

Divided America 3/27/01

SAMPLES: Good afternoon, welcome to the Cato Institute. My name is John Samples I'm the director for the center of representative government here at Cato. I would like to welcome each of you for coming today to, see our event and hear our event on governing a divided America.

Let me give you a brief overview of what we are going to do today. Each of our speakers will deliver a presentation, followed shortly, thereafter, by a question and answer session. Then finally we will adjourn upstairs for lunch.

In mid-January I happened across an article by Terry Teachout, a commentary entitled "Republican Nation, Democratic Nation?", which ended with a question mark. Terry argued that the 2000 election had revealed a divide America. He cited the following exit poll data: The more regularly you went to church the more likely you were to vote for George W. Bush. Sixty-three percent of voters who go to church more than once a week voted for Bush. Sixty-one percent of voters who never go to church voted for Gore. Bush also took the votes of 53 percent of married Americans and Gore 57 percent of unmarried Americans. Of the 4 percent that identified themselves as homosexual, 70 percent chose Gore. Of the 16 percent of voters that belong to unions, 62 percent chose Gore. Blacks voted nine to one for Gore, while 60 percent of white males voted for Bush. Among the voters who own a gun, which was almost half of those polled, 61 percent voted for Bush. Among those who do not own guns, 58 percent picked Gore.

Terry went on to say that the differences were magnified by geographical distance and the loss of a common American culture. As much as I like the article, I could not help but turn to Terry's question mark. Are we a divided nation? What might that mean for politics and policy? In response to these questions, I decided that Cato should do the public intellectual thing. That is, we should bring together interesting and intriguing thinkers of some depth, to give us the larger picture of divisions of America at the start of the 21st century. I am happy to say that I got my first three choices for the job; Terry Teachout, Deborah Dickerson, and Andrew Sullivan.

We'll begin today with Terry Teachout. Terry has served as the senior editor at *Harpers*, an editorial writer for the *Daily News* and since 1993 he has served as a full time freelance writer. You may well know him as the music critic of *Commentary* magazine. He is also a contributor to *Time*. He's edited and anthology of H.O. Minkins works and he is currently finishing a Minkin biography that he tells me will be available next year. So, you might want to look for that. He's also written another book "City Limits, Memories of a Small Town Boy. Terry also has revealed that his favorite TV show is *Dario*, which I think tells a lot about him. Terry.

TEACHOUT: It's been four months since George W. Bush was elected President. The first of those four months felt like it lasted for about a year. So much has happened since the election that it's hard to turn your mental clock back to the morning after that fateful night. I think Republicans in particular, don't seem to want to remember what happened

in November, because you know, it's much nicer now. We have Republican President who's doing really quite fabulously well in the polls. Republicans are in control of both houses of Congress, more or less. So, why be talking about red states and blue states? But, here we are about to do just that and I think we are quite right to do so. Yes, President Bush is charming, but his charm hasn't changed the results of the election of 2000 or what it told us, and what I think is still telling us about America today. So let us step back for a moment from the charm offensive and return to the numbers we were all staring at, blurry-eyed, four months ago.

The big number, of course, is the popular vote. Bush and Gore split it almost evenly. The closeness of the race wasn't a fluke. The same thing happened in the House and Senate. That alone is the story: The country appears to be almost evenly split in its party preferences. Some people argue this is because both parties have migrated to the political center. Republicans and Democrats have become indistinguishable so it stands to reason that they should split the electors fairly evenly, but behind the big numbers of the vote count are the little numbers of the exit polls. What they tell us, as John just summarized, is that there are many differences between Republican voters and Democratic voters. The differences are significant and they have to do with culture

These numbers mirror the changing ideological makeup of the two parties is exactly, as the popular vote tallies, mirror the even division of the electors, along party lines. When I was a boy, the Democratic Party was basically a liberal party, but it had room for Southern Democrats who were anything but liberal on many issues and not just race. I think no longer. Now that Bill Clinton has departed the scene, it is a lot easier to see that the Democratic Party is becoming a true party of the left, meaning the cultural left. The GOP isn't quite as unified; country court Republicans still hold a lot of sway, but it too has come to be defined by cultural stances as much as economic ones.

This alone isn't news, I think we all saw it happening, and the closeness of the election is not such a surprise. The 2000 election is a three-legged stool and the third leg is geography. Except for Alaska and New Hampshire, all of the states won decisively by Bush were geographically contiguous. Forming a vast bell shaped curve that sweeps down from the Rocky Mountains, across the Great Plains and then through the Midwest and South. By contrast, except for California and Washington, most of the states won decisively by Gore are bunched tightly around the urban and industrial centers of the Northeast and the Great Lakes. You all remember that map from election night. Since then a lot has been written about it. Mostly trying to show that it isn't quite as significant as it looks. Andrew, for example, points out that many of those states were divided pretty closely between Bush and Gore, and he is absolutely right.

To better understand what happened on election night, you have to look at a county-by-county map of the 2000 election occurrence. Bush ran ahead of Gore in about 2400 counties with a total population of about 143 million. Gore ran ahead of Bush in about 680 counties with a total population of 127 million. The geographical line between those counties is very, very bright, although when you look at them they appear to be scattered across the map. You realize in a closer inspection, that Gore won in the cities, in the

older suburbs, in the college towns and in certain non-urban areas with very high concentrations of Blacks or Hispanics. Bush won everywhere else. Now, the voting populations of these two geographic entities are taken together, almost identical in size, but they're completely different places.

On the Democratic side of the fence, you have an urban and suburban-based coalition of government employees, union members, blacks, new class knowledge workers. On the Republican side, you have the modern equivalent of what H.L. Mencken called the "Bible Belt". Mike Buron calls it the country music belt, in which rural and small America have joined up with those Americans who live in exurbia, the new middle class communities that are springing up around the rim of the older suburbs. Now, I'm not saying the population in each of these places is uniform. I ought to know better than that. I live on 84th and Broadway in New York City, maybe the most Democratic precinct in America, and I voted Republican.

It does appear that one cultural type, very broadly speaking, seems to be increasingly predominant in each of those two places and that's the news. The two parties are culturally distinct. The two cultures are geographically distinct and the two geographical areas are roughly identical in population. What this suggests to me is the possibility, only a possibility that America may be in a process of splitting in two nations that are competing for political control of the country as a whole. Now, conservatives and neo-conservatives in particular are very reluctant to consider the possibility that American might be splitting into two culturally distinct nations.

Look at the definition of the word, I looked it up in the shorter Oxford English Dictionary and I found that a nation is "a large aggregate of people so closely associated with each other by factors such as common descent, language, culture, history, an occupation of the same territory, as to be identified as a distinct people—especially when organized or potentially organizable as a political state." That is what I see when I look at the county map. Democratic nation and Republican nation are literally two different places. In addition to being largely separate cultures they occupy largely separate territories and being dominated by two different parties are at least potentially organized as political entities.

Now, nothing is as simple as it looks. I've already acknowledged that neither nation is completely culturally uniform. There's another problem with my thesis: Half of all of eligible Americans don't vote. In this fact alone poses a major problem for anyone seeking to sort Americans into two kinds of people. Are non-voters disillusioned or merely apathetic? Do they resemble their voting neighbors and cultural allegiance? Until we have good answers to those questions, we cannot say with real certainty that the two nations are as different as they seem to be at first glance. Nevertheless, the exit polls do tell us a great deal about the cultural allegiances of those Americans who do vote. It seems clear that at least up to a point, Republicans and Democrats are culturally distinct and that the differences matter. They are not trivial. In fact, I think they are going to become more important, because the peculiarity of the present day American politics.

As each of the two major political parties refines its pitch, so as to maximize its appeal to swing voters, it moves closer in practical terms, to the center of the political map. That's what Clintonism is about and maybe also Bushism, if there is such a thing. This migration to the middle throws the remaining cultural differences between the parties into higher relief. Those underlying differences are, inherently, the ones most different to paper over. It's a lot easier to compromise on prescription drug plans and tax cuts than it is on abortion. A younger voter who opposes gun control or supports public school vouchers is going to see very quickly that there's no place for him in a Democratic nation, no matter how his parents voted when he was a child. So instead of choosing a party out of family loyalty, which is what used to be the typical case, he's more likely to choose it out of cultural conviction. Also, I think, more likely to settle in a community where his next-door neighbor may share those convictions.

This gives you the situation I've been describing—the gradual self-segregation of the electoral map into two geographically discrete nations that share a shrinking pool of common cultural assumptions. Not only are most of the issues that separate the two nations cultural in nature, many of them—maybe most of them—seem to partake of an essentially moral character. Moral factionalism crossed with regional factionalism. Sound familiar? It does to me.

It sounds like America in 1860, not nearly as drastic. For one thing the regional split is a lot more geographically complicated and there isn't one dominating question remotely as powerful as that of slavery. There seems at least to be a family resemblance between America now and America then. President Bush thinks, or says he thinks, that it's possible to forge a cross-cultural consensus and reunite the two nations. That was the meaning of the compassionate conservatism and of last year's relentlessly inclusive Republican convention. Did it work? Once again the electoral map and the exit polls supply an answer. Democrats consolidated their hold on blacks and on unmarried women in 2000 and increased their vote totals in the older suburbs.

This doesn't mean the Republican nation is doomed to falter and fail. It's possible, at least, that the seemingly equal balance between Democratic nation and Republican nation in the 2000 election was an artifact. As much a function of union-led Democratic turnout efforts as anything else, the exit polls told us that conservatives still outnumbered liberals, 29 percent to 20 percent. With 50 percent of the voters describing themselves as moderate. 53 percent said they prefer less government to more government. Even if the balance really is as close as it looks, we have to remember politics is dynamic. It's driven by demographic change. The counties that Bush won, in November, are going in population at a rate of 14 percent as opposed to a 5 percent growth rate in Gore's. The electoral map could look different in 2004 and very different in 2008.

Still, my guess is that the evenness of the cultural split and the sharpness of the geographical split are going to be with us for some time to come. They are our new political reality. That means a country that is hard to govern, even by a charming Texan, we'll see how much President Bush's charm is worth the day after the House or Senate or both goes Democratic.

So, are we two nations? I did end the title of that piece with a question mark. I think that maybe so, I very much hope not. Things do seem to have cooled down since the election for which I'm glad. I really don't think that Republicans should count on the cultural temperature staying comfortable for all that much longer. The divisions are still there, still deep. The geographical split feeds the cultural split, especially on the left. Republicans are forever being bombarded with democratic rhetoric, and mass media takes care of that. When you live at ground zero of Democratic nation, as I do, you don't hear any ideas that go against the conventional wisdom, unless you go out looking for them.

That's what I'm afraid of. I'm afraid, we really are two nations and that the two nations are talking to themselves, instead of to each other.

SAMPLES: Thanks very much Terry. Our next speaker will be Deborah Dickerson. Deborah is senior fellow at the New American Foundation, here in Washington, D.C. She's written for such publications such as the *Washington Post*, *The New Republic*, *Essence*, *Slate*, and the *Village Voice*. She was recently awarded the first place for personal commentary by the New York Association of Black Journalists for her essay "Disappearing Acts". She's a regular host of "Washington Journal" on C-SPAN and she has appeared on the "Oprah Winfrey Show," National Public Radio and "Good Morning America." She's a 1995 graduate of Harvard Law School. Began her writing career following a twelve-year service in the U.S. Air Force. Ms. Dickerson writes principally, though not exclusively, on questions affecting the black middle and working classes and the role in American society. Last year she published her first book; a political memoir entitled "An American Story". She is now working on a second book that explores what she believes to be the fundamental political and cultural shifts within the black community, including growing unrest with the traditional black leadership and the emergence of new conceptions of racial identity. The title of that book is "The End of Blackness." Deborah.

DICKERSON: Good afternoon. Let me make just one clarification, I don't host "Washington Journal" anymore and the people at C-SPAN get really ticked off if I put myself forward as one of those. So, I don't do that anymore.

I have to say, I really, I gave up on putting together an actual presentation today, because I don't even agree with the question. Are there two nations? I guess it's not that I don't agree with the question. It's that I'm not sure that I understand, even if the answer to that question is yes, what the significance of the question is. In the last couple of weeks I've run across several articles that say America is two nations: East and West. You know, Peter Bionard in *The New Republic*. He's talking about drug policy, but still, American is two nations, East and West. Mike Lend in the *American Prospect*, who is also a colleague at the Foundation, he says America is two nations: North and South. There is the Northern party and the Southern party and never the twain shall meet. They are divided by ideology and region and segregates who volley back and forth for supremacy, based on race and ethnicity. He claims there always has been and there always will be

the Northern and Southern parties of America, now two Nations Democratic and Republican.

I just am not sure what we're supposed to do with that question. If we are two nations, what's so bad about that? Why aren't we just one nation with serious differences of opinion, not that are gonna rip this country apart. If slavery didn't do it, nothing will. Abortionists think this is an issue, think this is an issue as it is not going to do it to America. What people do instead is prioritize and try to convince each other. So, I wonder to all due respect to Terry, and having read this several times, trying to shed being black and working class you're pretty much tattooed with the Democratic Party logo when you are born.

Trying to stand outside that, I read this and read this and it keeps coming across to me as a lament for the loss of the right, white male, Protestant, right-wing hegemony, politically and culturally. I read statements like this one, where you're talking about Hemopharb, "the left wing counter culture of the 60s and 70s she argued, has become the dominant culture, proudly and aggressively secular, while religious believers and moral traditionalists have coalesced into a distancing culture that co-exists, somewhat uneasily, with the dominant culture." Well, that wasn't considered a problem when it was the other way around. It wasn't considered a problem that was going to bring us to the edge of rack and ruin. What is brought us to was the 60s where the distancing culture got mad, didn't take it anymore, and got out, agitated, and changed things. So, if it wasn't something that kept us awake at night in the 1950s, why is it something that keeps us awake in the 00s?

I think consensus is not necessarily overrated. It would be a wonderful thing if we had consensus. I don't know, people like us would have to get real jobs. Consensus isn't is factualism—you know, the type that the founding fathers both railed against and depended on, is the life blood of this country. Certainly, in my own personal life, I have changed my opinion and have been swayed by arguments on the other side that I never thought would sway me. There are some arguments that are never going to sway me. It's okay for you to make those arguments, just don't try forcing them on me. Use the political process, try to change peoples minds and that's okay.

When I read your piece several times, I kept wanting to get to the point: What's going to happen? When we all agree there is two nations what is the dire consequence? The fact that we don't get along, that's always happened. The fact that our election is very close is more, I think, of a good thing. Maybe it's just because I figured we got no place to go. I'm not leaving America so I want things to work out here. What are the dire consequences of having these two Americas?

When you look at, especially, the losers in this equation—this time around were the Democrats—what I see is people scrambling, to try and convince that other side that this party is for them. The way they try to convince them is by trying to change. If you went to the DLC's magazine, I think it's called *Blueprint*, they had a very substantive back and forth between some of the leaders in the DLC. They identify the reasons that they lost

this election and say this is what we need to do to convince people to vote for us. We need to lesson our identification with racial minorities. We need to do this and do that.

I think it's going to foster greater creativity and greater cooperation. It has to. George Bush right now is acting like he got a mandate. You know, I would act that way too if I were the president. The reality is that he's out in the countryside trying to support his tax plan. I think, especially because I follow race so closely, what fascinates me is that I seem to be the only person who thinks that the outcome of the election, insofar that it concerns 90 percent of blacks voting Democratic, is going to be counter-intuitive. I think there's two ways to look at it. You can look at that and say, "Oh man, these black people are just insane. Why do they put all their eggs in one basket? I don't know what to do with these people so fine, let them keep voting Democratic." I think the other option is the one that George W. is taking and I think the more sensible ring of the Republican Party, which is to win over the blacks it can win over. You primarily do through outreach, which the Republican Party hasn't been very good at. I've always wondered why they didn't just simply appeal to blacks for their vote. That's what's happening now.

The most brilliant thing I've seen in the last 10-15 years of watching politics is this outreach to the black community, this complete end-around the political class through this outreach to the ministers, who have enormous clout in black communities. If there's a black person on a ballot black people are probably going to vote for them, but when black ministers from neighborhoods say, "You should listen to this guy. You should vote for that guy," it really resonates. Especially when it is the ministers in the communities who provide the bulk of the services. The rest of America is only just starting to figure out what people in the communities have always known, which is that it is the black church that provides contact. There are very few people in America who will to even go into black neighborhoods, and presumably Hispanic neighborhoods, to deal with the lowest of the low. It has always been the black church that has the job training centers, that goes to court and gives character witnesses when Ray Ray is on trial. To be funneling millions of dollars, and more importantly respect through a very close association with the black community is absolutely the most brilliant strategy I've ever seen. It's gonna work

There was a black minister the other day who is involved in this outreach, I can't remember his name right now, but he said, "If this continues the way it's going there's no reason why black people shouldn't vote Republican in 2004". They all said, "I voted Democratic and the Democrats didn't win, so we have to play the way the game is laid out." This wouldn't be happening if the Democrats had won the election 80-20 or something. I think in a lot of ways the closeness of the election is a good thing. People understand that it is thumbs up or thumbs down and you've got to negotiate. You've got to cash the widest possible net. I'm a disaffected Democrat, but most of the time I hold my nose and vote Democratic. I think more and more people are that way.

To say that we are two nations, you alluded to this, well no, you officially said this that there are wide differences. People vote and have all sorts of different oppinions. At the

end of the day you still have to pull the lever for a Democrat or a Republican. Maybe what we should be looking at is proportional representation. Maybe what we should be looking at is ways to safeguard and nurture the emergence of third parties. I'm just not sure the answer is to be more cultural hegemony when we the guy we don't like has it. I just think it's interesting that the liberal media is so roundly condemned, but lots of people still voted Republican. You mentioned the "West Wing." Well when it was Donna Reed and "Leave it to Beaver" and there were not black people on TV except as maids, everybody was married and had a nuclear family—that was cultural hegemony. We survived that.

I think this nation thrives on its differences. I refuse to be afraid by the nose-to-nose competition between the two parties because it has to result in greater cooperation. It has to result, I think, in a rethinking of this sort of idealistic notion that there can be and should be consensus, because that presumes that there is a right answer to every question, that humans can arrive at it. Just because you feel strongly about abortion or you feel strongly about capital punishment, you can't convince the next guy about that. You can have a difference of opinion about privatizing Social Security and still go out and have lunch and be friends. There's not necessarily a right answer and a wrong answer to that question; there are better ways and worse ways of going about it. Privatizing Social Security—that's not something that's going to rip this nation apart, but an insistence that one side is right or wrong on some of the major issues of the day—gay rights, for example, same sex unions, the right of gays to adopt—to think there is a right answer to that question and whoever disagrees with you is causing disharmony in the country is, I find, a very disturbing notion. So, when we get to a point of some sort of cultural hegemony, I don't think that's going to happen. What has always happened is that one group of society forcing its will on another?

You talked about a time when there was, when you talked about these two cultures "not so long ago the members of these two cultures live more or less in proximity." Not in my neighborhood. I grew up in a very segregated city and I almost 42 years old. "They were also bound together by a common national ethos is thought a transient group identities and partisan divisions." I just beg to differ with that. I just don't think that really happened. What we had was one group imposing its will on another. You will love Western Civ and you will love Shakespeare and that's all. Nobody else, no Tony Morrison, no gay writers, no Arabic writers no matter how good they are. There's no, I think, trend to transient group identities but just to enforce one over one. It would be great if we all agreed on these things, but we simply don't. I think we have to come back to the basic American notion, this time indeed, instead of simply in rhetoric, that we all have to get along. We all have to respect each other and most of all we all have to respect the democratic process. If you use the democratic process and win, that's what matters. Thanks.

SAMPLES: Thanks Deborah. Andrew Sullivan is a columnist at *The New Republic*. He was formally editor of *The New Republic*. He is also the Webmaster and writer for andrewsullivan.com on the web. He's an author, his most recent book, I believe is "Love

Undetectable Notes on Friendships, Sex and Survival” and he also wrote “Virtually Normal.” Andrew.

SULLIVAN: Thank you and thanks for having me. I’m sort of uniquely well positioned to talk about this because I’ve held both positions, as *The Weekly Standard* tweaked me on. When I first looked at the map, the electoral map, and you do look at it state by state—it is a very striking map. I think that part of what we are responding to is simple geography here. I think at first glance you can also see certain broad-brush strokes of different cultures both in the red zone and the blue zone. It’s gonna be part of our language, in a way, to talk about, as I do, “Oh I got an e-mail from a red zoner today.” I get loads of red zone e-mails. That tells you something; the red zone is e-mailing me. We’re having a conversation, which suggests that perhaps the deep divisions that we’ve talked about are not quite as deep as we think.

I have a few qualifications to my first response to that map, which I think add up to basically an abandonment of the notion that there are two deep nations as Israeli understood them to be, which is of course the analogy that we are talking about. I think we are actually much less split as a country now, or indeed last November, than we were during impeachment. I think we were much less split once Clinton had left than we ever were when Clinton was here. I think Clinton, as a figure, was a much more deeply divisive figure than anything that we can deal with as an issue. A human being can divide people because everyone can understand that human being than a whole variety of abstract issues. In fact, I think, we are actually moving out of an era in which the splits are very deep.

We should also be careful not to simply associate an even split with a deep. I think what was really remarkable about the last election was the extraordinary symmetry between the two national votes. I think it is very easy, natural human thing to say, “Oh look two identical nations, therefore two deeply divided ones.” It may not be the case. There are many circumstances in which parties can be very closely balanced in a society and not be deeply that different. In fact, when you look at both of the campaigns that both candidates ran, with a small exception of Gore’s completely bizarre attempt to move to the left, you see actually a relatively conventional battle for the political center.

I think what we saw last November was a snapshot of an extremely dynamic country, ideologically, culturally, geographically, and economically. To talk about this as if it’s some permanent way of being in this country, this division, seems to me to miss the extraordinary dynamism in change that is still going on. Look within each nation and you will see many other deeply divided nations.

Within the Democratic Party you have, for example, the most loyal block, which is of course African-Americans, but you ask them what their cultural views are and you find that they are actually quite conservative. If you ask them if they go to church, you will find that many of them do actually go to church. So, there you have the most loyal constituency of the blue zone showing all sorts of characteristics of a red zone. In the old days you would think that the Democrats represented the working classes or the aspiring

middle classes and the Republicans represented the wealthy. Well, within the Democrats you do indeed have some poor ethnic groups, you have some Hispanics with less than the actual income. You also have in the last election an increasing number of very wealthy people voting disproportionately for Gore. You have the Tony Blair phenomenon in which increasingly the leadership of the left is far more socially upwardly mobile and far more wealthy than that of the Right. You have the secular block within the Democratic Party, which is definitely true especially among Jews and especially among Yuppies. At the same time you have a growing Hispanic vote, which is profoundly religiously conservative and Catholic. In other words, I think this subtraction of this culturally secular left, these culturally traditional right, breaks down when you analyze each particular camp.

Similarly, within the Republicans, yes if you ask people if whether they really do go to church every week, you are going to have quite a dramatic difference between whether they vote Republican or Democrat. Ask them if they believe in God and you might have something much more amorphous. Look at the number of Republicans that are still secular, the Perot Voters, the independent entrepreneurial sometimes-Libertarian types who are a critical part of any Republican majority who are not religiously conservative or even religious at all. Look within the religious blocks of the Republican Party and you will find, beneath the surface, considerable tension between Protestants and Catholics. The great dream of some members of the religious right to bring these two factions together, specifically in a war against abortion, has failed. Those groupings, the old deep divisions between Protestants and Catholics, never quite manage to be lost within a single culturally monolithic block called the red zone. Of course, at Cato everyone would know this, there is also of course a very profound difference within the red zone between authoritarians and libertarians, or Traditionalists and Libertarians. Take the drug war. I think you will find as deep divisions within each camp as you do between the two.

In other words, I don't think, in fact we do have a very profound or irreconcilable cultural war in this country anymore. I think we have had some flash points. I think the last twenty or thirty years have been particularly divided, but I think in many cases this particular division is weakening. It is nothing like the cultural divide we have in the 60's and nothing like the cultural divides we had since as that original divide, the Vietnam divide, the 60's cultural divide played itself out in our culture. Evidence of this settlement as it were, this compromise, this motis of endie, between these many different groups can be seen in any number of cases.

Abortion, for example, which we might think of the most profoundly divisive question in our culture. Well, we have John Ashcroft pledging to uphold the constitutional right to abortion. John Ashcroft, as Attorney General, appearing to be, so far, more left-wing than Janet Reno in any number of areas, recognizing though that the settlement on abortion is done. It's over. There is no way, certainly in my lifetime—or taking my lifetime out of it, our lifetimes—in which abortion will be made illegal in this country. President Bush has acknowledged this. It's basically done. We have basically a Republican-appointed Supreme Court that has upheld *Roe v. Wade*. There is no way on

earth this is changing. In other words all grownups recognize this. It is not that deep. We can care about it profoundly, but we are not going to war over it.

Gay rights, sure still an extremely divisive and difficult issue. At the same time, the very fact that there are some many obviously prominent gay people in the culture, in the media, in entertainment, shows an enormously big shift toward basic acceptance of the reality of these people as an essential part of American life and culture. There are many issues to be dealt with; marriage is obviously the most contentious one. Even there, there is some kind of settlement temporarily. Look at Vermont, where you have civil unions and which are not going to be overturned. In fact, the Vermont settlement, which is basically marriage in all but name for gay couples, plus a symbolic attempt by the other side to say marriage is still between man and woman, seems to be, at least, the settlement we will have for the next decade.

Affirmative action. No one really actually passionately supports this anymore, except a minority within the blue zone. Again, we're not really fighting massively over it. California, which is in fact in many ways is the most dynamic and ethnically mix part of the country has moved clearly, as a symbol of where the future of our racial politics lies toward getting rid of racial organization, getting rid of bilingual education at affirmative action. Showing that these things can reach some sort of multicultural resolution without the old haphazard methods of the 70's Left.

I'd also argue that the geography isn't as deep as we think. One of the things that I found on the Web is how remarkably easy it is to generalize about what happens in certain parts of the world. If you've been on the web and you've been out there particularly exposed, you will find liberal Democrats in the middle of Alabama. You will find frustrated right-wingers in the middle of Manhattan. You will find all sorts of weird and corky combinations of views and ideas and cultures in all sorts of parts of this country. This is partly fueled, of course, by the Internet, which is one of the most remarkably unifying as well as disaggregating technology as we find.

If you were a gay kid living in Montana 30 years ago, you were screwed, but apart from that you had no ability to talk, find, reach, communicate, have any idea what was going on. Now, one click, you're in touch not only with your local gay network, you are in touch with an entirely national gay culture. I have a correspondent, a 19-year-old gay kid in Kazakhstan that is writing me on a weekly basis, just found me on the Web. If openly gay kids in Muslim Kazakhstan can be in touch with this, how much more of the different cultures and communities in this country in communication, in contact, in unifying discourse through the Internet. It's a huge and important shift.

Secondly, these deep shifts and differences are also made much more complicated by the extraordinary mobility in this culture. Just look at California. Within 20 years we have a totally different political outlook in that state, the biggest state in the country. To say we have some permanent divide between one country and another, when one of the major states turns overnight from one particular kind of state to another, is crazy. We have had enormous immigration. We have phenomenal ethnic change. We have a situation where

finally our racial politics is no longer going to be black/white. They're going to be about a competition and a dialogue between all sorts of shades of brown. These things are not, I think, going to keep dividing us as deeply as they have in the past.

Look at the Latino vote or Latino culture. It's extraordinary how dynamic this is. You might think, here is a community in this country with a different language, different outlook, concentrated in very particular geographic areas in many respects. Look more closely and you see, once again, this phenomenal American process of churning in which a first generation segregated community turns up within only a couple of generations speaking English, penetrating the popular culture, having a Ricky Martin character as one of the leading pop music figures inaugurating President Bush.

One of the things as someone who wasn't born here, but has come here and learn to love about this place, is its extraordinary ability to shift its cultural identity like a kaleidoscope. One minute you think you've got it, the next minute, a few generations, a few moves, a few events, and the whole dynamic changes again.

Having said that, I would say the following as well, it seems to me nevertheless undeniable that there is at both ends a clear group of people a small minority on both sides who are really are not interested in anything but cultural war and cultural identification. It's quite clear that a certain number of angelical white Protestants really are not interested in the current diverse settlement. It's also clear, it seems to me, that the African-Americans community is not interested, at least hasn't been so far, in genuine ideological or political openness. Those two groupings, which exercise extraordinary implants and power over the political process simply because of their loyalty to both parties, distort somewhat the politics of all those of use who are stuck in between those two holes.

I sort of partly believe that these things can be resolved, that you can engage, that you can persuade. I am heartened by Deborah's remarks about the way Bush has been able to have some input or some handle on the black vote. I have to say I am also a skeptic. I don't—I genuinely do not understand why after the last campaign with a kind of messages put out by President Bush, the response by African-Americans to that kind of outreach was actually a more definitive spurring of that candidate than ever before, a more definitive rejection of the Republican Party than ever before. Ninety percent—an extraordinary monolithic vote for what seems to be basic gut cultural reasons. Similarly, there's a certain element of the angelical whites who really are not interested in engaging this America at all. They want to stop this America. They want to unravel it and take it back to something that they want or believed once existed, but in my view never did.

Quite how we grapple with those groups I don't know. I would say, however, that it is more important than ever not to let them set the agenda for the rest of us and not let their polarization blind us to the much more.....

SAMPLES: Contrary to plan and in the interest of fairness I thought I might really quickly give a each speaker a chance to respond to what was said, beginning with Terry.

TEACHOUT: Andrew and I have something in common: We are both Republicans who live in Democratic nation. I think in listening to what he has just said and also reading what he has written about this subject since the election, that we are looking at the same set of facts and our discussing them in roughly the same sort of universe. His is an optimistic interpretation of what he sees, mine is not. I find it interesting that he used the phrase snapshot to describe the election. What I would say on election in a two party system is in this kind of context, is a sort of form of factor analysis. We have this very desperate world that Andrew describes with people like me living on the upper West side of New York and all of the different interpenetrations of culture that he has been describing, especially in the context of the Internet. All of these desperate elements are put into this two-factor analysis and we look and see what is being divided out. What I see being divided out through the exit polls and through all of the other things that I have talked about in this presentation and in my much longer piece is a cultural division.

I think I agree it is not as dire as it has looked at other moments, but still does seem to me to be strong and distinct and that the result of the way our two-party system is working right now is to factor out these two kinds of cultural positions as the basic areas where the parties are. Obviously, if you look down lower, if you get right down on the ground and look at people and where they live, you may not be able to see these kinds of patterns. The point of this sort of analysis is to pull far back enough where the groupings emerge. I, too, am very heartened by what Deborah was talking about and puzzled as Andrew is by the fact that it has seemingly had no political issue. I've always been fascinated by the fact that blacks as a group seem to be culturally conservative, but don't vote that way. I am very curious to see what happens. I am very skeptical, as Andrew seems to be about at least the short-term results of this kind of outreach.

In the other parts of Deborah's presentation I think I'll just say simply that while Andrew and I do seem to be in the same area talking about the same things, it almost seems as though when Deborah is talking about cultural hegemonies and such that she is in fact illustrating the kind of vision and maybe the kind of incomerability that's implicit in my position. In some fundamental sense she and I are not talking about the same thing. We are not bringing the same assumptions to some extent the same values to the table, whereas possibly Andrew and I are. So that's my reaction to these two presentations. I think Andrew and I have got the same set of cards on the table we're just drawing different clues about them.

DICKERSON: Not to belabor the last point, I guess what I'm saying is, we're divided in some ways, but not in ways that place the nation in peril. I think that divisions have always been there and we've reached a point in our maturation as a country where we have the leisure to notice that there are people who don't agree with either sort of dominant block. I think that the difference is that I have no fear. If the reins have been subterranean for centuries haven't ripped this country apart, the fact that they're more on the surface now is not going to. I think in so far as our divisions lead to great debate in time and discourse that's a good thing. That's a strong thing.

TEACHOUT: I agree with that by the way.

DICKERSON: So I guess my question is what are these dire consequences? Just that there's two large blocks of people that vote for different parties, but both of those parties encompass such large swaths of political, cultural and religious beliefs. That is what happens when you have a first past the post system. I mean, this is what minorities have always complained about. You never get to win and yet nobody is leaving. The gays aren't packing up and moving, blacks aren't packing up and moving, women don't pack up and move. You stay here, you stack out your territory and you fight. That's what Americans do, you know, when you have a nation that's polyglot by definition, this is what happens. So, I guess maybe having come from a minority that has always read the paper and just sort of rolled its eyes at what America thinks it's doing, maybe knowing that you are sort of behind the eight-ball politically just doesn't frighten you that much. Get in there and fight, that's what Americans do. This is a very stable country. We're not going to have a civil war. We're not going to have mass out-migration. I just can help but smelling a strong whiffs of loss of perch that is the real heart of the problem. I just don't think that's all that worrisome. Everybody needs to get in there and mix and mingle and try to persuade the next guy to see it your way.

Which leads to the second point. That is what exactly what Bush is doing with black people. You don't understand why blacks didn't vote for Bush and we don't understand why you all don't understand that. There's always this sort of head scratching that goes on about these inscrutable black people. What's so difficult to understand? Just because Bush doesn't seem like a scary guy doesn't mean that he doesn't associate with a people that scare the hell out of black folks. Just because blacks are culturally conservative you're still black. You're still visibly marked and from where we sit there is still a lot of racism in this country that affects black people's daily lives. I think that's the part that you all don't want to grapple with is that whether you agree with it or not, understand it. That is the basis of it and that Democrats are more likely to support you against that than Republicans. It is quite rational. Blacks are as rational as every other group in this polity. We just never seem to get credit for it. It's not superstition that keeps blacks voting Democratic. It had to do with what I was saying before about these black ministers.

Part of the reason they're so influential in the community and part of the reason Bill Clinton was so popular with black people is that he was clearly not disgusted by us. He was clearly willing to hug and touch. Have you ever seen the Martin Luther King Day ceremonies when George Sr. was president and he had to do the linking arms swaying and singing "Lift Every Voice"? You have never seen a more uncomfortable man in your life. We get that. We see that.

TEACHOUT: I don't believe he would want to link arms and sway with anybody.

DICKERSON: I don't want to. But the fact is Bill Clinton would have done it with gusto. My point is that Clinton was not afraid, neither afraid nor disgusted, by black people. Lots of other folks are, including the bourgeois blacks, the black political class—

which I don't think spends nearly enough time in the communities, in these churches, which the ministers do. Which social services agencies do.

Even with Bush—who nobody in the black community thinks is a racist—no one in the black community is scared of Bush, but at the same time this a man who's playing hardball. This is real politics. He goes to Bob Jones, apologizes to Catholics, but not to blacks. He refuses to take a stand on the confederate flag. We notice these things. It's rational. We make the same kind of political calculations as anybody else. The other thing that's rational about the black attachment to the Democratic Party, which I think is problematic, and I am glad to see breaking down. I don't think that the answer is that blacks become Republican, but I think that the answer is that blacks claim the power that we have just so far refused to claim as citizens. If black people didn't notice the alacrity with which the Democratic power structure backed away in the debacle with the campaigns about disenfranchisement alleged or otherwise in Florida. Gore distanced himself from that and black people saw that to which is what I think is going to this encounter intuitive result. Speaking rationally, blacks have built up a power base in the Democratic Party. They have a home there. They've invested. Why would they very quickly walk away from that because George Bush walks around saying I'm not a racist? It's rational. Black people are as rational as anybody else in this polity and they thought their best interest lay in the Democratic Party. I think they figured out after this last election that's wrong factually given the closeness of the race. We've got to have our eggs in both baskets.

SAMPLES: Thank you.

TEACHOUT: Is bougie black slang for black bourgeoisie? This term I haven't heard.

DICKERSON: Yeah those terms are interchangeable.

SAMPLES: Andrew.

SULLIVAN: Thank you, Deborah, for that. It certainly seems to me in fair point that if we think the blacks are irrational politically, what does that make Jews, given their unbelievably monolithic loyalty to the Democrats for I think even less cogent reasons?

One tiny little thing, which is this point about cultural hegemony, which I do think is an issue. I think part of the reason you might have a cultural revise when one group thinks, "Hey this is my country, it's being run by the other guys both culturally and politically." I do think that the change in public media in this country, which is essentially a fraction of the once-monolithic control of the networks and a monolithic control of a hand full of newspapers. It has helped that by allowing there to be a great adversity of voices from both the blue zone and the red zone and every shade of lavender in between. It's one big lavender nation.

Actually there was a very interesting map on the Web which instead—I put it on my site—which instead of doing who won, who lost, blue, red, they actually did a pixel

change to make 100 percent blue, 100 for Gore, 100 percent red, 100 percent for Bush and gave the hues the different hues of purple basically. I come out much more complicated and interesting than you guessed before. It's a much more accurate reflection of where we are.

TEACHOUT: The interesting thing about that map Andrew is that you also provide is you also provided a link to a pixel-connected county map, which looks just the same as the original county map.

SULLIVAN: Fox News for example, the Internet, any number of other outlets have broken the possibility of a unified cultural nation, which one party can control or the other control. Therefore, you defuse, to some extent the battle over that single space. That has helped; I think elevate part of the cultural war.

SAMPLES: Ok, let's go to questions. Please wait for the microphone. Please identify yourself and your affiliation and please have your presentation in the form of a question.

LEON HADAR: A question to Mr. Teachout and I actually want to demolish your theory by arguing the following. There are two groups. You call them, I think, one of them the new class knowledge worker. Why don't you call them the new economy class? I mean go to Silicone Valley and other places. This is the most advanced and energetic class in American and in global capitalism. Nevertheless I suppose you call them part of the left, the cultural left, or whatever. Clearly, you know, that goes very much against your argument. The second one that was mentioned is Hispanic immigrants for changing the country. They are culturally conservative. Nevertheless, they vote for the Democrats. How do you explain that? The fact of the matter is, I will tell you why your thesis is wrong: Because you don't include two variables: immigration and globalization as cultural variables. I would argue that if you interject those two elements into your debate it changes the entire map. You know the good guys and the bad guys here kind of have been transforming in some ways. Many of the people that you like are against immigration are against the globalization or suspicious of that. So, you know it's a little bit more complex was argued here than the way you are describing it.

TEACHOUT: Well, of course it's more complicated. If you are going to talk about things you have to talk about them in a way where you can sort them out and try to make some sense of them. For example, you say that existence of new economy—new class whatever you want to call them—these people negate my thesis. In fact, it demonstrates exactly what I have been saying, which is that when there's convergence among the two parties on certain kinds of issues which don't cut along this, it's the ones that are left over that become the significant issues the cultural issues. I'm not discounting the existence of people who have complicated belief systems. I think most of us do. I do. I would certainly not want myself to be characterized in some of the ways that I have been implicitly been characterized as for writing this piece. If you sort, you have this group and it believes these things and that's sort of like the way the other party believes and they drop out of the equation. It's the things that you're left with after these other variables drop out of the equation—the cultural issue that seem to cause the division. I

think the Hispanic immigrant vote is in the process of becoming. It's a group that's in the process of finding out what it thinks. We're in the process of finding out what they think. I don't think that either in my piece or this presentation I've ever denied that demographics are a dynamic process and that what I'm trying to describe is the way things look now. That they will change over time is a certainty. I have not doubt of that.

SAMPLES: Other questions.

I have a question for Ms. Dickerson. Whether, for example, Clinton hugs blacks or not I assume you would agree that doesn't affect their daily life although that would affect their perception maybe. My question is, you alluded to the fact that there's still a lot of racism that does affect blacks and their everyday life. I would like you to explain just what it is in their everyday life that is due to racism per se? Rather than just perception of people what they are like.

DICKERSON: I was waiting for the microphone oddly enough. I'm so obedient, see, we are irrational. I think without the guard dogs and the water hoses and all that stuff, than you can always say there is no racism. We see it differently, you the universal you. One could always say, "Since there are no more guard dogs and water hoses and that sort of thing there is no more Jim Crowe that proves to me that racism exists." I can't, but residential segregation, I think that the funding of school districts based on property tax districts, I can certainly could argue that it was racist inherently or classist. The continuation of it certainly solidifies continued any structural inequality. I think the ways you get treated by police, I think that cultural hegemony in the schools where the majority cultural is right on a test and minority culture is wrong. Maybe that's not actually an instance of racism. It's definitely an interest that's about power in the society. Definitely I think the drug war and certain ways in which racial profiling is carried out on races. One of the outcries about the proposals to make ecstasy, to increase ecstasy I guess, was actually done will disproportionately affect middle class white kids. I have a feeling that's not going very far, but the drug war that traps large numbers of poor blacks every year, we'll argue about that until the cows come home, but I don't think that is going to change. Yet it did get worse under Clinton.

No one's arguing that because Clinton is comfortable around black people that he was necessarily the best president for black people. The augment was one of comfort and where people can see themselves. To a large degree black people cannot see themselves being made welcome in the Republican Party. That has to change if the Republicans want more black people in the party, if they don't than it doesn't need to change. Black people certainly feel that racism is real and continuing, to the extent that other people don't agree that will continue to be a source of devices between the two groups.

SAMPLES: Roger Pilon

ROGER PILON: Thank you, John. Roger Pilon, Cato Institute. Andrew, I do think that Terry is on to something here that perhaps you were a bit too sanguine about. I want to coach my question by going back to the title of today's program, namely "Governing the

Divided America” with an emphasis on governing. It strikes me that to the extent that governing reaches virtually every aspect of life, that the more we have a divided America, the more it is going to be difficult. Seems to me that you focused on a number of areas in which we don’t seem to have differences and in the process perhaps given too little attention to those areas where we will have differences and where they are going to come to a head. Terry mentioned incommensurability, for example, whether we have a tax cut or not is an up or down issue and there is a great divide in this country. If you can imagine a country that is limited to the kind the founders had where we had limited constitutional government, than you wouldn’t have these great issues before us on every aspect of life. That is not the case today. Obviously, every issue is seemingly a thick subject for federal attention. No issue is too trivial and that’s why it is such an important issue. One of the places is going to come to a head in addition to tax cuts, affirmative action and so forth, is the issue of judicial selection. I submit that we are going to see some very real battles ahead on that issue. Especially with such a deeply divided Senate and I think that the Bork and the Thomas hearings are going to be repeated. We didn’t see that in the Ginsburg and the Breyer case perhaps because one side is a bit more civil than the other in these matters. Civility takes us to just the issues that Terry was talking about where you have these kinds of moral issues that are really a substitute for deeper divide about such things as the scope of government in our lives which manifest themselves in such things as judicial selection hearings. Perhaps we are going to see it at that point. Perhaps you and even Terry would care to comment about that.

SULLIVAN: Well I think if you were right the events of the last two months would not have happened. I mean, you had a president elected in the most contentious circumstances. A deeply divided country, I mean really divided in November and December, if what you are saying is right he would be at this point unable to govern. Not only is he able to govern, he is governing with enormous support and certainly so far considerable civility.

DICKERSON: Has it been tested? Has there been a real issue?

SULLIVAN: I think you can look at the tax cut thing as you mention, we sure as hell gonna have a tax cut. The question is a normal rather tedious one: How big and where and how and why, which the system is working through. If you look at Ashcroft, there you have after the most contentious divided election; you have the most lightning rod candidate for attorney general. Imaginable, I don’t know anybody more extremist than Ashcroft on any whole number of issues. What happened? Nothing, really. Yes they tried to turn up the fight, but the fizz has gone out of it. It’s extremely easy to govern this country right now. The divisions are not that deep, if they had been you would not have seen anything like this. As for the judicial selection, most people in this country couldn’t give a damn about judicial selection; it’s an extremely abstract question, which is fought over by think tanks and professional types in Washington, has very little importance outside. So, I think that you’ve just been refuted by the last two months. If the last two months did not show deep divisions, then what will?

TEACHOUT: To simply answer that, I think that time and not very much of it will prove Andrew wrong. The judicial selection I think is going to be a tremendous lightning rod, but more than that, when the party balance in one or both chambers of Congress changes than we are going to see what civility is worth and who has it and who doesn't. I think suddenly this fictitious civility that we are seeing in Washington now is going to give way to something a lot more like the sort of civility that you see on a college campus. As I say, you know the facts will bare that out one way or the other.

DICKERSON: What is it that we think is going to happen? Yes, there will be vicious op-eds back and forth. If the impeachment of Clinton, which didn't strike me as all that civil, was an incredibly conflict ridden time for the country, and we survived it. I think we established a few things, like that the American public is only gonna—as moralistic as we are—is only going to sit still for so much intrusion and to the private life no matter how tawdry and disgusting. What is it that's going to happen? Civil war? The majority of people get up and go to work everyday and live their lives. It's us that sit around having these panels about how deeply divided the nation is. I guess my question is, why is disagreement itself deemed so problematic when it really seems to me, at base I keep sort of getting these whiffs that it's about having to have these contests at. When has there ever been consensus that wasn't enforced with some sort of power. What is it that we are so afraid of?

TEACHOUT: The answer to that is, I think as you don't that there's one side that if it does what it wants to do the war is going to get a lot worse. I mean the picture that I envision here is not of the civil war because of course we are not going to have another civil war nothing like that is going to happen. I see something like England in the 60's and 70's where you have two parties that really want to travel in very different directions and you have this whip side affect. I'm not worried about blood in the streets, but I am worried about a country that seems to fall in regional division where the two parts don't like each other. Where particularly one side, the left side is very militant about wanting to change the other side and not let them live their lives. Alan Wolff has been talking, I believe I remember this phrase correctly, about how what we are going to see and what we may need is a kind of moral federalism. A sort of decentralization of these attitudes, but the trouble is one of the two sides in this moral federalist arrangement is not going to let the other side conduct itself in the way it wishes to.

DICKERSON: So I was right. I was right. It's rare that you get that concession. So the problem is that the wrong side is being taken too seriously is winning to often?

TEACHOUT: I think there is a side, and a lot of people in the room would agree that there is a side that is closer to the way we think things ought to be done than the other.

SULLIVAN: We, what do you mean we?

CATHY GROSSMAN: Hi, Cathy Grossman from *USA Today*. I would like the panelists to address two variables that I don't believe I have heard addressed so far, and that is the variable of age. A number of people in this room under 30, raise your hands. I would

like to know how America divides on many of these cultural issues in terms of age. Somebody else already pointed out immigration, but I'm also very interested in the economy. I think age has an effect on that I think that the possibly rapidly changing economy is goanna have an effect on where people stand as well. This is a different economic world even than it was eight or ten years ago, not just because of the prosperity factor, but because the way people are invested. A number of small fry invested in the market, for example, who might be discovering their first recession. I wonder how much that's going to move people back and forth from the various colored zones.

SULLIVAN: I don't think there's going to be some massive economic backlash. It's the small fry that have got their heads screwed on. It's the big fry that panic at moments like this in the market. Age though is actually fascinating and important I think. I think that if I were to look at a real split, not what I think of these slightly phony splits. I think age is important partly because we have set up a welfare system devised in the 50's and 60's and some parts in the 30's basically paying through the nose for people to sit around at the age of 60-65 for the rest of their lives, doing nothing but consume public wealth, or, if we are lucky, a little bit of their own wealth. That generation is going to increase since they rigged the system so that it will work for them, but it won't work for us and we will spend the rest of our lives paying for them to have a wonderful retirement. We won't get the same retirement when it ends. That is a real crisis. Unfortunately, partly because the baby boomers are a particularly powerful generation about to basically fleece the rest of us if they haven't fleeced us already, in this process. That seems to me to be, I have a little edge in my voice because it is in some ways the most divisive issue as far as I can see in terms of the country. It's generational. In order to win states like Florida and Pennsylvania you have irresponsible people like Al Gore promising them free drugs the rest of their lives, paid for by the working poor or the people in younger age groups. That's going to be a real issue. I think you put your finger on perhaps the most significant divide in the next 30 years. It's not cultural really.

TEACHOUT: I would point at a different aspect of the age divide. Historically, it seems to be as people get older and marry and start families, they become more conservative. In other words our attitudes about cultural issues are dynamic across age. If that process continues to hold there's going to be one kind of America, but if you have a regional division in which is up to a point appears to be the case, in one nation fewer people do that than in the other nation. Fewer people in Democratic nation are subject to this transforming force this cultural force that occurs when you get older, than that's going to change the characters. It's going to separate the characters of the two nations even more greatly. We'll just have to see what happens there.

DICKERSON: Also I think it's interesting, young people grouch about exactly what Andrew was saying, although usually more diplomatically. Then they vote at such low levels so I wonder on the one hand, I will be 42 shortly and I wonder if I will still agree with Andrew in ten years about—hopefully I still will—that we need to do something about that. I wonder, given how few children we have and that sort of thing, if anything will really be done about that. Again in the black community I see rays of hope in that blacks over it's lost identification with the Democratic party, but under-30 self-

identifying independence at a much higher rate and growing all the time. I'm not sure how many of them identify as independent but still vote Democratic, but certainly identifying yourself as an independent is the first step.

SULLIVAN: Also, Deborah, there is that amazing statistic in the census that showed that blacks under the age of 30 are twice as likely to cite another race than blacks over the age of sixty. In other words, you're also seeing the wonderful effects slowly of cultural mixing, but also the end of the miscegenation laws, and you are beginning to see a much more genuinely mixed racial grouping. Also, if you look at something like the gay issue and you look at the polling of college freshman, you find clear big majorities now in favor of equal marriage rights for gay people. The highest numbers of these come from private Catholic colleges where the most sort of significant majority is in favor of dignity for homosexuals is coming from the young and from more tradition types among the young.

DICKERSON: Right, but then the question is to get them to vote. On the issue of economics I'm one of these people who I'm the opposite, I'm the naysayer, I am the rosy future person here, but I'm the naysayer when it comes to this rosy economy which of course is starting to not be so rosy now. Even when we were also so full of self-congratulation. So many of those jobs were without dignity, without future. We started getting Home Run Groceries and a couple of months ago these guys were full of vim and vigor. Home Run is this computer base grocery-ordering place and then they deliver it to your house. In the course of just a few months these guys have gone from zippitty-do-da to I'm-gonna-start-a-union and I'm-so-unhappy-they-are-mistreating-us. I wonder about the depth of some of these jobs and peoples' ability to raise a family, have insurance, and will my kids do better than me. That along with the consumer debt load the amount of bankruptcy is going to be more difficult. I think that's where there's a real danger in so far as education doesn't keep up with the demand of a high-tech economy. I think that's where the real danger lies because people are pretty easy to get along with as long as they can work and feed their families, but when the time comes where more and more of the workforce is temporary. This morning on NPR they were talking about the effort to unionize Wal-Mart and places like that. The heavy unionization in places like Las Vegas where half my family moved to in the last 20 years because it is a really great place for the working class. So I think that question is really really important. As the economy sours and people start losing these jobs it's gonna be a really dangerous time. I wouldn't want to be governing America when the bottom falls out.

SAMPLES: Time for one more question.

JERRY MAHLER: Jerry Mahler from Catholic University. I'm wondering, given the fact that all three of you have looked at evidence, electoral evidence as many of us have, to what extent is the notion of two nations? Itself a construction of intellectual worriers of people whom only feel that the intellectual sap is rising when there is indeed a battle. When there is indeed a battle there has to be a battle between two sides. Seems to me it ignores three essential things. One Andrew Sullivan's alluded to: The difference between an even split and a deep split. Secondly, more importantly that on many issues on which

there is some degree of polarization the notion of cultural war or two nations implies that the major cultural battles the people line up in the same position on all the cultural and non-cultural battles. So that someone who has a position on abortion should have a particular position on tax cuts or a particular position on the environment or a particular position on gun control. It seems to me that this is often not the case, that indeed they are hatched. That is to say that people have different commitments, which they feel to different degrees on many of these issues, so they don't line up. Thirdly, it ignores the fact of ambivalence and ambiguity. That is to say that which many people genuinely feel ambivalent about a number of these issues rather than being polarized on them.

Ambiguity in a the sense that whichever side one feels that one is on it's often not clear what to do. Take the issue of eliminating the inheritance tax, which could be the greatest blow to the funding of voluntary organizations in the United States. Is it conservative to advocate that? Is it radical to advocate that? Is it far-sighted? Is it irresponsible? I don't know. I think that a lot of people have that genuine sense of ambiguity about these issues as well. So I am wondering to what extent are you looking at the same evidence but constructing it in a certain way and others also constructed in this way both on the left and right. Those who feel most comfortable and indeed energized by the notion of cultural war and to be attracted I think to this construct of two nations.

TEACHOUT: Well I am not actually the sort of person you described.

MAHLER: You don't seem that way by your cultural criticism, which is why I was a surprised by the piece.

TEAVHOUT: I'm not; I mean I don't even write about these issues anymore. I haven't for years. It was simply a matter of getting up the day after the election and looking at the map, spending some time at the exit polls, looking at the county map and beginning to think that I had seen something that other people weren't seeing. Weren't writing about and that's why I put this piece into print. It occurred to me that maybe it was just possible that I had gotten my construct more closely described reality than the other ones that I was reading in the media. I'm not the kind of warrior that you are describing. By the same token when you gave that list of issues where people might fall one way or the other way, It seemed to my by choosing that, even in choosing that set of issues you sort of confounded more than one possible set of things that you could be talking about. I think the divide is cultural and that means that we are not talking about the environment. There are issues where different kinds of consensus emerge and people do manage to do something about it. There are areas in which parts of the two parties have converged. Part of my argument is that precisely because of this convergence in certain areas, certain other areas are starting to stand out more, are becoming more salient become where the divide is. I interpret those as cultural issues. Sure, we're all looking at the same data, I hope, I think, and trying to see what we see. That requires a certain kind of filtering. There's no such thing as theory that accounts for all possible variables.

SULLIVAN: I think you are right that we do see what we see. We come at we see with pre-existing sensibilities, and I think you're right there's a certain hangover in a way from the Cold War and in indeed from the cultural war which was synonymous at some

level with the Cold War. We like those battles because it was fun and those of us who were part of that it sold magazines and it gets the blood racing. When the country has moved on, we look stupid to keep firing these volleys in a battle that fewer and fewer people care about, in which more and more thinking people realize that the world doesn't fit into those categories. I'm so exhausted being asked, "How can you be this and this?" It's so boring. How about the answer, "I'm just trying to think every issue through on its merits and trying to figure it out." Most people in the country are like that. It's just our professional political links also to institutional and inertia reasons can't quite change in tune with the country. Also, of course we should never underestimate the importance of money. Many of these special interest groups in Washington need the culture war for money. They need it to reeve up their fundraising basis. They need these hot buttons—yes or no, red or blue issues. So if a gay kid gets murdered you're going to have 50 million direct mail pieces going out there, 50 million other direct mail pieces trying to tell you the Boy Scouts are about to sodymize your children. These sorts of things are partly created by institutional structure in this town, which needs this war even when the war is over. My position is wakeup its over, move on think yourselves.

DICKERSON: I would agree. I think that I am probably the panelist closest to what you were saying. I think that some of it comes down to, we have this information, and we have this polling information. We've got these pixels and maps and we've got colors and we've got pundents like me with time on their hands who don't schedule anything a week before or the week after an election. You've got to have something to talk about. I regularly get calls by places to do some sort of pundancy and the bookers are always amazed when I pass. I say I don't have anything to say on that subject. I didn't write one impeachment column. There were just enough people doing that. I think I am in the minority there. I do think there's an extent to which it's a full employment act for intellectuals and for the people with Lexis. I think it's important to look at this stuff and to be constantly checking ourselves. How much imposed conformity is there? How much lack of conformity is just simply that and serves no other purpose? I do think that the electorate busy with lives and busy with real jobs having to get groceries delivered is comfortable with a lot more ambiguity than we are. Both parties encompass people who don't agree with anything except for a couple of things, but when you're in the both you've got to punch one name or the other, Democrat or Republican. I think more and more are like me who hold their nose while they do it. On some days I really long for a viable third party, but on other days what kind of can of worms would that open? So this is the system we've got and I believe it does the greatest good for the greatest number. I don't get overly exercised about these sorts of things. I've got to say consensus scares me. The push for consensus scares me because the word to me is a code word for socio, political, cultural hegemony and hegemony of any kind scares me. I don't want to be in charge of it and I don't want to be enforcing it. I don't want to be crushed under its boot heel. I will take the rough and tumble of American politics and respect on all sides for our Democratic principals any day over even being in a camp that's on top. I don't want to be on top. I want to be equal.