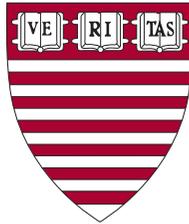


**THEODORE H. WHITE SEMINAR  
ON PRESS AND POLITICS**

**WITH**

**ANDREW SULLIVAN**

Joan Shorenstein Center  
**PRESS ▪ POLITICS**



**▪ PUBLIC POLICY ▪**

Harvard University  
John F. Kennedy School of Government

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The Theodore H. White Lecture commemorates the life of the reporter and historian who created the style and set the standard for contemporary political journalism and campaign coverage.

White, who began his journalism career delivering the *Boston Post*, entered Harvard College in 1932 on a newsboy's scholarship. He studied Chinese history and oriental languages. In

1939 he witnessed the bombing of Chungking while freelance reporting on a Sheldon Fellowship.

In 1959 White sought support for a 20-year research project, a retrospective of presidential campaigns. After being advised by fellow reporters to drop this academic exercise, White took to the campaign trail, and, relegated to the "zoo plane," changed the course of American political journalism with the publication of *The Making of a President*, in 1960. The 1964, 1968, and 1972 editions of *The Making of a President*, along with *America in Search of Itself*, remain vital documents to the study of campaigns and the press.

Before his death in 1986, White also served on the Visiting Committee here at the Kennedy School of Government; he was one of the architects of what has become the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy.





**Andrew Sullivan**, one of the world's most widely read bloggers, is a political commentator and the author of five books. His blog now appears on *The Daily Beast*. Sullivan was born in 1963 in a small town in southern England. He attended Magdalen College, Oxford, where he was president of the Oxford Union in his second year at college. Sullivan is a graduate of Har-

vard's Kennedy School of Government (MPA'86) and received his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1990.

He worked at *The New Republic* as deputy editor under Hendrik Hertzberg, and in June of 1991, at the age of 27, was appointed acting editor. In October, he took over as editor, and presided over 250 issues of *The New Republic*. In the late 1990s, Sullivan worked as a contributing writer and columnist for *The New York Times Magazine*, a regular contributor to *The New York Times Book Review*, and a weekly columnist for *The Sunday Times of London*. Sullivan has been a columnist for *Time* magazine and a regular guest on HBO's *Real Time with Bill Maher* and NBC's *Chris Matthews Show*.

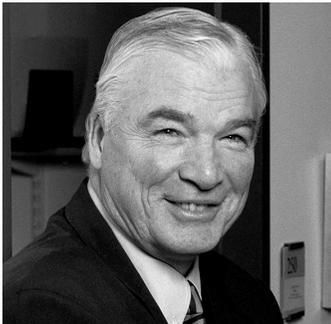
In the summer of 2000, Sullivan became one of the first mainstream journalists to experiment with blogging and soon developed a large online readership with [andrewsullivan.com](http://andrewsullivan.com)'s Daily Dish. Andrew blogged independently and for [Time.com](http://Time.com) and, in February 2007, moved his blog to [TheAtlantic.com](http://TheAtlantic.com), where he was a senior editor for the magazine. In April 2010, Andrew moved to *The Daily Beast*.





**Thomas Frank** is the author of several books, including *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, *The Wrecking Crew* and *Pity the Billionaire*. He is a columnist for *Harper's* magazine and has been a contributing editor to the magazine since 2004. He was a columnist for *The Wall Street Journal* from 2008 until 2010. He has received a Lannan award and been a guest columnist for *The New York Times*. Frank grew up in Kansas, has a Ph.D. in history from the University of Chicago, and now lives in Washington, D.C.

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**David Nyhan** was a columnist and reporter at *The Boston Globe* for 30 years. A graduate of Harvard College and a Shorenstein Fellow in the spring of 2001, Nyhan was a regular participant in Shorenstein Center activities before, during and after his Fellowship. Nyhan died unexpectedly in 2005. In his eulogy Senator Edward Kennedy said of Nyhan, "Dave was a man of amazing talent, but most of all he was a man of the people who never forgot his roots....In so

many ways, but especially in the daily example of his own extraordinary life, Dave was the conscience of his community." The hallmark of David Nyhan's brand of journalism was the courage to champion unpopular causes and challenge the powerful with relentless reporting and brave eloquence. In his memory, the Shorenstein Center established the David Nyhan Prize for Political Journalism.



# THE THEODORE H. WHITE LECTURE

## NOVEMBER 17, 2011

**Mr. Jones:** Welcome to you all. Welcome to the John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. I am Alex Jones, Director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. Each year this night is a highlight in the year of the Shorenstein Center. But this year it is extra special because this is our 25th anniversary year.

As some of you already know, the Shorenstein Center was founded in 1986 as a memorial to Joan Shorenstein Barone, a truly remarkable television journalist who died of breast cancer after a distinguished career that was all too short. Her father, Walter Shorenstein, endowed the Center as a place for focused and searching examination of the intersection of the press, politics and public policy. Walter Shorenstein not only made the Center possible, but remained vitally interested in what we did and was our unstinting supporter and friend. Last year after a long and extraordinary life he died at the age of 95. We miss him and we mourn him.

He was above all else a great citizen. And the Theodore White Lecture and the David Nyhan Prize are to recognize that same kind of engaged, active citizenship of a journalistic perspective. I'm proud to say that at his memorial service in San Francisco his son, Doug Shorenstein, who is here with us tonight, said his father's two achievements that made him proudest were his family and the Shorenstein Center. He was our goad and our great friend, our benefactor and our visionary ally. I can say quite frankly that he really did inspire us.

The Kennedy School is a place built for people who come here to learn how they can change the world. And that is why the Shorenstein Center belongs here and why it is so fitting that it should be so big a part of Walter Shorenstein's enduring legacy. I'm very glad to say that the gauntlet has been passed. With us tonight as I said are his son, Doug Shorenstein, and his daughter Carole Shorenstein Hays and also here is his great-niece, Marissa Shorenstein. I would ask that the members of the Shorenstein family stand while we pay tribute to them and the family. (Applause)

A bit later you will hear our Theodore White Lecturer for 2011, Andrew Sullivan. First I have another task to perform, which is also an honor. In 2005 we at the Shorenstein Center lost another great and much admired friend, David Nyhan. Some of you did not know David, and I want to speak of him briefly as this year we bestow the seventh annual David Nyhan Prize for Political Journalism.

David Nyhan was a man of many parts, a devoted family man, a loyal pal, the best company in the world. He was a real Boston guy, a big handsome man with a mischievous smile and sparkly eyes and that rare power to raise everyone's spirits and make it seem like a party just by walking into the room. I can still feel the glow he imparted as a Fellow at the Shorenstein Center. Tonight we honor David Nyhan, the consummate reporter and political journalist, which is the role that occupied much of his life and in which he could not be bested. David was a reporter and then a columnist at *The Boston Globe* and his work had both a theme and a character.

The theme was almost always power, political power. And also especially the abuse of political power by the bigshots at the expense of the little guys. But he also loved politicians. As a group he respected them. He felt they were often given a raw deal and judged by a standard that was smug and sanctimonious, two things David never was. He was a self-avowed liberal and not defensive about it. Were he with us today he would relish the coming battle for the White House. And he would have had some fun with the gaffes and goofs of the Republican primary.

But he would not have been predictable. He was always surprising his readers with his take on things because most of all David Nyhan was his own man and he called them as he saw them. In his memory and honor, the Nyhan Family and many friends and admirers of David Nyhan have endowed the David Nyhan Prize for Political Journalism to recognize the kind of gutsy, stylish and relentless journalism that David Nyhan embodied. David's wife, Olivia, is with us tonight as are his children, Veronica, Kate and Nick and other members of the Nyhan family and I would like to ask them all to please stand. (Applause)

This year's David Nyhan Prize for Political Journalism is awarded to Thomas Frank. Thomas Frank is from Kansas, something that has informed his life and career in ways that may have been unexpected even to him. He was born actually in Kansas City, Missouri, then grew up a bit west, across the state line in Mission Hills, Kansas. As those of you who know your history will remember Kansas before the Civil War was a hotbed of abolitionist sentiment and was known as Bleeding Kansas for the violent battles with slave holders. Politically, 19th-century Kansas might reasonably be called radically liberal by the standards of the day. It is now among the most reliably conservative states in the nation.

Thomas Frank's 2004 blockbuster, *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, was a native son's careful, albeit polemical, analysis of why Kansas is the way it is. And as Frank saw it, the way Kansas is, is almost crazy. Crazy in that people there act against their own best interest, both politically and even culturally. Frank has been called the great chronicler of the American paradox. He views that paradox through the eyes of a former conservative who

changed his mind. He concluded in fact that the views of the people of his home state and much of the great conservative movement, from his perspective, were based on what he considered a huge deception. He called it the backlash. And he described it as a cynical manipulation of cultural values.

Now, what did he mean by that? As for instance when small farmers in the name of small government passed their votes for a Wall Street–designed program that will eventually push them off their land. And where the wealthiest and most privileged managed to convince the country that they speak on behalf of the people. As for instance when a pro-life stance trumps any other concerns, such as job safety or economic empowerment. As he put it, and I’m quoting him now, “Ignoring one’s economic self-interest may seem a suicidal move to you and me, but viewed in a different way it is an act of noble self-denial, a sacrifice to a holier cause.”

The thing about Thomas Frank, though, is that he managed to make his passionate case with humor and a wry sense of the absurd that made *What’s the Matter with Kansas?* both an iconic political rant and a huge best-seller. That book is only one of many, the most recent being *Pity the Billionaire*, which examines with mere wonder how a capitalistic meltdown and catastrophic economic collapse for the mass has been turned into a great profit for the few. And at the same time the founding fathers had been reconceived as heroes from an Ayn Rand novel and the powerless have successfully been enlisted into a fan club for the prosperous. Perhaps he will tell us what he thinks of Occupy Wall Street.

Thomas Frank is a graduate of the University of Kansas, has a Ph.D. in history from the University of Chicago. He is an author, journalist and columnist for *Harper’s* magazine and formerly wrote extensively for *The Wall Street Journal*. His sense of outrage would endear him to David Nyhan as would his sense of humor. The winner of this year’s David Nyhan Prize for Political Journalism, Thomas Frank.

(Applause)

**Mr. Frank:** So I really don’t know what to say about being here. When I started out in journalism back in the 1990’s I never expected to be the kind of journalist that won prizes, never, ever, ever. The whole idea was to declare war on cliché and war on consensus. And I accepted that there would be no prizes in it, that was the price. So be it. Things have changed. We live today in a time of catastrophic intellectual dysfunction. Just three years ago and with scarcely any warning from journalists, politicians, the economists, the financial industry upped and threatened to fling the entire world economy over a cliff.

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**We live today in a time of catastrophic intellectual dysfunction.**

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Now the consensus view up until that point was that an event like that was impossible, right? We were supposed to be living in this sort of wisened-up period in which all seeing markets had sliced up risk and spread it around so wisely that global catastrophic events were impossible. But the consensus view was of course completely wrong. And the consensus view was wrong in 2003 when it accepted the president's explanation for the Iraq War. And the consensus view was wrong in 1999 and 2000 when it saw ever-rising tech prices, not as a bubble, but as evidence of mankind's growing savviness about investing. And the consensus was wrong all along when it assured us again and again and again that what made America exceptional among the industrialized nations of the world was our acceptance of extreme inequality.

Now, we are sometimes told that we have entered a new age of enlightenment with Facebook and aggregators and the celebrities tweeting each to each. But I sometimes think the opposite is true. Outside of places like Boston and New York and Washington, D.C., people scarcely know any longer about what is going on in their state governments. Because what is left of their local newspapers doesn't bother to tell them. And they can't tell them. They don't have any reporters out in Topeka or where ever it is. Think about it. The most vital political movement of our time, and here I don't mean Occupy Wall Street, but the doppelgänger on the other side, the Tea Party movement is based on a vision of reality that is so perverse that it can really only exist in a kind of closed-off mental universe that brings North Korea to mind.

But through it all our Washington, D.C. consensus just chugs merrily along, nothing can put a dent in its self-assurance. But a few things have changed. When I first moved to Washington back in 2003 I was told that my views were outside the consensus. This is a great phrase. I love that phrase. You always hear it in Washington. They say that's outside the consensus. I was outside the consensus and therefore my views didn't need to be considered. Well, I was proud to be in that spot back then. But I am infinitely prouder to be here with you tonight. Thank you, very much. (Applause)

**Mr. Jones:** I think it's fair to say that we have two speakers tonight who are outside the consensus, but in a somewhat different way. Theodore H. White was a consummate reporter whose passion was politics. He came to Harvard on a newsboy's scholarship and went on to a very distinguished career as a journalist and also a historian. Indeed, Teddy White, as he was universally known, changed both political journalism and politics when he wrote *The Making of the President* in 1960 about the Kennedy-Nixon campaign. For the first time he raised the curtain on the warts and all side of presidential campaigns and changed campaign coverage forever.

Ever since Teddy White, insider candor and behind-the-scenes drama have been a staple of campaign coverage. He followed that book with three more *Making of the President* books in 1964, '68 and '72. No one has yet surpassed those smart and groundbreaking examinations of what happened and why in the maelstrom of a political campaign. And it is fair to say, I think, that Teddy White's heirs are the journalists of today who try to pierce the veil of politics, to understand what is happening and then analyze and deliver the goods to those of us who are trying to understand.

Before his death in 1986 Teddy White was one of the architects of what became the Shorenstein Center. One of the first moves of Marvin Kalb, the Center's founding director, was to raise the funds and establish the Theodore H. White Lecture on the Press and Politics in his honor. This year the White Lecture is to be delivered by Andrew Sullivan, one of the nation's most fearlessly opinionated and dazzlingly unpredictable political pundits. The very popular blog site of which he is editor, the Dish, on *The Daily Beast*, has as its watch words, "To see what is in front of one's nose needs a constant struggle," the quote from George Orwell. It is a struggle that Andrew Sullivan has wholeheartedly engaged and the result has been a powerful stream of thinking. And I don't use that word lightly.

You can almost see him thinking, see the wheels turning when, for instance, he is explaining why he likes Judge Judy. No topic for him is off limits. In fact he has a feature on the Dish called "Ask Andrew Anything" — it's in a video form, and he responds to questions, such as why do you like Judge Judy so much? Which he told me just before we came out here, he does completely extemporaneously without knowing what the questions are going to be.

For those few of you who haven't been watching daytime TV for the past 15 years, Judge Judy is Judge Judy Sheindlin, formerly Manhattan's supervising family court judge and she is tough. On her program, *Judge Judy*, which is the highest-rated daily half-hour nationally syndicated program on television, she grills people and pronounces judgment. So why does Andrew like her so much? One thing is what he calls the pleasure of seeing an obvious liar being exposed on TV. A lot of the litigants who come before her lie with abandon. But, and here comes the thinking part, he said that he is dismayed that there is so little accountability in the world and that she offers a refreshing, even inspiring, authority. He called it the great relief of authority.

He speaks with some of that authority on, it seems to me, any number of subjects. He has long been outspokenly gay and strongly conservative, a pairing that he sees no contradiction in. His political views include support for a flat tax, limited government, privatization of Social Security and he opposes the welfare state programs and interventionism. He finds abortion

personally immoral, but can legally accept the concept of abortions in the first trimester. He endorsed George W. Bush in 2000. But in 2004 he went for John Kerry and then last time around for Barack Obama. He is strongly for gay marriage and, indeed, is married to his partner. But in a view typical of him he is critical of civil unions, which he has dubbed “marriage light” and has argued that civil unions weaken the unique status of marriage, both for gays and lesbians and heterosexuals.

Andrew Sullivan was born in England and took a first in modern history and modern languages at Magdalen College at Oxford. He was elected president of the Oxford Union, which describes itself as the world’s most famous debating society. He is also a graduate of the Kennedy School of Government and has a Ph.D. in government from Harvard. He began his career at *The New Republic* and became its editor five years after joining the magazine. His broad view of what was interesting and germane prompted him to expand the magazine’s focus from political coverage to cultural issues and the politics surrounding them, a theme that has been consistent from then on.

He got into trouble, something that doesn’t seem to bother him much, at *The New Republic* when he published excerpts from *The Bell Curve*, a controversial book that linked race and intelligence. He solved what amounted to a staff revolt by publishing lengthy rebuttals from 19 writers and contributors. But he has continued to defend his position that the book has some genuine insights. Again, he is eager for debate but slow to back down. In 2000 he began his blog, the Daily Dish, which has become a perch that has made him one of the most influential and best-read commentators and analysts of politics and culture. The blog is now at home at *The Daily Beast*.

He was reared Catholic and has termed the Catholic Church the institution closest to his heart. But he is also a fierce opponent of the kind of rigid fundamentalism that he sees in the Catholic Church and elsewhere. But again, Andrew Sullivan says, “To dismiss all religious people based on the actions of the most literalist dumb ones, I think, is bigotry.” His conservatism, to his mind, is the traditional kind. He is a fiscal conservative, a limited-government conservative, with a strong streak of libertarianism on social issues. He is also a conservative who opposes government involvement with things like prostitution and the use of marijuana, as civil rights issues.

I think the only way to sum up Andrew Sullivan’s point of view is to say that it is fearless and his own. He says what he thinks. It is my honor to present the 2011 Theodore White Lecturer, Andrew Sullivan. (Applause)

**Mr. Sullivan:** Well, thank you so much for that very generous introduction. My great fantasy about Judge Judy is that she would get to do

the interview with Sarah Palin, but it never happens. Can you imagine? (Laughter)

If it doesn't make sense it isn't true. That's something that Judge Judy is known for. And it's words to live by. I want to thank Harvard, this place which I walked into as a just-21-year old in 1984, especially the Kennedy School of Government for its great forgiveness of my delinquency. I set a record at the time for an MPA student taking 15 of the 16 required credits outside the Kennedy School, because my interests didn't quite fit entirely within number crunching. And they changed the rules after that. So I'm glad to be responsible for greater discipline in the Kennedy School of Government.

I'm here tonight to talk about conservatism, which I think it is not controversial to say, is in some sort of crisis and has been in a sort of crisis for quite a long time now. And what is staggering is when I go to campuses and talk about conservatism, the conservatism I speak of seems unrecognizable to the students of today. I studied conservatism right here. I wrote a dissertation on perhaps the greatest conservative political philosopher of all time, Michael Oakeshott, as obscure as he is profound. And I read Burke and Aristotle and saturated myself in Catholic social thought as well.

I do not recognize the current Republican Party as in any way a conservative force in this society. And I want to explain tonight why. For me, conservatism is fundamentally deeply about the limits of human beings. It's about the tragedy of the human condition. It is about the paradox of progress. It is about questioning the liberal assumption that we have a solution to the problems of mankind. It understands that society is not a formula, it cannot be reduced to mathematical equations as in economics. The social science is an oxymoron. That culture matters, that we grow up and evolve and absorb so much from our parents and our countries and our cultures that as adults we really are across the world different people and constantly changing. That this is a dynamic landscape full of new plants and ancient old trees.

And our job as conservatives is to tend to it, to prune it, to manage it, to garden this beautiful inheritance. And along with a sense of tragedy is also the relief and release of joy. Oakeshott described it as the preference

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for present laughter over utopian bliss. Life is good. Life is funny. People are wonders. The West's great achievement in sustaining polities and governments which allow for diversity and pluralism and individualism and liberty, keeping government in its place, is a fantastic and unique achievement, as unique as it is always vulnerable.

And the conservative will seek to defend this, not because it conforms to some ideology, not because it conforms to some ideal, but because it is his own or her own. And he or she has become familiar and rather likes it, and doesn't like it when it is summarily changed. This leads also to a notion that government itself can be a threat to that order. It can use its monopoly of force to rearrange things in ways that perhaps the people and the communities in a society may not want or understand or believe. It operates by force and that's something that conservatives also understand about the origins of the state. It is vested in violence and the threat of violence. It is thoroughly occluded through constitutionalism and through time and through history, and that itself is a great achievement. Though the state is a danger, a danger because a few people can get a hold of it and just a few ideas can wreck the complicated, subtle, beautiful lives of many.

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**...the state is not the only danger to a free country. So too is the accumulation and concentration of power anywhere...**

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It is also about doubt. Doubt about all systems, all systems of thought that claim to have resolved human conditions. For me the great moment in my own discovery of what conservatism really is was Michael Oakeshott's famous essay on Friedrich Hayek. Oakeshott was a great critic of Hayek. Why? Because he turned capitalism into a god. He turned markets into a system

that could not account for the diversity, complexity and subtlety of the great human organism that is our society, our civitas. But also he opposed it because the state is not the only danger to a free country. So too is the accumulation and concentration of power anywhere, whether it be bankers who can eventually, and have in this country, become a rentier class, not contributing what can be contributed and should be contributed by bankers, but a way to really suck value out of the society for no reason other than it has expertise and power which most people cannot understand or fathom or see.

So corporations, too, if they are allowed to grow into monopolies or if they are allowed to abuse their power, they too should be subject to a conservative critique. Because they too can destroy culture and society. They too, through the sheer logic of market capitalism, unearth the very things that conservatives love and support. I was privileged at Harvard to be

taught by the man who wrote the classic book on that, Daniel Bell, a man whom I revere for his intellectual integrity.

I want briefly to talk about two great crises that we are now confronting, which to my mind demand this conservatism, which prove the case that now more than ever this tradition is necessary to rescue our society and indeed our world. And its striking absence from our polity, except, to some extent in this president, the best conservative president since Bill Clinton. And certainly utterly absent and purged from the Republican Party which claims absurdly, preposterously, outrageously the word conservative.

Look at our debt crisis. Now, our debt crisis is caused by many factors and I think we can all agree over many generations both parties should take some of the blame. Part of it, a conservative would say, comes from the long-term consequences of the Great Society, itself a utopian idea that is now foundering upon mathematics and generational change, generational imbalance, created by the ideology that if you just cut taxes somehow growth will occur and deficits won't matter. Two complete ideologies foisted upon this country that have helped undermine it. It was created in many ways with good intent. Who could deny the elderly prescription drugs? It was also created critically by two wars, both of which bankrupted us and were put outrageously again off budget by the Bush administration that trashed whatever conservative principles it ever had.

But there is, I would argue, nonetheless an obvious conservative solution to this crisis, without going over and dividing over who is to blame, without parroting some ideology or the cliches that we hear in debate after debate in this circus of a Republican primary, in which no actual proposals are made to address the actual problems that we have. But our debt is soluble. It is easy to solve. And we all know the solution. It has been done in other countries, it can be done here very easily. In fact here we have a golden opportunity to do it, quickly, easily and restore confidence to the world markets.

And if we truly had a conservative party in this country it would be doing so right now. It would be saying we have a constitutional system with two parties. Both of them have vested interests. Both of them represent legitimate parts of this country. One is fix-

ated on keeping taxes low. One likes to keep its spending, shoveling to its own special interest groups and indeed to the needy. Well, both have to take a hit. Personally I would prefer spending cuts to be three to one to tax increases. But that tax increases have to happen is a mathematical fact. And

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the denial of it, the ability of this deranged Republican Party, to even force this country into an unnecessary default because they will not accept that fact is not conservative, it is destructive, it is radical and it is hostile to the political order and institutions of government.

It can be done, in other words. And at the same time, I might say, there is a great conservative argument for tax reform of the 1986 kind. A tax code loaded with all sorts of reductions for all sorts of special interests. Itself the main reason we have lobbyists in Washington, itself the main reason they

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**...the conservative party seeks to turn this into brinkmanship and push us over a fiscal and financial cliff.**

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remain a cancer on our body politic and keep stopping the people's will from being implemented. That could be done away with if we went to a simple tax.

I prefer a flat one, but you could have three very simple rates, and got rid of all the deductions, you would save so much money you could raise revenues and reduce the rates of taxation which

might act as disincentives to entrepreneurship and growth. It is rare that we come across a solution so clearly suited to our times that would actually restore confidence in this country, increase growth in this country and reassure the world. And yet the conservative party seeks to turn this into brinkmanship and push us over a fiscal and financial cliff.

The second obvious crisis which we are in the 10th year of, 11th year of, is the war, the religious war that has come out of the sad degeneration of many of our great religions into fundamentalist sects. And nowhere I think is the danger clearer and more salient than in the current conflict between Iran and Israel. We have been told, and we know now, that the

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**...religious conflict...is by far the most dangerous form of warfare because the stakes are divine and God demands total sacrifice...**

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Israeli government has said it will not even inform the United States if it launches a first strike upon Iran's nuclear facility. Such a strike would, in my opinion, unleash the third world war. A first strike by the Jewish state upon an Islamic nation is a declaration of religious war at a global level.

For all the success we have had, primarily under this president, in defusing this terrible conflict, this religious conflict — that is by far the most dangerous form of warfare because the stakes are divine and God demands total sacrifice — is terrifying, the prospect of this initiating. And yet we sit here as if nothing is going on. When the ex-chief of the Mossad is going public in Israel and saying the people running this country are crazy and capable

of launching a preemptive war at any moment, we know we are in great danger, especially since the United States would be directly implicated as Israel's chief ally in the Middle East.

Now, you will find no one in this room more hostile to the despicable regime in Tehran, no one. As a blogger I followed hourly, minute by minute, for a month that amazing, astonishing revolution of hope, of youth, of pluralism, of freedom and of faith. I stand with them. I stand with the people of Iran and not with the vicious, vile, murderous, mischievous regime. But I don't believe that it is possible at any point in the future to stop the country with the sophistication and the ability of Iran for developing a nuclear bomb capacity. I do believe they are doing so, even though I keep reminding myself of the fantastic error I made in 2003 in accepting the bullshit that was served up as intelligence of Iraq's WMD's.

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I also don't believe that this regime in Iran wants to commit suicide. I do not understand why mutually assured destruction, which kept the peace in this world for 50 years between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, isn't applicable somehow to the Middle East. Iran does not have a record, even under this vile regime, of actually attacking other countries, except through proxies. Israel has attacked many more foreign countries than Iran on a regular basis. My view is that what we need is George Kennan. What we need is a true conservative approach to this which wants to contain Iran, not the crazy George W. Bush style preemptive war that created such chaos and murder.

I believe we need containment, not preemptive war. Because I think preemptive war will also destroy the State of Israel, completely de-legitimize its existence and possibly lead to the extinction of many of the Jewish people who live in Israel. And I stand before you also a very proud and fervent Zionist. These great crises, and I think they are real, deserve a conservative response. A conservative response that believes in stability, that believes in reforming institutions in line with their current existence, fixing the problems that are obvious and not fixing things that don't need to be fixed.

I want to just correct something. I do not believe in the privatization of Social Security. I've learned my lesson. I did once. I've seen the experiments, both in Britain and in Chile and other places of this. And frankly

looking at the stock market over the last 10 years, I don't think I want to commit the savings and future of so many people to the extraordinary gyrations of that market.

Containment and stability in the Middle East to allow and to permit this astonishing and conservative bubbling up from the young and the idealistic of democracy in the Middle East, which is a fantastic development and is an organic development. The contrast between conservatism and

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**Democracy, a conservative understands, has to come from the culture and not be imposed on it.**

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liberalism as I understand it would be exactly the contrast between what happened in Tunisia and what we tried to impose in Iraq. Democracy, a conservative understands, has to come from the culture and not be imposed on it. And when some Bush officials said we create reality, they were telling us that they had left conservatism far, far behind.

So this is conservatism's moment. It is the time we need desperately for a sober conservative force in the world. We do have one, to some extent, in our president, a man whose temperament and whose judgments are empirical and who is, in my view, a natural Burkean conservative, which is why he is despised so much by the radical party that opposes him.

But one final thing. Conservatism has also been associated in recent years with capitalism. And capitalism, market capitalism, proper market capitalism which means regulated market capitalism according to Adam Smith, is a great and wonderful thing. It is the most and has been the greatest engine for human wealth and material well being that we have ever seen. And the last 10 years have been a miracle, a miracle around the developing world in which people's lives have been immeasurably improved through the engine of capitalism.

It's only this country, forced now to compete with billions of new competitors, that is suffering. And we regard it as a crisis that we are going through a recession which means simply that our wealth collectively is the same now as it was in 2001. I do not want in any way to minimize the misery and difficulty of many people in this country who are struggling to find jobs and make ends meet. I do not. But I do want to say that their standard of living is something that their predecessors in this country for hundreds of years would have thought simply miraculous. That the notion that a society cannot really exist and be stable unless it is constantly gaining money and wealth and material things is an illusion, a false god. Conservatism has always said that there are no solutions to the fundamental human problem except, ultimately, religion. And that is where religion comes in,

as a solace, not a means of power, not something that these fundamentalists wield to control others, but something that truly spiritual people trust in silence to resolve the deepest problems.

And I'll end with Oakeshott's last published piece. He was going to write a piece, another essay, but never got around to it, which would have been really interesting. It was going to be on religion. But this was about politics and about our society now, what he called the *civitas cupiditas*, the society of want, material want. And he decided to tell the story through the great and ancient story told in many different cultures reflecting a deep human truth, before culture, the Tower of Babel. And I want to read it to simply say that conservatism must never be about greed. Greed is a sin. It must be and society must provide material well being. But that is not its goal. That is not our end. That is not what we are here to do.

As a Christian, I believe the amount of riches we build up will actually prevent us from living good and happy love-filled lives. Oakeshott: "In this version of the tale, the curtain rises upon Babel, a city full of the bustle of getting and spending. A vast variety of enterprise is afoot. There is an endless proliferation of wants and satisfactions. The inhabitants are noted for their fickleness. The general atmosphere is one of moderate vulgarity. Art has degenerated into entertainment and the entertainments are apt to be crude.

"The Babelians have no particular spectacular vices and no heroic virtues. They are easily seduced by novelty. If they had Madame de Sévigné's gift of introspection, they too would exclaim, 'dear God, how I love fashion.' They are self-absorbed and self-indulgent. It is indeed a city of freedom, the home of every imaginable lib. Yet a stranger come among them, might have recognized them also to be a difficult people. There is an undercurrent of discontent, an aimlessness and an absence of self-discipline. The stoic and martial virtues are notably absent

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**...conservatism must never be about greed. Greed is a sin.**

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from their character. They are a wayward rather than a listless people. And they are resentful of government. Not as a wild and passionate people maybe, but in the manner of spoiled children. Indeed, such order as there is among them has for so long been maintained by bribes that this is the only control they now kind of tolerate.

In short, Babel is” — let me interject, America is — “a *civitas cupiditas*. And its inhabitants, although not overwhelmingly affluent, are a people devoted to affluence. From one point of view, this tale of Babel is that of a nemesis of greed. I feel the nemesis is at hand.” Thank you. (Applause)

**Mr. Jones:** We are going to have a question period now. I have a question for you before we start, Andrew. Your portrait of America, in an odd way, is an interesting juxtaposition with Thomas Frank’s vision of America. If you were calculating what you agree with and what you don’t agree with, with what you know and have heard of Thomas Frank, how would you describe it?

**Mr. Sullivan:** I think almost all the most interesting liberals, like Garry Wills, are formerly conservative. I didn’t just read your book so I’m having to address some of the broader ideas within it. I think it’s largely right, except I think I would disagree about the solution and I think I would disagree about the way the government might redistribute wealth to overcome this problem.

What I found particularly good about your book was its refusal to condescend to those who believe passionately as a religious question in the sanctity of human life. It is an immensely difficult question. And I think frankly the Supreme Court bears a huge amount of responsibility for the damage that this issue has done to this country by denying the people of this country the democratic ability to make the decision for themselves about what is a terribly difficult and complex moral issue. Which comes to

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**...basically,  
fundamentalism has  
replaced faith.**

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the point of this, that they are tragically, I think, misunderstanding or have been misled about religion. And I do think that you don’t have just a political crisis, you have a religious crisis.

Essentially what’s happened — how am I going to summarize this quickly —

but basically, fundamentalism has replaced faith. I’m not sure these people even believe or even know what it is to believe. I sure don’t. I think anyone really in front of the godhead trying to understand as I do the mysteries of my faith is not in any position to tell anybody else how to live his or her life. And that move, the move from truth to power is the move that Jesus resisted. It’s the move that Jesus resisted to his death.

If God is God, I cannot know him, let alone know him well enough to tell you how to live your life. That core concept of religious freedom is something that I'm afraid has been forgotten, has been bound up in culture, in class and is being used cynically by some, especially in the Republican Party, for political advantage. I say this as a gay man who has been among the first objects of attack, according to these politics. So I think frankly that liberal condescension to which the heartland has a huge part of this too, this is a two-way street of misunderstanding. And what I really hope for Obama was his ability to try and communicate.

And I believe, and I'm sorry if there are a lot of disillusioned Obama-ites here, I believe this president has tried as hard as anybody humanly could to overcome that divide and has met with the most repulsive radical and obstructionist opposition that we've seen in a very long time. (Applause)

I supported Obama not because he was a liberal, but because he was a conservative. You remember my piece in *The Atlantic*, "Goodbye to All That," that he was a post-conflict pragmatic believer, wanting to get a deal with the Republicans. That which the Democratic base hates him for, I love him for. Sorry. So it means, just to finish, it is vital he be reelected, vital. And anybody who has any lack of enthusiasm about that needs to wake up. (Applause)

**Alex Remington:** Thank you, very much. I'm an MPP1. Thank you so much for coming to talk to us. When you mentioned earlier the failure, among others, of the media and the journalistic establishment in the run up to the 2008 financial crisis, of course, the 2003 Iraq war and on and on and on, I wanted to ask what you as a journalist would like to suggest for the American journalism industry. How does it get better?

**Mr. Sullivan:** Get off cable news, number one. No serious journalist should go on that circus. Secondly, the cult of the journalists as celebrity, with all the lucrative speaking gigs that it brings, I mean, the classic journalistic trajectory in Washington is get a low-level reporting job. You can be 21 and a *Politico* sub-minimum wage Internet treadmill and your job is to get on MSNBC for 10 minutes. And then your job is to get famous and then your job is to give speeches and make the real money. That's not what journalists should be doing, obviously.

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**I believe this president has tried as hard as anybody humanly could to overcome that divide and has met with the most repulsive radical and obstructionist opposition that we've seen in a very long time.**

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Journalism in Washington is corrupted by clubbiness, by this consensus that you talked about, which unfortunately is not even that explicitly noted. It is much more dangerous because it is completely subterranean. The notion that journalists have reputations, that we should be up on a pedestal, maybe it's because I am British, I think we're the lowest of the low. I think our job is to say things that no one else will say and to find out things that make people very uncomfortable, the powerful and the powerless. I think our job is not to worry about the impact of what we find out and say but to say what we think and to report what we see.

I remember my own notorious now and widely derided obsession with Sarah Palin in the last election and my obvious question about her absolutely ridiculous story about her alleged fifth child. I wasn't allowed

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**I think our job [as journalists] is not to worry about the impact of what we find out and say but to say what we think and to report what we see.**

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to ask that question in the mainstream media. I talked to lots of other reporters who all wanted to know the answer. I said to one, "Do you think this could be true? It's so crazy." He said, "I think it could be true. I wonder how it gets into the mainstream media." "You are the bloody mainstream media!" (Laughter)

And he said, "Well, don't do it. It will hurt your reputation." Who cares about my reputation? I don't. I should be dead by now. I mean, at 30 years

old I was given six years to live. I don't regard that as a missive to tell lies. Now, I haven't told lies about this, but I have asked questions and demanded answers and no answers were given. And part of the problem and part of what we're seeing is that a whole class of politicians are not being open to the press in ways they really should be.

Sarah Palin ran for vice president as we know without a single press conference. Staggering. You know why? Because each media unit wanted their own exclusive gig, their own little interview they could sit down and peddle as the exclusive get. So none of them got together and said you get up there and you answer everybody's questions until we're done. This is a democracy. You are not a celebrity, you are a servant of the people. And we've forgotten that and we've become rich and smug and clubby. And it kind of makes me sick. And I must say that's one of the reasons I love blogging. I love it. I can do what I want. Every day I can say whatever I want.

Now, if I'm wrong I'm committed to correcting it. And not just in spinage on the second page of *The New York Times* where anyone sees it, but right up there, right up front, right where I wrote the original piece. That's kind of as a process over 10 years. That's pretty great. I have 1.4 million fact

checkers. Within seconds if I get the spelling wrong of some Latin word I will get three emails within an instant. That relationship, I think, is why I believe that online journalism blogging contains within it a revival of citizen journalism in a way that can bring truth back to a discourse.

**Zachary Rosenfeld:** I'm an MPP1 here at the school and fan of the blog, hope to one day win the View From Your Window contest.

**Mr. Sullivan:** You can tell you are at Harvard. (Laughter)

I'm staggered by that contest, by the way, the nerdiness of it is staggering.

**Zachary Rosenfeld:** I was hoping to ask you if you could expound on the idea of utopianism and ideology. And I really wanted to press you on the statement you said, "I'm an avid Zionist." To me I think of Zionism as being a sort of utopian idea of a way of remaking the world into something better for the Jewish people. And I'm wondering what makes that different than something that you would describe as utopian?

**Mr. Sullivan:** That's a brilliant question. Let me explain what I meant. I was brought up with a deep sense of the Holocaust as unparalleled and unique mark of human evil. And it affected me deeply. I visited Israel as a young man and it also affected me deeply. And I think the fact of the matter is it now exists. But I wrote a post, a throw-away line in the blog lately which you might have caught onto, where I compared the euro with the State of Israel. You may think that's elite, but let me explain why.

Both were born out of the second World War, the acts of horror of the second World War really. One was the way to atone for the Shoah and to give the Jewish people finally a safe refuge. And I think that was incredibly noble, but yes, utopian vision. And I don't think of those being conservative would ever have agreed to it. And I happen to think at the time I don't know, but I think I probably would have said no, which I know will make me lots of friends. The euro too, Europe's suicide in the first part of the 20th century, grotesque suicide, and the desire to expunge that from history forever by creating a currency that would unite this entire continent, first of all the economic community.

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**I have 1.4 million fact checkers. Within seconds if I get the spelling wrong of some Latin word I will get three emails within an instant.**

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**...blogging contains within it a revival of citizen journalism in a way that can bring truth back to a discourse.**

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It grew, but as it grew I think it's utopianism accelerated and the euro, I think, was the step too far.

I find the idea of a Europe where you can travel without boundaries, where trade is freely traded, where you can go wherever you want, to work in any country you want, I love the fact that like hundreds of thousands of Poles rebuilt parts of Britain, just love it. It's a fantastic Americanization churned in Europe, which I find, considering its history, inspiring. But the euro is insane. It always was insane. And this is an example where conservatism was right. Thatcher — that was a joke — (Laughter)

— was correct. You can't possibly have a currency union without some kind of political or monetary union, you just can't. And at some point these different countries and cultures are going to reveal themselves and it's all going to go down the tube. Similarly I am always reminded of *The Onion's* headline in its world's worst entry collection, "Jews Seek Homeland: War weary Jews seek homeland between Syria, Egypt, Iran." Of all the places. (Laughter)

But I still think Israel could have survived. I think that the occupation of the West Bank and the disgusting treatment of the Palestinians in the West Bank and the brutal attack upon Palestinians in Gaza and the increasingly deranged fundamentalist nature of its government is potentially fatal. I'm afraid it may have gone past the point of no return.

And here is the great Tower of Babel moment. You brought six to seven million Jews all together in a place where they are now vulnerable to mass extinction. That's the paradox of utopianism.

**Rohad Modar:** I'm an MPP1. It's really awesome to see you. I actually wrote my final thesis in college on Oakeshott, so you were in my work cited.

**Mr. Sullivan:** Fantastic. Congratulations.

**Rohad Modar:** It was an okay paper. (Laughter)

**Mr. Sullivan:** He's a tough nut to crack.

**Rohad Modar:** My background is in social media and digital mobilization. What I'm really interested in is what is the online community missing? How do we find that fine balance between what happened in Tunisia and what happened in Egypt online and someone just updating their status about what they ate for lunch?

**Mr. Sullivan:** Do good journalism is the only answer to that and people will come. Everybody has a blog now called Facebook and it's great. And everyone is communicating, but I don't want to know when my best friend just had a bowel movement. I'm not that interested in the fact he saw something at Target three minutes ago. This is not world-shattering events. On the other hand, there is some fun. I have no problem. The web

is not zero-sum. The great thing about it is non zero-sum. Nothing is at the expense of anything else because it's an infinite expanse. So my view is simply, use this new media, as we are beginning to figure out and I like to think of the Dish as this sort of ice cutter, an experimental, because I have nobody to answer for, because I have total editorial control to try stuff out, like the Iran coverage, which I think between me and a few others, we advanced a whole new form of journalism like watching live events, which is now part of *The New York Times*, part of the need to caucus. Do it and they will come.

**From the Floor:** Hi, my name is Katie and I'm a junior at the college. In one of your recent Ask Andrew videos and also in response to the first question, you mentioned that in the '90s you were a writer with nothing to lose, but now it seems you're a writer with everything to lose, so how have you managed to maintain that same way to challenge everything and change your mind —

**Mr. Sullivan:** I don't have anything to lose anymore.

**From the Floor:** I mean in terms of reputation, readership.

**Mr. Sullivan:** I don't care about my reputation. I know that sounds pompous in a way and I do think that two things affected me in that. One was the HIV diagnosis young when it was still untreatable and surrounded by people I love who I saw dying. My best friend died in front of me. We were diagnosed in the same month and he died two years later and I watched it. I don't think he would want me to bullshit the rest of my life. That's why I wrote *Virtually Normal*. I inscribed the date of the forward the date I found out I had HIV.

There is something wonderful about living posthumously. Because it is actually living now. Like when I read the Gospels I see in Jesus a man utterly without a care for the future, utterly without a care for his reputation. A man who was silent when accused of something he was not guilty of. Now, I'm not equating myself. I'm saying that's my goal and I fail, of course, I'm proud, I feel offended, I'm upset — you know, there have been several debates which I've felt terribly wounded by. And in the '90s in the gay wars it was brutal. And I felt attacked by my own, the people I love.

The other thing is just being out as a gay man. When you're 21, 22, and you want to be a journalist, you have a choice. You knew at that time it could define you forever and marginalize you, or did you want to live your life? And I think I wanted to live my life. It was really about that. Screw it. I couldn't lie. So that's the answer. The truth is none of you in this room

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**There is something  
wonderful about living  
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have anything to lose by telling the truth, except your own humiliation and recognition of one's own fallibility.

**From the Floor:** Hi, I'm Ari. I'm doing a Ph.D. in literature and a huge fan of the Dish.

**Mr. Sullivan:** Thank you.

**From the Floor:** It's a great honor to see you here. Thank you. My question is about a problem you have observed with Obama and the

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**The truth is none of you in this room have anything to lose by telling the truth, except your own humiliation and recognition of one's own fallibility.**

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Republican field and something that supporters of Israel think about Israel and the Arab world and that is, how do you be reasonable with unreasonable people? And what is the tactic? What are the modes of argument, the modes of interaction that can cause positive outcomes in relationships that often seem like they are severely asymmetrical?

**Mr. Sullivan:** This is another brilliant question. I was thinking about this recently because again one comes back to the Gospels, I think. There is a tone of voice that I have to admit I have failed many times to adopt because I'm a bit of an Irishman and occasionally I get testosterone shots. But I think, I hope that over the years I've moderated a little bit in terms of accepting other people's point of view. And my favorite diffusing those moments are — three words come to mind: "Oh, come on," in a way that you allow the person not to lose face, but to somehow also acknowledge they are wrong in some respect. Creating an atmosphere in which that is possible. And I think Obama has it, but I think so few others do at this point.

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**We have got now immovable marriage rights in at least a hefty chunk of this country. And we did so because our arguments were better.**

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In the Gay Rights movement when I started talking about marriage rights, I'll call you out, E.J. [Dionne], you reviewed *Virtually Normal* and you said, "I love this book, except for the marriage stuff." But E.J. is a reasonable person. When I had to go on Christian talk radio, when I had to go up against Pat Buchanan, when I had to go up against the religious Right, the temptation was to be so

angry and upset as to just scream. But I realized that, no, reason will win in the end. If I didn't believe that, I would not believe in liberal democracy. Reason will win in the end, calm reason, constantly, the arguments. I mean, we haven't won every one. We have won the basic principle. We

have got now immovable marriage rights in at least a hefty chunk of this country. And we did so because our arguments were better.

So my experience is that it works. And also in terms of more massive social protests, non-violence, always, against unreasonable people. Passivity, it disarms them. It bewilders them.

**Benjamin Esparza:** Thank you, very much. I'm a Dish-head. I guess I have the pleasure of the last question. I guess to follow up on that point, my question is what do you think the end game is? And in going back to your presentation and the things you have talked about tonight, it seems like there is a general sense of despair and some pessimism about where we are. You made reference to the Tower of Babel and we all know how that ends. So I'm wondering what you think happens from now on? I hate to say it. What's the future is such a cliché question, but where do you see the conservative movement going, where do you see our politics going when reason will win, but these people don't listen to reason and it's scorned people like you who are reasonable?

**Mr. Sullivan:** Yeah, I'm completely an anathema. You know, you have a two-term governor of Utah reelected with 84 percent of the vote who has foreign policy experience with our most important rival power, really interesting ideas on tax reforms, who is polling at one percent and a motivational speaker who has a pattern of serially harassing women as the front runner, or was the front runner until, I don't know, better check your watch. Or we have this preposterous man, Newt Gingrich. I think things can get worse before it gets better. I think the only way they will learn is by being defeated soundly.

I hope that would happen sooner, but unfortunately there was some sort of cultural panic and we may have to wait some time. But look, the debt is inevitable. Either we will go under or we will take measures to stop it. The question is whether we will be proud of ourselves for waiting. And that's also what is happening in Europe. It's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when. So in other words, in all politics, there are simply practical things to be done. And we hope they are done. It's muddling through. There is no end point. I'm an Oakeshottian. There is just now. (Applause)

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you very much, Andrew. Tomorrow morning on the top of the Taubman Building at 9:00 o'clock we will have a panel, including both Thomas Frank and Andrew Sullivan and some other distinguished commentators and analysts who will discuss the things that were said tonight. We encourage you to come. We hope to see you there. Thank you very much. Thank you, Thomas. Thank you, Andrew. This was extraordinary. (Applause)



# THE THEODORE H. WHITE SEMINAR

## NOVEMBER 18, 2011

**Mr. Jones:** Good morning. Welcome to you all and we are very glad to have you this morning with us. Andrew will join us. He told me that he might be a little bit late, but he will be joining us. But I can tell you that we have a very distinguished panel to respond to what we heard last night.

I want to begin by introducing our panel briefly and then we will start. The frame for this gathering is what happened last night, but it's certainly not limited to that and we will be roaming where interest in conversation takes us and we will then open the floor to all of you to be able to take part in the conversation.

On the right is Tad Devine, who is an IOP Fellow here at the Kennedy School. He has, since 1993, been a media consultant. The thing that makes him so particularly interesting is that he has not only done it in the United States but he has had extensive experience abroad as well, and he has been doing strategic advice for national campaigns in Europe and the Middle East and elsewhere.

Next to him is Jill Lepore, the David Woods Kemper Professor of American History at Harvard and the Chair of Harvard's History and Literature Program. She is a contributing writer to *The New Yorker*. Her 2010 book, *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle over American History*, put her in the sweet spot between American history and absolutely contemporary events, I think.

To my right, your left, is of course Thomas Frank, who is the Nyhan Prize winner and who had provocative things to say last night and who I promised I would give the first shot at responding to the same question I asked Andrew last night about where he sees the two of them overlapping and where he sees them differing. I very much look forward to hearing your thought on that.

Next to him is Nia-Malika Henderson, she prefers just Nia. She is a national political reporter for *The Washington Post* and covers the White House, a graduate of Duke and Yale, and she wrote about education and race in the White House for *Politico* before joining *The Washington Post*.

And, finally, our Shorenstein Fellow, Mark McKinnon. Mark, in an odd way, reminds me a little bit of Andrew. He is someone who follows his conscience and his political ideology, which is not easy to characterize. He is a conservative, he has worked for George W. Bush, but he declined to continue working for John McCain, even though he had been in John McCain's campaign, because he declined to work against Barack Obama once he was the nominee.

The thing that he is especially focused on now, however, is nomination of a third party candidate that would be on the ballot in all 50 states, and it is something that makes some people skeptical and makes some people enthralled, but he comes at this particular election season from a different perspective than perhaps any of the rest of the people on this panel.

Thomas, please talk just briefly about where you and Andrew overlap and differ and how you see that.

**Mr. Frank:** I was struck by something that Andrew said, that he refers to himself as a conservative, even though he wants nothing to do with the Republican Party and he thinks that it's gone in this very radical direction. And I remember back in the, what, early 2000's I was writing *What's the Matter with Kansas?* and someone said to me, "Why do you refer to them as conservatives? They are not, they are radicals. They even use this term to describe themselves." Paul Weyrich said we aren't conservatives, we are radicals trying to overturn the existing order.

I also liked the way we were talking about Dwight D. Eisenhower last night, a conservative accepts that things like Social Security are here to stay, that the New Deal in fact has happened, it's not going to be reversed.

But the people that I describe or that I write about all the time are determined to overturn these things and, to go further than that. I also sometimes think that I have a conservative temperament, and this sounds very strange, if you've read what I've written because I'm always regarded as the guy that's outside the consensus, right? I'm way off to the left. My views are totally unacceptable but, at the end of the day, when I was writing the book about Kansas, for example, I would drive around in those towns. I loved that place, I love those people, I don't want their world to be destroyed.

And you wonder when I'm describing that sort of landscape of desolation and futility and all the sort of T.S. Eliot kind of things out there in the Midwest, and whether it's Kansas or whether it's the south side of Chicago, of whether it's Cleveland, or all over America there are places like that today. You ask yourself what did this to these people? What are the forces that did this to these people? And it's not government.

The answer is the market, this sort of golden god that we have built for ourselves and that we bow down and worship and whose every dictate we obey and who we've convinced ourselves is all seeing and all powerful and all wise but that continues to do these dreadful things to people and to cities. So that's where my economic views come from — I don't really like the word conservative anymore — but for a concern for these people and for their way of life, not out of some determination to smash America or some crazy thing like that.

**Mr. Jones:** Well, pardon me if I'm imagining something, but it seems to me that you and Andrew actually view things not exactly the same but very similarly and you come at it from a sort of humanistic kind of perspective. I know his is informed by his Catholicism, but his definition of a conservative is Barack Obama, as you heard him say last night, and when he calls himself a conservative —

**Mr. Frank:** It's surprising.

**Mr. Jones:** — he means that he's a Barack Obama-conservative.

**Mr. Frank:** Well, I was a big fan of Obama, he was my state senator when I lived in Chicago and, like everybody else in Hyde Park, I thought he was a great man. I was very happy to vote for him. I mean I couldn't believe that my state senator was running for president and that he won was an extraordinary thing. And I was very happy to vote for him.

**Mr. Jones:** You part company with Andrew on Obama, I take it.

**Mr. Frank:** Well no, no, no. When Andrew was talking about people who are disillusioned with Obama, I'm one of those people. I'm sure it will look different 20 years from now. We'll look back at the Obama years and think that it was a golden age. But he came into office in 2008 with such high expectations and people expected so much of him that it's almost impossible for him to have lived up to that.

But, on the other hand, he also could have done whatever he wanted in 2008. He had a huge majority in both houses of Congress, the global economy was prostrate. He could have done whatever he wanted and instead he chose to continue the Bush administration's course on the essential economic matters, and I think that was a terrible mistake.

**Mr. Jones:** Well, let me broaden this conversation. I would like to call on Jill first to respond to what she heard last night.

**Ms. Lepore:** Sure, thanks very much. I feel a little odd speaking to the empty chair. (Laughter)

I come from the college and we don't chat over in the Yard, we only read, so I wrote something out, but it really is a square response to the remarks last night, so I feel a little awkward, but we can conjure Andrew here.

I was quite struck, as I think we all probably were, with my sense of gratitude for the judgment and discernment and gravity and eloquence of the remarks that we heard last night. I want to take issue largely with this definition of conservatism because I found that to be imprecise and I think we could all benefit from interrogating that a little bit further. "I do not recognize the Republican Party as a conservative force in society," Mr. Sullivan said in framing his remarks. I agree and I think many of us probably agree with that statement.

I wonder though if we ought not to inquire whether Mr. Sullivan's definition of conservatism isn't rather too capacious to carry the meaning that he places upon it. So, to consider very briefly three elements of his definition which I jotted down as I was following his speech, "Conservatism concerns the tragedy of the human condition," Mr. Sullivan said. Is that not true of all systems of belief? Does that qualify in any respect as a definition? Conservatives believe that social science is an oxymoron, so do most academics I know.

"Conservatism," Mr. Sullivan tells us, "involves doubt about all systems of knowledge." Is that conservatism or is that skepticism? In American political culture today, the greatest act of political courage is moderation. Mr. Sullivan was introduced to us as fearlessly opinionated, as I think Thomas Frank was as well, and neither of these people are answerable to their introductions, which were gracious and generous of course, but

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**...is being opinionated  
in itself worthy of  
admiration?**

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I find fearless opinionability a sort of curious commendation in this age.

Sure fearlessness is to be admired, but is being opinionated in itself worthy of admiration? We live in an era of excess, a preposterous, greedy, exuberant excess of opinion. Most of that opinion is unsupported by evidence or argument. A great deal of it is hostile and inflammatory, deliberately so, in part because American politics has been so entirely unhinged by a set of morally troubling and cynically manipulated ideas about the

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bodies of women and the lives of children.

"Vicious," Mr. Sullivan says, describing our political rhetoric and I agree. I find much of it also to be grotesque, but I'm also constantly taken aback, especially given how much of our politics hinges on what happens inside of women's bodies, by how entirely absent women are from most political debate in the United States. In 2010, 95 percent of all books about American politics published in this

country were written by men, as were nearly 90 percent of the reviews of those books. That is a very narrow conversation.

Nationally, more than 80 percent of all op-eds published in American newspapers are written by men and last night, of course, of all the dozens

of people who lined up to ask questions, excellent, thoughtful questions, only one woman stood up in that room, and yet none of us question that.

This gets me to the last question I would like to raise. As a Catholic, I found myself quite moved by Mr. Sullivan's remarks about how fundamentalism has replaced faith. I wondered though whether there ought not be a place in our shared set of concerns about the world in which we live or worry or even alarm about the replacement of knowledge with opinion. In answer to a question from the audience made with the intention of encouraging a young, earnest, journalist, Mr. Sullivan celebrated what he called a revival of citizen journalism. "The web is not zero sum," he said. But I tally in the list of losses in the transition from the age of print to the digital age these things.

No one reports on the State House anymore, as Thomas Frank remarked. Long-form investigative journalism is nearly dead. If women, as political writers, are nearly absent from the world of books and newspapers, they are all but silent in the political blogosphere. Metrics are hard to come by, but many of you will have remembered the report that more than 85 percent of contributors to Wikipedia are men. Women do not post.

And, finally, we have also witnessed in the span of a dozen years the death of the editor, a cultural role whose invention was one of the greatest accomplishments of the Renaissance and is responsible for much of what has made liberal democracy and the freedoms we enjoy possible. "Only conservatism can rescue our society and our world," Mr. Sullivan argued. I reason differently and I place my fearless faith elsewhere.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Jill, for that very thoughtful response. Nia, let me ask you to respond not only to or give your thoughts about last night but to what you just heard from Jill, as a woman in a journalistic institution.

**Ms. Henderson:** Thanks. Well, I wish I had something typed out, I do not. I didn't go to Harvard and I don't hang around here. (Laughter)

But I did notice, I will say, Jill, as I sat in the audience last night, the lack of diversity in terms of race and gender and certainly notice that all the time as I report on the White House and on the campaign. When I'm at a Tea Party rally, I especially notice it. And it obviously does lead to a different sort of conversation, the fact that there are mainly white men who are in this conversation. I think for me personally, I am often asked what does it mean to be a black woman covering these sorts of things and I'm

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always struck by the fact that no one ever asks a white man what it's like to cover these sorts of things, as if white men don't have race and gender.

In terms of what Andrew said last night, this whole idea of conservatism in crisis, I certainly see it every day in terms of covering this campaign, covering this election, this cast of characters that has cropped up as presidential candidates, as they struggle with some of the bedrock ideas of conservatism. This idea of being hawkish, you see Ron Paul down in South Carolina getting loud cheers when he is talking about an isolationist approach to America's foreign policy. You see Herman Cain, who doesn't seem to know a lot about foreign policy, doing so well in the polls.

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And Mitt Romney is holding fast at 23 percent. I don't know if that's a floor or a ceiling, but it looks like he is the inevitable choice in this campaign and if he does win, some people predict it would be in many ways the end of the Tea Party because he is such a moderate guy. So I thought it was a fascinating talk, very insightful. I don't think that most people would agree that Barack Obama is a conservative. I think some

liberals might agree with that and are certainly upset with the way he has handled the approach to the debt ceiling, the approach to Bush tax cuts, but that's all.

**Mr. Jones:** Okay, thank you. Mark, what did you hear last night?

**Mr. McKinnon:** Well, first of all, let me echo what Jill said, which was last night, between Thomas and Andrew, a lot of gravity, judgment and eloquence. And I turned to my wife Annie afterwards and she said, wow, what a profound evening, and she said you are doing a panel with those guys tomorrow, right? And I said yeah and she said don't talk much. (Laughter)

So I'm going to follow that instruction. But the first thing, I of course had great sympathy for Andrew in the sense that I often feel pretty lonely, as a Republican, and it was nice to have some company out there with Andrew because we share a lot of the same philosophy and thoughts. And so I have, like a lot of people in my life, a political sort of arc — I started off as an anarchist trying to abolish student government at the University of Texas, and then worked for years as a Democrat and then evolved.

There were only two parties in Texas at the time, you were either a Democrat or a conservative Democrat, and the Republican Party grew and as I grew and became more conservative, I became a Republican, worked for George W. Bush. I was attracted initially by the whole idea of compas-

sionate conservatism and his governorship at the time and worked in a very bipartisan fashion. And so I have worked through a number of means, in writing and activism and NGO's, trying to encourage the Republican Party to enforce what I think are ideals that have been long abandoned, that Andrew touched on a lot of last night, and it's discouraging.

I mean it's hard and it's difficult to see where I think the party is headed and where the primaries have taken us, the thin quality of the field of candidates, and I wish a lot of other people had run. And, by the way, I think that our system is largely broken, which creates a lot of frustration, but I'm not giving up and I'm continuing to try to

find ways to kick the shins of the system. And so I'm now coming back to my anarchist phase, making a full 360. And I'm very interested in this Americans Elect idea, which is an alternative nominating process, which I think more than anything just re-imagines democracy.

When the smoke clears from the Republican primaries, everybody is going to be looking around and they are going to go oh, Romney and Obama? Yawn. And they'll say isn't there something else? And the answer is going to be yes, there is going to be this very--

**Mr. Jones:** Mark, explain just in shorthand.

**Mr. McKinnon:** Yeah. The shorthand on this is that there is an organization called Americans Elect which is taking a very innovative and unique approach to an alternative nominating process in the sense that they said, we don't have a candidate but the impediment to any kind of alternative candidacy has always been ballot access and money, and money is a feature of the first. You have to have money to get on the ballot because the parties have made it impossibly difficult and expensive to get on the ballot.

So these folks sort of sat down and said if we could re-imagine democracy, how would we do it? We are trying to encourage good people to address the profound challenges that we have and good people aren't stepping up because of the nature of the primaries and the nature of the political process. How would we do it differently? Well, we would eliminate the primaries, we would use technology. We would create a unity ticket so that you would have a Republican and a Democrat or a Democrat and Republican as a unity ticket to address the hyper-partisanship, which most Americans are really hungry for.

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And all you have to do to be a delegate is sign up on the Internet and all you have to do to vote is be a delegate, and you can nominate anybody you want to. And you go to americanelect.org and there's a lot of detail about this. And so of course there's all the typical questions that I hear, which is it can't happen, it's never happened before, here's why, here's the challenges. And I say, yeah, I get it, it's the same thing I heard, we're never going to elect an African American president.

Just because it hasn't happened before doesn't mean it's not going to happen. And so it's a very interesting, innovative idea at a time when people are very unhappy with the status quo. And the logical question is who is going to run? I don't know the answer to that yet, but I'm quite certain that when you eliminate having to go through the primaries and you don't have to spend millions of dollars to get on the ballot and you can do it for free, it's already done for you, I assure you that some interesting people in this country that are either in office, have been in office before or in the private sector, they are going to step up and go through this Americans Elect process.

**Mr. Jones:** Tom, let me ask you. When you hear this, how do you think this will play in Kansas, one, in terms of the process of nominating? And then let's assume for the moment that there is a credible candidate that emerges from Americans Elect, how will your Kansas react to that?

**Mr. Frank:** Well, it's funny that you turned to me and to Kansas because Kansas is known for its dalliance, its flirtation with third party movements in the 19th century. And I wonder, Mark — you mentioned two big obstacles to third parties. You said how much it costs to get on the ballot and what was the other one you said?

**Mr. McKinnon:** Money. Well, just getting on the ballot and then the money.

**Mr. Frank:** Right, but there's another one that you need to consider and that is that after Populism, the last great third party movement, for those of you who don't know, was this third party movement all over the Midwest and the South and it actually managed to elect people from local officials to U.S. senators. They ran people for president, they didn't do as well at that level, but it looked scary. They were growing and growing and growing and Populism sort of petered out after 1896 and, after it did, just about every state where it had been strong passed laws to make their strategies illegal.

Specifically what they used to do is called fusion. Kansas has always been pretty much a one party state where the one party is the Republicans, and the Populists would fuse with the Democrats, who were a tiny, little party, and so they would nominate somebody and the Democrats would

nominate the same guy, and then the person would win that way. They would be listed on the ballot twice, both as a Populist and as a Democrat.

And in the South, where the Democrats were the traditional party, the Populists fused with the Republicans. And this was very effective and it's now illegal all over America. And the thing is if you were to change those laws, and the two parties won't let you, of course — I mean there's a reason we haven't had third party movements again.

And it would be really interesting, if you were able to overturn those laws all over America and, hell, it would not be interesting, it would be fantastic. It would be America's spring time or something like that. (Laughter)

If we could actually have a range of candidates with all sorts of different views, it would be fantastic, so go get 'em, yeah. (Laughter)

**Mr. Jones:** Tad, what's your take on last night? And, also, if you would, what is your take on the idea of Americans Elect?

**Mr. Devine:** Great, thank you. Well I wrote down my thoughts, like Jill, but not as eloquent, I'm afraid but, nevertheless, I put some thought into it. First let me say that I agree, I wish Andrew were here so he could hear how much I agree with what he had to say last night. I don't know if that makes me a conservative. I'm not, at least as I understand what a conservative is. First, I agree the debt crisis is one of the great challenges that we have to confront today and I agree with what Andrew said, that in order to confront it, both sides have to take a hit. I think that's the only answer.

I agree that the potential conflict between Iran and Israel over Iran's nuclear program is a huge threat to security, not just in the Middle East, in the world, although I don't know if I agree with what he said about mutually assured destruction being something that in fact could maintain security there. I think it's a very different place in a different age today. I agree that, as Andrew said last night, we can not impose democracy on a country or a culture, that it has to come from within and not be imposed from without.

I agree with many of the remarks that he made last night about President Obama, that he has the right temperament, the right judgment and that it's vital that he be reelected, and I certainly support that. And I also agree with what he said last night that President Obama has faced what he called a repulsive radical and obstructionist opposition. I think that's absolutely dead on. I don't know if I agree with his assertion that — and maybe

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this is why I'm not a conservative and I am who I am — I don't know if I agree with his assertion that the Supreme Court denied the ability of the country to make decisions on their own on a deep, moral issue when the Supreme Court decided *Roe v. Wade*. I think the Supreme Court was correct when they decided that a woman has a constitutional right to an abortion and I think the formula articulated in that decision, I remember reading it many years ago as a young law student, I thought was the right balance. The approach to a trimester formula was the right balance to a very difficult problem.

And I agree with what Andrew has said, that the time has come to end discrimination against people in this country on the basis of their sexual orientation, when it comes to the issue of marriage. And I for one would

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be very happy if the Supreme Court decided that the equal protection clause of the Constitution should apply in that instance as well. I think it's perfectly appropriate and maybe that kind of judicial activism is why I'm not a conservative, I'm a liberal.

And, finally, I have to say that I agree with Andrew that we, as a nation, are too devoted to affluence and materialism. And I can tell you, and I think

I heard this from Jill, as a practicing Roman Catholic myself, I share many of the sentiments about my church and its profound problems. So I agree with much of what he and also what Thomas said last night. I very much enjoyed their comments and their insights and agree with many of their conclusions.

And as to third party and Americans Elect, I will tell you that I have never seen a time in the 31 years that I've worked on political campaigns that America is more ready to move out of the two party system. The dissatisfaction that is expressed with the direction of the country, the profound dissatisfaction, I think I counted something like 35 national polls since the middle of the summer where the wrong track is net 50 to 70 points higher than the right track. It was unbelievable.

I see this when I go to Bolivia and Colombia and Honduras and third world countries where people live in abject and dire poverty. You can understand why they feel their country is going in the wrong direction. But to see it in the United States of America, I think it presents a tremendous opening. And last year where here in New England I worked on two campaigns for governor, one in Rhode Island for Linc Chafee, who I worked against in 2006 when he was a Republican but worked for when he

became an Independent, when he was elected governor, and the other very remarkable campaign for Eliot Cutler, who was unknown, never ran for office and came within a couple of thousand votes of being elected governor of Maine.

It showed me that there is a tremendous opening for candidates outside the structure of a two party system to step forward. Linc Chafee announced for governor by saying he was going to raise taxes. Eliot Cutler made it clear to everybody that there were no easy solutions to problems but he was willing to take them on. That really cut through and in a three way race you can win with 35, 36, 37 percent of the vote, so I think there is a real opening and I think we may see it.

**Mr. Jones:** We are very fortunate to have E.J. Dionne with us this morning. E.J. is a member of the Shorenstein Center's Advisory Board and to have him at this table is a great pleasure and honor and, E.J., I would like to get your response to what you have heard.

**Mr. Dionne:** Thank you, although I feel like after Jill's wonderful presentation, I'm just adding to the problem. I'm a guy, I write books and op-eds. (Laughter)

**Mr. Dionne:** And I'm speaking up. I just want to say first on Jill, it's a real honor to be with you. Everybody should read *The Whites of Their Eyes* but if you read nothing else in that book, you should go to the end where Jill talks about the problems with originalism and points out that in the Revolutionary Era, at the time the Constitution was written, where she couldn't vote, she probably wouldn't have a public voice, she wouldn't be writing books, and also she would be wearing some kind of clothing that she wonderfully described, I can't remember, and it's a beautiful paragraph that I think is the best skewering of originalism I've ever read, so it's a real honor to be here.

I'll skip Americans Elect. Mark knows I have some differences with that, but that's for another day. One other quick thing. It's great to be here with Andrew and Tom and I told Tom that many, many years from now when he writes his memoirs, they should be called "Outside the Consensus." I would love to read them.

I think the theme might be described by Bill Clinton and the theme is, it depends on what the meaning of the word conservative is. I was grateful for Andrew's talk because I actually think that one of the deepest flaws in our current politics is the absence of certain kinds of conservatism, and that I think there are only two dominant forms of conservatism right now that

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have driven out all the others. The dominant forms are a kind of radical individualism that goes back to the Gilded Age. It's rooted in the thinking of Hayek. I was happy that Andrew mentioned that his hero, Michael Oakeshott, was critical of Hayek and its radical individualism that I think is very unusual in the American tradition. It really may define the 35 years of the Gilded Age, but it doesn't define 235 years of our history.

And then the other kind is a very particular kind of religious conservatism rooted in a very particular kind of Evangelical Protestantism. There is a kind of Catholic conspiracy going on here. I wish our friend Richard Parker were here today. But it's a very particular kind of Evangelicalism because, as Tom has written, Evangelicals are actually at the forefront of progressivism. William Jennings Bryan was a deeply progressive figure and a lot of the opposition to Darwinism was an opposition to Social Darwinism, which was an attempt to say survival of the fittest is the best way to do public policy, which the country decided, after a while, was a disastrous way to do it.

What we are missing are a whole variety of conservatisms that I thought Andrew spoke for very well. We are missing a kind of communitarian conservatism. Indeed conservatism arose as a critique of individual-

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**...compassionate  
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ism and I miss communitarian conservatism. We are missing compassionate conservatism, and I was very critical, as Mark knows, of President Bush. But when you think about Rick Perry, President George W. Bush looks like Hubert Humphrey and that, at the heart, at least compassionate conservatism acknowledged some role for government and the public sphere to lift up the poor. And you see someone like Mike

Gerson, my colleague and President Bush's speech writer, who feels very marginalized within the conservative movement as it exists today.

We are also missing a traditionalist conservatism that Andrew spoke for, Burke, Robert Nisbet, his hero Oakeshott. I think Bill Buckley would now be too left wing for the current conservative movement. And traditionalist conservatism is really about balance and that's I thought what one heard at the heart of Andrew's talk. It was a talk about balance between the public sphere and private sphere, between government and business, and so while I think of myself as proudly — I use the word a lot more now that liberals don't use it much — I think of myself as a liberal or even a social democrat, but there is this kind of conservatism that I think is so valuable to humankind, and has been valuable to our country, that's totally missing.

And I want to add a third vote for Ike, the president who gave us the interstate highway system, which has environmental issues but was a heck of an investment project, and also allowed millions and millions of people to go to college, including me, through the student loan program. And I agree with Tom that Ike is underrated and I wish we had conservatives of that sort around right now. So I was grateful for Andrew's provocation because I think he actually went to the heart of a problem in our democracy. And I'm sorry to add to the percentage of wrong, Jill.

Can I say one great thing for the record? The reason I like this kind of conservatism, Andrew mentioned last night that I wrote that column about his book, which I did. And the reasons I changed my mind on gay marriage were the conservative arguments made by Andrew, Jonathan Rauch and David Brooks. And the conservative argument

for gay marriage is if you believe in fidelity and commitment, you ought to want to encourage fidelity and commitment, and I actually wrote a long piece quoting myself and then criticizing myself.

But I think that this is an interesting case where conservatism ended up being the ally of change and it changed the minds of a lot of people, including me.

**Ms. Lepore:** First of all, I'm happy that men speak up, I just want women to speak up too. I have no blame for you for skewing the percentages, I just want women to have a chance to speak.

Just to offer up a historical vantage on some of these questions because we are defending the Vatican over here. With regard to the remarks that Andrew made last night, some of which have been echoed here today, the conventional narrative about Roe, that is largely accepted by Left and Right is that the court overstepped.

People quibble with that or argue, but the retreat of the Left in the decades since Roe has been a consequence of backlash that the court overstepped at that moment. That is simply not borne out by the historical evidence. What is borne out by the historical evidence, I just have been working on this very long essay for *The New Yorker* last week about the long history of the debate over contraception, birth control and abortion in this country, what is borne out by the evidence is that the reconfiguration and

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**...the reconfiguration and re-invention of the Republican Party that began in 1969 with Kevin Phillips and the emerging Republican majority was a very deliberate attempt, largely at the behest of Nixon's advisors, to ask Nixon to reverse his position on family planning and abortion.**

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re-invention of the Republican Party that began in 1969 with Kevin Phillips and the emerging Republican majority was a very deliberate attempt, largely at the behest of Nixon's advisors, to ask Nixon to reverse his position on family planning and abortion.

There's a series of memos from 1969, 1970, '71, '72, all describe Buchanan and Haldeman and other of Nixon's advisors convincing Nixon that he needs to abandon family planning, which he had signed Title X into law, that he needed to reverse his position on the legalization of abortions on military bases, which he does, and that the way to do this, the way to destroy the Democratic Party, gearing up for

his campaign to reelection, was to take the Catholic votes from Democrats, that there is a Catholic moral compulsion around this issue, that it was a growing and a gut issue with Catholics and that the future of the Republican Party was to be found in taking a moral position on the question of abortion that echoed the language of the Catholic Church.

And so in 1971 Nixon publicly reversed his position on family planning and abortion, used the phrase the "sanctity of life," which before then had never entered the Congressional Record or the Federal Register, has

no purchase in American politics in any way whatsoever before that moment. It is not the court. The court is actually largely following public opinion. Sixty-eight percent of Republicans in 1972 supported a woman's right to choose, 58 percent of Democrats did. Republicans supported abortion more than Democrats did well into the 1980's. It doesn't become a partisan issue in Congress until 1979 with the Moral Majority and the recruitment of Evangelicals to the Republican Party.

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**The Republican Party and modern conservatism, so far as it aligns itself with the Republican Party, is a consequence of that moment in 1970 when Nixon decided to define the party around a single issue that he thought could destroy the Democrats.**

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quence of that moment in 1970 when Nixon decided to define the party around a single issue that he thought could destroy the Democrats. We have been left with that legacy ever since, it defines what we have by way of a Democratic Party. Democrats foolishly, stupidly allowed their party to be completely defined by this issue without engaging with it in a substantial way and it is not the fault of Harry Blackmun and the Supreme Court.

**Mr. Jones:** Very interesting. Jill, let me ask you to give us your opinion about the viability of the Tea Party as a third party, as something that could be an enduring element of American politics, or how do you see the Tea Party going in this next election year and beyond?

**Ms. Lepore:** I think the Tea Party involves a lot of people quite earnestly and sincerely distressed with the direction of the country and having a kind of formless frustration that is very easily manipulated by the media and has been I think quite shamelessly manipulated by the media. I don't see the Tea Party as having, kind of organizationally or structurally, the strength of, say, 1880's Populism. It lacks a kind of leadership that could accomplish that. It has more structure than, say, the Occupy movement I think in many ways, but I don't think that it will be the third party.

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**...we are in a period of such political disequilibrium that there could very well be a third party, but I don't think that the Tea Party will be it.**

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I completely agree with Mark and also with Tad that we are in a period of such political disequilibrium that there could very well be a third party, but I don't think that the Tea Party will be it.

**Mr. Jones:** Mark, what will happen to the Tea Party if Romney is the nominee?

**Mr. McKinnon:** I think that they are going to find a way to express themselves in some manner. They are not going to be happy with Romney, they are not going to be satisfied.

**Mr. Jones:** Would they take Americans Elect as their —

**Mr. McKinnon:** It would be awful hard to see how they would, but I think it's highly likely that they will consider a third party route. It will be difficult for them to do it through Americans Elect just because they would have to be a unity ticket and I don't think they would ever accept that, and that's part of the design of Americans Elect is to make sure that doesn't happen. But it's hard for me to imagine they are just going to sit by and watch this go by, I mean I think that they'll try and field a candidate.

I think they are more organized than Jill observed. I saw Mark Meckler up here recently, when he was with Larry Lessig during the Constitutional

Convention. I was listening to what he was saying in terms of how the Tea Party has evolved or at least their organization of the Tea Party Patriots, which is the really three legs of the stool. Two of them are sort of consultant driven, but their organization is a true grassroots organization and they can flip a switch and it's hundreds of thousands of people and I just can't imagine how they are going to support Romney.

So they are going to do something and I'm not sure what it is, so then it gets to that whole ballot access issue and money and they would have to have the funds to get on the ballot but after two years, they can move pretty quickly.

**Mr. Jones:** Nia, do you have any sense of what the White House's thinking is about how this election will proceed if Romney is the nominee and where the Tea Party will go from there?

**Ms. Henderson:** The White House is focused on Romney, thinking that he will be the nominee. Romney just rolled out a campaign where he says that Obama and the White House and Democrats are obsessed with him. And of course that's just another way of him saying that he is the inevitable nominee. He can't say that so he says that the White House is obsessed with him. They obviously think it's going to be a really tough election, this whole idea of Romney being a moderate, which he actually is, could actually help with Independents.

They are doing two things, one of which is trying to tie him to the Tea Party, but also paint him as a flip-flopper which in many ways are contradictory strategies, but they are obviously wanting to paint him as a Tea Party guy, as a radical. He doesn't touch the Tea Party. He had a rally a couple of months ago where he finally went to his first Tea Party rally. He did not say the words Tea or Party in that speech, so I think it's probably a smart strategy for him.

I think the Tea Party obviously wants to win. We have seen, over this last couple of months, them falling in love, first with Donald Trump, with Herman Cain, with Rick Perry. They seem to not be able to make up their minds, but I do think the Tea Party is a much more serious organization than people give it credit for and I think that's been one of Rick Perry's blunders, this whole idea of approaching, running for the White House in a very unserious way.

I think that oops moment, more than anything, it sort of gave the impression that he could, just by his own bluster and record in Texas, could win this group over, and they have very much decided that he doesn't have the intellectual timbre to be their candidate and be their spokesperson. I think in terms of the general election, Romney, if it is him, people are thinking that he would have to get a number two, a vice presidential nominee, that is of the Tea Party's liking, whether or not that's

Mark Rubio or someone else, and I think that's what the White House is thinking.

They are training all of their energy and their strategy on Mitt Romney. If you look at all of the press releases that the DNC sends out, none of them are about these other candidates, they are all focused on Romney.

**Mr. Jones:** Do you think they take this Americans Elect thing seriously?

**Ms. Henderson:** That's a good question. It hasn't gotten much press yet, but I just emailed my editor to say we should do something on it. I know there's a spread in *Newsweek* recently and I think it's probably going to get a lot more attention, but I don't sense that yet, that the Democrats or the White House are taking this seriously yet, but I think as time goes on they probably will look at this a little more clearly.

**Mr. Jones:** Having Tad and E.J. here, there's no way I can't ask you what you see happening with the Tea Party and with the impact of the nomination of Romney.

**Mr. Devine:** I think Romney is going to be the nominee of the Republican Party because he is the only person who put in place a mechanism to receive a nomination. You actually have to be able to go to these states, organize, win delegates and he is the only one credible, I think, on that score. Now, what is our side, the Democratic side, going to do? A lot of people say, well the Obama campaign is going to do what Bush did in 2004 to Kerry, make him out to be a flip-flopper, go after him.

I think they are actually going to do what Bush did in 1988 to Michael Dukakis, another campaign that I had the privilege to work for and observe up close. What the Bush people did in '88 against us and, remember, when we left the Democratic Convention in Atlanta, Dukakis had a 17-point lead, it was a very good moment in time. And what they discovered through their research was that if they could accumulate negatives on Dukakis, a series of negative attacks, they could depress that support and convince people that he was unready to be president. And I think that's precisely what we are going to see from the Obama campaign, certainly that Romney has been a flip-flopper.

How do you go from the left of Ted Kennedy? I worked for Senator Kennedy here in that election in 1994 and Romney decided when he ran he was going to go to the left of Weld, that was the model. Weld beat Silber in the governor's race in '90 by essentially being the progressive. Romney did the same, went to the left of Kennedy on a broad series of issues, fundamental issues, abortion rights, gay rights, real things that if you are going to change your position, I would argue that it's a fundamental change.

They are going to do that, but they are also going to do other things. They are going to do what we did in '94 here in Massachusetts and look

to his record in business and the job destruction that went along with it. I spent a day in Marion, Indiana, in 1994 interviewing striking workers at a plant. Let me tell you their testimony against Romney was devastating and that was something that people in Massachusetts got a chance to see firsthand.

They are also going to I think say that Mitt Romney was a bad governor, that's why Massachusetts was 47th in job creation during his tenure, and I think what they will attempt to do in the course of the campaign is to accumulate those negatives on top of Romney. It's not just going to be the straight sort of hit that it was in other campaigns. And when they get

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**...Mitt Romney was a bad governor, that's why Massachusetts was 47th in job creation during his tenure...**

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enough negative on top of him, enough doubt created about him, I think there will be real openings for the president, particularly a president who has, frankly, a lot more states to go to in 2012 than we had to go to in even 2000 or 2004.

**Mr. Jones:** E.J.?

**Mr. Dionne:** First of all, I'm reluctant to follow Tad, who has worked on every Democratic campaign since Al Smith, I think. (Laughter)

I don't know if you worked for Bryan too but —

**Mr. Devine:** Every losing one. (Laughter)

**Mr. Dionne:** Outside the consensus is always a better place for a pundit to be because if you predict what everybody else is predicting, what good is that? And so I'll tell you on Romney what strikes me is that no matter how many gaffes some other candidate makes, the support isn't going to him. So Perry comes down, the support goes to Herman Cain. Herman Cain starts coming down, the support goes to Newt Gingrich. What that tells me is that there is a significant part of the Republican Party primary electorate, probably as high I think as 50 percent, if you add all this up, that just doesn't want to get to Mitt Romney.

And so while on paper you say, well, who else is going to win the nomination and you end up with Romney, it just strikes me as a much more fluid situation than that conventional wisdom suggests. I even think that there is an outside possibility of a kind of draft write-in for someone else, although the last time you really saw that I think was in 1964 for Henry Cabot Lodge up in New Hampshire, so it's a very hard thing to do. Nonetheless, I wrote that in a blog and a very prominent conservative, who never has sent me a note agreeing with anything, sent me a note saying yeah, that's right, and then went on to describe a write-in campaign for Jeb Bush or someone else.

So there is a sentiment in the Republican Party, but I agree with my colleague that the paradox is what hurts Romney in the primary may help him with the election, that flip-flop is dangerous but it also allows moderate voters who are mad to say, well he can't be that bad, he probably doesn't believe any of that stuff he said in the primary, and that could actually be helpful. But I think that if the economy got worse, I mean Angela Merkel could tank Barack Obama's chances.

If Europe got really bad and tanked our economy, it will get very hard for Obama. Nonetheless, I think things have gotten a lot better for him in about three months. He is finally making an argument which he didn't make for about six months of this year about the economy. He is pursuing a bit of a Harry Truman strategy against the Republican Congress or against Republicans in Congress. Congress is at nine percent in the polls, at least in the worst one I've seen, and so I think that gives him a shot.

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**...the paradox is what hurts Romney in the primary may help him with the election...**

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And just real quick on the Tea Party and Americans Elect. On the Tea Party, I don't view the Tea Party as an independent movement, I view it as the right end of the Republican Party and a lot of the people, Kate Zernike of *The New York Times* also wrote a good book on the Tea Party and if you read Kate's stuff, what you see are people who have always been active on the right end of the Republican Party and were energized both by their anger at Bush and their anger at Obama's election but they are still, at heart, Republicans. And the polls always show that they are overwhelmingly Republicans, so I don't see them as a third party movement.

And I think, lastly, Tom's point about fusion points to the difficulties with America Elects, which is, with fusion, your voting for your first choice doesn't guarantee the election of your last choice, but we don't have fusion. We don't have transferable votes where you can vote one, two, three. We've experimented actually this year in some cities with that, and so the problem with Americans Elect is if you put up two moderate candidates, and while I don't agree with Andrew exactly that Obama is a conservative, I do think he is pretty middle of the road, I think the likelihood is that you split the center-left vote and a lot of people who would vote for the Americans Elect candidate would end up electing their last choice.

And lastly, but I don't want to open a polemic on this, I do think Americans Elect is like the privatization of the party system, that somebody has bought valid access, and that raises some democratic, small "d" democratic theory issues and practice issues that I think we'll debate as this goes forward.

**Mr. Jones:** Do you want to respond quickly, Mark?

**Mr. McKinnon:** I look forward to that debate. Like I said, this is a bold experiment, and it's brand new and there's a lot of angles to it that need to be and will be considered. Well, I mean at the end of the day half the people that I talk to argue that it's going to hurt Obama, half the people argue that it will hurt Romney. I think there are convincing arguments on either side. There's also a mathematical exercise that I can send to you that Doug Schoen did that says it won't do either.

But my view is that the only thing it's really going to spoil is the strange hold that the two party system has on this country that's led to things being as broken as they are. And I think that's a good thing, so I'm for anything disruptive. And I think the notion that having more voice and more choice is a good thing and it means more democracy and if there is more democracy, I think that's going to lead to a good outcome.

**Mr. Dionne:** Well, just one quick point, and this I think Mark and I agree on (the reason I'm talking fast is I've got to catch a plane so I can do my day job) but it depends on who they nominate. I mean a certain kind of candidate could hurt Romney, another kind of candidate or whoever the Republicans nominate, a certain kind of candidate could hurt Obama, and we don't know for sure who that would be.

**Mr. Jones:** Tom, how do you see the election season shaping up, assuming Romney is the nominee? Or do you also share E.J.'s speculative idea that that may not be what happens?

**Mr. Frank:** I'm planning on getting a job with President Bachmann when — (Laughter)

Look, I just finished writing about the conservative resurgence. We are using conservative in the actually existing sense here, the conservative resurgence since 2008, and it's an astonishing thing to me. And we've been sort of tiptoeing around this issue but we haven't really got to it, right to it, that what you saw in 2008 was this sort of catastrophic failure of a deregulated system, of this great economic experiment that we have been engaged in for, what, since the 1970's in this country.

And you saw it fall flat on its face and almost bring the world economy down with it and, by and large, the most, the loudest, most vocal response to that has been this movement demanding more deregulation. It is so strange, okay? This is the paradox and the peculiarity that we need to be looking at. It is very puzzling, is it not, sir?

**Mr. Jones:** It is.

**Mr. Frank:** All right then, so what's the answer? (Laughter)

So the way I looked at the conservative resurgence and the Tea Party movement is by trying to understand this in terms of what happened in the 1930's, the last time we had a very similar response, and people turned

against orthodoxy then. We were talking about Galbraith last night. Go back and read Richard Parker's biography of Galbraith and the way the world turned on the orthodoxy of the preceding century and 1930, '31, '32 is a remarkable thing. They didn't embrace orthodoxy, they didn't say, yeah, go gold standard, they were like, to hell with this stuff. And there was a revolt among economics graduate students here at Harvard. All over America people were tossing out the old orthodoxy, not embracing it. What we have done is very peculiar. Okay, so how do you explain it?

One of the things that intrigues me the most about the Tea Party movement and about the conservatism generally, just over the course of the last two years, first of all, I should say when they did this they made the signal very early on, in '09, that this is the direction they were going to go. Remember? All the pundits were saying the Republican Party is finished, they've got to moderate themselves, they've got to move to the center, all that stuff. They didn't do it. And they succeeded by not doing it. They did exactly the opposite. They went out to this crazy extreme and that yielded them this fantastic victory in 2010 by going the opposite direction. That's very strange. All of these things, very peculiar, what explains it?

I think that one of the things that these guys do very well is they sound like a radical movement. They sound like, on the surface, like a kind of left wing movement out of the 1930's. And I've got this whole book filled with evidence of this, but the classic example is Glenn Beck. One of the big problems that they are having now is that he is not on TV anymore. I mean you go to enough Tea Party rallies and they are all just mouthing things that they saw on his TV show the day before or two days before, or something like that. It was a giant projection of Glenn Beck and without him, without the leader, I don't know what they are going to do.

He is a really intriguing guy in all sorts of ways but one of the things about him that's very intriguing to me is the way that he mimics left wing speech.

I mean I'll give you one example. You know who Adbusters is? They are responsible in some ways for Occupy Wall Street. For years, when I used to do *Baffler* magazine, I read Adbusters and I would correspond with those guys and one of their sort of trademark

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**All the pundits were saying the Republican Party is finished, they've got to moderate themselves...They did exactly the opposite... and that yielded them this fantastic victory in 2010...**

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**Glen Beck...mimics left wing speech.**

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things was they had an American flag where they had replaced the stars with corporate logos. They called it like the corporation flag or something. It was their cynical way of saying, yeah, America is just the land of corporations. So on Glenn Beck's program some time in 2009, here he is, he's got an American flag and with this great sweep of his hand, wipes all the stars off of it and starts replacing them with corporate logos, making exactly the same point but with the politics 180 degrees different. A fascinating guy.

Anyhow, I could go on about this for hours and hours and hours, but the critical point is this. The reason they were able to do this and they succeeded with this is because of the complete absence of an actual left wing movement that would be using this language, like you saw in the 1930's. That didn't happen this time around. Well it finally did, the Occupy Wall Street people, and that has really problematized the Tea Party movement's critique by giving them some competition.

One of the things that made them so powerful and effective, I mean even to someone like me, even to a cynical leftist like me, I go to their rallies and there's something very moving about it. One of the things that made that possible was that they didn't have any competition, they were the only game in town. They had the park all to themselves with their tri-corner hats and their megaphones, but now they don't anymore and that's going to be very difficult for them.

**Ms. Lepore:** Can I just respond to that?

**Mr. Jones:** Sure.

**Ms. Lepore:** I'm dying to read the book, I can't wait to hear the end.

**Mr. Frank:** Oh, the title, the title, it's called —

**Ms. Lepore:** It's not *Outside the Consensus*?

**Mr. Frank:** No, it's called *Pity the Billionaire*. (Laughter)

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**...all politics is an argument about the relationship between the present and the future.**

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**Ms. Lepore:** So looking forward to the fuller explanation, but I do think there is a difference between the Tea Party and the Occupy movement in this regard, and it has to do with your bewilderment at this failure to reject orthodoxy at this moment in 2008–2009. And that is to say the rejection of ortho-

doxy requires a historical argument, it requires a sense of history. Glenn Beck's whole schtick was, and he said this again and again and again, I am America's history professor. Every time he got on television and still when he is on the radio he is giving a history lesson.

He is supplying his constituency with a historical argument that justifies a course of policy. All politics involves a historical argument, all politics is an argument about the relationship between the present and the

future. That's a historical argument, it requires a sense of the past. Historians are different, historians talk about the relationship between the past and the present. Beck just kind of meshes this all together and just does his own thing, uses history that is essentially only a political argument.

But Occupy does not have an official historian in that way. In other words, in the '30's there was actually a whole generation of scholars who were interested in thinking about history and thinking about how we got into this mess and making a historical argument offering a critique of the gold standard that was based in evidence and based in argument and that wasn't blather and bluster and politics, so there was a separate kind of discourse that was going on.

The Tea Party still does have that from Beck and there's a giant, and many people have written about this, a fairly sizable industry of the fake textbooks, basically. There's the fake textbooks and there's the fake historian. And if you feel that we are at a moment of unprecedented historical crisis and there's only one direction to go, that is because you have a sense of history to guide you. The Occupy people don't actually have a sense of history and they have no one talking to them about the past.

**Mr. Frank:** And they don't have a TV network either.

**Ms. Lepore:** Right.

**Mr. Jones:** Let me open it up to your questions.

**John Reidy:** This is for any member of the panel that wants it, but let's assume you've been given two minutes with President Obama and that you are very anxious to get him reelected, what things would you suggest for him to do in the remaining 12 months? Let's assume that Europe doesn't collapse and that the economy is no worse than it is now.

**Mr. Jones:** Tad and Mark, I'm going to ask you to pretend you want him to win. I don't know whether you do or not.

**Mr. Devine:** Well, I would tell the president to talk about jobs because even if you are not delivering jobs, even if the economic performance of the country is in decline, if people believe that you actually are in there with them and care and are concerned about the

things that are top in line with them, that are affecting their lives so centrally, and that you are fighting for them on that issue that matters to them the most, you have a much better chance of winning support from them.

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**The Occupy people don't actually have a sense of history and they have no one talking to them about the past.**

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**...I would tell the president to talk about jobs...**

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So I, as a Democrat, am very pleased that for about six weeks now, and E.J. alluded to this, the president has seemed to maintain a pretty singular focus on talking about jobs.

I don't think it's a lot more complicated than that, to tell you the truth, and these winning campaigns tend to be simple and if you could simplify it and sort of stay in that space, that's the zone the voters are in, I would

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**...the most important attribute that voters look at is the perception of strength.**

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get in that zone with them and I would stay there and try to occupy that as much as possible.

**Mr. Jones:** Mark?

**Mr. McKinnon:** When voters vote for a president they vote on a constellation of attributes, not on single issues, and by far the most important attribute

that voters look at is the perception of strength. And it's really interesting, when we were running against you guys in 2000, even when we were a little bit under water in September, that attribute was still strong and that gave us confidence that we would prevail in the end. But that's the thing we watched the most and so if I am working for the president, I'm thinking how do we strengthen that particular asset that I believe has suffered for a whole variety of reasons that we could talk about, some uncontrollable, others more in their control.

But the one that was in their control that I do fault the president for is the failure to adopt the recommendations of his own commissions, two of them that put forward very muscular, comprehensive ideas and to have put those commissions together, set them up and then to walk away from them I thought was a huge mistake, from a policy perspective but I think from a political one as well.

And I think that everything that we know about the Super Committee is that it's going to be another train wreck and I think once again people will say geez, this is supposed to be the president's job, and he gave it to the commission, and the commission has kicked it over to the Super Committee and then the Super Committee hasn't done anything. And so it's just going to be this additional baggage of perceptions among the public that the government and the administration is incapable of doing anything.

So my advice would be to step in in whatever capacity to say, listen, we are going to make the bold decision, we are going to tackle entitlements, we are going to raise taxes, we are going to take half a loaf from each side and that's the way we've got to go and everybody has got to do it and understand that there are potential political consequences. But, in the end, I think those consequences are small, relative to the greater perception

that the president will step in, do the right thing, make the hard choice, which is what leadership is really about.

When you look at successful leaders over time, usually they are not successful in the moment. In other words, they have done the politically unpopular thing that over time makes them more popular.

**Mr. Jones:** Tad, how do you respond to that?

**Mr. Devine:** I agree. I think the president has to look for and try to seize every opportunity to demonstrate strong leadership.

**Mr. Jones:** Well, what about this Super Committee issue?

**Mr. Devine:** Well, listen, I think that Congress is broken. There's a reason that their job report was nine percent, it doesn't work anymore. And I'm not in the room with these guys but it doesn't, from a distance, it doesn't look like they are going to resolve anything at all.

**Mr. Jones:** George?

**From the Floor:** I'm very glad that people started mentioning a little bit about Occupy because I was beginning to think that this was taking place in 2010. I think there's a fundamental conservatism about the Occupy movement. I think that, as some people have said, the rule of law is now a radical position but it's also a conservative position. Washington, D.C. Occupy came out yesterday with an economic plan that is also fundamentally conservative, so I would like you to talk about, if you can, the conservatism of the Occupy movement.

**Mr. Jones:** Let me ask you, Jill, do you have any thoughts on that?

**Ms. Lepore:** Well, I haven't seen this economic plan, so I would be at a disadvantage.

**Mr. Jones:** Well, fortunately none of us have either, so you are not —

**Mr. Frank:** I haven't seen it either, but I know one of their big demands, the Chicago Occupy people, their demand number one, as a matter of fact, is to bring back the Glass-Steagall Act. And maybe that doesn't sound conservative to you because it was a radical change when it was done in 1933, but think about the banking industry that that gave us, it

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**When you look at successful leaders over time, usually they are not successful in the moment...they have done the politically unpopular thing that over time makes them more popular.**

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**...bring back the Glass-Steagall Act...that is a supremely conservative thing. They don't want frenzied finance.**

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was profoundly boring. It was very, very safe. It was dressed in black pin-stripe suits or whatever.

In some ways, that is a supremely conservative thing. They don't want frenzied finance. They don't want Wall Street slicing and dicing, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah and all the crazy things that Wall Street has done for the last 20 years. Can I talk about what I would tell Obama to do?

**Mr. Jones:** Sure.

**Mr. Frank:** First of all, strong leadership, that's fine. The thing is look at the historical position we are in, he has got to come out and say it bluntly, the old order is discredited. The things that we've been doing for 30 years got us into this mess, and I know that's a big change for him, that so far he has not wanted to do that. He has not wanted to break with the past, but I think he has to take a leaf from the Roosevelt administration. The unemployment problem — start up a new WPA. All this talk about job creation has to come from the private sector? No, it doesn't.

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**You fix the problem of  
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the situation that it is...**

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It's really easy, it's an easy problem to solve, and then the other thing that we've been talking about, the debt crisis — I know in Washington, D.C. everybody thinks it's a terrible thing, but have you looked at the interest rate on government bonds these days? It would be an easy thing to do something like the WPA, to spend, spend, spend. You

fix the problem of the deficit when the economy is doing well, certainly not when it's in the situation that it is, but propose it. The Republicans will shoot it down of course, but everybody has fond memories of the WPA. Even Ronald Reagan liked the WPA. Talk about that.

And then, lastly, talk about the power of monopoly. When I look at the Tea Party movement, when I look at the rank and file of the conservative movement, the people who are angriest, it's always small business. Now, small business people, and E.J. is not here anymore, but those who know about the Bryan campaign, small business was a huge part of Populism and a huge part of the New Deal for that matter.

Why did they sign on with these crazy, radical leftists back in the day? It's because those crazy, radical leftists were the ones that proposed antitrust and wanted to enforce antitrust. And it would be an easy — well, I don't know if it would be an easy thing, but Obama should at least be trying to win these people back. He's got to give them something, he's got to at least problematize the world view. They can't just automatically be Republicans, so that's what he should do. If he does any one of those three things, I'll be absolutely astonished.

**Mr. McKinnon:** Alex, can I just jump in on the Occupy movement? I'll refer you all to Buddy Roemer, who is running for president and has been completely shut out of the debates, a very talented guy who is a former governor, former four-term congressman, very successful in the private sector and has completely embraced the Occupy movement with a very conservative approach and conservative message, so check out Buddy Roemer.

**Mr. Jones:** Does he sound like a prospective America Elects —

**Mr. McKinnon:** I think he would be a very good candidate. (Laughter)

**Ms. Henderson:** I want to respond to the whole idea of what I would, if I were partisan, what I would tell Obama. I live in Washington and the consensus in Washington now is that Barack Obama will lose to Mitt Romney and I think that we missed the fact that there are millions and millions and millions of Americans who absolutely love Barack Obama still, and don't have questions about his record and defend him and think that it has been a Republican Party full of obstructionists that have derailed his plans.

And I think my advice to Obama, if I were a partisan, would be to get out into the country and get in front of those crowds of people who love him. And I think that's one of the things in 2008 that was so powerful about his campaign was that he was in front — I mean, 10,000, 20,000, 30,000 people would come out and see him and I think that's something that would give the sense that he is a leader and I think the comparison between him and Romney, or whoever the other nominee is, would be pretty powerful and be to his benefit.

**Mr. Jones:** Well, Jill, you are the only one who hasn't given Barack Obama any advice this morning, go ahead.

**Ms. Lepore:** I think he needs to talk about history. I actually think he could do that incredibly well and with great effect. Soaring political rhetoric is his great skill and I think asking us to think about our common humanity is a matter of historical argument. And he could find a way to talk about all elements of discontent, whatever part of the political spectrum they are expressed in, as giving us an important historical moment and opportunity.

And I very much agree with Thomas Frank about this is a transformative turning point moment, but he needs to justify that argument by thinking in a grand scale and offering us a grander historical narrative to counter what I think is essentially a historical narrative offered by others.

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**Mr. Jones:** I want to read you this note that I was just handed. Andrew will be here soon, he overslept. (Laughter)

He did have to stay up and write a column last night.

**Ms. Lepore:** And I have to go meet with students, so he can replace me here. Thanks very much.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Jill.

**From the Floor:** Americans Elect is a very interesting concept, but transparency is going to be very important to that cause, I feel. Why the great secrecy as to who has been backing this, Mark?

**Mr. McKinnon:** They had to appeal through the court system — they got shut down by the FCC in order to raise any money to fund this project. They are complying with the laws of the IRS that the Boy Scouts and any other organization does, in order to get this funded. Once the candidates are elected, all the candidate funding will be done exactly as the transparency laws currently subscribe.

**Mr. Jones:** Well, I don't think that really quite answers why are they reluctant to be identified now?

**Mr. McKinnon:** Well, it takes a ton of money to do this and there's no agenda, there's no candidate that anybody is supporting, and the only way to do this is to raise large amounts of money. They have a way in which they are going to repay the money, so it's all small dollar donations, but the people who are doing it are people who are interested in changing the process who have been active in politics before and are getting a ton of pressure from the powers that are in power. And if they choose to disclose who they are, then they get heat from the Republicans or the Democratic Party to pull down.

But the important point to me is that they are complying with all the laws. If they choose to disclose who they are, that's fine but, in the end, when the ticket is nominated, whoever funds the ticket has to do so under the FEC laws.

**Mr. Jones:** Well, speaking as a journalist, I would be afraid that the issue will become who they are, rather than the process and the nomination.

**Mr. McKinnon:** It's an understandable question, it's a legitimate one. It's simply, and it gets asked, and at the end of the day, when the candidates are elected, whoever contributes to those candidates will have to be fully disclosed. And it's not perfect, and I admit that, but it's the only way this thing is going to get done.

**Mr. Jones:** Fair enough. Yes, sir?

**From the Floor:** I'm sorry Jill left because I think she began to answer the question I have. There's a wonderful piece in *Foreign Affairs* by George Packer this month called "The Broken Social Contract." How can Obama

respond to the issues which really articulate far better than Occupy Wall Street does what's wrong with the country and the system and our broken social contract at this point in time?

**Mr. Frank:** Well, what you are describing is what I've been writing about for a long time and it's a great argument and it also goes back to the kind of "conservatism" that we all share. You are talking about the world that I grew up in. What destroyed that world? How did that world end? Well, it wasn't Hollywood that did it and it wasn't the teachers union that destroyed it. It was the deregulated market, allowing all the changes that we've had since the late 1970's, early 1980's.

The first step in coming to grips with that is to acknowledge it. If Barack Obama even talked about it, it would be extraordinary to me. Probably the biggest sort of structural change that's allowed all that is the complete destruction of the labor movement. After World

War II they had a seat at the table in any big decision. But you go back and look at any government commission, any blue ribbon commission from the '50's or '60's or '70's, there's always, here's some people from Wall Street, here's some people from organized labor, that's always how they did it.

Today they never have a seat at the table anymore. Maybe like one guy, like their lobbyist will get to be there, or something like that.

**Mr. Jones:** Did you sleep well?

**Mr. Sullivan:** I am completely mortified, I am so, so sorry. I had to write a column last night, and I was up until 2:00, and I set my alarm and it was still ringing when I woke up. Also I've got a little jet lag from the West Coast, so really I have never done this before and I am incredibly —

**Mr. Jones:** Well, I think you should suffer for it for the rest of your life. (Laughter)

It was appalling. I'm sorry you weren't here to defend yourself.

**Mr. Sullivan:** I'm sorry to defend myself. I truly, truly —

**Mr. Jones:** Well, I do have a piece of interesting news for you, by the way.

**Mr. Sullivan:** Yes?

**Mr. Jones:** Those of you who were at the dinner last night know that Andrew was challenged very pointedly by a reporter from *The New York Times* about his assertion that *The New York Times* and other major news organizations had stopped using the word torture to refer to waterboarding and other things after the United States became involved in it. And Tom Patterson gave me this shortly before we began, it is a Shorenstein

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Center student analysis from April 2010 called, "Torture at Times: Waterboarding in the Media," and I would like to read you one sentence: "The *New York Times* called waterboarding 'torture' or implied it was torture in just two of 143 articles, 1.4 percent." In other words, I don't know whether the woman last night was one of those two, but I think Andrew's point was well taken.

**Mr. Sullivan:** Well, thank you. I will follow up with Carlotta because I felt very bad. I did my own exhaustive analysis of this at one point and came up with zip. But if that particular one, which was a very early one, slipped through the cracks, I told her that I would resolve it and I would publish it. I'll post it today.

**Richard Parker:** I forwarded it to Tom Patterson this morning, Carlotta's piece in 2005. It has the word "torture" in the headline. So Tom has that.

**Mr. Jones:** Tom?

**Tom Patterson:** We talked a little bit about this from a historical perspective and the historical perspective is that *The New York Times* routinely used the term "torture." They did so during the Vietnam War, they did so during the Korean War, they did so during the Philippine uprising and they stopped using it almost completely, and I say almost, not entirely but almost completely when the U.S. became involved.

**Mr. Sullivan:** The U.S. and Israel actually were the two exceptions.

**Mr. Jones:** We have gone past our time, but I am not going to let you leave without answering one core question that all the panelists have addressed. If you had two minutes with Obama and you were giving him advice on how to win in 2012, what would you tell him?

**Mr. Sullivan:** Tax reform. I think the one thing missing from his current platform is a radical tax reform that gets rid of the deductions and simplifies the rates. And the argument here is that it's not just the free market argument today that a simple tax structure is more transparent and therefore more accountable. I think what people feel when they look at the tax code is they have no idea what's going on in it and the lobbying industry is entirely dependent upon this tax. I mean a vast amount of its business has to do with that tax code.

If you gutted it, and this is I think why Herman Cain, however absurd, got an appeal because his idea resonates with people. This tax code is an invitation, like all truly, really complex things, to prevent the public from

finding out what's really happening in their own government. If you removed all the deductions, and I would go so far as to remove the mortgage too because I think that's a distortive anti-market device, then I think you could.

First of all, he needs more than just, reelect me, more of the same. He needs more than the alternative is too scary to contemplate and he needs more than trust me, if it weren't for me, it really would be bad. I think he needs a positive proposal, but I don't believe he should abandon his essential character as a conciliator. I think he should argue that the grand bargain on taxes and revenues is his goal, has long been his goal. He wants to do it. He will cooperate with anybody who will cooperate with him and that you should vote for him for that and vote for Democrats for that, and that's I think what he should do.

And I think also he should make much more of his foreign policy and the dangers of the alternative. I think that he made a very ballsy decision to increase the war and intensify the war in Afghanistan, something I opposed at the time. But the success of that surge in terms of its ability — not in terms of its ability to rescue Afghanistan as a viable nation, which is an impossible and quixotic task — but to actually kill about 300 or 400 mid-level Al Qaeda operatives, more of the mid-level connectors between Qatar and what's going on in Afghanistan is really spectacular.

The drone program, whatever its moral issues and the fact that it did, over time, minimize civilian casualties to a really remarkable degree while wiping out almost all of Al Qaeda. And then to go in and capture, not just kill but get bin Laden and get all of the intelligence that was available in that house against the advice of Biden, of Clinton, who both opposed the raid, the president who personally made sure there was an extra helicopter, which turned out to be exactly the right thing.

Look, the Republicans did their best amazingly and gracelessly, with that gracelessness that they are now identified with, to say, oh, he just said yes and he was golfing and the Seal Team — no. His first act in office was to say, "Get bin Laden," to the CIA. He pursued the strategy and he got it. If he were a Republican, he would be on Mt. Rushmore. I mean he really would. We would still be having celebrations of this great event. I mean he would have descended from an airplane in a super parachute and he really could have said, mission accomplished, and they did it when they had nothing really.

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Because, and here I think because he thinks it's good governance, he doesn't want to inflame. He wants to win by diffusing and defeating quietly. So I think he really should look — and you look at the ratings actually. His polling on foreign policy is 60/40 approval. People like what he has done. He ended the Iraq War.

So I think tax reform. I want him to be a kind of a Republican, but I do think tax reform is a good government thing, I don't think it's just a Republican thing. It really upsets me the Democrats have such sort of issues with it, and I think foreign policy.

And then tell us your record. Obama, I've watched him very closely for a long time. In fights in the ring, he is on the ropes a lot of the time and he is happy to be. He hangs back. He is a boxer who does not jab, he waits, and then, when he jabs, when he closes, it's pretty nasty, he can really punch them in the face.

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**Obama is almost certainly going to win this reelection...he has always been an eight-year president.**

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I think Mitt Romney in this environment, as a candidate, is extremely vulnerable. In an environment, in a Populist environment, if you elect

someone whose net worth is \$264 million, who earns \$26 million a year, whose job was to fire people, and whose religion, tragically and wrongly, will suppress the voting base, and who has gone through this really humiliating — I mean isn't it humiliating what's being done to him by the Republican Party? Have you ever had a candidate run before, a perfectly competent former governor, front runner and they just can't, they can't coalesce around him? I mean he has been there for months now with no surge of general party support. You would think most of the Republican Party normally figures out, oh, well, we've got this guy, let's all, you know, and they don't want him. They honestly don't want him, but they've got nobody else. So, under those circumstances, my own view is that Obama is almost certainly going to win this reelection. And my own view has also been, from the start, that, again, is that he has always been an eight-year president.

He has always regarded his strategy as that long-term thing. So looking at it right now, especially given this opposition, misses where he is looking. He is always looking about four years down the line. But he may lose because of the economy. I mean it would be quite remarkable for the president to win a reelection by any serious margin under these circumstances, but I think he can and I think he almost certainly will.

**Mr. Jones:** You didn't hear me say at the beginning of this that you and Thomas gave us last night one of the most fascinating evenings that the

Theodore White event has ever offered up and I want to thank you both for that. It has really been quite an extraordinary couple of days, and very provocative and lots of things to ponder. Andrew, I'm sorry you overslept, but I'm awfully glad that you were here. And, Tom, the same. Thank you both. Thank you all. Thank the panelists, I thank you very much.

