

## LEVERAGING BLOGS AND ONLINE MEDIA

ARSHAD HASAN: Welcome to our second installment of DFA Nightschool's summer 2006 sessions. Today we'll discuss how to leverage online media. We have two takeaways for this section. Number one, we'll learn how to network through the net roots. Number two, we'll learn how to gain mainstream media attention. We'll spend a lot of time on that first goal, telling you the tips and techniques you can use to leverage online media, how you can connect with other activists online or the net roots. The second goal is harder to achieve, bringing online media into the mainstream media for a wider audience. But when we do achieve it, it's definitely worth it. And we'll talk about a couple of examples towards the end of this presentation. One quick note, we won't be talking about the really technical aspects of programming.

There are a couple of ways of looking at leveraging online media, and we want to sort of set that out as a mindset discussion right away. Number one, there's sort of a dinosaur view. People who see nothing—they see no potential and no use—in the internet. They believe that all this stuff about blogs and about online media is really just all hype. Then there's the opposite group, the overzealous. They believe not only all the hype, but they believe more. They really believe that online media is the second coming in political campaigns, and they can throw everything else out because we have the internet now. We take a view somewhere in the middle. We know it's important to identify and then leverage the strengths of this growing and new media. And that's what we'll be concentrating on. This is a new media. So a lot of people are still kind of working to figure out what works and what doesn't work. So we'll identify some of the things that we know do work, from our experience.

There are a number of different kinds of online media. Three of the most prominent kinds are web sites, podcasts, and blogs. You can think of web sites as an information hub for your campaign. Years ago, web sites were thought of as brochures for your campaign, something that essentially resembles a direct mail piece. There's podcasts, which are audio and video clips that are usually self-produced. They come in a format like traditional media, similar to radio and television, but they're delivered in a downloadable form over the internet. This is still a relatively new technology and beyond the scope of this presentation. And finally there's blogs, and that's going to be tonight's focus. Blogs are less formal, more conversational. They're potentially more interactive. And they're the best for creating a sort of a community outreach. Blogs are also dynamic and constantly updating.

The thing to remember about all of these different kinds of media is that nobody is looking for it unless you tell them about it. That is, finding web sites, podcasts and blogs need to be done actively by the volunteers. They need to take the initiative, and they need to have the information that such media exists in the first place. This is one of the reasons that online media doesn't have quite the reach that mainstream media does, where you can absorb it passively. And that's going to be a key point—making sure that we publicize and get the word out about our media and about our blogs.

Why is online media important? Well you might remember from our last presentation, we pulled out a study from Pew about where Americans primarily got their news. They volunteered answers and indicated that most people don't think about the internet as a news source without being specifically about the internet. Pew also tested prompting individuals to respond whether or not they got their news online. The study then found that although people generally don't see the internet playing a primary role in their political lives, their familiarity and willingness to accept it has grown enormously over a short period of time. This shows that, again, it's not a large segment of people who primarily get their news online. But like most other news sources, the internet is playing a role as a supplemental news source.

In addition to television, radio, and print, online media is getting a larger and larger audience, and it's rapidly gaining credibility. Because of that the mainstream media pays attention to these sites, and the public as a whole pays attention to mainstream media. The largest political blog in the United States is called Daily Kos. Within a week it gets 3.3 million visitors. Again, that's substantially smaller than CNN.com, but Daily Kos is beginning, and many of the other blogs, are beginning to really get the stories out there. Again, this will get picked up by the rest of the media as any story in the media does, and it can become the story itself.

Many of us generally know or at least are familiar with the definition of a blog. And many of us even know what a blog looks like. The defining characteristic is that blogs are dynamic and chronological, constantly adding new posts. A good blog is more than just a diary or a series of rants, though. Your posts ideally spark a conversation. This conversation comes in the form of publicly viewable comments. And these comments respond to the post itself or other people's comments after they've responded to the post.

There's two kinds of blogs, generally; you can break it down. There's the personal or campaign blogs. Generally they come from one voice. They may or may not allow commenting on it. There's also community blogs. A community blog has many voices. And these voices are either invited to post or it allows the commenter, the people who read and comment, it allows them to post their own diaries for everyone else to see. An example of the community blog is Daily Kos. Daily Kos is the largest political blog in the country by far. And right here we've got the front page of Daily Kos. And we've broken it down into three things, three sort of segments we want to point out that are critical to this particular blog, which we will find occasionally in many other community blogs.

If you take a look at the circle that's marked "A", you can see that you can log in and create an account. To participate in many community blogs, you generally need an account, and you usually log in with this account. This is where you determine your name, and you even need a password. Well this allows you access to more materials and more interaction. So take a look at the circle marked B. This is commenting. This is when you see a post on the main side over here. You can see, this is called an open thread, which is basically just an open dialog. There's no main post, but people can talk about whatever they like to.

When you click on "comments," that's when you get to enter in whatever you like, and that's when you can join in the conversation. You can see any other person's comments as well.

Circle C over here, you can see it says “Recommended Diaries.” On Daily Kos and on some other community blogs anyone can just submit a diary. On Kos it’s a community-driven process as to who sees the diary. On Kos you can recommend other people’s diary. You just give them a little plus. There you go. You can take a look at everyone else’s who has a recommendation. The people with the most recommendation flow to the top, literally, of this page. That’s where all those recommended diaries are. Let’s go to the next page. You can see what a couple comments look like on Daily Kos. This is actually just strolling down. We took a look at some of those comments, and you can see, you can even recommend the comments here, and you can respond to other people’s comments.

As I said, online media is new. People who don’t see the power of online organizing usually simply don’t understand how to make it work for them. And then people who over-hype the internet as a political tool, however, run into the danger of not understanding exactly what they can get out of it. The first major campaign to really use the internet, really make it work for the campaign, is Dean for America in 2003. Dean for America had a blog component called “Blog for America.”

And this Blog for America created a community. It helped spread a message, and it helped the Dean campaign get picked up by mainstream media. People were allowed to interact with each other. People really felt a sense of common bond. And a lot of campaigns these days can seem sort of impersonal, with television ads and radio ads. You don’t really see the campaign, see the supporters very much. Well Blog for America brought that back. And even though people were behind their computer screens and often distant from each other, they actually started making those connections again. There were other people who believed as they did, reasons to believe as they do, and really saw sort of a community.

Primarily you use blogs for three things. You can get three things out of the blogs. Number one, you can spread your message. This is done primarily through your activists, and possibly those who are curious enough to visit the site. Ideally, the mainstream media will also pick up on this message and spread it far and wide. Number two, you can build a community. You can actually mobilize people using the blogs, and you can create social networks. Get people to get to know each other. People become very comfortable on the blogs, sharing as much as they’re sharing their political views, sometimes they’ll share recipes or they’ll share ideas. They’ll also share campaign actions or share campaign resources.

One infamous example in the blogs was Flat Howard, which for people not familiar with the Dean campaign, a lot of activists obviously wanted to have Howard Dean at their event, as any campaign and any candidate and any supporters do. So the activists on Blog for America made an almost larger-than-life-sized digital photo of Howard Dean and put in instructions on how to back it up against a piece of wood or cardboard so they could have “flat Howard” at just about every event. It’s a corny little thing, but something that really built community on the blogs. It was more for the activists themselves than it was for the campaign, and that the campaign benefits from.

Number three, you want to get picked up by mainstream media. Now this is the big coup—influencing the media. It’s not easy, but when it happens it’s huge; it’s big. If you’ve got

a really great blog, then the people who are blogging on it will actually get their message out to the mainstream media, because often the media are looking and watching and reading the blogs just like many of us are. We can give them ideas and we can let them know what the campaign, what the activists on the campaign, are thinking sort of behind the scenes but really for everyone to see.

A quick note about the progressive left, the left side of the blogosphere. The left side of the blogosphere is characteristically different from the right side. We're larger, we're more grass-rootsy, you can say. Blogs on the left connect to other blogs in a way that really reflects the community. We link to each other much better than the blogs on the right do. And we're also substantially larger. Daily Kos is one of the biggest blogs in the country. It's definitely a left-leaning progressive blog. Studies have shown—connected again by people who watch the internet and people who analyze data for where people are clicking, that on some weeks, the high traffic weeks, Daily Kos is as large as almost the entire right side of the blogosphere. We're huge.

One thing the right side of the blogosphere does, however, is that they are well connected into the media. Although this removes a lot of the grassroots feel, because often people in the media themselves who are doing this blog, it does get their stories in the mainstream media easier. So one of the things that we need to do as the progressive blogosphere is make sure that we network with each other so we can grow in size, and then make sure that we figure out how we can get our message, spread our message, to the wider audience. And the wider audience right now, until we get even larger, is going to be the mainstream media.

Now bloggers can be both campaign activists as well as citizen journalists. People who are on the campaign and people who are a little bit outside the campaign but still clearly have a supportive viewpoint in one way or another. Blogs generally reach out to two particular constituencies. They can reach out to the grassroots, looking for alternative information, information that generally fits their existing worldview.

And the second constituency is the mainstream media looking for a story. Often these stories are process stories. They're stories about the blog itself or, you know, "What are the bloggers doing today? What are the bloggers talking about? What are the bloggers thinking about?" But this we can use, again, to leverage and get in the story. There's a story about, you know, "How kookie those bloggers are!" That's fine so long as they're coming and they can say, "But those bloggers are really talking about something. They really are onto something." That's how we're also going to talk about leveraging our media.

Among the blogs, whether they're community oriented or personal or campaign, different blogs will have different sizes and scopes. You've got national blogs; you've got local blogs. On national blogs you've got a much wider audience. Those audiences' general interests are the national interests and national campaigns. So this is good for congressional-level campaigns. National blogs are also good for national issues and major national organizations. Local issues and local campaigns have difficulty finding traction on national blogs unless there's a local tie-in. National blogs are more likely to have open commenting, and will certainly have many more comments and more of a discussion.

Some of them will even allow you to write your own diaries. If that's the case, you want to make sure to get your diaries recommended to drive traffic to your site and spread your message. Certainly you put your site in the diary. Then that's another way of getting people onto your site. The example pictured on this slide is again from Daily Kos, but it's about a diary that got recommended and you can see that it's actually helping a federal candidate, Jerry McNerney, who's a congressional candidate in California. And it mentions Democracy for America, DFA. It mentions one of our campaigns. What this activist was doing was it tried to get Jerry McNerney the most votes in a contest that DFA was running. You vote just by knowing about the vote and clicking on the right candidate.

This person wants everyone to click on Jerry McNerney, so he's got to let everyone know about Jerry McNerney. He knows that the people on the blogs are obviously online and generally familiar with online contests, and so right here's the audience. This individual got 27 recommendations, which is sometimes enough to get on the recommended list. Again, the recommended list is on the top of the page, and most people go and read those recommended diaries. And so this is how they got attention to their candidate. Incidentally, Jerry McNerney did win the DFA grassroots allstars contest, partially because of the attention on the blogs.

Local blogs are the other kind of blog, a little bit smaller than national blogs, sometimes much smaller than national blogs. You want to treat your local blogs like mainstream media though, because they can help you cover your local issues, just like your local paper and your local TV station. To find a listing of local blogs, you can go to [www.leftyblogs.com](http://www.leftyblogs.com). You can also go to the blogrolls of national campaigns. Well what's a blogroll? A blogroll is a little bit like an honor role. It's like everyone that we want to honor, everyone that we want to mention, everyone that we go and visit ourselves. The owner of this site and the creator of the blog will list all the blogs that they also like and would also like you to go and visit. Check out the blogrolls for our local campaigns and see if there's any nearby.

Local blogs are great for campaigns at every level of office. Again, every national candidate is still running in your local district; every local candidate is running obviously in your own local district. They're great for local organizations and local causes as well. Often many local blogs are very successful talking about individual issues. It's easier to get noticed because there's actually not as much traffic on a local blog. So once you've posted to that blog, once you've commented on that blog, and once you've networked with the other people on the blog, it makes a bigger difference. You're not sort of yelling into a crowd, you're talking to other individuals.

And it's really where the activists on the ground are. When we say that we've got to take our country back, we've really got to start doing it in our own neighborhoods. This is the online version; this is the online neighborhood. You want to make sure then to treat the blogs and the people who own the blogs and the people who comment on the blogs regularly with respect and they'll write about you with respect. And that's really sort of the whole point. It's a largely untapped resource for progressives, but this is starting to change. And hopefully after this presentation you'll go and start getting active in your local blogs.

Blogging on the campaign, blogging for the campaign. Campaigns can really make excellent use of bloggers and blogging itself. You want to make sure that you have a fulltime blogger or a netroots coordinator, maybe even somebody on staff after the campaign's really heated up. This person will read other blogs, interact with the blogosphere, and is open and honest to criticism. Blogs and the blogosphere itself is a very candid place, so you want to make sure that you've got a blogger out there. We'll talk a little bit about developing a personality and what to do and how to network in a bit, but a campaign definitely has a role for the blogs. For the people who go and check the campaign blog, it's a different perspective than what you would get on television or on the radio or in a direct mail piece. It's kind of the behind-the-scenes look again, and it's available and open for everyone.

The campaign blog is really performing a service to activists, really letting activists who might not be there at the moment be able to go online and see what happened, really pretend that they were there for a minute—going to the parades, going to the marches, going into the office and seeing all the volunteers come in. The campaign blogger provides that perspective and really builds that community for activists. And again, that's the main thing the blogger's doing, building a community, spreading the message, and hopefully, ideally, getting that message out into the mainstream media.

The candidate or group leader should post diaries and participate in the major community blogs as well. And that campaign blogger, the person who's in charge of the online outreach, is going to help the candidate do exactly that. On the picture here you can see Peter Welch, who is a candidate for a congressional seat here in Vermont. It's our only congressional seat—was blogging. And you can see right there he's blogging on Blog for America, getting active with our community with DFA.

All right, so what do you do once you've got a blog? How do you become a blogger? How do you drive traffic to your site? Well one thing that is characteristics about blogs is they often occupy a niche. And in campaigns, that niche could be the perspective behind the scenes for the campaign from an activist within the campaign. The blogs actually have niches of all sorts of varieties, of very flavor, not even just political blogs but there's cooking blogs, there's auto blogs, there's gaming blogs, there's all kinds of blogs. With the political blog, still you want to occupy a niche, a role, something that you cover—your specialty. That's how you start getting your first audience.

So you want to be true to that niche. You want to remember to stay on message for whatever you're talking about. If you're a progressive blog and you're talking about progressive politics in Connecticut, you want to generally talk about progressive politics in Connecticut without getting too distracted. Every now and then a personal message and a personal perspective is great, and we'll see how helpful that is. But generally, people should know what they're getting when they go to your blog. When they're searching among the blogs and through the blogs, they can go to your blog and they'll know that this is where I get all the local news about Connecticut for example.

You should also have short, action-oriented paragraphs. Again, the passive voice is never good in writing. It's not any different on the blogs. You want to make sure that you've got

people excited. I know they're sitting in their chairs and behind their computers, but we want to get them up and get them excited, or at the very least catch them up and see what's been going on in the campaign. If your posts are really boring and not in action-oriented language, then really it seems like the campaign is the same. You want to insert photos and liven it up. There are some perfectly fine text-heavy blogs out there, but a lot of the photos will really let you be there and let the reader experience the event or the place that you were—the topic that your blog is covering.

The next one is huge: include clickable links. In blogging—and this is something that the progressive blogster does really well—we link liberally. You want to make sure that you've got links all over the place referring to where you found information. Refer to other blogs. Let people know, "Hey, the other blog over here has a great story." If you take a look at My DD, another national blog, you'll see that they'll often link to a local blog, let's say My Left Nutmeg, which is a Connecticut local blog. My DD will say, "Hey, look what I found on this Connecticut blog over here." They'll have a snippet of that blog and they'll let you link directly to it. That makes My Left Nutmeg, which is that blog again in Connecticut, more likely to link back to My DD. The progressive blogosphere is really well connected like this. And, in fact, it actually drives up traffic to all of the blogs. So you want to make sure you put as many links as possible.

You also want to learn basic HTML to actually start writing a web site, writing your web pages. To liven up your posts instead of just doing text. You want to be able to do bold; you want to do links; you want to do all kinds of stuff. Again, the content is what's really important, but make sure that you liven it up a little bit. There's also a bunch of technical details that we'd love to share with you. You can find that at our web site, which is [www.democracyforamerica.com/nightschool](http://www.democracyforamerica.com/nightschool). And it will help you with some of the more technical aspects.

You can see on this page is a picture of the Burnt Orange Report. This is statewide, so it's a local blog in Texas. Here they're featuring John Courage. And what they're doing is something called a blogroll, which summarizes all the news that the campaign John Courage has been in among the blogs, throughout the blogs in the state. You can see here that the Burnt Orange Report takes a definite stance. When you go to the Burnt Orange Report, you definitely know that they support John Courage. And that's another thing about blogging: there's usually a bent to it. A progressive blog is definitely a progressive blog. There's no need to waffle on the message.

On that note, you've got to have style. Make sure that your blogging is your personality. Again, the blogosphere is fairly candid, so candor definitely works. Personal angles work. Readers can find impersonal and slick messaging just about anywhere. They can just turn on their television and see some nicely-produced commercial. But when they go to the blogs, they see it from a personal angle. They see it from the perspective of another activist. They see it as the perspective of somebody who generally shares their worldview, their ideology.

You want to develop a voice. Your voice is basically your personality. So if you've got multiple people posting, you've got multiple different voices. Even if you cover up the name of the author, after a while your regular readers will become familiar, and they can just sort of tell

who the person is based on their writing style, based on their personality on the web site. Blogger voices are generally casual. They're personal; they're a little bit revealing, and they're definitely conversational. Bloggers, when they blog, they write a post as if they're sort of making an announcement to a group of friends. They're writing to a group of friends. Again, it's casual.

And definitely, like we mentioned before, have a point of view. That's why people are going to your blog. They're speaking out like-minded points of view and seeing what kind of news they have and seeing what kind of views they have, what kind of events are going on, and what they can do. You want to make sure that you've got a personality, that you're exciting, that people would actually want to meet you if they were next door to you. That they would actually want to go out and make the effort to see who you really are. And they'll have an idea. They'll feel like they know you. If you're a really good blogger, every one of your readers will feel like they actually know you because they've been reading a series of correspondences, personal correspondences, conversational correspondence, something casual.

Like we've mentioned, the hallmark of a successful blog and a successful blogosphere really is networking throughout that blogosphere. There's a couple ways that you can network. There's public networking, which is right online, right on your page. And then there's sort of behind the scenes. In public, one of the biggest things you can do is link to others and give credit where it's due. Remember we talked about that blog roundup? That's basically a summary of news from throughout the blogosphere on a particular topic. Usually campaigns will have a blog roundup about their own candidate, their own campaign. This gives credit to all those blogs. And they, in turn, will refer to you.

There are also paid advertisers. There's a number of things that you can do to get your blog advertised on the internet. There are services like Google Ad Sense which will basically trigger anytime anyone does a Google search for certain items. You can pay Google to flash up little ads on that right-most column. So anytime they put in, for example "democracy," they'll get a little ad for Democracy for America on the side. That's one way to advertise. You can also advertise on the other blogs. So you can put up a little post; you can buy a little square of space and advertise right there, and people can click on it. All online advertising is by clicks. So every time somebody clicks is when you pay. It could be ten cents, five cents, 25 cents for every time you've clicked. But it might be worth it to increase traffic.

Again, like we mentioned, you want to stay on message in the public blogosphere. If you're covering a particular topic, keep covering that topic. That's how people will know that you're the expert on it, or at least that you've got the niche on it. And leave constructive and on-topic comments on other blogs and on your own blog. That's a way to start the conversation. You might have a post and then other people start commenting. But start digging into those comments and responding to people. Again, this is like having a conversation, sort of chatting in a chat room. But instead, more directed on a web site, on a blog.

There's also the behind-the-scenes networking, private networking in the blogosphere. You want to make sure that you open up lines of communication with bloggers and treat them with respect. One of the big things about bloggers and interacting with the blogging community

is in many ways you want to treat them like the mainstream media. You want to give them a heads up. You want to give them a press release specifically to bloggers. You could do a conference call, again specifically to bloggers, so that they sort of have the behind-the-scenes insights. Really, we do this with reporters as well. Do little conferences, do little press releases. Let bloggers in on it as well, and they'll be far friendlier to you. They'll give you the access that you want. And they'll reach those two particular constituencies, activists and mainstream media.

So you can open up lines of communication not only online or on the phone, but also offline, having conversations and meetings and lunches. This face-to-face conversation, it's not just old fashioned it's effective. And it will actually get you results more than an email will, which is intuitive but something not to forget when you're doing online organizing. For campaigns it might be important to not only just do little conference calls but individual quick meetings. At the Lamont victory party in Connecticut, there's going to be a room just for bloggers, a little private conference area reserved for them so that they have their own media area. Again, this isn't extraordinary or unique. Reporters generally have their own spaces as well. So giving bloggers a space can show them that you're serious about blogging.

And keep in mind though that generally in media everything is on the record. And particularly with bloggers, they often don't have the rigorous professional standards that the mainstream media have or are supposed to have. And you might tell them something in confidence and all of a sudden it's on the blog. If it's on the blog it's not only in print for everyone to read, but it's there forever because it's online. So you want to make sure that you get a good relationship and that your open lines of communication are explicit.

So why are we talking again about mainstream media, now that we're talking about online media? Well, again, refer to the statistics. Even though the blogosphere is growing and growing at a fantastic pace, still the vast majority of Americans rely on mainstream media for their news. And because we need to make sure that we're reaching out to all people, not just ourselves, we need to make sure that we can leverage the blogosphere to get on the mainstream media.

And while there are some major national examples—here you can see Markos who maintains the largest political blog the Daily Kos—and you can see Wonkette, who maintains the Washington DC niche blog. They're both on “The “Situation Room.” This one's on CNN, this one's on Fox news. You can see that they get online, but even the local blogs can get picked up by the local newspapers and local television. And again, remember most people get their news from local TV and local newspapers. If your blog can get in good with those groups, then you can develop a relationship and you can be another way to spread your message to the mainstream media, and thereby spread your message to the group as a whole.

The first thing to consider is if you want to be legitimate in the mainstream media, you've at least got to be legitimate within the blogosphere. You don't want to be the sort of nutty character who just goes off on rants and goes off on a tangent, because again, remember the media sometimes do read our blogs. In fact, they often do, whether or not they always report on them. They're looking for ideas. And the blogosphere can help with those ideas.

If you want to get picked up by reporters, the number one thing that reporters are looking for and looking into when they're looking at the blogs is some sort of new angle on a story. Maybe even a new story. Something fresh, something different. Again, most of the stories that are covered by reporters that regard the blogs are generally process stories about the blogs themselves. About sort of the existence of blogs or blog activists. If you want to get picked up by reporters, you can take advantage of that. You can say, "Look at what my blog is covering right now." "Oh, you've got a blog covering this event." "Yes, we've got a blog covering the event, and this is what we're talking about, this is what we're saying." And they might be fascinated by the fact that your blog even exists and that you're doing this work. It's important to let them know, in fact, the substance of the work.

Again, you want a new angle, sort of a fresh take on a story. Some of our best successes on getting and leveraging the blogosphere on online media is really digging up the story, digging up research, digging up visuals and pictures, and showing the media that in fact this is out there, this exists for the whole world to see. Once that happens, you can get coverage in the mainstream media. Often a good way to do this is to build the drumbeat throughout all the local blogs in the area. Not only do you have a story that's up on your blog, but then all your other local blogs in the area are repeating the same story and referring to you, referring to a new angle on it. Once the many local blogs in the area build up this drumbeat, the mainstream media start taking notice.

So you can see why we started talking first about networking throughout the blogosphere, and then breaking into the mainstream media. Because by building that drumbeat, by having many sources at once, we can really get in there. One excellent example in Connecticut was all of the local blogs asking major Democratic Party officials as well as other candidates whether or not they would support the primary winner—the winner of the Democratic primary—in Connecticut. The situation in Connecticut is that there's a primary, Joe Lieberman vs. Ned Lamont. Joe Lieberman is the establishment candidate and Ned Lamont is the sort of insurgent grassroots candidate with the support of most of the major liberal blogs out there.

Well because Joe Lieberman said that he would drop out of the Party, the big question mark was well then are people in the Party going to support Joe Lieberman if he goes and runs as an independent? And all the blogs started calling the gubernatorial candidates, started calling the Party chairs. And after these calls started coming in, they started getting commitments and putting these commitments on the blog. "Yes, I will support the Democratic primary winner," "No, I'll just support Joe Lieberman or whoever." And you can see that after this stuff's throughout the blogosphere, this itself was very newsworthy.

And again, if you go back to the five criteria of newsworthy, you can see this is new and fresh; it has conflict and controversy; and it's just an entirely different way of deriving a story. It hit on the mainstream media right away and then started percolating up to the national media. So you can see that when the blogs work together we can actually get into mainstream media.

Let's go to the next page and take a look at a couple of other examples. Two more examples from Joe Lieberman and Ned Lamont's primary. Again, we're focusing on this because it is a very recent example of the blogosphere working to get into the media and working to network.

We've got blogs all over the country, and this is one where they've played a major role since the Dean campaign and some other campaigns.

The first one here is "the kiss." It's a story that's more than a year and a half old, but it suddenly became newsworthy again because the blogs brought it up. The blogs went and researched and found from the State of Union that sort of moment when George Bush gave Joe Lieberman a great big kiss. Well the whole store line in the Lamont campaign is that Lieberman's too close to Bush, and Lieberman won't stand up to Bush, and Connecticut needs to send somebody to stand up to Bush."

So this was the graphic representation literally of George Bush and Joe Lieberman getting very, very close. And so this kiss has now turned into a float that travels around and dogs Joe Lieberman at every single one of his events. Bloggers made this float, and now it gets into the mainstream media because first they publicize the story about the kiss, and then they're really bringing it to life offline and posting those pictures offline on all the blogs. Literally every time Joe Lieberman is at a public event, that kiss float follows him around and the media pick it up, and it gets right into Joe Lieberman's press event.

The second one is the "Nomorejoe.com." It's not from the Lamont campaign; it actually belongs to a Republican media consultant. What happened was Joe Lieberman's message was that Lamont's only running a campaign that's anti-Lieberman, that he doesn't stand for anything itself. They produced a commercial where they produced a fake bumper sticker called "No More Joe," and the web site is [nomorejoe.com](http://nomorejoe.com), which is leased, as I said, to a Republican media consultant. Well, the bloggers dug this up and found out that in fact that's not a Lamont bumper sticker at all. And so the scandal was that Lieberman is making up a whole bunch of stuff about Ned Lamont that isn't necessarily true, and they're going to all kinds of different and desperate lengths to paint Ned Lamont as a one-issue candidate. So again, the bloggers in this case were able to stop a story before it got big by revealing the sources.

You know now that DFA Nightschool never leaves without first assigning something to all of our viewers and all of our listeners. The main assignment here is just get involved with the blogs. Use the blogs for about the next week's DFA Nightschool or just DFA Nightschool in general. Get an account at a major blog or a national blog like [MyDD.com](http://MyDD.com) and [Dailykos.com](http://Dailykos.com). That way you'll be able to comment, you'll be able to leave your own posts, and you can also start recommending each other. Get an account at a local blog. Get involved with your local blogging community. Take a look. Go to [leftyblogs.com](http://leftyblogs.com) and see what's around. If you are involved with a blog already and you want to really take this assignment one step further, let's go around and start figuring out messages that we can get and unify the blogosphere locally. If you've got a big campaign going on, see what the other local blogs are doing and see if we can all cover the same story from a bunch of different angles and get it in the media.

One thing that if you don't have something to rally around is DFA Nightschool. Start talking up DFA Nightschool. This is something that we want to let other people know. Like we said, we spread a message using the communities that blogs have already started building. Let's spread the message that people need more training. It's a free service and we're happy to

provide it to everyone. So ask folks to go to DFA Nightschool, that's [democracyforamerica.com/nightschool](http://democracyforamerica.com/nightschool), and spread the training throughout the blogosphere.

Thanks very much for coming and joining us for this session of DFA Nightschool. Don't forget to sign up for our other lessons. "Sustaining a Media Presence" is the lesson following this one. You can also help keep Nightschool free. Really, we depend on your dedication, your passion, your commitment—also, your contributions. We provide this as a free service. It definitely takes our staff time and staff resources in addition to our organization's resources. Refill those coffers right now and contribute. You can do so by clicking on our link, which is [contribute.democracyforamerica.com](http://contribute.democracyforamerica.com).

Please let us know what we can do. Give us feedback. And give us some money so we can keep doing this. If you want to learn more about the DFA Training Academy, sort of the larger project, you can go to our web site [democracyforamerica.com/training](http://democracyforamerica.com/training), and you can take a look at the in-depth training we do for campaigns, for activists. And for people thinking about running we do a pre-in-depth session where we go over this in greater detail and greater depth. So check us out—[democracyforamerica.com/training](http://democracyforamerica.com/training)—as well as [contribute.democracyforamerica.com](http://contribute.democracyforamerica.com).

And you can join the discussion. If you have questions or if you have some comments to make, one of the things you can do is talk to all the other people who have taken this course by joining our DFA Nightschool group. It's a DFALink group which is available at [www.dfalink.com/nightschool](http://www.dfalink.com/nightschool). We have our own blog. You can upload and download resources and take a look at what other people are saying about this issue. Thanks, and join us again.