

FRANCES FOX PIVEN: Please, will you take your seats. Welcome to our plenary on the "Erosion and Rebirth of American Democracy", with the emphasis, I hope, on the 'rebirth.' You know, we all talk about- we all have our own litany about all the terrible things that have happened in the United States. Some of those terrible things have to do with what has happened to the minimal American welfare state that emerged in the 1930s with the chipping away of programs that guaranteed some income to the poorest people, services to those who needed it, the tax on Unions. Some have to do with the wearing away of the American infrastructure, which we've been meeting about for a long time, but we didn't really get the full blast of what was happening until Katrina, and then the collapse of the Minneapolis Bridge.

Some of those woes have to do with the undermining of democratic processes, including the emergence in the last twenty-two years of a propaganda machine that seems to have held at least a majority of the American people in its grip, and drew on, for a very long time, on the susceptibilities that Americans have to issues of race and sex. And then finally the culminating use of propaganda, to my view, was—occurred after the attack on the World Trade Center, the so-called "war on terror," which then became a war on Iraq. And for a moment at least, war, the excitement, the patriotism, the madness, did hold Americans in its grip, with the consequence that elections were won that would not otherwise have been won. Well, these terrible things have not occurred in the United States for the first time. There've been other periods when people have seemed to be paralyzed and slightly nuts, at—with the—so that democracy hasn't worked, what we have of American democracy was the consequence that American business has ruled the country uncontested. In fact, that is a kind of default of American politics in the absence of popular pressure. In the absence of popular pressure government succumbs to the machinations of business and professional politicians.

Well now there seems to be a light on the horizon. You can tell that there is a little bit of light in shifts of public opinion. In fact, actually, public opinion never drove the policy initiatives which eroded democracy over the last quarter of a century. So even though, you know, you can take some confidence in the fact that most Americans, overwhelming majority of Americans are against the war, have lost confidence in the bush administration, majorities even want unions again, and most people would defend our minimal welfare state, you can take some confidence in that. But public opinion never drove the policy initiatives which did so much damage to American democracy.

So the question for our panel is how will public opinion, public opinion regarding domestic programs like healthcare, unions, environment, and war, translate into actual- into the actual politics and policy changes which would indeed lead to a rebirth of democracy. And to deal with those questions we have three wonderful speakers, our first speaker is Patricia Williams. The James Door Professor of Law and Columbia Law School, Patricia is an original. It's hard to say in fact, exactly what she is. Her writing combines personal narrative, literary theory, legal analysis and social and political analysis. She is a couple of our people are, a MacArthur Genius, you know the- those awards. And she's known to many of you for her wonderful Nation column *The Diary of a Mad Law Professor*. I've asked each of the speakers for 18 minutes, I'm gonna give them a few minutes to answer each other, and then we're opening it to the audience. Patricia.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: Thank you. I, I am, very very concerned about the question of propaganda and its effect on American democracy. I—we have somehow descended into a moment of such absurdity that it's almost hard to put words to it. My central concern, in all my writings sort of begins with race. But it sort of exceeds my ability to capture it when you have people like Robert Allan, or Bob Allen, of Florida recently, who wrote a law, authored a law, which called for, I think life imprisonment for sexual predators, who was arrested last week for soliciting sex in a bathroom in Florida. And his defense, with a completely straight face, was that the police officer, the undercover officer who approached him was black and there were other black people in the park and he was so scared he would've done anything just to get out of there.

This is certainly about race, but it's also about some sort of, hypnosis of criminalization, that makes that even a—that doesn't make him committable, really, because it is so absurd. And—for me it's almost like a concentric circle of repercussion. We have a cultural context in which, again, a public official could say something like that with a straight face, and the public context is of course a country in which we have two and a quarter million imprisoned, almost all of those black or Latino, or brown-Latino, and a projection that we will imprison two-hundred thousand more over the next four or five years, with the scale going up, even though again, it is of no relationship to the, to violent crime, at this point. We have so exceeded the standards of most rates of imprisonment except maybe the Gulag.

Now, this, therefore, has sort of made me think, because I've been thinking of a larger project for the, for the Soros Foundation, about the question of Orwell. What is it about speech, whether Bob Allen's or George Bush's that has so undermined the democratic project. And this has also made me reflect a lot about Orwell's classic essay *The Politics—Politics and the English Language*. His fear, that the unconsidered use of language makes it easier to have foolish thoughts was related to his fear that foolish thoughts, in turn, make one susceptible to political manipulation whose end is to make lies sound truthful, and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind. Now, when I first read this essay I was in high school, and Stalinism, Fascism, and McCarthyism were more or less things of the past, at least that's what I was taught. And the Soviet Union was someplace else entirely on my radar screen. And as a result I viewed his warning about empty words as a punishingly academic exercise of a bad tempered martinet, two-wit, Miss McLaughlin, who was my English teacher. Now, at this moment in time, after listening to Alberto Gonzales and watching the conduct of our Congress in passing a very sweeping surveillance act in the last week, I began to think more seriously about this essay. After all, the real Eric Arthur Blair, writing sub nomine of George Orwell, was himself a professional propagandist, who earned his chops producing purportedly impartial BBC broadcasts that were in fact engineered efforts to provoke colonial India into war against Japan. And that experience left him with an intense dislike of such manipulation. He feared polemics that were purposely devoid of signification, even as their multi-syllabic service glittered with the promise of complexity. Orwell also knew that potent new devices of propaganda were emerging. New means of public hypnosis and mass influence, to say nothing of media dispense to distraction. Machiavelli notwithstanding, this scientifically enhanced power to dictate political division and create desire was still very recent when Orwell wrote. The sociological insights

derived from widespread data gathering and demographic analysis wasn't even a coherent body of study until the 1930s, hence Orwell's vision, was I think just short of prophetic.

Now, today, the Bush administration's mangled, tangled declarations of a sprawling war on terror have marked a watershed on the corruption of political language. The laws, policies, and executive orders that have flowed from this administration are testament to the dizzying array of "mental vices," as Orwell called it, that he so abhorred. And suddenly we live in a bright-lined world of good guys and bad guys, America the Beautiful becomes a homeland secured. Our constitutive text, is less the US Constitution than a shadow document called the USA Patriot Act. No longer is the collective discourse one of competing theories of constitutional interpretation. These days it is a rivalry between completely different textual universes, between due process and none and all, between the courts and unfettered executive discretion, between personal privacy and super-surveillance, between public accountability and official holes of dark and unfathomable secrecy. Orwell was always making lists of rules, or pseudo rules, that embodied imperiled values, as he saw it. The five rules for politics of language, the seven shrinking commandments of animal house, you remember that all animals are equal but some are more equal than others. The enumerated slogans of newspeak in 1984, "War is Peace," "Freedom is Slavery," "Ignorance is Strength." If you were alive to embellish those cautionary statements, here's what I imagine he might have come up with.

One: The death of metaphor. Now Orwell actually worried about "dying metaphor," that's what he called it. I worry about the actual death of metaphor, with a stake through it. And I'm sorry I'm going to at some point get to the rebirth of democracy, but right now it feels more vampiric to me. But, I'm worried about analogies so over—he worried about analogies that were so overused that they lose evocative power, and signal only laziness on the speaker's part. I worry that today's American vernacular has killed metaphor outright. Mass media has surely enabled this corruption on a cultural, even global, scale. Television values plain meanings over the complex, bright—over the complex, bright lines over shades of grey, and lowest common denominator over any calculation. Similarly, fundamentalist religious leaders of all denominations have divided again, the world into easy halves of good and evil.

Now, when- where there is no sense of metaphor at all, no play, no elasticity between a word and its poetic echoes, totalism I think becomes easier, When this sort of fundamentalism rules in religion, it becomes easier to cast God as the word. Blasphemy becomes a palpable harm, punishable, grounds for excommunication or holy war. If the bible says God created the earth in just six days, then that's that. An eye for an eye becomes justification for killing abortion doctors. Parable turns into mandate, mandate into Jihad. Similarly, who needs diplomacy when Armageddon is at hand? The very term, again, "War on Terror," defies political critique, it appeals to the unconscious rather than to history, its force located in the sphere of emotions rather than in the cycle of history.

Number two is the wishful immediate. And this I think is sort of the loss of the subjunctive, as arcane as this sounds. But the loss of the subjunctive in American speech is much underrated, if not altogether invisible, as a cause for worry. With its abandon by the collective culture, any shred of the contingent or the conditional has disappeared as well. No word stands for anything but its plain meaning, and plain meaning runs no further than the

present tense. This is a slippage that advertisers have perfected; it is the essence of commercial sloganeering. In this brave new world, all things are possible, all things are present, all fantasies made real. You didn't just wish it were so, it was. And so the present imaginary literally rewrites the past. And this is, I think, symptomatic of a national mood that routinely considers itself only a purchase away from perfection. The American work ethic that for so long promised anything is possible, has morphed into a wish ethic that tolerates no earthly limit. It is a greedy state of mind to say the least, but also one that glorifies lying, cheating, and dissembling, as a kind of blind ambition. When exploited as a feature of political discourse it serves to divide us from history, from facts, from sinkholes in the road of life, and floats us gently into wonderland. Mission accomplished. For example, colorblind society, if only it were so.

Thirdly, what I call "The Passive Explosive." Here, the passive voice is used to bury agency and to reassign responsibility. Conversely, the active voice is sometimes used to animate the passive. So, for example, you have, for example, a glassy eyed drug addict who runs naked through his neighborhood waving a steak knife and a pair of glow-in-the-dark knitting needles. Police officers arrive, and promptly shoot the man dead. Depending on the circumstances, it might be a reasonable reaction, or an overreaction. It might be an accident, it might be negligence. But can there be any doubt that one needs to consider more facts, or that there ought to be some detailed scrutiny for ultimate accountability? In the last few years, however, such encounters increasingly have been labeled "Police Assisted Suicide," or "Suicide by Cop." Now, this unfortunate terminology shifts all the agency away from a public officer who, justifiably or not, actually made the decision to fire his weapon. It re-describes the police as passive extensions of the outlandish will of the deceased. By law, police actions are constrained by the reasonable exercise of force, but why bother with all that if dying was by the crazy person's choice, rather than by the officer's hand. Similarly, when three uncharged detainees committed suicide in the prison at Guantanamo Bay, our top-brass called it "Asymmetrical Warfare." The erasure of the self was styled as a rudely aggressive, affirmative act of warfare against others. Suicide became a peculiar form of public relations propaganda, unfair, out of proportion, designed to make the good guys look bad. Now again, while it may indeed constitute bad press, to have these sorts of suicides, this nomination diverts attention away from the more serious questions of moral accountability, such as the due process owed even the most reprehensible captives, to say nothing of those with no pending charges, under the Geneva Conventions.

Number five, what I call the "**Paca Disputandum**." Now, Orwell, and I say that with some tongue-in-cheek because Orwell worried about the overuse of foreign words, to Latin infillments, to obfuscate what is not implied. I worry about the use of foreign places, mythic times, and distant planets to do the same job. This or that happened long ago under someone else's watch, not on American soil, or in a free trade zone where all the usual rules are suspended. The Bush-Cheney administration has been masterful in the use of the apical tense, to obliterate causal connection. The president cut a nobler profile than Buzz Lightyear as he promised a manned mission to Mars, "To future and beyond," even as he installed a head of NASA who doesn't believe there's any such thing as Global Warming.

Similarly, distant times and places that never were, were constructed- are constructed to isolate indiscretions. Recently the CIA was forced to declassify thousands of documents documenting assassinations, use of unwitting citizens for drug experimentation, illegal wiretapping (sound familiar?), sabotage of lawful political groups, and torture. The documents, according to a spokesman, quote, “provide a glimpse of a very different time, and a very different agency.” Ah, the distant, mythic agency, long gone. The limbic other world of epic creatures. Like the Aeneid, we are transport—transported to another dimension, I sing of arms and the man, and of the CIA.

Rule number six: Whatever goes on two legs is an enemy. Growing up as a little girl in the Cold War Era, again, I learned to fear the KGB. We read about Stalin and temperamental mister Khrushchev. We welcomed the exiled novelists and dancers and athletes who fled from behind the iron curtain. The USSR, we were told, was as was oppressive because of its system of secret police and inhuman gulags and lack of due process. It is therefore quite astonishing to wake up and find out Bill of Rights effectively upended by so-called signing papers, unchecked executive privilege, unwarranted data mining, whimsical fishing expeditions and secret searches of peoples’ homes. Now only are citizens not secure in their papers, as the fourth amendment puts it, but neither are they secure in their computers, cell phones, automatic global positioning chips, elevator monitors, medi-alert beepers, credit cards, nanny-cams, tracking devices, or DNA trails. In a land where everyone’s a suspect, there’s suddenly probable cause to search everyone. And this high-tech voyeurism has any number of unsettling consequences. In an executive branch dominated by particular brands of fundamentalist Christianity whose mission it seems to be to break down all boundary between church and state, the doctrine of total depravity seems to be displacing the presumption of innocence. It also seems to operate as a kind of theoretical underpinning for the administration’s use of preemptive detention, as a justifiable check upon humanity’s presumptively inherent transgressivity.

In a different but parallel evolution, youth culture revels heedlessly in the cybersp— cyber-exposure of MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube. Even as intelligence agencies troll the internet for foolish and illegal behavior, a whole generation positively frolics in the gays of the panopticon, seemingly bent upon memorializing themselves naked and with bongos. There’s an odd villagley- villagey communism about it, no secrets here. It’s as though the in-your-face voyeurism of spring break had become a righteous political stance. Perhaps none of this is any different from the care—antics of careless youth throughout the ages, but it’s worth wondering if we are not seeing a new brand of creative accommodation to totalistic oversight. Because certainly I can’t get any of my law students really worked up about what’s happening in terms of surveillance or the possibility that their pictures might be used later in their careers.

Finally, number seven, what I called “The rupture of the rapture.” And the narrative of the rapture, as you know has been popularized in recent years by Timothy Lahaye’s global best-sellers. And I don’t want to talk about the religious implications of this, but in a world as rigidly literal as ours, these images don’t always resonate as mere tropes or even as fictive. They are circulated within a Fox-fear driven media brew, where widely watched televangelists like Pat Robertson or the late Jimmy Farwell can roar that the devastation of hurricane Katrina, was not merely an act of God, but the premeditated intervention of a punitive God. A God who, like Zeus

with his thunderbolts, took specific aim at the chocolate city of sin, where far too many good times and too much mumbo-gumbo had long been allowed to roll. New Orleans, in other words, simply got what it deserved. Religion aside, however, the political employ of “just deserts” has enjoyed renewed and growing currency since the Regan years. The loaded, coded reference to those who are deserving as opposed to undeserving. Rationalizes the status quo of a citizenry divided between an earthly heaven, and Hell. between suburban utopia and ghetto squalor, good white families and bad black men, the right endowed and aliens, the innately intelligent and dumb savage brutes, civilized tax-payers and the lazy underclass. The sense of divine inevitability that informs this civic vision allows us to wash our hands of a whole raft of otherwise obvious political and Biblical injunctions, like feed the poor, heal the sick, education the illiterate, house the homeless, rehabilitate the wounded. Instead we have watched the divisions in the United States grow wider and wider, and the distance between rich and poor has never been greater. The size of the prison population has never been bigger. Nationally, public schools are more segregated than they were in 1954. Health insurance has never been more expensive. And this tragic, ongoing split in American society erupts from time to time in riots, in immigration crises, in racist gang fights, in outbreaks of epidemic disease, in appalling rates of infant mortality, in the manifest negligence that allowed the city of New Orleans to drown.

Orwell feared communism, fascism, totalitarianism, and all their attendant linguistic concedes. What he did not foresee, perhaps, was a privatized but global oligarchy, whose police power comes wrapped in a sheepish ideology of Laissez-faire, yet sanctified as God’s will. Thank You.

FRANCES FOX PIVEN: Our next speaker is Joel Rogers. I met Joel about twenty-five years ago, and he was known then as a kind of vunducant. He’s outgrown that, and now he is a professor at the University of Wisconsin where he teaches law, political science, sociology. And he also is a MacArthur Genius. Joel is known for his work on economic and political reform in the United States, he’s written many fine books on American politics and on industrial relations in the United States. but what is distinctive about his work, I think, is that he also is invested in practical an pragmatic reform through a number of organizations that he has created, maybe most important the Center on Wisconsin Strategy. And one more thing that I think a lot of people don’t know, Joel is I think the sweetest guy in the world. Try to live up to that.

JOEL ROGERS: Well. Yeah. Okay. I don’t have prepared remarks, but I did make a little- a few slides for you, let me just see if they can work here. We—it’s not working, you’re supposed to be able to see this, oh yeah, ok, so. I made for example this slide. And this one. Yeah ok, the PowerPoint’s working, alright. I really wonder about power points sometime. Okay. And I’ll show you a slide or two later, good, yeah. And I can barely see this but, I found the—I thank the organizers for this panel and for inviting me to be part of it. Tier instructions at least to this, this member of the panel were generous to a fault, or strikingly non-indicative in their instruction. I was told basically “Say something about the death of American democracy, but try to be hopeful at the end.” And, and so I’ll do that, I guess. I’m not gonna speak—you can’t surpass Pat in her commentary on political rhetoric and the deep pathologies of the—our society that public rhetoric and its present degradation portends, as well as reflects.

I want to speak more about public goods, and the public that you need to create those public goods, and some of the, the, the questions that I think about when I think about answering the question that Francis helpfully began her introductions with. Namely, you've got a bunch of reasonably good and moving public opinion in the US, how do you make something out of that? Public opinion never drives politics, really, politics drives politics, finally. And politics is better organized than that opinion in effective ways which can actually lead to some sort of concrete result. And as I reflect on the current state of American democracy, and I won't pause to inventory its many, its many faults here. I have both a- a quite optimistic, maybe uncharacteristic of optimistic, maybe more optimistic than other folks on the panel, view on long-run prospects for democracy in the world. I don't, for example, believe what Tom Freedman, that Hahira globalization will destroy all of European social democracy or it will- it'll destroy egalitarianism. I don't think that- I think it's possible to imagine a global democratic project, in which egalitarianism is furthered, while also including the rest of humanity in it, beyond the rich countries of the North. But I do think, certainly in the US case, that there's some, some rather serious problems in making that translation- that transition to a different sort of world. And I think there are very specific things that the left in the US or Democrats in the US, which small Democrats have failed to do, which we need to do in order to get through the next period. So, I'm conscious of the fact that we live in distinctive times, of course everyone thinks the times they live in are distinctive probably because they are in them, but they are, I think, qualitatively distinctive. I don't know how old everyone in the audience is but I assume that you're somewhere between, I don't know, fifteen years old and sixty or eighty or something or other. And in that period, you've seen, basically, the world transition from a world in which some of it was organized under a capitalist means of reduction or the capitalist system of some-- obviously many huge amounts of variety, to a world of which that's basically completely dominant. You've seen the growth of worldwide communications of a sort that I think has to affect, in pretty critical ways, democratic organization, namely the internet, which has basically made the ability to move knowledge around the world, and all the help-to organization that knowledge can provide essentially costless. And you've seen the collapse, not the collapse, the rumors of Europeans social democracy are vastly overdrawn, I agree, but you've seen rather substantial challenge, let's say, to the one time in the development namely social democracy, new deal, liberalism, call it what you will, and I know that they're different. And also I'm getting some feedback here- are you hearing that feedback? Is anyone else hearing-? Oh. Maybe I'm being invaded by Mars here. You've got a collapse, or a serious decline, let's say, or challenge to the one time in history of capitalism in which liberty and equality were eventually able to move together. Marx, of course, didn't think that was quite possible, Mill didn't think it was possible, it wasn't until you got the organized capitalism, big firms and big labor movements and deals for the state and the Keynesian synthesis of social democracy, that you were able really to achieve that. And that, since the early 1970s certainly has been challenged and I think is, if not in, in terminal decline, and has to shift its form substantially, to realize democratic ambitions. So why don't we start there. Let's see if this thing can work...

As a general matter, well it's just, more wind up. I take the—us in the US to be in fairly deep weeds at the moment. Obviously we suffer from a generation-long onslaught by the right in ideology, and more importantly I think, in organization, which has really not until very very recently been seriously challenged. We have an extremely counter—weak counter-leadership

structure, it'd be hard to say who runs the movement in the US or even if there is a movement in the US with any sort of brain or even an instinct to self-preservation. We sort of behave like, in this very very divided movement, a bunch of, not to be too unkind, sick people stealing each others' medicine, you know. Endlessly competing in different spaces, and not having much of a public presence. We of course have an incredibly corrupt electoral system. I won't say more about that, I think you all know that organize money, or and would agree that organized money has pretty much effectively replaced organized people in much of our politics. That's expressed through the very capital-intensive media which gives the public many of its opinions, and it's expressed in elections, or course, I'm all for public funding of elections. But it's really felt, I think, in politics after the elections—it's incredibly well-funded, pretty well organized, counter structure which is able to block all sorts of progressive change and is there constantly. And billions and billions of dollars spent simply on the business about Medicaid, to make sure that it was impossible to use Medicare power to actually bargain down drug prices. This will—only one example.

We don't have an energized mass movement at the moment, this must be an object of concern and happily not despair, for folks like Medea whose done so much to try to mobilize support—or opposition to the war. But there are not a lot of people marching in the streets right now, and there are not- we don't have a draft, we have a serious involvement of much of the middle class in these issues of public policy which are momentous. We don't, despite five years-five runs at it, we're about to take another run, have the mass movement demanding health insurance for people or demanding that we actually do something about raising wages at the floor or demanding, what I take to be sort of the most pointed failure of the American system at the moment to actually do something about kids in central cities. The six million children that we know very very heavily, of color, about to join over the next fifteen, twenty years that—what did Pat say? Two point five million heavily of color, prison population. We've, sociology has studied this in excruciating detail, I think Paul Geroski and other folks have talked about concentrated poverty. We basically know, as a society, we certainly know as academics, as citizens, etc, that we have a little holocaust going on right before us every year, and as a country we've not been able to do anything about that, haven't been able to mobilize around that. You can say that's merely a matter of race, and it may be—it's certainly very heavily a matter of race, but I think of it, speaking to broader capacities and moving reasonable public opinion, I do take the American public opinion to be fairly reasonable, toward any sort of result. And the chief reason for all this I think is that we, we basically lack any infrastructure for progressive politics. I'll say a little bit about what I mean by such an infrastructure.

There's also a problem, of course, that we lack a clear, progressive, economic, social alternative. I guess the topic of this conference, "Is there an alternative?" Yeah, I think there's actually—this is another thing I'm very optimistic about. I think there is a pretty clear alternative which is more or less emerging, which would preserve egalitarian ideals after globalization, and, and, I do not buy into the Tom Freedman view, referenced earlier. And I think what that basically looks like if you can possibly see this is something like this: This is where I think we're all headed. It's different than social democracy, and giving—if you can see the different axes there I suppose, the economic strategy. Thos are sort of characteristic functions of government, or things the government's gotta do or the society's gotta do, the elements in the social contract if

you will, the basic rules, the basic functions, well all of them, displayed across three different—called public philosophies. Sort of social-democratic New Deal one, a neoliberal one that looks completely ascended in the world in terms of ideology as well as practice—is still ascent in terms of practice, but is fading happily in terms of ideology, and then where I think we want to go. And I could run you through those very very briefly, let's do that.

I think as a general matter people understand you've gotta worry about effective supply as well as demand, it's much more difficult in an economy which doesn't control the flow of goods across its borders, in which you've got a truly internationalized economy to a substantial degree, which over just the—since the Berlin Wall fell, since '79. You've gotten a doubling of the world- of the effective world labor force. And you got those people connected to all sorts of more advanced technologies than we thought of poor people being connected to in the past. And so there has to be a much more a deliberate effort in the production of public goods, in the- in any democratic society or passively democratic society, to really make sure that equal opportunity is real, that people really do get the education, that you have a bunch of, effectively locationally immobile public goods screwed down into the economy to provide those sorts of productive inputs to people. And you can't rely simply upon a stabilization of effective demand. And as problems in the economy migrated to those which are pretty much easily addressed, through macro-economic steering from the center, more to the supply side, and more inside firms and inside communities and inside regions, you're going to want to have more dispersed capacity. Social contribution, I think the thing is gonna wind up being, de facto, a little bit more conservative in conventional terms, but I think perfectly in keeping with classic radical egalitarian traditions, in terms of equal opportunity, it's going move more deeply into the sexist division of labor within the household, and get beyond mere educations with equalizing things for people. I can barely see this myself. In terms of the state-civil society relation, I think we're going to move from a—we're going to be happier toward many markets, but not treating them as Gods, but more effectively as tools, and take a more deliberate associate of politics in which we're gonna worry about the conditions of mass-organization as a possible tool for effective government. I think it's not going to privilege the executive much like the past administrative state privileged the executive, it's certainly not going to privilege the, the overreaching judiciary that we have in the current court in the US, or any judiciary. it's gonna be more into deliberative democracy, more into sort of the legislative end of things. It's going to put the redistributive peak a little bit earlier in the life, less worried about old people, not throwing Grandma from the train, but making sure the kids are alright. It's going to, in terms of the national state relations I think try to promote a more progressive federalism which is attentive to the ways in which regions and in our case states, are critical actors, yadda, yadda, yadda. There are other elements in that, and I could be happy to talk about them afterwards.

But I think that the—I think a lot that is relatively uncontroversial and is relatively easy to design around. And the effect of—not that it's politically easy, but it's easy in terms of the income flows, of what the results would be. And the net result, let's not go into the political infrastructure yet, the net result would be one in which you had higher levels of equality, that didn't have an employer-based welfare state, had a higher social wage. You put a bunch of effort into getting people ready to participate actively in the society, and you had these productive public goods that you screwed down in different ways, in different nations, which

were basically in the business of adding value and reducing waste, and capturing the benefits of doing both in democratic countries. And I think it's possible to find your way, without hallucinating, to peace between the North and the South, and leftist- and democratic forces in the North and the South, to that as a basic mechanism of, of international trade as well. The point of international trade goes by quickly here, but essentially I'm into a strategic protection of the American way of life, I am into trying to get a new architecture which has the effect of promoting sustainable development rather than trade integration, per se, as the goal. And I think that's view- that view is very very widely shared, including by the folks who originally gave us the World Social Forum. And I think that is going to be both necessary to the well being of folks in the North, and well being of folks in the South. Any, so this is the optimism.

So let's get to the pessimism, I'm not ending now in hope, but on the bad stuff. The bad stuff it that the right has successfully, has succeeded in our politics so well, until it has reached a certain moment of exhaustion and discreditation right now, because it's invested very very heavily in what you might think of as the seven major habits of highly successful social movements. The movements that need to—the things that you need to have in hand, in addition to mass mobilization, to compete effectively in political space, and democratic forces simply have not. I think this is almost a, a mundane observation, we simply haven't done it. We haven't put the money together. We haven't put the organizational routines together to do these basic things. SO what are these basic things?

Well, there's a list. CBSM to the power—or M to the power of four, if you like odd mnemonics. You need to have an effective means of communication in leadership, convening in some degree of coordination, with your base, with your secondary leadership, and with the mass public, and we basically have none. You need to have new blood coming in all the time, because if you don't you're basically dying as a movement. And you need to have real mechanisms of youth recruitment, and joining a democratic movement and political organization as we've seen, is a commitment of a life, not a commitment to a particular job. You need a clear, positive message about how to get from here to the other side of the Jordan, which you tirelessly repeat with some message of—some matter of discipline. You need thousands and thousands, even more, messengers which are relatively well-trained, and reducing that, they'd have to look like the people that they're broadcasting it to. You need some models for what you're trying to do, some ways to begin to see how you're getting- how you're beginning to pave the road that you're moving along toward the better world. And you need some sort of stable sources of money, and a variety of secondary organizations, here called service centers which basically are as-described. And when you think of what the right, starting in the early '70s, and what we have done over the last generation, basically they've invested in all those things, and we as a movement haven't in invested in, more or less, anything. So I think there are ways to begin to do that in the economy, I won't talk about that. I think there's real rational hope, here, for beginning to crawl toward that space in the economy that we want to be at that we suggested before.

I'm particularly impressed in my own work, and I would suggest in all of our work, at the centrality of metropolitan areas, in both our organizing and our building a new political economic machine. But what I think is really essential, finally, for this, is to, to get yourself politically in the

point where you can actually make the major investments in those locationally immobile public goods, to get to the point where you can do that in political space. And to do that you have to build this political infrastructure, and for that you also need to make votes count, which would be a useful thing to do. Above all I think you need to feed the movement and the leadership—and develop some leadership structure. We're just not behaving in a way, and don't have the organizations in place to capture the opportunity that Francis began with.

FRANCES FOX PIVEN: Thank you Joe. Our last speaker is the irrepressible Medea Benjamin. Sometimes you wonder what would a republican national convention be, or a congressional hearing be, without Medea waving wildly in the background. Medea has been a lifelong activist working in Latin America and Africa, and later as a cofounder of Global Exchange, which has been the lead organizations in actions against corporate-led globalization. Since 2001, Medea and Global Exchange's consuming issue has been the war in Iraq. Global Exchange has, I believe, two-hundred and fifty chapters, and their flamboyant presence everywhere-- Code Pink, has helped to bring the American public to its senses. Medea.

MEDEA BENJAMIN: Well, I'll talk about the activism side of thing, and certainly we have a great cause for celebration today. Does everybody Carl Rove is resigning?

FRANCES FOX PIVEN: Did he make a statement?

Yes, he made a statement to the Wall Street Journal, he said by the end of the month he will resign to spend more time with his family. All these crooks, right before they're gonna be indicted they want to spend time with their families. And speaking of somebody else who should spend a lot of time with his family, that is Alberto Gonzales. I think he really needs to spend time with his family.

I think we have seen how the use of media manipulation, the use of fear, has led the American people into a state of insomnia, a state of allowing our civil liberties to be taken away from us. And when I go to Washington I'm basically- I live in San Francisco but I move myself to Washington to go to the hearings every single day, and you can be there and hear Alberto Gonzales say things like "We don't have the right of habeas corpus in this country." We have just seen the Congress not only pass the Patriot Act, the Military Commissions Act, but right before it went on vacation, give this Alberto Gonzales the right, without a warrant, to wiretap millions of phone calls and correspondence between anybody here and anybody overseas. This is certainly not the time to expand the power of Alberto Gonzales. This is the time to impeach Alberto Gonzales. And there is a motion to do just that. And when Francis said "How're we gonna move from public opinion being our side, into actually having positive things happen," That is people like us in this room getting outraged and doing something when you hear that Congress gave this expanded authority to the Bush administration. How many of you did something about it? Sent an email, wrote a letter, I see a couple of hands in here. Everybody in this room should do something about it. And we have a possible opening in the next six months, which is that what Congress enacted was a six-month piece of legislation. So if we all do something right before our Congress gets back into session, to say "We demand that in the next six months, you resend that authority that you have given." You know it's hard to get back rights once we lose them, so we've gotta do something to get back this right now.

And I'm not kidding when I say impeach Alberto Gonzales, because one, there are many man grounds to impeach him, but two; there is already a piece of legislation to move in this direction. And that was just introduced last week; the Congress went out in session two, by Jay Inslee from Washington, on the grounds that Gonzales lied to Congress about the firing of eight attorney generals, on the grounds of him overseeing this illegal wiretapping. Some of us would like it to be more on the grounds of how he allowed torture under his control and how he allowed for extraordinary rendition, and called Geneva conventions "quaint." But there is a movement underfoot to impeach Alberto Gonzales. So I would recommend you not only call your Congress person and say "Whether or not you voted for giving the Bush administration this right, you want to make sure that in the next six months they take it away," and they sign on to Jay Inslee's call for the impeachment of Alberto Gonzales.

Moving into the war issues. You know it is impossible to have a democracy in a country that is ruled by fear. And in fact, when Congress, and there were forty one Democrats in the house and nineteen democratic senators who voted for this expanded wiretapping. They did it not out of fear of national security, and this was something that was actually said in the New York Times editorial, they did it out of fear of job security. They did it out of fear of going back to their districts and have people saying "Aha if there's a terrorist attack you're going to be the one to blame for it, because you allowed—you wouldn't allow the Bush administration to do its job." That is living under fear. We cannot be a democratic society that lives under fear.

You might remember Benjamin Franklin having said 'A society that gives up sec- liberty for security deserves neither.' The same is happening to us around the war in Iraq, and now an excuse for a continuation of the war in Iraq, on the grounds that Al Qaeda will grow even further, will take over reigns of control in Iraq, and then will attack us here at home etc, etc, etc. We have to get beyond living in a state of fear, and understand that actually, for our national security, we must end the occupation of Iraq. And, we as citizens did our democratic duty last November 2006, when we voted a new Congress in with a mandate for peace. An example of how our democratic system isn't working is that not only did we not get a withdrawal of US troops, we got a surge instead. I blame, of course, George Bush and the Republicans for getting us into this war, but we have to recognize the enabling side that the Democrats have been playing, to keep this war going. And when Nancy Pelosi became speaker of the house, and one of the first things out of her mouth is that she would not defund the war and that impeachment was off the table, these were two huge mistakes.

One, she used George Bush's discourse, and equated funding the war with supporting the troops. She should have used the discourse of Iraq Veterans Against the War, a wonderful organization who have been there and seen it, and decided this is a war that we must get out of. And their slogan is "Funding the War is killing the troops." That's what Nancy Pelosi has to be saying loud and clear. She instead said that we would continue to fund this war because we support the troops, and it is hard for her to get herself out of that once she allowed that to be the dominant discourse. And indeed what we saw in the beginnings of this last supplemental of ninety-five billion dollars being given of our tax money for war, was that initially the Democrats put a timeline for withdrawal. When it was vetoed by George Bush, they then laid down and gave him the money with absolutely no timeline. We can't allow that to happen again. And come

September there's gonna be a real showdown between we the American people, and this Congress. And that is around another hundred and forty five billion dollars that the Bush administration is asking for for war. We are building up this summer, yes Joel is right, we don't have the movement we should have. We don't have the injection of youthful energy because there isn't a draft. We don't have strong unions, like Francis said, that would help us as it does in other countries get massive numbers of people out on the streets, and we don't have a really —opposition party.

Despite that, we do have a movement. This summer, people are sitting in in the offices of their elected officials. I come from San Francisco and just yesterday, we had an incredible march across the Golden Gate Bridge, then marching to Diane Feinstein's house, and then to Nancy Pelosi's house, where people began a two-week encampment outside of Nancy Pelosi's home with a hunger strike. And come September will be the real show down, because General Petraeus is supposed to give his report by September fifteenth, and Congress will be asked to continue funding this war. We are calling for a massive march in Washington DC on September fifteenth, and any of you who can get off to get yourself there, it is a Saturday, please join us in Washington DC, because we do need a massive show of opposition to this war. And then we need to force the democratically controlled Congress to give George Bush a bill that includes a fixed timeline for withdrawal. If he vetoes that bill, there is one thing that Congress can do then, which is don't give him another bill, which means there will be no more one hundred and forty five billion dollars to continue the war. And in fact, the bill that we are pushing Congress to put before the Congress is one that says we will only fund the full and safe and speedy withdrawal of our troops from Iraq.

It's very interesting when you look at how hard it has been for us to push the Congress to do what the American people are calling for. Yet on the other hand, in the democratic presidential race you do see how public opinion has influence their positions, and they are further ahead than Congress is, not because they are more progressive, but because they're out talking to people all the time and they see the kind of reaction they're getting from the public. And so it is quite interesting to see how somebody like Hillary Clinton, who was a war hawk, who did support this war, whose tendency is to support war, has been voting in the most progressive way, more than most of her fellow senators, voting for a timeline for withdrawal, and voting to cut the funding for the war. We have seen how John Edwards has taken a very progressive position, how that has pushed Barack Obama, how that has pushed Hilary Clinton, and of course the one out there pushing them all has been Dennis Kucinich.

But we also see a very disturbing tendency in the last couple of weeks among the top presidential candidates, and that is Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, and that is while they're talk about withdrawing the troops from Iraq, they are doing what the New York Times actually picked up on yesterday, is allowing for a large number of troops to remain in Iraq for many years to come by including loopholes that would allow troops to stay to train Iraqis to fight Al Qaeda, and to protect US personnel. That could mean tens and tens of thousands of US troops staying in Iraq, not only for years to come, but it could be for decades to come. The Congress has actually voted and successfully passed legislation that say that we do not want to have permanent bases in Iraq. If these democratic candidates are saying that tens of thousands of

soldiers could remain there, there are going to be then permanent bases in Iraq against the will of Congress and against the will of the American people. So we have to push them even further, to say we want all troops removed, and we want all private security contractors removed from Iraq as well.

A couple of other disturbing things you hear from the presidential candidates, the top ones are all saying that in the case of Iran, all options should be on the table, which is a code word for saying that includes a bombing of Iran, and that also includes a possible nuclear attack on Iran. That must be absolutely off the table, and we must push the democratic candidates to stop saying all options are available. We also have a very disturbing trend the last couple of weeks with Barack Obama after he made the comment that yes, he would talk to people like Ahmadinejad in Iran, or even Hugo Chaves in Venezuela, then wanted to show that he is actually a tough guy by saying that he would call for intervention inside Pakistan without that government's approval. We also hear disturbing calls from Hillary Clinton in terms of —she would also call for the invasion of other ally countries, but let's just not talk about it openly to the public. We have to have a different discourse, and it should be coming from people who are running for the highest public office.

There is one very important thing that we have to start talking about in this country, and that is the word "Empire." That we cannot have a democracy as long as we are an empire, and that if we want to move in the direction of both national security and in the direction of having democracy that includes a government that takes care of its own people, a government that provides health care to its people instead of spending four hundred and fifty billion dollars a year on the military, a government that gives good education to its young people instead of allowing young people to get such lousy education that one of their only options for getting a college education is to join the military, then we have to look seriously at this issue of empire. Even before 9/11 we maintained over eight hundred military bases and installations in one hundred and thirty countries. Even before 9/11 we had about two hundred and fifty thousand US service people in bases all around the world. And one thing that is almost never talked about is one of the reasons that we were attacked on 9/11 is precisely because of the US military bases that we had in Saudi Arabia, around the Holy Lands of Mecca and Medina. The US administration has quietly removed those bases, but has put them in places all over the Middle East, which will continue to make us a target for terrorist attacks.

So I want to close out talking about how important it is that we reign in the military, how we start focusing on building a democracy, and how we work globally with our friends overseas, to try to make ourselves less of an empire and more of a democracy. And on a hopeful front, a number of things have happened in the last couple of years. A lot of you have heard about, if not attended, the World Social Forums, where over a hundred thousand of us get together every year to talk about how do we build together movements to deepen and strengthen our own democracies. We have also built up strong organizations globally that have been attacking the global institutions like the World Trade Organization, the IMF and the World Bank, and we have in fact derailed the agenda of these institutions. And we have put on the agenda, our desires for fair trade that benefits both the producers and the consumers. And in this case of unfettered US military bases around the world, in March of 2007 there was a meeting of about four hundred

people from forty countries around the world, that formed an international network for the abolition of foreign military bases, and these are groups that have been fighting for years to free themselves of foreign military bases, of course ninety-five percent of all foreign military bases are precisely US bases. We met in Ecuador because that's where the president Rafael Correa, when he ran for president said one of the things he would do would be to close the US military base there, and when he was confronted by US journalists saying how could you do that, he said "Well maybe I would reconsider if the US would allow us to build a military base in Miami." That military base will soon be closing in Ecuador, as will a number of US bases thanks to the struggles of groups overseas, with support from groups like us, that have been actually going to Congressional hearings and bringing up the issues of how these bases are making us more of a target for animosity and both for- terrorist attacks overseas.

So I want to end with a quote from one of our founding fathers. And you know that although they did have many flaws, like building a society that was founded on slavery and didn't allow women to vote, they did have very good points when it came to the fact that the US should not invade and occupy lands overseas, because then we would become just like the empire that they had fought to overthrow. Washington, Jefferson, Madison, all warned against invading and occupying other lands, and secretary of state John Quincy Adams—I love his quote because he said "If America went abroad in search of monsters to destroy, she might become the dictatress of the world, but she would no longer become the ruler of her own spirit." This is the time to reflect on how empire building is destroying the soul of our nation. It's time to recommit to getting our soldiers out of Iraq, dismantling our foreign bases, preventing new conquests like an attack on Iran, redoing the international community, and in the process strengthening our democracy at home and becoming the rulers of our own spirit. Thank you.

FRANCES FOX PIVEN: We'll take questions or very brief comments, if there are any in the audience, anybody? Yes. Why don't you come up so that we have a mic.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm not sure which direction to face. My name's Adam Flint and at the moment I'm teaching sociology at Hartwick. My question I guess was motivated by something Joel Rogers said, having to do with the really severe lack of infrastructure for movement building. For the last forty eight hours I've been hearing this in various forms, and I guess my question is both why, at the time when conservative right wing foundations and funders have been funding grassroots community-based organizations with flexible funding, have been thinking strategically, have been doing all these things that you're talking about, why it's not happening with the folks that, that we would like to happen. And secondly what would be necessary to make that change? And that's not just for Joel Rogers, though probably first, I think it's for everyone.

JOEL ROGERS: Okay, got it. Well, it didn't happen because- I don't think that people running the foundations or the source of big money in the left or the Democratic Party or the unions in America wanted it to happen, basically. They didn't want to—they didn't think it was necessary, they were used to a liberal state, on which they could organize claims. They didn't realize that you'd actually have to build an infrastructure to do stuff. And they, in particular, were much less attentive than the right to the opportunities and the foundational character in American politics, or the state stuff. For years it was impossible to get people even to open their

eyes. If you said “Look- the right is moving into the states, it’s taking over the states, it’s got a whole infrastructure all over the place,” and, you know, you just couldn’t get a hearing from it.

So you essentially had national institutions that were quite confident through the democratic majorities that have—that continue to obtain in Congress in the 70s, in the continuation of a, basically a claim it state, and just didn’t see it coming. Although, millions of people, or not millions of people, many people told them that all the time. The reason why it hasn’t happened since then is- well look where the money is. The unions are in serious decline, and never been able to agree much outside of presidential campaigns on a particular platform. They spend millions, hundreds of millions of dollars, every year, or every four years, on that. But there’s very little other unity in the, in the Labor Movement and political program. And they have, actually systematically divested themselves of field capacity in a variety of areas.

The churches, forget the churches. Then you have the liberal foundations. The liberal foundation, people often speak of the Ford Foundation, or Carnegie, or just was this morning, this person was asking about- “Gee, I heard somewhere that the right had actually made investments in building infrastructure in the states.” This is all news to this is a fairly high-level person. but the Ford Foundation, Carnegie, these people on whom I’m dependent and many of you probably are, those are, are, very very attentive to not straying into direct political activity, and so the usual stuff on, among people doing political work is to say “Well this actually has nothing to do with politics, it’s just a charitable educational thing that I’m sort of engaging in.” Then unlike the right, this is beginning to change a little bit by things net based fundraising, like Move On, other stuff, but took us a very very long time. We did not have the sign cant direct mail operation that was pooling resources in any significant way, and we still don’t. If you wanted to build a left infrastructure or a democratic infrastructure in US, it would not cost that much money. I don’t know, ten billion a year would pretty much to it for you, and you could take back the country. You’ve got, certainly, hundreds of millions of people who could easily give a thousand dollars a year, I think probably everybody in this room. The reason why you don’t, and also the reason why you don’t answer Medea’s call or other people to get on the phone and call your Congress person, is that no one likes being a sucker, basically. And you don’t have any confidence that the money would be well managed, or that it would be directed in a way that, that would have critical effect.

So, I think that the task is to set up institutions that can receive the money, in which people would have some plausible confidence, they’re semi-professionally, they’re semi-professionally managed, that are some way transparent, and open the sluice gates. I really see no alternative, I know that sounds ridiculous, but that’s what I’ve come to. We have to tithe in some way to a series of things. So imagine something like, what’s the credit card company Medea, you know the thing—Yeah think of working assets only writ very large, that we could all put money, there would be some process of reviewing different projects. But it’s, it’s absurd, the dependency we have on foundations.

FRANCES FOX PIVEN: I’d like to answer that question too, because I don’t quite agree with Joel. Foundations have never funded movements, and the great movements in America in history and in the world have not had the kind of infrastructure that Joel described. I think the

infrastructure he described is more like a party or a cam—party campaign infrastructure than a movement infrastructure. Now there are— come on, you can interrupt me.

JOEL ROGERS: Just to point out, I wasn't talking about movement infrastructure, political infrastructure.

FRANCES FOX PIVEN: Alright.

JOEL ROGERS: The movement is outside of all that stuff, it's about how to get movement...

FRANCES FOX PIVEN: Good, I'm glad that you clarified, that's fine.

JOEL ROGERS: No, I've no illusions that foundations have led the mass movements of the world.

FRANCES FOX PIVEN: So, Joel's infrastructure. The Democratic Party, and other well-meaning institutions, might work on building that infrastructure. I certainly would be in favor of that. But the important thing to know is that there are movements, there have been movements in the United States. What- if we have lacked anything, I think it's the kind of synergy that results when movements operate within an electoral environment, which is vulnerable to the movements. The movements that- of the last twenty years, have operated within a republican or a democratic party dominated by the DLC, that could not really be assaulted by the movements. We need to elect a democratic party, ideally with Joel's infrastructure, and then attack it from the bottom and the left with movements, because they will respond. Therefore, I think that the recent little imbroglio in the Congress in which the people calling for impeachment of George Bush confronted the Democratic Party—it's a kind of episode in miniature of exactly what we need. The democratic party's not gonna save us by itself, but the democratic party confronted by movements which can really hammer the democratic party, might save us indeed. Thank you. Anybody? Another question.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Is it live? This question is for Medea, and it carries right on from Francis' statement. Could you ever have an audience which is more convinced of the institutionalization of abuses of power than the one you have in front of you? Don't we all agree that the Democrats and the republicans are two faces of much the same coin? Why then, have you not called for the interjection of the power of law in removing Mr. Bush and Mr. Cheney, when you have Pelosi already in her garret?

MEDEA BENJAMIN: Well, I don't- I'm- There are more sympathetic audiences, probably, and those are the ones that some of you are part of which is out in the streets. I don't know how many people here actually feel that impeachment is the way to go. Raise your hands if you think that is. Raise your hand if you don't think it is. Interesting. I'd say, looks like two-thirds think it is, one-third no...? There is tremendous resistance on the part of the leadership of the Democratic Party around impeachment, is quite astounding. And I'm part of a movement that has been pushing them to take on impeachment, in fact, I did mention how when Nancy Pelosi said it the day after being elected speaker, that many of us were astonished by it because what a crazy thing to say, when you're elected and you haven't even looked into all of

the legal issues that are available to you to deal with the destructive practices of the Bush administration. And we had assumed that Conyers was going to begin holding hearings as he promised us that he would. We had met with him several times before the Democrats took over, and he said “Put us in power, I will be in charge of the most powerful Judiciary Committee in the House, and you will see impeachment proceedings going forward.” Lo and behold, we did our job, Democrats came into power, and they didn’t do theirs. So, we have a movement that is pushing Congress people one by one by one to sign up to articles impeachment that have been introduced by Dennis Kucinich, that start out with the argument, when people say we can’t impeach Bush, because then we get Cheney, so his articles of impeachment are to impeach Cheney as the first step. So, there are only nineteen Congress people who have so far signed on to that. Now there’s about seventy Congress people in the progressive caucus in Congress, why wouldn’t all seventy progressive Congress people sign on to that? Because they are getting so much pressure from Nancy Pelosi and the top leadership. So yes, they key is Nancy Pelosi, that’s why it’s great then we had Cindy Sheehan who has announce that she will run against Nancy Pelosi, and it’s great that we have such a strong base in San Francisco that has started something like the encampment and a hunger strike at the same time, outside her house calling for impeachment to be put back on the table.

FRANCES FOX PIVEN: Another question.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Dick Flacks. I admire everyone on the platform immensely, but I am bothered by some of the way you formulate the questions that people on the left have to deal with. And I think the heart of my anxiety, is there’s a lack of a certain respect for imperial understanding of what the left is in this country, and of the existing strategies and efforts that people are trying to make in many dimensions of our life. And that includes what you just said, Medea, about the- Pelosi. I am not willing—here to stand up and defend her, but don’t the Democrats have a strategy to try to deal with the Bush administration in a way that they have understood to be politically necessary at this point? Pelosi will say privately “We’re gonna hearing them to death; we’re going to expose them in many different ways in Congress.” Is this working? I don’t know. But to simply say they’re unwilling to deal with the Bush administration, neglects trying to understand the diverse points of view that people might have about this. Some people say impeachment, move, if it got anywhere, would vitalize the right wing, in a way that would be very threatening, and we don’t need that now. So there’s a real debate there, not simply empty, or not empty, but slogans that push us to applaud but not to really consider. And I say you the same thing, more deeply about what Joel Rogers- our visions are fant—incredibly important, but they, in a way, tell those of us who’ve been working for thirty-five years in a relatively doldrums situation, we haven’t done anything. Well we have done an immense amount, and this needs to be examined empirically by sociologists at the foundation. What has the left accomplished over the past thirty dec—three decades in an apparent absence of effect? The effects are deeper I think than your talk seemed to imply.

FRANCES FOX PIVEN: Joel briefly, then Medea briefly.

JOEL ROGERS: Yeah, Dick, I don’t mean to give that impression that the left hasn’t done anything over the last generation at all. If you—on a caricature of my view it’s that of Pat Buchanan. We’ve won most of the culture wars, while losing a lot of the political, and most of

the economic ones. Now people say “Ah we haven’t even won the culture wars.” I think in fact, America has made tremendous progress in racial toleration, in respect for women, respect for gay people, GLBT, it’s just, it’s a much, I don’t know it’s a more tolerant country, and I give the left all the credit for that, basically. Little bit of capitalism but mostly the left, and I think that’s a huge advancement politically.

All I was making, and I don’t think, which is funny I emphasize, I don’t think you produce mass movement out of a little bit of planning and advance, and less, you know lest of all—least of all, foundation funding. What I was saying was, was trying to agree, anticipate Medea. I think this is really more a time about politics than policies. I think we can fight our way around the situation, you know, restructure welfare state and different policies. I, I- Right? Point one. But we not very good at taking disorganized public opinion, which is politically powerless, and mass movements which are at a low ebb, not nonexistent, but at a low ebb, and translating that into effective political space. And that is because we don’t have the standard tools that the other side does have, that’s the political infrastructure. I don’t know if that helps at all, but. No, I don’t think people have wasted their lives we haven’t done anything, I just think we’ve lost rather substantially on the terms that we would want to measure winning and losing. It’s not a more equal country right now, it’s maybe more tolerant, but it’s not more equal, and it’s at least as violent toward the rest of the world, and that’s, that’s a bad thing.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Is there a local level in this country that has changed over the past seventy years, at community level, city level, where the left didn’t even exist before transformation at that level, that needs to be taken into account that was what I’m trying...

FRANCEL FOX PIVEN: You can’t answer again.

MEDEA BENJAMIN: Yeah it could be unfair for me to answer again. There are a million of them yes.

Well, I just, as far as the question about understanding the Democrats strategy and being sympathetic towards it, I think it’s wrong. I don’t think it works. In fact what we’ve seen is that we have a continued war with the surge, and a report that’s gonna come out in September saying things are better, and a media that’s gonna start echoing that, and it’s gonna be even harder than it would’ve been to come out very strong in the beginning and say “We will only fund the withdrawal of US troops.” I think the, the democratic leadership made a strategic blunder, and we have been working with the progressive elements of the Democrats from the beginning, who have said “Come out very strong.” And when you make a compromise, the compromise position will be a timeline for withdrawal. Instead, they came out with the compromise position and then ended up giving Bush all the money he asked for without any kind of timeline. So, I feel their strategy has been proven wrong. We do work with groups like Move On that work very closely with the democratic leadership and do work out the inside-the-beltway kind of strategies. We push MoveOn and MoveOn pushes the Democrats, and hopefully we’ll see some results.

FRANCES FOX PIVEN: I’ll take one more brief comment or question. Sally?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: DO I have permission? Okay. I just have little comment on the- I would like to give a new title for our democracy, should be named as "Dictatorial democracy," or "Democratic dictatorship." It comes like this that, like, [REDACTED] elected by 100 person. [REDACTED] is elected by 100 person. We have two candidates they get 50 person, they are equal. After you elect them, then you have no rights, you have only the rights to vote, and then, that your expiration, and you should be happy that you are given the rights, then I have the authority to do everything, and anybody who speak against me, then you are unpatriotic, and if you're a Muslim then you go to the black hole of the Patriot Act. So these are the things. But we never talk about the political corruption, the few meetings that I have been. And that is the biggest problem- that we cannot overcome this situation. I worked in Asia and Africa for thirteen years though I'm a Haitian and I have seen the best of the democracy, and I [REDACTED] by migrating here, that is the small country Botswana. And, they had a, they allowed the insurance company to have insurance policies, and next year the insurance to increase the premium, they said "No you cannot do that." Then they said "okay we are not going to do business." Said "Go away." Then the government introduced a two cent tax on the gasoline, in case on insurance, the government takes the responsibility. So we cannot talk against the corporation and that's the Saudi here, and that's what is happening. And the Congress and the president, everybody's ruled by the corporations, and therefore we don't have a democracy, we don't have the will of the people. And movement, I said to my student, that if another twenty percent people go to the poverty line, then there will be a revolution that will come, and we don't know what type of revolution it will be. Thank you very well.

FRANCES FOX PIVEN: Well it's certainly a limited democracy, that's for sure. And for some of the reasons that you mentioned. Is there anybody that wants to make a brief response to that? We're having an elections panel. Patricia.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: Actually, the newspaper I brought with me, as I assume people have saw yesterday's newspaper, where China's enacting a high-tech plan to track people- data on the chip which everyone will have to carry in the entire country and will include not just the citizen's name and address, but also history, educational background, religion, ethnicity, police record, medical insurance status, landlord's phone number, personal enforcement of the reproductive policy of their reproductive history will be on there, as well as adding credit history, subway travel payments, and small purchases which may be charged to the card. And what was interesting to me was not just that China is doing this, but that the technology is being developed in Plano Texas, and with a variety of American companies and investment companies that are doing this. And that simultaneously we have this law that was passed just last week after all of our complaints about Alberto Gonzales' illegal wiretapping, which basically authorizes this new unitary executive to do exactly what, what strikes one as rather fearful about the Chinese project, in a number of other countries that are doing varieties of this, but, but it's almost like—I think the implication of what was, of what is labeled formally "The Protect America Act," that's the name of that act which was passed last week, the six month law, are relatively invisible, people do not understand how broad this is. This is a law that will affect not just a communication between a citizen here and somebody else there, that's how it's, it's based. it affects anybody who uses the telecommunications system, because almost all of our telecommunications go through nodes which are international. I mean every time you ask for

directory assistance, it goes between here and the Philippines, perhaps. And so there is very little limit on it, and this law prohibits any court oversight of the substance of that wiretapping. The courts can only look at the procedures that the NSA or Alberto Gonzales uses to overhear, but they can't look at the substance. And it makes everything else completely secret. So the degree to which this really allows an invisible program very similar to what China does more openly. I- and with the cooperation of clearly, sort of politically motivated American companies and banking, is cause for huge concern. And I just wanted to add that my latest column in The Nation taking off on the title "the Protect America Act," is called "The Protect Alberto Gonzales Act."

FRANCES FOX PIVEN: Well, I think we have to bring the session to a close although I hate to allow it to end on such an ominous and gloomy note. We have to get rid of that unitary executive and a lot of the people they have brought to power and that won't solve the problem. Then we have to work with and support the movements that will also bring the Democrats into accountability. Thank you very much for coming, thanks to the speakers.