



GREENBERG MILLENNIAL PROJECT

FOCUS GROUP #12
WHITE, PARENTS, MIXED GENDER
LOS ANGELES, CA
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MODERATOR: INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTIONS.

I'm Sarah and I'm a full-time mom of a two-and-a-half-year-old boy who drives me crazy. I live in Los Angeles and that's about it.

I'm Jennifer and I live in Santa Monica. I'm a domestic engineer as well. I have a four-year-old who drives me crazy as well.

I'm William and I live actually up the street, about four blocks from here. I also have a four-year-old son and I work in the middle school.

I'm Dina and I live in Porter Ranch. I own a small internet based company called Organizing.org and I have a two-year-old.

I'm Ralph and I live in Cedars Ranch and I do financial planning and investment management. I have a one-year-old.

I'm Shauna and I'm a home business owner. I have a six-month-old so he doesn't drive me that crazy yet. I'm a passionate environmentalist, so be ready to hear about that.

I'm Janelle and I live in Redondo Beach. I'm engaged and I have a soon to be seven-year-old and eight-year-old stepchildren, girl and boy.

MODERATOR—I WANT TO KIND OF GET AT THIS IDEA OF....WHEN WE TALK ABOUT AMERICAN HISTORY, A LOT OF TIMES WE TALK ABOUT IT IN TERMS OF GENERATIONS, THE BABY BOOMERS, GENERATION X. THE IDEA BEING THAT PEOPLE BEING OF A CERTAIN AGE HAVE SIMILAR EXPERIENCES, SIMILAR ATTITUDES. WHEN YOU LOOK AT YOUR GENERATION OF AMERICANS, UNDER 30 IF YOU WILL, DO YOU THINK THAT YOU HAVE SIMILAR SETS OF EXPERIENCES AND ATTITUDES THAT KIND OF SET YOU APART FROM PREVIOUS GENERATIONS?

I think so. I think it's more electronic and more computerized now, which is going to be much, much different for our kids than it was for us growing up.

More technological.

Fast paced.

MODERATOR—WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?

From the food we eat to the way we drive to everything, everything is just fast. It wasn't like that thirty years ago.

More global. I just went to China a couple weeks ago and I don't anyone a couple decades ago would have thought of going into a communist country for our vacation.

MODERATOR—SO YOU WERE FOR VACATION AND NOT FOR WORK?

A little bit of both.

I think culturally, I think that that's our generation. I don't think ideologically so much. I don't know that there'sit's not like the 60's when it was the peace and love era and the 80's it's the error of greed. I don't think that there's anything that separates this generation that way.

I agree. When you asked that question, I couldn't think of any one thing that could really define our generation because everyone is so different. The more I tried to think of an answer to that, the more I just thought of answers that would apply to all of our society, not just our age group. We are not really doing anything special yet.

I think so too.

We are called generation "Y" aren't we?

MODERATOR—NO.

WHY.

It's too eclectic. Everyone does whatever whenever. There are just so many choices and everything is okay, really.

MODERATOR—WHAT ELSE IS UNIQUE ABOUT YOUR GENERATION?

I think we are more aware collectively as humanity and as a world, as a group of people. We are trying to grow and not make the same mistakes past generations have made.

MODERATOR—ANY SPECIFIC EXAMPLES YOU ARE THINKING OF?

Like in every way, environmentally, spiritually, emotionally. We don't treat our children the way we were treated. And our parents were treated worse. Stuff like that, we are just trying to get better and be more tolerant.

I think the way that we can define ourselves is our lack of definition. I think prior generations had a set way of how they were supposed to grow up and how they were raised. It was very common how people were raised. It was all the same. And now, maybe it's just because we live in LA and it's such a melting pot, but people have all been raised very differently. All of my friends have very different backgrounds and that probably comes from the divorce rate. But now people are choosing how to live their lives instead of being told by their parents how they are supposed to live their lives, so people are choosing so many different things that it's hard to put your finger on something.

MODERATOR—A COUPLE OF YOU MENTIONED THE TECHNOLOGY. HOW HAS THAT KIND OF SHAPED YOUR GENERATION?

I think it has taken away from our generation because there is less one-on-one or less personal time with each other, like everything is cell phone or texting. You can't even hear somebody's voice now everybody is in such a hurry. And the kids are younger and younger and it's more acceptable to have all of these things.

Yeah.

They are getting addicted to them. Even myself, I'm a victim of being attached to those things too, but I don't think it's a positive thing.

I agree with e-mail especially. If there is somebody that you don't want to talk to on the phone, like a relative, you are e-mailing them because they'll keep me on the phone forever. You use the e-mail and you can just say, hey, how is it going. It does take away.

It's funny because of all of the options that we have we communicate less because it allows us to ignore each other easier.

Right.

Like texting, you can just pretend that you didn't get the text. Or you don't return the voice mail, I wasn't getting service. And I've noticed a lot of times that I'll get blown off so I'll just straight call. I'll be like, you are not ignoring me this time. No e-mails, no text, I'm just going to call you.

MODERATOR—OTHER EFFECTS OF THE TECHNOLOGY IN PARTICULAR?

Instant gratification. We are so used to a world where I can get an answer in two minutes on the internet or I can make a phone call whether I'm in my car or in a foreign country. I'm not as patient as I would be probably if I didn't have the technology at my fingertips.

I feel the same way. I've lost a lot of patience because of that. I could be in my car and use the laptop now with the internet card and Google anything anytime anywhere. So, I think we overly rely on all these sources that if we don't have, what are we going to do?

I think it also took a lot of teenagers and young kids away from families. It's like you see...you go to restaurants and you see that mom and dad are sitting with the teenage daughter and all she is doing is texting to her friends or using her sidekick.

It's terrible.

It's dinnertime and there are three different minds at three different places. I don't think it's a positive thing. In many ways, I don't think technology can be positive.

Same with the TV. More people watch TV while eating instead of talking.

And the video games, my son is addicted to that stupid Nintendo. We have to take it away from him because he tries to play it at the table. It's just...they are very...we have to take it away and say sit down and read. Go do something else other than a videogame. They are so caught up in it and it takes away from education too when they are so caught up in everything else, trying to play video games and stuff. I mean, we used to read. Maybe not our generation as much as before us, but

I used to play outside.

Yeah.

Absolutely and they are addicted to technology now.

MODERATOR—YOU MENTIONED SOMETHING ABOUT HAVING A MORE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE, DO YOU THINK THAT TECHNOLOGY HAS KIND OF SHRUNK THE WORLD AND GIVEN PEOPLE A BETTER PERSPECTIVE ON WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE REST OF THE WORLD?

I agree with everyone, what they said. If anything, it probably takes away from one-on-one...having to personally cohabit the earth with other people. You have so many choices that instead of making it better, we kind of shrink our world. And yeah, I think it's global definitely.

MODERATOR—WHAT ARE THE VALUES OR THE MOTIVATIONS THAT YOU THINK DRIVE YOU GUYS PERSONALLY?

Raising my child differently than how addictive everybody is and is getting with the technology and trying to completelyshe's four and she already wants to be on the internet, so limiting that to a half hour a day, and a half hour or an hour max of TV a day. And doing that, she loves to read now. So just trying to get generations ago those type of things that were important back now is what I strive for literally everyday and it's so hard.

For example, me just watching my son grow up motivates me every day. It makes me happy. And just to see that he's going to grow up in a hopefully better world. That's about it.

Mine is to ...it may sound cornball, but to make a difference. I know that something is better than nothing. I don't give up because I can't make some huge change like certain vice presidents, but I do my part. My job as a professional organizer, I'm in someone's home and that gives me the opportunity to coach them on a personal level. If I can get them to change one small habit like buy recycled toilet paper, then that makes an enormous difference over the course of time. And if do that to enough people, that plants little seeds here and there. And that makes a little bit of a difference. That's something that...that's my motivation to just make that tiny little change because I know it matters, even though nobody really sees it.

Fine, where do I buy it?

Whole Foods, Trader Joe's.

Yeah, I think Target is selling some now.

Ralph's sells it. Some of them though.

I think just watching my son grow up. It's like he's the love of my life and he's two-and-a-half so he's starting to talk and just the words that he says. He shows me if I'm teaching him right or wrong. If I use a word that ...he's like a parrot. He just grabs and two days later he spits out. It's like something you teach them right. With himat one point until a month ago, I thought he doesn't understand anything. I'm talking to him but he is not understanding anything. And then we got to a point where he was starting to push kids at school and I thought if I sat down and talked to him he's not going to listen to me. And the teacher is like, talk to him. And I'm like, but he doesn't understand and he's like just talk to him. So I started talking to him and little by little to see that just talking to a child solves the problem. I didn't think that a two-year-old would understand, but just teaching myself that talking to a kid and just continuing that for the rest of his life and each step just talking to him, that's what motivates me.

MODERATOR—WHAT ELSE?

Oh gosh, mine is not old enough to worry about those things. My main motivation is just to go to work every day and provide financial security for the family. That's what I see every day and if I don't make money, no mortgage and all that stuff.

Same thing, just trying to advance my career a little bit. And at the same time, getting ready to add to the family. Once my fiancé and I get married, I want to have one or two kids. We have two now that we are providing for and then one or more two that we are going to be providing for also, so just kind of keeping that up.

MODERATOR—OTHER MOTIVATIONS?

I don't know if it's a motivation, but one of my passions is like art and culture. And that kind of motivates me. When I see something that I'm really passionate about or that I really love, it makes me want to get up the next morning and see it again.

MODERATOR—HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE THE VALUES OF YOUR GENERATION?

Missing.

Yes.

Perfect word.

Not there.

There are no values.

I was forced to come up with my own. Developed from a mishmash of religions that I was exposed to when I was growing up, kind of some Mormon, some Catholic, some Buddhism, what I saw on TV, what I read in a book. And they all have the same things in common, respect others and treat people how you'd like to be treated. Sometimes you just have to learn the hard way. Nobody really taught me.

I want to steal her word, missing.

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK MOST PEOPLE JUST DON'T HAVE ANY OR IS IT...

Just lacking sitting down together at dinner and doing the things that the families need to do to say close and connected. And trying to enforce that in a world that, especially living in LA with such a fast-paced world, but enforcing that, whether you want to do it or not, enforcing that value so that your child grows up with that to make that change.

Values carry into what you are wearing and what you look like and what celebrity is dating who, it just kind of takes away from individual people. They are more worried about what is going on in like Hollywood, at least around here it seems like. It takes away from...and they see these other people doing things, like getting DUI's all the time and it kind of drops everybody else's values. It absolutely drops the standard, I think.

Instead of people trying to be better people, and nicer and kinder to one another, they are trying to get more money or get a better job. Or get a better car. And stepping all over each other to get it.

And they are looking up to these people who aren't setting very good examples, I think too. My kids love High School Musical. I was so horrified when I found out that that chick was on the

internet nude. I was like, aw, my kids thought that was wholesome. But, it's just when they....little things like that just kind of takes away from..it does drop the standard.

I think if we go back to technology because kids have access to see so much that parents are not teachers anymore. It's like everyone else is teaching our kids, but we are not.

But we have to be.

Yeah, and it's like they are on the internet and someone is teaching them something. They watch TV and they learn. It's like family values are gone, especially because there is no more family time. I don't think family....I'm sure there are probably....parents don't spend time together anymore. There is no more family time.

I went toI agree with everybody, but I think we as parents have a responsibility. For example, in my home, values still exist. I go out of my way to spend time and to make sure we sit down at a table. Not everybody can do it unfortunately because of the fast pace, but I made a choice very early on. I think we have more power than we think and we only need to maybe just monitor a little more or pay attention to what the kids are looking at, etc.

MODERATOR—YOUNG ADULTS OF THE 80'S AND 90'S WERE CALLED THE ME GENERATION, GREED IS GOOD. DO YOU THINK THAT STILL APPLIES TO YOUNG PEOPLE IN YOUR GENERATION OR IS THERE MORE OF AN EMPHASIS TOWARDS MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

I think we are at the verge of cracking that change. They are literally like half and half. The things that are so severe in the world right now, they are seeing that, like global warming and stuff like that, so they are seeing that they need to make the change. And the teenagers are coming out of that more selfish stage and that's being put in their face a lot more. I think it's on the verge of changing.

I completely agree. I was actually going to say the same thing, that they were half and half. There are those kids that don't care and then there are those other ones that I see that just blow me away because they are so passionate about it. And they are starting young with the passion and it's really at the forefront of the media.

MODERATOR—SO YOU SEE EXAMPLES OF THAT IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL STUFF, ARE THERE OTHER EXAMPLES WHERE YOU CAN SEE PEOPLE IN YOUR GENERATION TRYING TO REACH BEYOND THEMSELVES AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

I don't see that. I think if anything it's a bigger me. It's like a bigger, more improved, more technological me. In the 80's, it was about me and whatever, but people still had to interact with each other more. And now, it's like me and if I have everything that it takes, I can pretty much rule my little world and I don't need anyone.

I think if you are asking us to compare this generation with other generations, it seems like it's pretty much the same thing to me. It doesn't seem very different, I think. People are always...there is always a certain segment of people who are very interested in making a difference, whether it was the Peace Corps or America Corps or whatever it is. There is always a certain segment that is interested in that and there is a certain segment that is interested in whatever the progressive causes are at the time. And I think the bulk of the people who are in their twenties are interested in their career and making a little money and providing for their family and whatever the sort of shallow vices are of the day.

Plus it's kind of like the time to be all about you. The twenties and thirties, you have to kind of...that's your base for adulthood. After your mid thirties, I would suppose that in your early forties, then you could start being proactive. I don't see how us collectively as a generation of twenty somethings can be all proactive. It's kind of like the time to make mistakes.

MODERATOR—DO THE REST OF YOU THINK THAT THE PEOPLE OF YOUR GENERATION CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

I absolutely think so. They say that kids learn, how they are going to adapt to their world by the time they are like six-years-old. So I think it's so important now while the kids are young to really instill the things that need to be important for them to survive and be caretakers of the world.

It's also easier to do things for others, like maybe a community effort when you don't have to have a full-time job and you have kids to support. If you are younger and you just kind of fly by the seat of your pants, you can fly off to China and be in the Peace Corps. People like us have kids and can't move around all the time, so it's a little like the lazy environmentalist. You send letters from your e-mail to your congressmen, but that's about it. I think it's really the generation behind us that is going to have the most opportunity to make a difference as far as like important issues. Above and beyond environmental, you have these social issues and the war and everything. People are really coming up behind us and starting to take some action because they can. Our generation is starting to get a little tied down with the family and the mortgage and car payment and stuff like that.

I have a thing that I'm always thinking about and I'm going to bring it up because I want to get some feedback, I guess. I always hear like on the news older people say, well, you guys have it so easy. You never had to work hard like we did or you don't really stand up to government or whatever. If you see something wrong that is happening, you just kind of turn away. And I kind of agree with that. It's not like I want to start WWII or anything, God forbid, but I wish people would take a stand a little more. Hey, what's happening?

MODERATOR—WHAT DO THE REST OF YOU THINK ABOUT THAT?

I think a lot of people are more aware that they can make a difference. I think we are more aware from other generations that each individual can make a difference, but we are running after so many different things that that is at the end of everyone's list. Or at the end of some

people's list. There are some people, yes, who try their best every day to make a difference. But everyone else is just aware. I think we have more responsibilities. Yes, we have the technologies of dishwashers and washer and dryers and all the other things that previous generationsbut there is so much more to have that we strive for more each day, a better car, higher mortgage.

We multi-task.

Exactly. And it's like we are more workaholics, I think.

Inflation, money.

Exactly. We filled up our tanks with \$50 and now it's like \$100 so you work harder. For some reason, that just happens to be at the end of your list. And you never get to your "to do" lists. At least I don't.

I also think that the government is a little bit different than say like in the 60's when you could organize a rally and the government would actually pay attention and take that into consideration when they are making their laws and things like that so as not to piss off the masses. But nowadays it kind of seems like they don't really care. We have global gatherings on certain days about certain global issues and it's just completely ignored, at least in this country. And they do what they want when they want. And the only people that have any say in it are the people with a lot of money.

Or the media. The media has a big impact on what they cover. I think that has a huge impact as well.

And they only cover celebrities.

Yeah, everything else is like a small minor story. The big stories are not necessarily things that should be.

Is that like in the whole country or just here?

I don't know.

I actually grew up on the east coast and I don't remember Hollywood being that big of a....celebrity news and everything. The one news channel, FOX, they actually tell every celebrity story. Oh, guess what Britney Spears was caught doing, blah, blah, blah.

Especially in the morning.

Yeah. East coast, you wouldn't hear...unless it was something huge and stupid that she did, not her normal stupid stuff, at least I didn't get it, unless it's kind of that way now. I was born and

raised on the east coast. I lived there until I was twenty-three and it wasn't as big, it was more like local news. It wasn't as centered around Hollywood.

MODERATOR—BACK TO THIS QUESTION OF LABELS. YOU GUYS SEEM TO FEEL LIKE IT'S DIFFICULT TO FIND A LABEL. IN A POLITICAL CONTEXT, WE TALK ABOUT VALUES, EITHER INDIVIDUAL OR GENERATIONAL, AND THEY USUALLY PUT THEM SOMEWHERE ON THIS SCALE. YOU'VE GOT LIBERAL HERE, YOU'VE GOT CONSERVATIVE HERE AND THE THINKING IS THAT EVERYBODY FITS SOMEWHERE ON THIS TWO-DIMENSIONAL SCALE. DO YOU THINK THAT YOUR VALUES FIT SOMEWHERE ON THAT SCALE OR DO THEY NOT REALLY FIT INTO THAT?

They fit on a couple areas.

MODERATOR—SO YOU KIND OF PICK AND CHOOSE?

Yeah.

MODERATOR—WHAT DO THE REST OF YOU THINK?

I'm the same way.

I agree with her, yeah.

Especially since the president humiliated himself and now all the republicans are trying not to be so republican. They are kind of graying that definition of republican and then democrats like Clinton are trying to be more republican so they can kind of get in on that too. So everyone is just kind of blending together.

MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT YOU GUYS? DO ANY OF YOU CONSIDER YOURSELVES CONSERVATIVE?

(many talking at once)

I think there are two different ways...you are either economically conservative or social issues based conservative. I know a lot of people who are very liberal on social issues, but want lower taxes and more libertarian on the government side. It's probably where you fall into those two categories and they can be totally separate I think now.

MODERATOR—BUT WHY WOULD YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF CONSERVATIVE?

I think out of all the issues you find where...I tend to be on the more conservative side of if you take like the top ten issues, I'm on that side almost every time. That seems like a pretty good label then.

MODERATOR—DO YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE ONE OF THOSE TWO THOUGH?

No, because there are definitely some issues that some people can't fit. There is the log cabin republicans, the gay republicans. So, obviously that's not your typical, and they are completely on the other side on one issue, but everything else they might be way over on the right side of your continuum.

I would say that I used to consider myself sort of a conservative. I mean I still consider myself sort of conservative in the classic meaning of what conservative means to me, in terms of things like smaller government. I think fiscally I'm fairly conservative. There is a problem of being conservative nowadays and it's not because I don't want to be associated with the presidency, although I don't. It has to do with the values of conservative people who label themselves conservative now. It has sort of changed. The reason I don't call myself a conservative now is because it tends to be a lot of divisiveness. It's based on sort of the evangelical core of the party. I can't consider myself a conservative because to me torturing prisoners of war is not a conservative position. The sort of what the current executive branch has done in terms of waging war and what they've done in the course of that war is not conservative in my mind. So I would say what I consider classically conservative, but not in step with the people who call themselves conservative.

More government run.

It tends to coincide with religion. These days if you are religious, like Christian, Christian is usually more conservative. And those dirty atheists or these liberals...it's probably not even close to true, but it seems that way to me.

MODERATOR—WHAT DOES LIBERAL MEAN TO YOU?

Broke.

Bigger government, more progressive social causes, more of an emphasis on redistributing the wealth to help people who are poor.

I don't know much about politics, but I don't see why anybody has to pick a side. In my head, I wouldn't want to and don't.

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE ONE OF THOSE TWO THOUGH?

No. I don't have to.

There is a party system, so we have to. We are supposed to sign up for a party.

Isn't there like an independent too?

That's its own party. If a person can run, he's an independent right? If you are running as not a democrat or not a republican, then you are an independent. That's the only person you are going to see on your independent ballot.

Any number of people I think can run as an independent. It's not an organized party like the democrat or republican party.

MODERATOR—WHEN YOU USE THE TERM PROGRESSIVE, WHAT DOES THAT MEAN TO YOU?

Progressive to me means sort of the causes that are the newer...it obviously has...it insinuates that it's newer. It's a new way of thinking. In other words, an environmental cause would be a progressive cause because a lot of those issues are newer issues that are developing.

I haven't heard it.

I haven't heard it.

I think it's acknowledging the fact that the older terms don't apply anymore, that things have changed so much that you can't say I'm a conservative. Like you can't call yourself a conservative because the definition has changed so much that it's hard to define it by that word. So, progressive would preemptively be saying, I'm changing the definition of this word to imply any new changes.

MODERATOR—HOW WOULD YOU GUYS DESCRIBE YOURSELVES, YOUR VALUES AND YOUR ATTITUDES? IF YOU HAD TO COME UP WITH A WORD, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Progressive.

Like politically?

MODERATOR—YOUR VALUES AND YOUR ATTITUDES ON A WHOLE RANGE OF ISSUES.

I'm more independent because I sway so easily. When I sit and watch something or I'm extremely worried about our healthcare or certain rights, I'm swayed easily and then I get locked into my specifics.

A conservative who focuses on personal responsibility over government intervention.

It's hard.

MODERATOR—SHIFT GEARS A LITTLE BIT. I WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE LEADERSHIP IN OUR COUNTRY TODAY ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM,

CORPORATE LEADERS, INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP. WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE LEADERSHIP IN OUR COUNTRY TODAY, HOW DO YOU RATE IT?

I think it's super shady. Super shady right now.

Very self serving.

I don't think they are listening to the voters. I don't think they even ask us anymore.

It seems more like a mafia than a...

We are detached from it almost.

People are not...they don't listen like she said. I think we as a generation and as a world have a lot to do with that because we just kind of roll our eyes or look the other way and it's been happening for so long that these people are taking advantage. But again, at this point, it would kind of take a huge metamorphosis or something like that to happen for us to collectively step up and say okay and actually be heard.

I think that's why I think everyone is so selfish now too. With everybody being so unhappy with Bush, people that got disgusted with Bush, they just look the other way. I don't like our president. But then those same people saying that didn't do anything about it. They didn't go and try to make a difference where they could. I don't like him so now I don't support our government. Whether we like our president or not, they should have stood behind him, he's our president. And the same thing now is going to happen with the popularity contest. It's like how Arnold got elected. It's like a popularity contest now versus like the things that really matter. Somebody doesn't get their way, then they just turn their back, which I think is what is creating much more government.

It's like they act as though they are parents and we are the kids. They'll ask us what we want, they'll ask us what we like, they'll ask for our opinions and they'll think a two-year-old is talking and then just turn around and do their own thing. And as she was saying, because they can get away with it. Afterwards no one is going to go after them and say, hey...everyone just rolls their eyes just because they want to make a difference, they think they can make a difference, but no one puts the effort to make that difference.

Plus over time, so many tiny little laws have passed to make it not conducive for communities to make a change on a government scale. Like I said earlier, you have to have a lot of money. There are all the corporations that send out their little guys to write those laws and make changes and they are running their own agendas. They are doing it for money and they don't really do it for the welfare of the people. And they make the most difference in the government because they can. They have the power. And the little people, they just get kicked out of the room because they didn't qualify, they didn't have enough money. And it goes back to hers when we are little flies bumping up against the window, people just kind of run out of steam. And they do come back into their own little world and start to protect themselves. I'm just going to concern

myself with my career and make myself happy and spend time with my family and that's all I care about because that's all I can do to change anything.

Where are the big leaders? There used to be big leaders before.

Like admirable.

People like that, I don't see...I don't know if it's the government's way...

MODERATOR—DO YOU SEE ANYONE YOU COULD POINT TO, NOT JUST IN GOVERNMENT BUT ANYWHERE, THAT YOU WOULD SAY, THAT'S THE KIND OF LEADER THAT WE NEED MORE OF?

No, because they are all self serving now. It seems like the people who have the most power over the masses are the dictators almost, like that guy from Venezuela or whatever.

Are you talking about political leadership.

He said any.

Any.

Oprah.

MODERATOR—HOW SO?

Just because she has a lot for herself, and why not? She works hard. But she's also very giving and she brings up topics that really need to be talked about. She's really powerful.

(many talking at once)

And just like the way she speaks and by her eyes. She talks about issues that so many people just pass by.

She has the means to do that.

Whether it's racial or...she has the means to do that, exactly.

She's someone who really makes differences. Or tries to.

I recently saw a movie ad about Jimmy Carter. Apparently he's making a big difference, but he doesn't get a whole lot of press. I know there are a lot of people out there that are doing that same thing, that are just kind of traveling around and really making a difference about different things. Maybe Darfor, maybe Iraq, maybe the environment, but they don't get press because

they are competing with Britney Spears. I think that there are those really great leaders out there and they are leading a lot of people, but we don't see it.

It's not well known enough.

Not in the public eye.

MODERATOR—YOU GUYS OBVIOUSLY ARE LARGELY DISSATISFIED WITH ANY EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP, SO WHERE IS THE ACCOUNTABILITY? IN GOVERNMENT WE HAVE ELECTIONS TO PROVIDE ACCOUNTABILITY, YET SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 95 AND 98% OF ELECTED PEOPLE GET RE-ELECTED EVERY TIME. IN BUSINESS, YOU'VE GOT THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF SHAREHOLDERS AND THE MARKET. WHERE IS THE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ALL THESE LEADERS IF THEY ARE DOING SUCH A HORRIBLE JOB? WHY DO THEY REMAIN IN POWER?

I think they might not even be doing that bad of a job, but the media...there is no privacy. The privacy seemed to be much stronger when Clinton was in office. He was doing a really good job, then everybody got taken off guard by his affair and what not. Legally, there should just be more privacy acts for people in leadership so we are not distracted and judgmental.

Yeah, twenty years ago that wouldn't have been known. I was a journalism major so I don't like the whole media.

I think the media is sabotaging...

I think they have like a...they are supposed to help change things, help bring about change, let people know what is going on. And I just don't think that they are good at doing that at all.

They have an agenda.

Yes.

That's interesting too because that should be the way it used to be. When somebody would do something wrong, the media would report on it and people would be aware. And nowadays everything is ...

It was not so editorial that people who are reporters are technically just giving their opinion on something or...

Or they are actors now.

Yeah. And they are giving kind of skewed facts or a lot of propaganda.

And now, every little stupid thing is...the big things...it's all the small things now. When something small like Britney Spears, she's blasted all over the media. She goes to the coffee

shop and somebody throws a coffee on her car. Who cares? And yet it's like all over the news. That's something that's just absolutely unnecessary. The problem being that a lot of people also, unfortunately, that's what they want to see. That's the magazines that they buy, the ones with Britney Spears on the cover. It fuels it. It's kind of hard because ...

MODERATOR—BACK TO THE QUESTION, WHERE IS THE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ALL THIS POOR LEADERSHIP?

Forgive me, but I don't think Bush was elected. I think he was kind of like....

Put in the seat.

And it's like where is the accountability? Well, I think it's pretty obvious.

We don't have much say.

And that to me as an individual, it kind of dissuades me from even wanting to vote. It's like why? Why should I bother?

I don't think most people care about issues. I think it has less to do with the media and more to do with individuals. I really don't think most people care about issues because caring about issues means reading about issues, researching and forming opinions, acting on those opinions. What struck me is we are in this election cycle right now, when I talk to people about politics, which I try not to do, I would say that it's something like 90% of the people who support whoever they support in the election, don't have any idea why they support them on an issue basis. I like her, I like him. He seems like a solid guy. They can't point to any issue. People don't research issues. So what you see as a result is, you do see the candidate who has the most money, who can pay for the most air time, who can do the best direct mail campaign and spin his image a certain way or her image in a certain way.

Like you say too, everybody is afraid to talk about it. Or please don't hate me for thinking this way. Or I don't like to talk about politics. This is what is hurting it too because people are afraid now to speak their minds.

But that also goes to show that people do have passion about it.

But they are afraid to speak their minds and to spread what you feel in your heart is right...

People are afraid to get into an argument.

You are right.

You just don't want to get into a conversation with a co-worker arguing over...

But people do argue because they are passionate about it. Nowadays you have to be passionate about it to make that change though.

Right, to make a difference.

I guess the distinction I'm making is that people are not passionate about issues. People are passionate about candidates. There are a lot of people who are passionate about a lot of candidates, but they don't know why.

It's 95% image.

Money talks.

MODERATOR—OKAY. WHAT DIFFERENCE DO YOU THINK CAN BE MADE? HOW DO YOU CHANGE THIS SITUATION?

I think that the dissatisfaction is going to make the change itself. Things are going to get so bad that people have to make a difference. Like healthcare right now is just too expensive. And there is no two ways about that. And people are getting really unhappy because they can't afford it. And it's affecting everyone. It's not just like an issue that you talk about that doesn't affect you that is in Washington or another state.

MODERATOR—SO THERE HAS TO BE A PERSONAL PRICE TO BE PAID?

It comes back to the me thing. If it affects me, then that's one thing.

And the war in Iraq...

MODERATOR—DO WE HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL IT REACHES THAT POINT OR

I think with our society, yeah, because people don't move unless they are forced.

There is a price to be paid and it's rising everyday and we are paying it. And we continue to pay it.

But we have no choice.

What about gas, for example? I have no idea on what to do. Yes, I can change my lifestyle, I'm not going to go out and buy a Hummer. That's what I can do to contribute, even if I could afford it, which I can't. If anything, I would probably buy like a hybrid. And that's what I could do to express my dissatisfaction about high gas prices. But I'm not going to ride a bike to work. Let's face it. So, if it comes down to the point where I have to pay \$10 a gallon, am I going to pay it? If everyone else does, I have to.

I think education is going to be a huge thing. If our government can do something to get people more excited and more funding for kids that want to be educated. A lot of kids that are raised here can't even go to school. They can't afford it and then they don't get that education versus people who come here from anywhere and they are right into our school system. You can get the education here that is better than other places. If our kids are more educated, that will change everything too.

MODERATOR—WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GET PEOPLE MOTIVATED TO DO SOMETHING, TO TAKE ACTION, TO TRY TO ...

I agree with her. I think it's one it affects somebody. Just from personal experience or from people I've spoken with, a hybrid didn't seem like a big deal until now. Until now that gas is up so high that people have to pay so much money to fill up their tank. Now everybody is like talking about hybrids, not because it's good for the environment, but because gas costs so much money.

And it's good for them.

MODERATOR—SO THEY HAVE TO SEE SOME KIND OF A PERSONAL BENEFIT.

That's what it seems like to me anyway.

In that respect, we are forced to pay it. We had electric cars and they were taken away from us. And other countries drive electric cars and they drive cars with different kinds of fuel other than petroleum. And we are not provided that option. We are provided a pacifier for that option, a hybrid, which really is not that different. It still runs on gas and we still have to pay a lot. I have a hybrid and I still pay a lot of money for gas. We just don't have much of a choice. It comes back to that again.

Maybe if we are forced to volunteer or have some kind of like mandatory community service, it would probably make a huge difference.

But that's not going to happen and we all know that.

We go on the 405 and it's packed every day and there is a single person in each car in each lane. You know what I mean?

MODERATOR—SO IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE HAVING TO HAVE A PERSONAL LEVEL OF SUFFERING BEFORE THEY ARE GOING TO TAKE ACTION?

Uh-hum.

That's probably the most human thing.

I think that's always been. You look through history and that's always what it was. People didn't become super radical in the 60's because they chose to be, it was because there was a war and it was forced conscription. People were going to have to go over and serve in Viet Nam so they started protesting against the war.

MODERATOR—WE TALKED ABOUT AN IMPULSE FOR THE GREATER GOOD, IS THERE NOT REALLY THAT IMPULSE THERE? OR DO YOU THINK THAT PEOPLE WILL TAKE ACTION JUST BECAUSE IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO AND BECAUSE THEY SHOULD?

I think it's a little of both.

I think the fringe will, but the core people won't take action until it hits them in the pocketbook or wherever it hits them.

It's got to hit.

MODERATOR—ALRIGHT. I WANT TO TALK ABOUT SOME OF THE SPECIFIC ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACING OUR COUNTRY TODAY. (HANDOUTS PASSED OUT) LOOKING AT HANDOUT #1, THERE ARE TEN OF THE BIG CHALLENGES THAT ARE FACING OUR COUNTRY THESE DAYS. READ THROUGH THE LIST AND RANK ORDER THEM. NUMBER ONE WILL BE THE ONE THAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT AND MOST URGENT, TEN WILL BE THE LEAST. WHAT ARE YOUR TOP THREE?

I, A, C.

I, A, C.

G, A, F.

C, A, G.

C, A, G.

A, B, G.

G, C, A.

MODERATOR—EVERY ONE OF YOU PICKED “A” AS ONE OF YOUR TOP THREE. WHY?

It involves money.

We hear about it the most probably. It's probably indented in our brain to worry about, even if it's not the number one reason.

I think it makes me mad that I have to pay so much for gas, but honestly it hurts my heart to see that people are dying for oil. That just infuriates me.

I think it's up there for all of us because it has so many broad consequences, environmental, social and political. And it's the cause of a lot of problems.

It's like all that is evil. It's horrible.

I agree completely. It's political more than economical.

MODERATOR—WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THE POLITICAL?

Not just the Iraq war, but our entire relationship with the Middle East is based on our interest in fuel.

And also the oil companies have a lot of say in our laws and things and so forth. For me, it was above all these things.

It definitely does have broad consequences. Our dependence on coal for environmental issues...we wouldn't be having problems in the Darfor region of Sudan if it wasn't for China's dependence on their oil. And so, it definitely affects the broad scope.

MODERATOR—"C" – THE RISING COST OF HEALTHCARE, THAT WAS ANOTHER ONE THAT MOST OF YOU PUT IN YOUR TOP THREE, WHY?

It's health. We won't be here discussing all this if we don't have that. And also the long-term consequences. It can't be fixed right away. If something goes wrong, it takes a really long time to fix that program.

And because of the healthcare system, six of our hospitals have been closed in a year. And that's just going to keep happening and then what is going to happen then? Only the people who are really wealthy can get healthcare? It's coming down to that.

Again, it seems like the health industry is more self serving than proactive. It runs more like a business.

Absolutely.

Pharmaceutical companies.

That's so true.

I cringe when I go in now.

And we can't afford it.

MODERATOR—HOW DID WE GET TO THIS POINT?

That's why I picked "D," America's rapidly growing national debt because I think that contributes to the healthcare and to the declining public school system. That's why I picked that as number two because I think that's what is contributing to all the other things that are happening.

The reason that so many emergency room hospitals are closing down, like Drew had to close their emergency room, a lot of it is they can't afford to keep them open because so many people use that as their primary care doctor that don't have insurance. It's just not cost effective for the hospital. You can't expect the hospital to give away services for free without reimbursement.

I think it's a combination of things. The self serving motivation of the pharmaceutical companies and private practices lack of accountability, and our food and our society's view on food, the diet industry, the entertainment industry. The food that we eat makes us sick and it comes back to the farm belt. The farm belt is based on a lot of money issues and so those money issues decide what we eat and what is the cheapest to eat so that the people who have the least amount of money eat the worst. And they have more health problems because of that.

I agree with that a lot. The processed foods we are eating is killing us and it's causing a lot of problems.

It's expensive to eat healthy foods.

It is.

Fruits and vegetables are like through the roof.

And organic foods are much more expensive too.

It's horrible.

If it was easier, I think more people would do it. The same thing with recycling ...this is off the subject...in our condo complex, we live in a townhouse, there is no recycling bin and there is nobody that comes around and collects our recycling. So we have to put it all in bags ourselves, go to one of those places, wait in line to give it to them and all of that kind of stuff. It's kind of a pain. If it was easier, I think more people would do it.

You can sign up for a multi-family building recycling program. Just Google LA County Sanitation and you can sign up for it.

Oh really?

They'll bring you blue bins and they'll specifically come and get them every week.

Thank you.

MODERATOR—ALRIGHT, “G,” THE THREAT OF TERRORISM, FIVE OF YOU WENT WITH THAT ONE AS WELL.

It's our safety.

Look at...we can't do so much because we are afraid, at least I am sometimes. It's like for the longest period of time I was scared to go to the mall or I was scared to take my child to like public places just because it's safety. You never know what is going to happen. It's like the people who worked in the World Trade Center didn't know that the airplane was going to go straight in through their office. It's scary.

I think it's taken a huge financial impact on the airport system and the different airlines that have had to close.

(end of side)

Security and we've just lost so much money because of the threat of terrorism, which is also causing a domino effect on all the other things as well, especially like the national debt.

MODERATOR—A COUPLE OF YOU PICKED “I,” THE INFLUENCE OF LOBBYISTS, WHY?

I put that as number one because our laws are the basis of our country, and if those laws are not dictated by the public, but rather dictated by people who don't have our interests in mind, things are going to go wrong really fast.

That influences everything else. If you have the bad influences, then you can't fix anything else. If you have people in the government who are just worried about themselves, they are not going to fix anything else. That's a concern.

It's just like instead of the government being run by the people it's being told what to do and manipulated by corporations.

MODERATOR—SO POLITICIANS ARE JUST LIKE YOUR GENERATION, BEING DRIVEN BY MONEY?

That's always been the case.

Yeah, that's true.

MODERATOR—LET ME ASK YOU ABOUT ONE OF THEM. YOU GUYS ARE ALL PARENTS, BUT NOBODY PUT EDUCATION IN THEIR TOP THREE. WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS ON THAT ONE?

That was my fourth one.

Me too.

That was my fourth also.

MODERATOR—OKAY, SO WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS ON THE ISSUE OF EDUCATION?

I think the results of doing something wrong there take too long to have an effect for anybody to notice it. If we don't educate our kids well, they get into enormous debt with the credit cards, they buy houses they can't afford, or they become criminals or a number of social issues that cost us a lot of money or make crime go up, all kinds of things. And if we really put more money into the education system, really focused on giving kids real world intelligence instead of this is the history of Thanksgiving, the Indians and the Pilgrims. We need to tell people how to live real lives in the modern world. I haven't been exposed to the current education system...like when I was in high school, I didn't know how to balance a checkbook. Nobody told me how to do that.

My four-year-old already knows how to add and subtract because of that.

My mother doesn't know how to do a checkbook. It's sad.

And it's important too. It needs to bepeople need to kind of make that more of something that needs to be important. To me, college is very...my kids will all go to college. I was brought up that way. You are going to college. It was like from day one. It's just the different feel for me on the west coast as compared to the east coast. I've noticed that. Supposedly my fiancé said that the schools are better on the east coast, but I don't know if that's true or not. I don't know if it's as important as it should be. There is not a lot of stress on education.

I think we all come at it at different angles. Like you were saying about adding more money to the system and I think that's one view that we need more money there. And I look at Washington DC as the most spent per child in any school district and I wouldn't send my kid to a school in Washington DC.

Not spent wisely though.

It's not a black and white thing. You can't just put money into it because the people who are in charge of the school system have to do the right thing with that money and right now they don't.

It's too bad.

It's too bureaucratic and there is no accountability for teachers. And the good teachers aren't paid. And good teachers should be paid better than bad teachers. There's got to be some accountability.

The Citi Group CEO got fired because he didn't do the job in one quarter. And teachers aren't held to the same standard of accountability.

That's a good idea. They should be paid on how they are.

And also, the topics covered should be re-evaluated. Probably it's so archaic. When I was learning Spanish, I live in LA and I should learn Spanish, instead I was reading a book where it said in the year 2000 we'll all live in glass houses. It was so out of date and it was so archaic that even if I spoke that Spanish to someone on the bus, they wouldn't know what I was saying. It's not current enough.

MODERATOR—WHAT ABOUT THE RISING INEQUALITY IN THE PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM? IT'S TALKING ABOUT THAT EDUCATION IS LOCALLY FUNDED SO AREAS THAT HAVE HIGH NET WORTH, HIGH TAX BASE, FAMILIES THAT MAKE A LOT OF MONEY HAVE MORE MONEY IN THEIR SCHOOL SYSTEMS. AREAS OF LOWER NET WORTH AND LOWER INCOME HAVE LESS MONEY IN THEIR SCHOOL SYSTEMS. THERE IS A STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY BASED ON LOCAL FUNDING. DO YOU THINK THAT THERE SHOULD BE SOMETHING DONE ABOUT THAT? DO YOU THINK THAT ALL SCHOOL SYSTEMS SHOULD HAVE THE SAME FUNDING FORMULA REGARDLESS OF WHERE THEY ARE LOCATED?

Absolutely.

Yes.

MODERATOR—SO AREAS OF HIGHER INCOME ARE GOING TO BE PAYING FOR THE SCHOOLS IN AREAS WHERE THEY DON'T LIVE.

Yes.

Absolutely.

I think so, but in theory it's good, but I don't think it would work. If it's not in our current infrastructure, it's just kind of squandered. And people in education are so badly paid that they trample all over each other just to get a little bit more. And whenever they can, they pocket it.

MODERATOR—SO MOVING THE MONEY IN ISN'T GOING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Right.

Parental involvement, that's one of the biggest concerns.

That's true.

I don't know what they are teaching now, but I definitely would have an interest. What if there are parents that just don't pay attention at all?

Like the nannies.

There are so many parents that just don't...they are not involved with their kid's schoolwork...it's unbelievable how many parents just don't care.

Well, I don't know whatever happened to the idea of the voucher system, which I always liked. The idea being that you would be issued a voucher for the amount of money that would be spent in a public school. And if you wanted to, you could move your child to a private school of your choice and use that money to that end. That's always an idea that I liked.

It doesn't exist anymore.

I don't think it ever really existed. I think it was an idea that the politicians brought up and it was sort of killed. A lot of this truthfully goes back to what we talked about, about lobbyists and special interest groups. The NEA, which is the National Education Association, the teacher's special interest group, is one of the most powerful lobbying groups there is. And it's difficult to make any real changes. Things that he was talking about, rewarding teachers for quality rather than just seniority, it's tough to get that stuff through when you have a lobby that strong.

MODERATOR—LOOK AT THIS LIST AS A WHOLE, DO YOU SEE US MAKING PROGRESS IN ANY OF THESE AREAS?

No.

No.

I don't think so.

If anything, most of them are going backwards.

It's scarier, yeah.

It's all talk. We can just talk about it and keep talking about it.

We keep going in circles. No one does anything about it.

They all say what they are going to do and then nobody does it.

They all say and we all agree that they are going to do that, we go ahead and we vote for them. And then at the end, we just sit in our seats and watch them do the opposite.

Like illegal immigration, it's a really hot topic and they do make changes, they made some drastic changes, but then they had these effects that were awful where a lot of really good food went to waste in the fields because there was no one there to pick it. Or a lot of the people are sent down to do the borders instead of helping out with national emergencies. It's kind of ... whatever change that they are effecting, it's going in the wrong direction.

It's all empty promises.

MODERATOR—WHY AREN'T WE MAKING PROGRESS? AND AGAIN, WHERE IS THE LEADERSHIP?

The lobbyists have it.

(inaudible)

Wages have been good and a lot of people have jobs with pretty good wages and unemployment is done. I'm sure we've lost manufacturing jobs, but we've replaced them with higher paying service sector jobs.

Without the retirement security or Social Security.

I think that is separate.

MODERATOR—OVERALL, HOW DO YOU THINK YOU REVERSE THE COURSE AND GET THINGS MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION ON THESE ISSUES?

Involvement. Choosing one and getting involved with the issue.

Calling senators.

Writing letters or e-mail.

Staying informed on it and talking about it. The more people you talk to about it, the more people might do something, might make a call, might write a letter. And I was never moved until I had a child, which is why I'm more interested in taking a stand. Anything that contributes to something being easier for her, healthier, safer for her, I get involved in. I think just having kids in itself moves people forward to wanting to make a change in these areas.

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE JUST BY TALKING TO PEOPLE, SOCIAL NETWORKING IF YOU WILL?

Uh-hum.

Any issue, I think she's right.

Just like the toilet paper issue, it just needs one person to hear it and then it will spread around.

Buy that for somebody for Christmas.

That would be awesome.

Wrap it up real well.

At least they can try it because people don't want to try it because they are like, it's going to feel bad.

(many talking at once)

I love organic foods and if anything they taste better to me.

But that's the common misconception.

At least with my fiancé, he doesn't touch any of my organic stuff because he thinks it tastes like crap, even though he won't try it.

MODERATOR—DOES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE, PEOPLE JUST TALKING TO OTHER PEOPLE?

Yeah, word of mouth is the biggest.

MODERATOR-WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE?

Teach your kids that too from a young age.

Exactly, lay the foundation.

Absolutely.

Maybe even become more involved in our own communities. Try to just to be more involved with issues and not so much with ourselves.

Teaching people how to do that, having seminars, educational classes. Some people just don't because they don't know how to. They don't know where to start.

I think a lot of people are turned off by some of the emotion in it. They get away from the facts and they just become posters or bumper stickers and not really going through a logical, real debate on the issues. I put the national debt as one of my last concerns because ...it's a lot of money, but is it historically high compared to ...no, it's historically low, so I'm not concerned about it. So just numbers and things like that can get lost because it's really hard to explain, especially economics, i.e. a bumper sticker.

MODERATOR-HOW DO YOU GET THEM PAST THAT BUMPER STICKER MENTALITY?

Stop putting bumper stickers on your cars from....they do reap the emotional slogan, sound bite....

MODERATOR—OTHER THINGS THAT PEOPLE OF YOUR GENERATION CAN DO?

Turn off the TV and get them to read newspapers instead. Giving your own homework assignments to your kids that they are not going to get from the classroom.

I think we have a lot of power with our dollar too. Really pay attention to what you buy and make a statement with that. If a lot of people do it, it makes a difference. A couple of months ago I noticed Ralph's came out with their own organic line. I was really excited. I don't have to go to three different stores to get my stuff. That is because people are buying more organic and they are responding to that need. If you buy less plastic....

They'll start making less of it.

Exactly, you are right. And it also goes full circle. You are not only not providing that demand, but you are also not creating that waste. There's just a lot of different things that you can do with what you buy. Christmas is coming up and a lot of people feel the need to tell someone how much they love them by buying them something expensive or nice and it's taboo to make your own, it's taboo to re-gift. But you have to be creative and not just buy something because it's easier or it's trendy.

MODERATOR—YOUR GENERATION ARE BASICALLY THE CHILDREN OF THE BABY BOOMERS. BABY BOOMERS ARE THE BIGGEST GENERATION IN OUR COUNTRY'S HISTORY. YOUR GENERATION IS GOING TO BE EXPONENTIALLY LARGER, BY FAR THE LARGEST GENERATION OF AMERICANS IN A FEW YEARS WHEN THE YOUNGEST TAIL END OF IT HITS THE VOTING AGE. YOU'LL REPRESENT ONE OUT OF EVERY THREE VOTERS IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. BY SHEER NUMBERS, YOUR GENERATION HAS THE POTENTIAL IN A VERY SHORT WINDOW TO MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE, WHETHER IT BE THROUGH VOTING OR THROUGH ECONOMIC DECISIONS. BUT THE QUESTION IS, CAN THAT POTENTIAL BE HARNESSSED? WHAT DO YOU THINK? CAN YOU GET PEOPLE OF YOUR GENERATION TO SET COMMON PRIORITIES AND TRY TO ACCOMPLISH THEM?

I'm optimistic. I think we are almost getting there. We are getting to be so bad, something good has to happen. Like change, I think we are all getting fed up, hopefully in the next couple of years, not decades. There has got to be something. And people like us, our generation, is going to have the power. I'm optimistic. I think something is going to give.

I think the first step is learning about it and becoming aware. That's where we are right now. We are learning more about it and we are becoming more aware. And then the next step is to kind of act upon it.

It's also kind of easier. I get newsletters and I barely read them and then all of a sudden one will peak my interest on a specific subject. They'll give you all the information in the e-mail and then they'll say, sign the petition and so I'll click the button and all of a sudden I'm on the petition. And then a couple weeks later I'll get another e-mail saying we won. And it's just like because so many people took that action because it didn't require much effort. These days everyone is like, I'm too tired. But since there are those certain little companies where there are people making a difference, they are harnessing that power of the internet and then all of a sudden a senator is getting 30,000 e-mails. And they may all look exactly the same, but they all have different names on them. Sometimes I even get responses directly from the senators, like stop e-mailing me. It's actually pretty inspirational.

My guess is that in the absence of some sort of a hot button issue, some sort of a big war that affects us, I would guess that most generations don't have serious political convictions until they get into their forties or so. I think when people are in their twenties and thirties, by and large they are in the mindset that they want to provide for them and theirs. As they get older and have that stable life, then their generation takes on some shape ideologically. I don't think that happens in the twenties or thirties.

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK THAT THAT'S GOING TO BE THE CASE WITH YOURS AS WELL?

I think that unless there is some sort of a huge issue. I don't think that Iraq has been a big enough issue to mobilize people in one united way.

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK ANY OF THESE THINGS ARE BIG ENOUGH TO DO IT? THE HEALTHCARE...

Terrorism could be. If there is a dirty bomb that kills thousands of people, then yeah.

MODERATOR—BUT HOW ABOUT THE BIG ONES THAT WE TOUCHED ON, THE DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL, THE HEALTHCARE, ARE THOSE BIG ENOUGH ISSUES TO GET PEOPLE MOBILIZED?

Obviously not yet.

I would actually make the argument that dependence on foreign oil and alternative fuel sources were actually moving in the right direction. We may be doing it slowly, we may not be doing it perfectly, but I think compare where we are now to where we were five years ago....certainly.

Yeah, it's much bigger of a deal.

We are moving in the right direction on that sort of thing.

MODERATOR—FLIP TO HANDOUT #2. I WANT TO TALK ABOUT A COUPLE OF THESE ISSUES IN A LITTLE MORE DETAIL. THE FIRST STATEMENT IS ABOUT HEALTHCARE. I'LL READ IT OUT LOUD, YOU READ ALONG AND JUST KIND OF UNDERLINE ANYTHING THAT STANDS OUT TO YOU AND THEN WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT.

EACH NEW GENERATION IS SUFFERING AN EPIDEMIC OF CHRONIC PREVENTABLE DISEASES DUE TO A POLLUTED ENVIRONMENT, A LACK OF BASIC HEALTHCARE AND THE POISONS WE FEED THEM EVERYDAY. EVERY CHILD IN AMERICA, REGARDLESS OF RACE, CLASS OR INCOME SHOULD HAVE FULL HEALTH COVERAGE AND PROPER NUTRITION. PARENTS MUST BE TAUGHT THE IMPACT OF PREVENTIVE CARE AND PROPER NOURISHMENT WILL HAVE ON A CHILD. IF WE CONTINUE TO SPEND MORE AND MORE MONEY ON HEALTHCARE, WITHOUT ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES OF THIS CRISIS, WE WILL ONLY WEAKEN OUR ECONOMY AND CONDEMN MILLIONS MORE CHILDREN TO SUFFERING AND DISEASES.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT STATEMENT?

I agree.

It's pretty strongly worded though.

Yeah, very.

I think it would have to be that extreme to get certain people's attention. Like maybe not us, but there are some people that just don't move unless they are scared into it.

I think a specific example would help. An increase in diabetes because of more processed corn starch or something like that would help. It would get you so you could see that. Oh, I know that person who has that issue. I know a kid with diabetes.

MODERATOR—DO YOU AGREE THAT THERE IS AN EPIDEMIC OF CHRONIC, BUT PREVENTABLE DISEASES?

Yes.

I do.

Yes.

MODERATOR—WHAT ARE THEY?

Cancer.

Obesity.

Diabetes.

Blood pressure.

MODERATOR—OTHER THINGS THAT YOU SEE IN CHILDREN?

Emotional diseases. People are attempting to fix them with pills and anti-depressants.

ADD and ADHD, things like that.

And they are drinking coffee or mocha lattes.

Kids are hyperactive, that's what they do and run everywhere. You don't need to give them a drug to slow them down because they are not paying attention. Like it says in the end, you are treating the symptom and not the root cause.

MODERATOR—WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT FINAL POINT? YOU'VE GOT INCREASING COSTS, DECREASING COVERAGE OFFERED BY EMPLOYERS, A GROWING NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ARE COMPLETELY UNINSURED, THIS IS SAYING THAT'S FINE, BUT THE ONLY WAY YOU ARE REALLY GOING TO DEAL WITH THIS IS THAT YOU CAN'T KEEP SPENDING MORE AND MORE MONEY ON THE SYMPTOMS, YOU'VE GOT TO GO TO THE ROOT CAUSES. YOU'VE GOT TO REDUCE THE NEED FOR SO MUCH HEALTHCARE.

That's why I don't quite know what this means to be honest with you. On the one hand it says, every child in America should have full health coverage, proper nutrition, which is not the case now. So presumably, that requires some sort of an expenditure. But then on the other hand it goes on to say that we shouldn't spend more money on healthcare without addressing the root causes.

I think it's saying for just everybody. Like the principals...so they are not going without just because their parents can't afford it. It's not up to them.

I think that's part of going to the root, being the preventative. If you put more money into the children, they will grow up healthier.

Also something like teaching the parents. That doesn't cost that much to teach parents.

And they have to be more educated if they are able to bring their kids in to get those visits and doctors can teach them. Every time I take my daughter to the doctor there are ads that are very....kids should play thirty minutes a day. I'm like, oh okay, I only spend twenty minutes at the park. There are always things that even I thought I was doing right that I read when I go into the office visits.

And especially if they were never taught when they were a kid too. They bring their kids up the same way. They don't understand or they don't know.

In response to his comment, I don't think that this particular paragraph is really focused on the need for more money, I think it is focused on that we need to change our perspective on how we look at this. Instead of treating the effects, we are treating the causes. I think that requires a total mindset change. If you watch TV you see all those ads for all the pills. Pills for everything. Pills for indigestion, a pill for asthma. A lot of asthma could be caused by the pollution of the environment.

Right.

I developed asthma when I was a kid when LA had some of its worst smog and everything. I haven't had an attack in a couple of years because I cleaned all of the chemicals out of my house and it makes a big difference. That way I don't have to spend money on asthma medication because I did that. That was a lot of education for me that I didn't know that I could do that. I informed myself.

Unfortunately, I think it goes back to business again. People are trying to sell pills, they are trying to make money and they are capitalizing off of everybody else's problems.

And laziness. And people just want to fix things...people don't want to go out and exercise anymore. They don't have the time. They want to take a pill and lose weight, which is just not....that's obviously not healthy either.

MODERATOR—OKAY, FLIP TO HANDOUT #3. THIS IS ON ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES.

OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL AND FOSSIL FUELS IS THE GREATEST THREAT TO OUR NATIONAL SECURITY AND OUR QUALITY OF LIFE AND OUR ECONOMIC FUTURE. THAT'S WHY WE MUST LAUNCH A MASSIVE CONCERTED NATIONAL EFFORT, SIMILAR TO THE APOLLO PROGRAM THAT PUT A MAN ON THE MOON, WITH THE GOAL OF MOVING AMERICA BEYOND FOSSIL FUELS AND INVENTING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENERGY BASED ON NEW TECHNOLOGIES SUCH AS HYDROGEN OR FUSION. THIS PLAN WOULD REQUIRE A HUGE NATIONAL INVESTMENT, BUT WOULD PRODUCE MILLIONS OF NEW JOBS,

DRAMATICALLY REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE AND FREE US FROM OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL THAT SUBSIDIZES REGIMES WHO SUPPORT THE TERRORISTS WHO ARE TARGETING US.

WHAT'S YOUR REACTION TO THIS ONE?

This is also very strongly worded.

Yeah.

It's taking a huge gamble. Let's just dump all of this money on an invention that may or may not work. But is it worth that to prevent these other things?

It's not only worth it, it's necessary. We are putting the gun to our own heads. By depending on oil, which is fueling terrorism, they are coming after us. We have to break that vicious cycle.

But it's still a big gamble.

Well, my theory coming from the limited information that I have access to is that we don't need to put more money into it, it's already sucking all of our money away. We need to be allowed to access those technologies that already exist, like the electric car. Although electricity still uses coal or petroleum, it uses a lot less and you can produce that here in America. But the fact that we are not allowed those choices is the problem. It's not that we are not putting enough money into making alternatives.

We need more options, if anything.

MODERATOR—THIS THING IS MAKING THE CASE SAYING WE DON'T NEED BIO-FUELS NECESSARILY OR SHORT-TERM STEPS, WE NEED TO GET TO THE LONG-TERM SOLUTION AND WE NEED TO DO THAT NOW, NOT CONTINUE TO DEPEND ON FOSSIL FUELS AT ALL. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT ARGUMENT?

I don't remember that part in the Constitution where it says it's the country's job to do that. With the high price of energy, there's a lot of money being made, whether it's from someone creating a better mousetrap. And the money would just flow to that new company. There are a lot of financial incentives to do it well. As long as we involve that, let someone build a new nuclear power plant or something like that where there will be a lot of money going to and it will reduce the dependence on foreign oil, but through the private sector.

MODERATOR—DOES THIS NECESSARILY HAVE TO BE DONE THROUGH GOVERNMENT OR COULD THIS BE DONE THROUGH THE PRIVATE SECTOR?

I think it would be better if it's done through the private sector.

I think it needs to be allowed. I read an article about a car that ran on air that's big in other countries, but they don't let us buy it here. The companies that are selling us gas are blocking that. They are buying that company out of our company. Sell it to Europe and France and Australia, but don't come on our turf. This is ours. They have the option to buy gas or to buy the air car or the water car or the potato car. There are like thirty different types of fuels out there and all of them have their pros and cons, but we only get gas.

Obviously this is like the biggest controlled mafia there is. Even our so-called third world countries have options. And the fact that we are being held hostage to what they want to sell us is huge.

They have a lot of power over us. We are kids and they have all the power over us. The word that she used, it's like mafia. Just like sometimes I think they have the cure for aids, but they don't give it out. They know we can do better than this. They know we have other options, but they buy them out.

There is money involved.

Exactly, it's all about money.

MODERATOR—OKAY. WHAT CAN YOUR GENERATION DO ABOUT THIS? HOW DOES THE ACTION START IF THEY WOULD?

I think this is something that in order for us to have any kind of chance against the oil companies is to do something big. You can't just not buy gas or ride your bike because they don't care. Or those little e-mails that say, we are not going to buy gas on Tuesday. It doesn't matter because they make trillions of dollars.

(many talking at once)

It really requires something that comes from the top instead of the bottom. I would have no idea where to begin on something like this. It's too big.

It's going to take somebody very influential and very...

MODERATOR—WHERE CAN INDIVIDUAL ACTION MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Stop using gas as much.

It will help the environmental aspect.

Like in LA, it should be easier not to have to drive somewhere. It should be easier to jump on a bus or ride a bike. The weather is always nicer here. There are more resources here. So people just really do need to get together and take advantage of that.

Like she said earlier in the grocery store, once you stop buying something long enough it's going to have an impact and they are going to have to do something different.

MODERATOR—FLIP TO HANDOUT #5, SKIP #4. HERE'S A LIST OF ACTIONS THAT INDIVIDUALS CAN TAKE. MARK EACH OF THESE IN ONE OF THESE THREE COLUMNS. THE FIRST COLUMN ARE THINGS THAT YOU HAVE DONE OR ARE DOING THE SECOND COLUMN ARE THINGS THAT YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE DONE YET, BUT YOU CAN DEFINITELY SEE YOURSELF DOING. AND THE THIRD COLUMN IS THINGS THAT QUITE HONESTLY YOU ARE UNLIKELY TO DO. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT YOU HAVE DONE?

Vote.

Vote.

Vote.

MODERATOR—WHAT ELSE?

Founded a business with social objectives.

Volunteering and petitions.

Attending public meetings or forums.

Purchasing decisions.

MODERATOR—HOW MANY PEOPLE WOULD SAY THAT YOU HAVE BASED PURCHASING DECISIONS ON COMPANIES AND THEIR POLITICAL OR SOCIAL ROLES? OKAY, SO THREE OF YOU HAVE? FOR THE REST OF YOU, IS THAT SOMETHING YOU'D BE LIKELY TO DO?

Very likely.

Very likely.

MODERATOR-WHAT DO YOU THINK IT TAKES TO GET TO THAT POINT?

Transparency. The company needs to be more vocal about how they make their things or how their workers are, their conditions. Right now when you see something on a shelf, you have no idea where it came from or what it's made of. There is no background on it. But yet, sometimes you go into a green eco-store or something and they have this teddy bear that was made in Bolivia by mothers who were war survivors and then you want to buy it. It doesn't matter the kind of teddy bear, but the level of transparency, you are doing something good for the earth. I think that if companies really wanted to make a lot of money, then they'd jump on that band

wagon because that's what we want them to do. We want them to boast about how well they are doing.

Unfortunately, it's cheaper to stay quiet and not tell you that that same teddy bear you are buying was made in a sweat shop by five-year-olds.

Right.

And sell it for four bucks or whatever.

MODERATOR—OTHER THINGS THAT YOU'D BE LIKELY TO DO?

Write an article.

Sign a petition.

Blogging is getting to be very huge in our time.

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK THAT BLOGGING OR GOING INTO THESE ONLINE FORUMS, DO YOU THINK IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE? DO YOU THINK THAT IT IS EFFECTIVE?

Yes.

Yes.

It spreads the word.

It's the same word of mouth type of thing.

Like the toilet paper issue.

I have a different opinion on that. A lot of times when I read a blog about a well written article, then all of the comments go on for pages and page and it's just people regurgitating incorrect propaganda and being extremely hostile about it because they are not forced to face this person. They can say whatever they want. And then it's just a big explosion of really useless information. Yeah, you are getting a good idea of what these people think, but a lot of what they think is based on things that aren't true.

Yeah, I agree with that. Blogging, there are two types of people who blog. They are people who already agree with you or who will never agree with you. You can just sit there and hash it out all day and it's never going to...

MODERATOR—WHERE IS THE LINE BETWEEN THE THINGS THAT YOU ARE LIKELY TO DO AND THE THINGS THAT YOU ARE UNLIKELY TO DO?

Obviously I'm never going to run for office.

Me neither.

At least personally for me.

The level of effort.

The convenience.

The effort and time.

And the know how.

The knowledge for me too.

Know where, when, how to start.

Signing petitions is relatively easy, like I was saying earlier.

It doesn't take much effort.

But then joining a political group and going into action requires more of your time and effort. You need to drive there and find a baby-sitter and you have to pay for that.

MODERATOR—SO IT'S THAT LEVEL OF COMMITMENT. IF IT'S A QUICK ACTION, YOU CAN SEE YOURSELF DOING THAT.

It depends also on the motivation behind it.

I do things that I think would make a difference even if they were a little inconvenient. Some of these things I just don't think make a real difference. I hate to say it, but I think that attending a protest or a demonstration for the most part doesn't make a real difference. I think attending a town hall meeting doesn't make a difference. I think writing your congressmen can. It depends on how likely you'd ...

I agree. I picked volunteering for a political campaign as unlikely because I don't think that would make a difference. Yeah, it would require a lot of effort, but if had enough passion or if I believed that it would make a difference, then I would.

MODERATOR—ALRIGHT, FLIP TO HANDOUT #6...

(end of session)