of your labor with nothing coming from the government, nothing coming from

the state whatever; and that taxes are just money that the government takes out of your pocket. That's the deep frame behind tax relief. And it's that deep frame that you have to worry about when you're dealing with that; you have to counter the deep frames.

And then there's the question of our own deep frames. That is, if you want to reframe taxes, you have to provide a very deep frame. And the idea of the common wealth is a deep frame. The idea that we put together our wealth to build an infrastructure so that each individual can use it, and that it's necessary for each individual to use it. That anybody who starts a business has to use the common wealth, and then has an obligation to return it. That is a deep frame. And we can no longer talk seriously about taxation unless we have a deep frame like that.

AH: Okay, well let's get moving. We're on slide #13, for people who don't know. I'll let George talk about this a little bit. But I wanted to share what got me interested in electoral politics. In 2003 I went to the Democratic National Convention in DC. They have one every year. There were nine candidates running for president, and I wanted to figure out who was the person I was going to support.

And I went into one of the overflow rooms when a guy named Howard Dean, who was the governor of this small state that I could never imagine living in—stood up and asked four questions. It was his “What I want to know” speech. Some of you who are on the call, who were involved in the Dean campaign a little early, might remember this. I remember a few of these lines sticking out. The quote that I have on slide #13 gets at sort of the heart of refusing a conservative frame and starting to talk about the deeper values I think everyone in this country really does feel deep down, whether you identify as a conservative or a liberal or whatever words you want to use.

Howard Dean called into question, “Why are we talking about the nuances of a patient's bill of rights when the Democratic Party ought to be standing up for health care for every single man, woman and child in this country?” I remember that with three other “I want to know's” in a speech that only lasted about 12 minutes. And in those 12 minutes I immediately felt that not only was Howard Dean the candidate that I really supported, but the candidate that I absolutely believed in. I wasn't even in the room—I was in the overflow room—and he appealed to my values.

Before I started doing electoral politics, I was involved in issue politics. I did a lot of environmental work, and those were the only issues I cared about. I had actually—even as someone who did political campaigns—felt a little bit jaded and cynical about candidates who run for office. Howard Dean changed the way I looked at it, not because he was the tallest candidate or really charismatic, and not because he presented a whole bunch of issues and statistics. I always thought of myself as an issues and statistics person. He didn't provide one statistic in that speech, and he had won me over, because he had convinced me that we were talking about the wrong thing. We should be talking about our values.

And George has been talking about this all throughout, and I'm going to let him take the reins once again. But George has been talking the entire time that we don't have to accept "tax relief." We don't have to accept a bunch of loaded questions and false premises. We can instead stand up for our own values, and this is true all across the spectrum using our own frames instead of using their frames which serves to reinforce the conservative viewpoint. George, I'm going to let you take the reins back on this and get us started on slide #13.

GL: Okay. Well the idea here is again you need to think about what you care about, what your values are, and what is true. Your job is, just as Reagan's job was, to express your values, to be authentic, to say what you believe—what you really believe—and enable people to trust you, to build trust. And that's true of every progressive, not just candidates. And that's what Dean was about and is about. And it's very important that people say what they really believe in this case. And right now the Democratic Party is not standing up and saying, "We have an occupation there."

Let me give you an example of the kind of bad framing that goes on. In the "cut and run" case in the Senate awhile back, what does "cut and run" mean? What is its frame? It says that there's a war against evil out there. It takes all of our courage and bravery to fight that war. We need all the support we can get. And you have to go above your self-interest and sacrifice to fight against evil. And if you go with your self-interest and give it up, give up that fight, you're not only a coward, you're immoral. That's what "cut and run" is about.

And what did Democrats do? John Murtha said, "Oh, it's not 'cut and run,' it's 'stay and pay.'" Well, who's paying? Us. That is, self-interest. We're cowards and immoral. And the words "stay and pay," the grammar of it, evoked "cut and run." John Kerry came up and said, "No, it's 'lie and die.'" Well, again, the grammar evoked "cut and run," but who's dying? Us. It's self-interest again, buying into being cowardly and immoral. Jack Reed said that this is a Republican plan to stay in Iraq forever. Well who's stuck in Iraq? Us. Self-interest. He's buying into the idea that Democrats are cowardly and immoral. That is, they're stuck in the "war-on-terror" frame. If you read Rom Emanuel's new book, he's stuck in the "war-on-terror" frame.

And until you get out of it, until you admit that there's an occupation there... And notice, nobody wants to do that, because what mother wants to say that her son is in an occupying army? That doesn't sound very good. It's not honorable. He's not defending the country. But maybe that's a very good reason to bring him home. So it's very important that we find ways to say what we believe and tell the truth, whether it's about health care, and so on.

And it's important that we reframe things in a way that tells truths. Let me give you an example. Take something like privatization or deregulation. When you deregulate—suppose you allow companies to do their own drug testing instead of having the Food and Drug Administration do the drug testing? Okay? That's deregulation. You're not getting rid of governance; you're shifting governance from the federal

government to a company. That is, it's a principle of conservation of governance. Only with the federal government or state government you have accountability, and you're shifting it to a company where there is no accountability and no openness.

So you're going from governance with accountability to governance without accountability. And that's very important. But that was never mentioned this week in all the hubbub about spinach. You know, how do you get ecoli in spinach? Well, ecoli comes in spinach when you have fertilizer in contact with your spinach. And, in fact I've met people who were inspectors in the state of California who regularly found fertilizer piled next to greens and lettuces and so on, and called people on it.

And as you get rid of inspectors and cut budgets for regulation, what happens is that you're going to get more ecoli coming in with your food. Nobody has come out and said, "Hey, this is an example of what's wrong with deregulation." You have a conservation of governance, and you can't trust the companies to do it, because they're concerned with profit not with the public good. That's an idea that needs to be brought out there, and we need to say it out loud. But it's not now being said. And that's what framing is about and what reframing is about. So that's the basic idea, and I'm happy to take whatever questions you have.

QUESTION from Randy in Tennessee: With the intense polarization today, how do you break down the barriers and explain to those who disagree with you that you do share the same values?

GL: Well, you may not share all the same values, but you may share a lot of them, and that's why I mentioned biconceptuals. But there are ways in which you can find out what values you do share by asking what people care about and how they exert their responsibility. That is, you can find out whether they love the land, and how they feel about their communities, and how they run their businesses and so on, and whether they care about their own health and their children's health, and what concerns they have about health.

There are lots of cases where you have the same values and lots of cases where you don't. But you don't always have to confront them with the cases where you don't share your values, because you probably share enough to be able to talk to them openly—and in the normal language you would use to talk to your base—to talk to somebody who is a "moderate" or self-described conservative, but really has half-progressive views.

QUESTION from Carol: How does corruption like that from Abramoff fit the picture of the strict father, the moral and disciplined person? Why do so many Republicans become corrupt when they believe in the strict father moral values?

GL: It's a very important question to ask, and thank you for it. Part of the strict father model says that the most important value is maintaining, defending and expanding the model itself. It gives you a moral system. And what you do is you have to keep that moral system going, the strict father system. Well how do you keep it going? Well one

way is you may have to use the devil's own tools against him if you're fighting evil. And that's justified, in that model, to use the devil's tools against him. That's why you justify torture, for example.

In the case of corruption, the way you keep that going is through electoral power. And in the case of Tom Delay, he saw that they had to get five more seats out of Texas. And to do that he had to raise the money and do whatever he needed to do to raise it; hence, Abramoff. That is, this was justified as moral because it was in the service of perpetuating a conservative worldview and imposing it on the country, which they saw as moral. You never saw Tom Delay apologize for what he was doing, because he really believed he was doing the right thing.

QUESTION: My candidate has been cast as a 'tax and spend liberal.' But she is responding defensively, not utilizing the tax as an investment argument. She may think that's an admission that she would raise taxes. Is it proper for her canvassers to still use the investment frame?

GL: Okay. One, in order to use the investment frame, you first have to use the common wealth frame and point out that everybody who runs a business or works for a business is using that taxpayer money and has always used it. They live in America. They live in a place where they have sewage systems; there isn't sewage running in the street. They live in a place where they can drink the water. They don't have to boil the water before they drink it.

I mean, they live in a place where being an American and paying taxes gives them the ability to get bank loans and have courts and use the highways. And that is necessary for them to have a lifestyle of the sort they have. And they owe America something for that, for the perpetuation of that system. And that's what taxes are about in this country, or they should be about. That's what's going on here.

Now what the Republicans are, of course, is they're "borrow-and-spend" people. That is, we're going tremendously into debt. They're not spending less; they're spending more. But they're not spending it on people's needs. They're not spending it on human needs. They're spending it on a war that should never have been fought, and they're spending it on transferring wealth to the wealthy from ordinary taxpayers. And that's an important idea that nobody says. When you give a tax break to wealthy people, you're actually giving taxpayer money to those people. You're transferring wealth. If Paris Hilton gets a tax break, then she's not paying the taxes that she ought to be paying, and you're paying them instead for running the country.

This is important. If you have subsidies to the oil industry or to large agribusiness, what you're doing is transferring money to the investors in those corporations. You're giving ordinary taxpayers' money to the wealthy. That's why it's important to get rid of those subsidies, that is, to get rid of what has been called "corporate welfare" (though that's not a great name), and get rid of tax loopholes,

because a so-called loophole is not a good thing for anybody. It's a transfer of wealth to wealthy people, to investors and corporations.

QUESTION from Isabel in Pennsylvania: What are good success stories of Democrats using frames?

GL: Well, there are interesting cases. One very interesting kind of case comes from progressive religion. When you meet somebody who—whether they're identified as a moderate or whatever—and you find out that they're a progressive Christian, you can talk about poverty; you can talk about transferring wealth to the wealthy; you can talk about all these issues like health care and so on in a way that you might not otherwise when you're talking about it from a religious perspective with them.

A good example of a success story is, as I said, Brian Schweitzer in Montana, who understood that the conservative ranchers in his state cared very much about whether the mining companies were polluting the streams because their cattle had to drink from those streams and so did they, and they needed to fish in those streams. That is, you can very much use the idea of biconceptualism to win victories when you talk to someone who shares your values the same way you would talk to your base.

So there are plenty of success stories of this sort around, but you've got to find out who you're talking to and when they do share your values. And there are certain values that are generally shared. For example, we have high gas rates now. People don't like the idea that gasoline costs so much. Well, why does it cost so much. Well, actually it costs more than you think, because we are supporting the oil industry with subsidies of many kinds—probably \$20 billion of direct subsidies. But we're spending \$57 billion a year in our Defense Department to protect oil tankers and protect our oil supply around the world.

That's a subsidy to the oil and gas industry, while we're not really subsidizing alternative fuels. The idea of alternative fuels is an important one out there, and in virtually any part of the country you could talk about ethanol from switch grass or you can talk about wind power or sun power. Wherever you go there are all kinds of ways in which you can talk about the local economy being better off and our energy being better off. There are many things like that where there are success stories.

HA: George, I am going to do a wrap-up of the last couple of slides. It seems that there are so many great questions. Would you be able to stay on for a couple minutes and answer a couple more?

GL: Just a couple. And I want to do a plug.... As of today, the Rockridge Institute has published a new book called Thinking Points. It's a progressive handbook. We've been working on this for several years, and we finally put together in one place all the basics that you need to know about framing. It's \$10 retail, \$8 over the internet. And you can order it now. It should be available by the end of the week. And we're then

going to put it up on our website chapter by chapter for free, although it's cheaper to buy it if you want a hard copy than to try to download it.

But our idea is to use it as a basis for further discussion so we can talk about other issues and not have to say the same things over and over each time. Where you could just click on it and find out what we say about our values or about deep frames or whatever, and then go on. Moreover, we're using this as a basis to start up a National Speakout Network of individuals and groups who would like to get together as we are on this call to think about these issues in groups; to talk about them and then perhaps have National Speakout Days when people are going around talking about the same kinds of issues and values around the country, based on whatever they decided in their groups. But our idea is to get people thinking and talking about these things on a regular basis. And all they would have to do is go to our website, www.rockridgeinstitute.org and sign up and become a member. We're going to start the National Speakout Groups in January. But meanwhile you can still go to our website and click on that book and get it.

The second plug is on July 4th I put out a book on freedom called Whose Freedom?, explaining the difference between what George Bush means by freedom and what we mean by freedom. And that's out there. That's \$15 on the internet. It's a hard cover, and it's cheap for the price.

AH: Well great. That gets into what I wanted to talk about next. We talk about these great ideas. We're on this conference call; we're online. But we're starting tomorrow to actually change that national dialogue. And George has been talking about this. DFA is emphasizing this. But this not something that happens overnight. This isn't even something that happens within one cycle. Reframing the national dialogue is something that is going to take time. And it's going to take a lot of people.

As we've seen, we've had a few examples—more than we're comfortable with—of Democrats in our society who do a poor job framing. Part of that is that we need to have their backs. Part of that is that we need to be able to start setting that dialogue. We're not going to be able to count on our elected officials to be able to take the lead unless we can plant those seeds right in the grass roots. That's the DFA vision, and that is, if you read Thinking Points, what George talks about quite a bit, and actually throughout his books.

So we want to actually get out there. Starting today—starting tomorrow I suppose—we want to start getting the word out in our LTE's, our Op-Eds, and through talk radio, starting to refuse the frames that conservatives provide us. We've got a few that we've talked about today that we've been able to reframe or at least start thinking about, starting to question the national dialogue.

Online as we follow up, we're going to continue talking about these. But through the Rockridge Institute—and George gave the address to continue the discussion and get more background. And also we—the three or so thousand of us that are on this call right now—we can follow up by going to the Night School's blog. That's right, we've got a

blog. We can talk back and forth. We've actually got some great discussion points that have been emailed to me. I'm going to try to post that on the blog so we can start talking about our issues.

People have talked about how we frame the environment. People have talked about or questioned anyway how do we talk about gay rights? How do we talk about immigration? Just go to our blog, which is www.dfalink.com/night_school. That's on page 15, by the way where you can click on the blog and start posting your own responses. Tonight I'll just start a discussion; we'll start figuring that out. George, you can check it out anytime you like, and type in when you like.

GL: Okay. I can't stay too long, unfortunately. But I can do some. And let me just mention about immigration. If you go to the Rockridge website and look at the discussion of immigration, we have a discussion of all the frames that are out there in public, and the ones that are not out there in public but ought to be.

AH: George, let's take another question while you're on. Then everyone else has everything they need in writing on the 16th and 17th slides. But we want to take advantage of the time that you're with us.

QUESTION from Ann in New York: What frames can we use to support the increase of the minimum wage?

GL: Well, we have in America a cheap labor trap. That is, the way that wages are structured in this country, a worker is seen as a resource from the point of view of a company. And companies try to minimize the cost of resources and maximize the profits. Not only that, workers have become much more productive, but they're not getting increases of wages as productivity goes up. The profits from productivity go not to the productive people but rather to the stockholders and the managers.

So we have a system that traps people in low wages and in a lack of increased wages for increased productivity. And there's something wrong with that. That means people cannot pull themselves up by their bootstraps; it's a myth that everybody can pull themselves up by their bootstraps. Imagine the bottom quarter of our workforce, 45 million people who can't afford health care, can't just all of sudden move upward because there's no place for them to go and nobody else to do that work, those jobs, at that cost.

So what's involved there is a minimum wage is the very least you can do for people who are doing the hardest jobs in society but upholding the lifestyles of the top three-quarters of the country. You know, there's no sense of gratitude here. Think of all the people who are working at minimum wage jobs, whether they're flipping burgers, picking lettuce, or doing day labor, or watching kids, or cleaning house. Those people make the lifestyles of everybody else possible. And they ought to get paid for it, because in America we believe that people should be paid for their work. If you work for a living you should be able to make a living. And that's the big bottom line. That sentence—if

you work for a living you should be able to make a living. And that's what the minimum wage is about. And the minimum wage isn't even enough.

AH: Alright, George. Thank you very much. I know that we need to let you go. I have a couple of other questions that I can answer just about the presentation itself. And, in fact, they're on the next few slides. Thank you George. If we were all able to talk on the line at once I'm sure we'd give you a big round of applause.

GL: Alright, thank you very much, all of you, for dialing in. And thanks for inviting me. Bye-bye.

AH: So one of the questions we've got is "What's next?" That's the question I'm going to answer next. On slide #16 we've got a couple other presentations that we're going to present. Number one is "Winning at Social Networks." Karen Hicks talking about the social networking model. We're going to take this framing training and start talking to people about our story. George Lakoff has gone over and over about we can appeal to people by figuring out what their values are, what they care about. And we can do that by talking about our own values. So we're going to win with social networks. A big part of that is being able to tell our story. Karen Hicks will join us for that.

"Voting Early, Voting Easily & Voting Safely." As the election draws near, we know that framing is a long-term project. But how do we get people motivated enough, using their own values and our own value system, to get them to vote early before everyone else, and to vote easily so that they feel safe doing it. Deb Markovitz, Vermont's Secretary of State, will be on for that one. "Getting Out the Vote"--what do we do on election day itself? Robby Mook will be joining us for that presentation.

If you take a look at slide #17, some of the stuff that we can do to follow up. A lot of people have been asking the question, "How can I get this Night School presentation? Can I use it? Can I use the recordings of it?" Yes, we're recording this presentation as we speak. So you'll have access to this recording both on the web site—www.democracyforamerica.com/nightschool—and also on DVD. When we finish these four sessions, we're going to make our DVD's available for everyone. These are the fall night school sessions. We've actually had two other semesters, if you will, of Night School—the spring semester and the summer semester. You can catch up on those earlier presentations by ordering one of those DVD's.

A couple of other questions that we've got coming up. If you'll stay on the line I can answer some of these questions. Where do we find more of these Night Schools? You can look at our list and figure out what other sessions are coming up. We'll have our Winter Night School available for you. And a couple of other questions are about op-eds and LTE's. We've actually done some of this stuff on previous Night Schools. So again I encourage you to go to the website, www.democracyforamerica.com/nightschool. And you can see what we mean by op-ed's and LTE's. Those are letters to the editor and opinion articles in the editorial section.

I want to thank everyone for coming down. A couple of our staffers are in Massachusetts right now. We've got some amazing news to share. Deval Patrick—we were one of the early endorsers in his campaign for governor—he just won his primary. I actually drove up from Massachusetts so I could join you guys for this Night School. Fortunately, we've been able to pull off another progressive victory in another statewide race. I think this is going well. Deval Patrick, Ned Lamont—these are examples of people who speak their values and speak the truth. These are the things that George Lakoff is talking about.

We've got a lot of technical questions coming in over email. But I think the underlying message is that if we speak our own values it will appeal to other people. We shouldn't be afraid of being progressives and speaking like progressives. That's the number one message that George Lakoff is expressing. It's the number one thing that we want to help activists do on the ground.

Democracy for America will back again next week of Night School—and for the next three weeks for many sessions of Night School. Please join us, please visit the website, and please continue sending us questions. We're going to continue the dialogue. It takes me a few days to answer these questions, and I'll try to get as many of these answered as possible. George Lakoff, we'll have him weighing in on some of these questions as well. Thank you for another successful DFA Night School.

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