



## GREENBERG MILLENNIAL PROJECT

FOCUS GROUP #6  
WHITE, COLLEGE GRADS, MIXED GENDER  
BIRMINGHAM, AL  
DECEMBER 4, 2007

### MODERATOR: INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTIONS.

I'm Andy and I'm from Birmingham, Alabama. I'm 24. I'm in lumber sales.

I'm Jennifer and you can call me Jen. I'm from Leeds, Alabama. I'm an environmental insurance broker and I'm in grad school. My hobbies are grad school.

I'm John and I'm an IT professional at a medical malpractice insurance company in Birmingham. Hobbies, pretty much sums it up in my job title, computers.

I'm Tyler and I'm from Birmingham as well. I live in Hubert. I'm an orthopedic sales rep and that pretty much sums up my hobbies, since I just got off work. And I guess my next hobby is building a house right now.

I'm Brandy and I'm a financial planner. I'm from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, but I live here on 280. My hobbies are going out with friends and that's about it.

I'm Jennifer and I'm from Birmingham. I'm a first grade teacher and I'm also in grad school. I just bought a house and am remodeling it. That's pretty much what my time is spent doing.

I'm Adam and I'm from Birmingham as well. I will tell you, don't build a house because I went through that.

I'm on my second one now.

Well, anyway, I'm a dentist in Warrior. Hobbies are sports, working out, music, kind of anything but work.

I'm Joey from the area. I work with a financial services business. Married, one on the way. Hobbies are golf, fishing, outdoors.

I'm Mark and I live in Moody, Alabama. I'm in pharmaceutical sales. I'm married and I just had a little baby girl like four days ago.

I'm Rhonda and I've got a five-year-old son. He is my huge hobby and he's into baseball now. Maybe he'll play for the Yankees. I don't like football.

**MODERATOR—I WANT TO START OUR CONVERSATION OFF TALKING ABOUT YOUR PERSPECTIVES AS YOUNG AMERICANS. WHEN WE TALK ABOUT GENERATIONS, BABY BOOMERS, GENERATION X, ALL THESE DIFFERENT GROUPS, THE IDEAS OF PEOPLE OF A CERTAIN AGE HAVE SIMILAR EXPERIENCES, SIMILAR POINTS OF VIEWS. WHEN YOU LOOK AT YOUR GENERATION, THE UNDER 30, DO YOU SEE YOURSELVES HAVING A UNIQUE SET OF ATTITUDES, BELIEFS, EXPERIENCES THAT KIND OF SET YOU APART FROM OTHER GENERATIONS OF AMERICANS?**

Yeah, definitely. Everything is so much more liberal than the generation before us. And the generation after us will probably be even more liberal.

I see more of exposure to different things. That kind of goes along the liberal thought process, but you have things that everyday we are exposed to that three generations ago just would drop their jaw at. The actual variety of things that we are exposed to or take part in actually just is a lot more wide variety.

I think technology is more...it's worldwide and you get information better. You can communicate with people more than the generations before.

Some good, some bad.

The media has more control.

Yeah definitely.

The media as far as attaching onto different demographics, what their base is. (inaudible)

I think we are more convenient and disposable as a group. And probably not as patient as maybe other generations. We want to have things now because we are used to it.

**MODERATOR—YOU FIGURE THAT YOUR GENERATION IS CHARACTERIZED BY INSTANT GRATIFICATION?**

Definitely.

Definitely.

**MODERATOR—HOW DOES IT MANIFEST ITSELF?**

Just if you want to know anything, if someone asks you a random question, Google it, there. Everything is at your fingertips.

(many talking at once)

I think our generation I'm seeing more acceptance in the workplace, in society in general, like in cultural shifts, especially like with men used to not have their ears pierced. That was a no no. And now it's very common. It's acceptable and it's getting even more acceptable, even with the different extremes of that.

MODERATOR—WHAT ELSE IS UNIQUE ABOUT YOUR GENERATION?

The way we dress. I think when my parents were growing up, some of the stuff that kids wear these days. It was like we were watching the cheerleaders and (can't hear this guy at all – totally inaudible) things are inappropriate.

My wife and I were out and people were wearing sweatpants (this guy is totally inaudible too – so low you can't hear him).

I think we are de-sensitized to stuff like that.

It doesn't phase us whatsoever.

No.

(many talking at once)

To see "hot" written on a thirteen-year-old's butt is kind of disgusting, but you can go to like Victoria's Secret now for like little girls that are ten-year-old to buy underwear.

Just like make-up, kids in eighth grade wear more make-up than I do and I'm twenty-four.

MODERATOR—WHAT ELSE?

I think also there is sort of like a ...there is more culture...just an example, in the 20's you had the gangsters, you had the flappers and then you had the working guy. Now you can think like (inaudible) kids, Goth kids, there is a category for every individual person. So, on a daily basis you can be dressed as the Sunday school guy or two hours later you are the raver.

They even have like specialty shops, My Space, all that stuff has just emphasized this whole generational....we are just looking at our generation. I think that's a good question. Like Joey was talking about, I was thinking like that too, where we are right now and how our kids are going to grow up. Or where are they going to be because we are de-sensitized.

They had a (inaudible) commercial on and it was like a girl in a bikini with a silk something on and I was just like what is this? I thought it was a Victoria's Secret commercial. Definitely things are changing.

TV is very inappropriate now. Between commercials and TV shows, I guess we are phased by it but we are not shocked by it anymore. Where my grandmother would be shocked if the Victoria's Secret commercial came on, I'm used to it. It definitely makes her jaw drop.

And now it's on TV, CBS.

It is. The fashion shows for Victoria's Secret where they walk on the runway and it's on TV.

You could even go as far as saying the reality TV.

Right.

That is getting out of control.

Out of control. The MTV reality, all that is out of control.

You know you watch it.

I'm not saying I don't watch it, but it's still out of control.

**MODERATOR—SO BACK TO THE CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUR GENERATION, WHAT ELSE IS IT?**

Uniquely the same. Everybody has their own stake to claim, but everybody is still categorized in a certain little culture.

I'm just trying to be different like everybody else. Everybody tries so hard to be different but everybody is trying to do the same thing. There are a lot of different extremes.

Maybe like our generation is trying to catch up. From our high school and college days, we are always like trying to see who has more, who dresses this way, who drives what or who makes this much money. I feel like we are just in a catch-up mode. I don't know.

I agree with that. It's like what graduate school, it's really competitive and maybe that's been there forever, but I just remember in high school driving my parent's Ford Taurus and now it's BMW's and Mercedes. And you kind of get marked for some odd reason for being less fortunate or more fortunate.

I think we are more career oriented, especially women.

Yeah.

Maybe it's insecurity for our generation, having to wear flashy things and drive flashy cars to keep up with our friends.

MODERATOR—ONE OF THE WAYS THAT PEOPLE OFTEN CHARACTERIZE THE AMERICAN DREAM IS THAT MY KIDS WILL DO BETTER THAN I DID. THAT'S ONE OF THE CLASSIC IDEAS. DO YOU THINK THAT YOU'LL DO BETTER THAN YOUR PARENTS?

Yeah.

Yes.

No, I don't.

Only because I think that because we have gotten caught up in making sure we try to do better than what our parents did, I think we seriously neglect the whole sense of what family is. I don't think parents are home, I think kids are trying to become something different and they really have no identity. They get to do whatever they want to do. Nobody is ever home. I'm never home.

Neither am I.

MODERATOR—WHO THINKS YOU WILL DO BETTER THAN YOUR PARENTS?

Because that's the way I was raised. My mom, she went to grad school at night and wasn't at home for me. My dad sacrificed a lot and worked for Sanford changing light bulbs to put me and my brother through school for free to get us an education. My mom has always taught me, I want you to be able to provide for yourself in case something happens to your husband and what not. So, she wants me to do better.

In what aspect? Financially or raising kids?

I mean if you want to think about it from society as a whole, I think no. Just thinking about what ...

Everything is a pay-off, everything is a trade.

Yeah.

You buy better things, but then this side over here is...

Right.

It's like we have no...our priorities are not even in order. There is not even a list, get out there and work...I mean I worked all the time.

That's what kind of makes it different. I just literally got off work, but in my dad's generation, he got off work at 5 o'clock and he was finished. Whereas today, I'm expected to answer my phone right now if I needed to and that is expected out of my job. Not to say that I'm call twenty-four hours a day because I don't get paid for that, but that is just expected out of me. Maybe that our jobs...I guess it's just we work more, so we do have to sacrifice more. I mean I wouldn't be there if I had children at seven o'clock when I was still working. In that aspect, I think your children would lose out, like your family like she was saying. Your job kind of gains, your salary.

You have to figure out what is more important.

Right.

And often we don't do that because we've gotten caught up in...

Right, right.

Because the whole thought process is, I can do better, I can make more money.

Money for our generation is pretty much very important.

I think our generation ...I think the integrity is gone. Most men nowadays sell themselves. They are all about the money, their value system is totally gone. I hear a lot of people in sales and financial, I mean it's like what else are you going to do next? Write this or do this just to get a monetary gain. I guess if you are talking like a humanity, what is going on, people are blowing each other up.

That sort of makes me think...and this has always been true with the United States...you are seeing more and more interest in other countries, other unfortunate countries. And the shift is always away from the values. You think of family and you think of we have to donate so many toys, Toys for Tots this year, because everybody at the company is doing it.

And we don't even help the neighbor next door.

Right.

Exactly.

Everybody is so greedy. Nobody helps anybody, except on TV. Well, I gave to this little kid, I adopted this kid.

I gave fifteen cents.

And two doors down they have no power or whatever.

I think we are a greedy generation.

MODERATOR—HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE YOUR VALUES?

Self oriented.

Very selfish.

Lacking.

Yeah.

As a generation as a whole or are you talking individually? I don't think anyone in here would really want to say that I'm greedy, I have no values. But I think that we are opportunistic. Like right now, if you don't have kids you are career oriented. You make the most you can, you do the best you can, you get to the top of the ladder if you can, and when you have kids it all changes. You make the best of what....

And if you've already gotten yourself into this house ....and you have a mortgage to....

Let's downsize and go get something else because you have a kid, no. Then you suddenly start thinking, well, I want little Johnny to....

My brother works for BE&A Construction and their newer companies are catering to that because they have a nursery. They get daycare right at their work.

Honestly, I think our values are not good. You are talking about our generation...some of our families weren't all doctors and lawyers and that's why we went to school or what not. We are not in it to something legally or do something medically, we are in it for the money. You could see it now.

MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT YOU GUYS PERSONALLY? WHAT ARE THE VALUES THAT MOTIVATE YOU?

My wife and I, religion is important. The environment is important, recycling. Charity is important, we do a lot of work for homeless kids and such.

MODERATOR—BUT WHY ARE THOSE THINGS IMPORTANT TO YOU THOUGH?

Maybe because I feel like that my parents and previous generations lost sight of those things. Honestly, the debt that our country has is on our shoulders and on our kid's shoulders. The poor choices have been made and they have to be rectified one person at a time, one group at a time.

And I'm thinking like the polar opposite of your point of view. You have some people who are just so ....the self realization that stuff is really messed up. I really don't care enough to worry about it.

Lazy and disinterested.

I think children, the future for our country.

We all say that, but if you can think back to when you were in kindergarten and stuff and like the wars and recycling and stuff, that wasn't as big of an issue, like global warming and all that stuff. And our parents always said you want to leave your kid with a better world, a better place to live in, all that stuff. But thinking back, the world wasn't like it was now. I don't have the answer to what we are doing wrong or to how it is wrong or how to fix it or anything. But wars weren't going on, recycling wasn't a big issue, global warming wasn't a big issue. It kind of makes you wonder what our kids are going to face. What we are facing now is ...everyday it's a different issue every single day. I don't know.

Our parents are all baby boomers and I think as baby boomers as far as money and keeping up with the Jones' and wanting to impress people and buying and consumption, we've seen that in some ways. Maybe I have. And what is so different about it.

**MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT THE REST OF YOU? WHAT ARE THE VALUES TODAY?**

I think kids our age now they are all doing worse. I think they are all trying to compete even harder. Everybody is keeping up with the Jones' even more.

**MODERATOR—WHAT ELSE MOTIVATES YOU?**

Just to be successful.

**MODERATOR—HOW DO YOU MEASURE SUCCESS?**

Some people measure it monetarily or just happiness. I didn't come from a family that kept up with the Jones'. We were just trying to keep up with the bills. It's just...and I have a....I have that drive to be successful, but not necessarily have the biggest, badest house in the neighborhood and drive the fanciest car, but just to feel secure.

I guess my mom was different. I've got four sisters and my mother never worked a day in her life. My father took care of us, he's a builder. She always taught us that success was always how you build your home. You as a mom. And it's important for that woman to fill...ensure that the qualities and values are in the home. And I think that would fix a lot of things. I think women are really career oriented.



MODERATOR—YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE 80'S AND 90'S WERE CALLED THE ME GENERATION. THEY ARE ALL ABOUT THEMSELVES AND GREED IS GOOD AND ALL THESE THINGS. HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE YOUR GENERATION?

More me.

Yes.

Not just me, it's more and more me.

I think a lot of the people I associate with, they are probably the more intelligent people that I know. With that sort of comes this alienation where there is a realization that...I hate to go towards the government, but you have these alienation of these sixty and seventy-year-old guys sitting in Washington that are making the decisions that will impact our Social Security, impacting our economic well being. Granted, we have a say so in who goes there, but it's basically just picking the worst of the three different evils.

That's a hard question. You kind of ...it depends on who you surround yourself with. I think if you surround yourself with a group of people that live in a community that are trying to all get ahead, very materialistic, you can say that that's the case. Or you can find your own community where the ideas are similar. That's a hard question. I don't talk to a lot of friends from my school because they were private school, keep up with the Jones'. You have to move on beyond that.

I think the reason it's hard to get a definitive answer is the fact that there are just too many descriptions.

Too many cliques.

Variety.

You can come up with any number of descriptions, but it is always going to be different per person because everybody sees it a little differently.

I think maybe a little more independent, our generation.

MODERATOR—INDEPENDENT HOW?

I don't know. More individual. Marriage is a big thing, but like before in other generations you went to college, you got married, you had kids. I think it's not as much.

I think the opposite.

Really?

Yes. I think ...I agree that it's independent, but I agree also that people think you've got to go to school, you've got to get married, you've got to have kids. It seems like these days young people ...everyone is getting married right out of school. But there are also the independent ones too, so....I have mixed emotions.

MODERATOR—ON THE ONE HAND YOU GUYS WERE TALKING ABOUT THAT EVERYBODY DOES THEIR OWN LITTLE THINGS, BUT WHAT IS IT THAT UNITES YOUR GENERATION?

Even with music, what would you say is the music of our generation?

Hip hop.

I think it is for us.

Alternative too.

Yeah.

MODERATOR—WHAT ELSE UNITES YOU GUYS?

I was going to say the Internet.

We were probably the first generation to really latch onto the Internet from when it first started to now. And so, know my dad can turn on the computer, but I'm not quite sure what he can do after that. We are expected to be able to know how to do everything on the computer because we grew up from when the computer first came out. You had a big old computer...and cell phones. We are supposed to know how to use a cell phone like an IT guy would, just because we've grown up with them from the big old block to now.

With e-mail and text messaging and all those things, I think that our generation keeps up with friends and such pretty much ...much more so than our parents.

It's easier.

You can talk at night, you can type an e-mail to a friend.

I think technology might be the link between all of us.

Digital.

That kind of links your cell phones, your internet, everything together.

We are the digital generation.

Yeah.

I like that.

Wireless.

Wi-Fi.

We are the Wi-Fi generation.

MODERATOR—WHAT ELSE UNITES YOU GUYS?

With technology all being under one umbrella, that kind of limits a lot of the stuff.

That kind of knocked out a bunch of them.

You talk about music, MP3 players. Everybody has an MP3 player, but that is technology still. Communication, e-mail, still under technology.

I'm not really in this category, but I think a lot of people are health freaks almost now.

Yeah.

I was going to say like a cautious generation. We've learned so much from our family's family and every day is a new day and a new year. We've seen so much happen, we are more accepting, more humble about life and acceptance.

I don't know how anybody feels about racial stuff, but my grandmother if I brought any type of other race home, my grandmother would probably disown me. But I have friends who are in different race relationships and it doesn't phase us. Gay, lesbian, whatever you are, it doesn't phase us. My grandmother would be floored. Those reality show TV...it doesn't phase us to see something like that on TV. So maybe that we are more accepting of the fact that there are different types of people out there as there were when my parents and my grandparents came through. It was like you were...you had to follow that strict cookie cutter type attitude. You did everything...it was all laid out for you. But now we all go in...that's why it's hard to answer that question, we all go in so many different ways.

Not all of our generation is accepting. My fiancé, he's a country boy. So, some of his friends, they are not accepting.

Right.

He grew up with...out in the sticks. When you get out from the city, it's completely different. It could almost be even though they are the same age, it's like a whole other generation. It's a lot of ....

There are more people that are more accepting, I guess if you...my parents weren't and my grandparents were a lot less accepting. But each generation has gotten more accepting. But maybe if you were in a certain area or a certain group of people you never break out of that.

Right.

Welcome to Alabama.

You are kind of still stuck in that previous generation. You don't really break free of your own shell, you are just kind of locked in.

MODERATOR—A LOT OF TIMES WHEN WE TALK ABOUT POLITICAL IDEAS AND VALUES, THEY ARE ALWAYS PUT ON THIS TWO-DIMENSIONAL LINE, LIBERAL TO CONSERVATIVE. DO YOU THINK THAT YOUR GENERATION'S VALUES FIT SOMEWHERE ON THERE OR ARE THEY NOT REALLY APPLICABLE ON THAT?

Yeah, they are way down here.

MODERATOR—YOU THINK THEY ARE WAY DOWN AT LIBERAL? WHAT DO THE REST OF YOU THINK?

As a whole, I would say so.

I would say so. There are different aspects of liberal that you are looking at, but I'd say we might be in the middle to...I guess it just depends on who you ask.

It's all relative to what you are looking at as being liberal. I mean I look at conservative as the man coming home and the woman having dinner fixed for him on the table. Other people would expect conservative to include so much more, which I don't even acknowledge as being even feasible.

I'd say the majority of the time I would probably be on the conservative side, but then there are some things that come up that are just a total liberal issue. I might be alright with that, so maybe we'd be in the middle.

Right.

I agree.

MODERATOR—WHAT DO YOU THINK OF AS CONSERVATIVE?

It's not changing anything, keeping it the same.

More normal.

Yeah.

Discipline, more discipline. I think we seriously lack discipline.

And modesty.

Yeah.

Rules to go by. I think we all need it.

I think socially or financially...I think socially we are probably more liberal as far as accepting people or giving the people the right to choose, even though I might not make a certain decision but I'm not going to tell them what decision to make, but socially I think we are more liberal. Financially, fiscally, low taxes is a conservative thing, however low taxes and the multi-million dollar war and other spending plans and big deficits, they don't really jive. So, I think conservative and financial may jive, but....

MODERATOR—SO HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE IT? IT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE ANY OF YOU GUYS WOULD SAY THAT YOU ARE CONSERVATIVE.

I agree.

(many talking at once)

On certain issues.

Like healthcare.

MODERATOR-OVERALL, IF YOU DON'T BUY THAT, THEN GIVE ME A WORD...GIVE ME WHAT YOU THINK WOULD DESCRIBE YOU.

My word would be liberal conservative. I think that the whole lifestyle balance, everybody wants to be moderate. Diet and exercise, everything in moderation. That's the thing, to be in the middle. And I think that really and truly though we all kind of are in some ways...we agree with the conservative agenda in some areas and in the liberal agenda in others. You just kind of match up as much as you can. If it's in the middle and the republicans are calling someone liberal, then that's like a bad word. And in some areas they are not liberal, they are more conservative than Joe Blow is, than the republican is.

Everybody tries to make it black and white and it's not.

It's not black and white anymore.

If someone asks me, what party do you belong to? I will be honest and I generally say neither. I consider myself a Libertarian. Do what you want as long as it doesn't affect the guy next to you. But everybody is expected to have that opinion. It's got to be liberal, it's got to be conservative. Obviously the second you say something that doesn't go along with what you have labeled yourself, that just doesn't make any sense. That's why because of all that, that's why you have all the problems with the political agendas of different candidates.

And you get cynical. It's all about how much money that the special interest groups and lobbyists and all that...it's BS. You get so fed up with the political system that you are not motivated to really do much more than just vote.

And even then you are sort of picking the best of all three evils.

You do agree with some things that one party is doing or one candidate is doing, but then you agree with some things another candidate is doing. You are just picking the best choice that would fit you that day, I guess.

You agree with multiple things. You have to choose which one you agree with better, I guess.

**MODERATOR—SOMEONE SAID EARLIER, INDEPENDENT. IT WASN'T NECESSARILY IN A POLITICAL CONTEXT, BUT WOULD YOU CONSIDER YOURSELVES POLITICALLY TO BE INDEPENDENT?**

Right.

It changes from what you like from different candidates. You were saying, it's hard to ever achieve one person where you are like oh yeah, I really stand behind everything he says.

Yeah.

Some people have to make a choice based on their occupation. If you are in healthcare...

Exactly.

Or education.

Yeah.

If we go to a national healthcare system, like the English or the Canadians....so who knows?

**MODERATOR—ANOTHER TERM THAT WE HEAR MORE AND MORE THESE DAYS IS PROGRESSIVE. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN TO YOU?**

It means that you are progressing towards a better tomorrow.

So what are your plans on fixing the world?

Yeah.

I mean everybody has an opinion, but no one has a way to follow through on it.

I guess the war is a big issue right now. And by sitting back and saying that we shouldn't have gone to war, that's a big thing that some people would agree with. And then some people agree that we did the right thing and we are over there. But you all have to sit back and think too about like...I guess the way...I don't know how to word this without getting into a heated debate or anything....You have to stand behind what has already been done too. So by saying that we are not...that we went over there and it's the wrong thing to do, you have millions of people over there who are our friends, who are our family, who are over there fighting for you that even if it was the wrong thing to do, they are still over there now. You can't pull out now.

MODERATOR—I DON'T WANT TO GET TO FAR INTO THAT DEBATE.

I would say fresh ideas, new ideas, trying to work towards new conclusions, new outcomes. That to me is progressive.

To me it means moving forward.

Right.

The only thing that scares me about that is, what are we moving forward to?

Yeah.

MODERATOR—WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE COUNTRY, THE LEADERSHIP OF THIS COUNTRY ACROSS THE SPECTRUM, POLITICAL, CORPORATE, HOW DO YOU THINK OUR CURRENT LEADERSHIP IS SERVING US?

They are not serving us.

They serve themselves.

I used to work for Circuit City. Circuit City one Wednesday called in everybody who was making over fifty cents, that position pay cap, and they let them go. There was no heads up, there was no ...it was literally come in, here is your option, here is your severance pay, which was just ridiculous. And that's life. Some of the best people working there were those people.

(many talking at once)

Yeah, you are a number.

I agree.

You have no loyalty. Nobody has any loyalty to anybody.

Whatsoever.

**MODERATOR—SO HOW DO YOU RATE THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP ACROSS THE COUNTRY?**

Poor.

**MODERATOR—WHY?**

I guess because there is no loyalty. And they are not serving us. They are serving themselves. I don't want someone not thinking about everyone else. You need someone up there thinking about everyone else. It is affecting everyone else.

**MODERATOR—WHO ARE THEY SERVING THEMSELVES?**

Look at the healthcare, the pharmaceuticals a couple years ago when the major chairs of the bills, they are all working for pharmaceuticals now and making ten times what they were before.

I'm not so sure it's ever changed. I think it's always been that way. I think because we are so connected now with news, we know more now. I think it is more exposed now than it ever has been. I think it was like that in the 50's and 60's, but we just didn't know.

**MODERATOR—IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE LEADERS WHO ARE TRULY WORKING FOR US? CAN YOU POINT TO ANY EXAMPLES OF GOOD LEADERSHIP?**

I think Stalin tried to do...

I think it would be hard because if you are going to run for any big political position, you've got to have backers. And those backers may seem all pristine on the outside, but who is backing them? You don't really know.

I think they are only as good as what is underneath them.

They are all trying to get elected.

Yeah.

**MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT OUTSIDE OF THE GOVERNMENT? CAN YOU POINT TO ANY EXAMPLES OF THE KIND OF LEADERSHIP THAT YOU'D WANT TO SEE?**

That's really sad.



That we want to see or we don't want to see?

MODERATOR—THAT YOU DO WANT TO SEE.

The leadership in my company that I work for is really great. If we had a president that was the same as the president of my company, the US would be a very nice place to live.

Where do you work?

MODERATOR—WHAT IS IT ABOUT THAT LEADERSHIP?

It's a family oriented thing. Every kind of ....when one person and this is a very large corporation and we have agents all across the United States, and when one person's daughter was diagnosed with cancer, they had private jets to take her where she needed to go. Treatment paid for, no problem, limo service for her and her family there. Just really cared about....every person has a voice. They care about every single person, regardless if you are a top dog or if you are cleaning out the wastebaskets.

I think the reason we are all having a hard time what leaders we think are good is when you pay attention to the media you are hearing negative. And you don't hear about the positives. So you have to really think about that. I might wake up tonight and go....

Yeah.

MODERATOR—CAN ANYONE THINK OF EXAMPLES OF THE KIND OF LEADERSHIP YOU WANT?

I'd like an absolutely straight forward, kind of like the wrestler guy that used to be the...what's his name, Jesse...

MODERATOR—JESSE VENTURA?

I like his boldness of ...he didn't hide anything. I like that. What you see is what you get. I really do like that. Somebody with that mentality.

And he was considered progressive in a progressive state. That's the whole...

I think that's the problem with our leadership. I know me personally, it's hard to trust people because they....like leadership from my previous job, they lie to you or they tell you what you want to hear. And then when it comes down to it, they don't follow through. That is why I agree that most of the leadership from what I've seen is just not good. Trust is a big thing and it's hard to come across these days.

I think ...how large is your company? How many people are in it?

You are talking ...it's hard for me...probably 7,500.

It just seems that like a lot of the time when you have more to gain or when you can pull more, and I guess it's just me being cynical, but the more you have to pull from, the easier it is to become sort of corrupted. I guess it's me saying a big government is a bad government. That's basically what it boils down to. There is too much of a stratification between a constituent and the person who is supposed to be representing them in Washington.

In the actual services industry with stockholders and companies and leadership, really and truly they are trying to please the stockholders. And the stockholders are the people with the money. And people with money are trying to make more money, therefore they are causing their leaders to cut headcount and become more efficient and more productive. That is where Circuit City boys are making....Circuit City is being bought out by some private equity company so they can try and turn it around and salvage it. That's not leadership, that's appeasement. They appease the people that they answer to.

It sort of takes away from the whole taking care of the next generation. It's more like here and now, let's see what we can go ahead and get done. These are cost centers, not people.

Just that number.

And that's poor leadership.

**MODERATOR—LOOKING AT THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OR THE POLITICAL DEBATE IN OUR COUNTRY, IS THE DEBATE FOCUSED ON THE ISSUES THAT MATTER, THE CHALLENGES THAT ARE FACING OUR COUNTRY?**

It's based on the ones that are going to pull attention to them.

It's the ones that people complain the most about. They come in and say, I'm going to fix it.

Quick fix thing.

Tell me how you are going to fix it. Tell me a long-term plan.

I don't think it's anything new. It's the same thing every time it seems like.

Yeah.

It's like that snowball effect. It starts and then it just kind of keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger.

It's reactive.

MODERATOR—ONE THING WE’VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT IN RECENT ELECTIONS ARE THESE SO-CALLED SOCIAL ISSUES, ABORTION, GAY MARRIAGE, ISSUES LIKE THAT. DO YOU THINK THAT THEY SHOULD BE AS CENTRAL TO THE POLITICAL DIALOGUE AS THEY ARE?

Yes.

I do. I think that our country is in such poor condition already. And because it’s so liberal, I think that until we fix it from the roots up, I don’t think you can just go in in the middle and say, well, I guess I’ll bring the troops home. There are things still that have to get fixed. And if you don’t fix it from the bottom up, you are not building a foundation.

I think that’s going to be ...even though it’s an issue for some people, I don’t think it’s ever going to be a big issue in politics because if one candidate sways the wrong way towards yes or no, they are going to be worried about losing those votes.

I think what it is though, I think that if we have someone elected, that those concerns are not made known. Like the problem with some gay people is that when straight people see them, they are emotionally unbalanced in all those areas. And then if we get those people into office, and everybody is operating on this and nobody is able to think for themselves....

I think that those issues were brought forth by Carl Rove and the republican party to get out their base vote. To me, gay marriage, what the hell does that mean to me? I’m straight, I’m comfortable with it. What are they going to do? Are they going to make everybody robots? Turn everybody’s kids gay? No. And abortion. Abortion is abortion and it’s been legal for thirty whatever years. And it’s a person’s right to choose.

It’s a personal choice.

And it’s a personal choice and that’s just masking the larger issues.

I think it’s a factor, but it shouldn’t be central. It shouldn’t be the way to persuade a vote one way or another. It shouldn’t be that big of an issue.

MODERATOR—YOU GUYS OBVIOUSLY DON’T HAVE A LOT OF CONFIDENCE OR POSITIVE THINGS TO SAY ABOUT CURRENT LEADERSHIP.

I think they are doing the best they can, but I mean who would really want to be president?

I think they are doing the best they can do right now.

Everything they do is wrong.

MODERATOR—IS THIS THE BEST WE CAN DO?

Not the best we can do, but it's the best we can do with what we are dealt with right now at this point.

What they got themselves into.

These are personal choices that were made by this administration.

Right.

And they've dug this hole and ....

They are still trying to fill the holes from the previous...

I think there are too many irons in the fire. They can't really focus on one.

Let's start over.

(many talking at once)

We are a generation of wanting more, so we are a nation of consumption. In order for us to maintain us and protect us, think about what a leader has to do. We have to take....we have to go where the money is. I'm not saying that factor of oil or anything...

It doesn't justify anything and it's not right, but unfortunately that's where we are.

**MODERATOR—YOU'VE ALL HEARD THE SAYING THAT IF YOU WANT SOMETHING DONE RIGHT YOU'VE GOT TO DO IT YOURSELF. DOES THAT APPLY IN THIS SITUATION? CAN YOUR GENERATION MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND TAKE A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THIS COUNTRY?**

That's the problem.

It's the baby boomers that are doing it all right now.

Blame it on our parents, it's their fault.

That hole has been dug already. To be able to change it, I don't know.

Don't you have to be like thirty to be a senator or twenty-five to be a congressman or something like that?

Forty-five to be a president or something?

So I mean you really can't do anything until you are that age.

MODERATOR-IS THAT THE ONLY WAY TO AFFECT CHANGE?

No.

No.

But our vote counts.

Little stuff, I know it's cliché, but every little bit helps. Like with the recycling and stuff, everybody is so concerned about global warming, but you don't twice about cranking your Hummer up while driving up and down 280 while you are shopping.

You have an option.

Or like gas. It hasn't been readily available. If it was going to be such a big deal, then why wasn't it readily available to use something different besides gas?

Ahead of time.

The oil stuff, they are so tied in with politics that we can't even get on that. But I think on a local scale, we might not be able to change nationally what is going on, but it starts little and grows. You might affect somebody else that is going to move someplace else and have an effect on them.

MODERATOR—DO THE REST OF YOU BUY WHAT SHE IS SAYING, THAT YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

I agree. I do. I think if we each...we are just one vote. If we each like practice what we preach and we actually do recycle or we actually do what we say we are going to do, we could make a difference. If you are actually doing all these things that you want yourself to be like, eat healthy and all that....

It's so little compared to what is already done.

But you can't take that. If everybody takes that, it ain't going to matter, it isn't going to make a damn bit of difference whether I recycle that cup over there or not...

(many talking at once)

Everyone is all talk, just like bashing the president. Well then, you go be the damn president.

Honestly, do you recycle every single day everything you should?

Everything I can recycle, I do recycle.

(many talking at once)

Even if you say you recycle, you are still not going to do every little bit, so it is just a drop in the bucket to what has already been done. Even if you change as a community, one community changes, one community doesn't.

(many talking at once)

You know if you did it, that's like with that whole hard work and integrity. It's like, hey, you can't take this away from me because I did...

It may make you feel better, but it may not make a difference.

**MODERATOR—HOW DO YOU MEASURE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?**

Positive change.

(many talking at once)

I think it's having a plan and sticking with it. And having enough confidence in yourself, knowing that this is what you are going to do and this is how I'm going to do it. I think he's a great president and the boy just said I don't care what any of you think, you all can vote or whatever, but I'm the president and this is the way it's going to be done. And that's what we need.

We need somebody like that.

We need somebody who will break the cycles, like finding out where the problems are starting. I work in a lower-income school system. Our big thing is that these students don't come from homes where parents have gone to college or education is not a big deal. I feel like my job is to let them know, be a voice and tell them, you are just as smart as everybody else and you have all these opportunities. You can make a difference in the world, just like everybody else.

This is the problem. The people who have the influence, who have the impact, like Jennifer, just also happen to generally get shafted when it comes to healthcare, income versus the guy who is going out and making the money. That's great. He can make the money, but he is not having any sort of positive impact at all on society.

I feel better.

I think it just comes down...I think it's each individual person. If you want to make a difference, you can make a difference. If you think you can't, then you won't.

It's a cop out to say I can't make a difference. It starts with recycling or whatever it is, I don't have to drive a fifteen-mile to the gallon car, I can drive a hybrid. I have that choice. I can

conserve. I can do these things and so we all can make a difference. It's a matter of whether we want to or not.

I think it comes right back to the selfishness of our generation a little bit.

It does.

We all can, but what it all comes down to it, you are really more interested in yourself than....

And you are talking about the hybrid stuff, you are also faced with a choice that a hybrid car costs \$75,000 too.

No, it doesn't. I drive a hybrid and I pay less for that than I did for my loaded....

(many talking at once)

I swear I thought it did.

(many talking at once)

I do want to make a difference, but maybe I just have that negative mentality. I've had a long day.

**MODERATOR—DO THE REST OF YOU THINK THAT AN INDIVIDUAL ACTION CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

I do.

**MODERATOR—AND HOW DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

If you want to use an analogy, if the doctor diagnosed you with something...you've got to start exercising or you are going to die. I think you have the holistic approach. The country is diagnosed with something, so each individual has to do something in order for the whole country to move in a progressive way. So each individual has to do something. Does that make a little sense?

**MODERATOR—SURE.**

But the problem is that everyone is counseling everyone else to pick up their slack.

Exactly.

We are lazy.

Tired.

And I don't recycle.

This coming from a nation that consumes 25% of the world's crops and we account for like 4%.

(many talking at once)

We are talking about if morals were in place the country overall would be a little bit better, but the problem is no one is making the move towards morals.

MODERATOR—(HANDOUTS PASSED OUT) JUST LOOKING AT HANDOUT #1 RIGHT NOW, HERE ARE TEN OF THE BIG CHALLENGES FACING OUR COUNTRY THESE DAYS. I WANT YOU TO RANK ORDER THEM ONE TO TEN. ONE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT AND TEN IS THE LEAST IMPORTANT...

(end of side)

WHO ARE YOUR TOP THREE?

J, D and I.

A, B and C.

G, C and A.

G, D and J.

C, B and H.

B, C and J.

G, B and C.

F, G and A.

G, B and A.

G, A and J.

MODERATOR—FEAR OF TERRORISM, WHY DOES THAT ONE RANK ABOVE ALL THE OTHERS FOR SO MANY OF YOU?

We've got to be alive.



All the rest doesn't matter.

Plus what happened at the World Trade Center. It shut our country down for awhile.

It's still taking effects.

MODERATOR—WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO TO ADDRESS THAT?

We've got to go to war.

Keep the duct tape.

We don't need to keep stirring up the pile.

I was going to say we don't need to keep making everybody mad.

Making enemies.

Yeah.

No way, you act like you are scared of them and they'll be back.

Not necessarily act like you are scared of them, but don't make any more enemies.

I think we need to tell them that we are it, this is our country and you are going to keep it out or we will just take care of you. And that's how you can deal with that. There is no way I would say, let's just be friends.

It worked for the Japanese.

You are going to go drop an atomic bomb on everybody?

If you have to.

Somebody will be likely to retaliate. That's the only thing.

They did the Patriot Act, which that has all kinds of people that are watching money laundering...that whole act watches everybody.

Yeah.

That was a gross exploitation. There are some things in there that are just not necessary. And now they are wanting to try and use that....

MODERATOR—ALRIGHT, SIX OF YOU PICKED “B” AS ONE OF YOUR TOP TWO. WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT IS SO IMPORTANT?

In order to promote change, that’s a big problem for the next generation. It’s not just ....we are all screwed up.

They will be taking care of us.

If you don’t have education, it’s kind of hard to even get a job.

Yeah, how can you be....

These days, a lot of times if you don’t have a graduate degree, it’s hard to get in a field.

Knowledge is power.

Yeah, exactly. You can’t assess the problems without knowing what they are and where they came from, how we got to where we are, so history does not repeat itself again. You have to learn.

MODERATOR—“A,” AMERICA’S DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL AND FOSSIL FUELS, LIKE COAL, NATURAL GAS AND OIL, HALF OF YOU PICKED THAT ONE AS ONE OF YOUR TOP THREE. WHY?

That’s what drives our country.

It’s 6% of our economy.

Yeah, but everything you do involves that. You drive, a lot of your energy, everything.

Heating, cooling, gas, your transportation.

All of our power.

While we are sitting here right now and have lights on and we are comfortable, it is the backbone of everything.

I think it’s important because there has been such an environmentalist movement in the past. It really started forty years ago, but this whole global warming that has come up now. They are like we’ve got to get rid of the old stuff. It has become such a big issue that we are kind of masking other stuff that we need to be concerned about.

The only way that we are ever going to be less dependent on foreign oil, gas, coal is conservation. And the reason that people drive hybrid cars right now is because oil prices are high. And it makes alternative energy more available, financially more inexpensive.

And you get a tax break too.

Exactly. In the end it's not to....when oil prices go up and lower taxes on oil, you are really not making any progress.

**MODERATOR—A COUPLE OTHER ONES, “C,” THE RISING COST OF HEALTHCARE. WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS ON THAT ONE?**

Well, it's not in my top three but I can probably say that everyone here is in the large demographic for uninsured. Isn't it like eighteen to twenty-four? That's a huge issue because it affects us directly.

We need to be able to take care of ourselves and it's impossible for a lot of people to afford healthcare.

And I think it goes back to the education thing. You have a higher education, you work for a good company who has health benefits. You can pay enough to be able to afford it, ideally.

Or you have a simple education not to screw yourself up.

Right.

The most basic kind of idea that I can possibly think of that is with sex education. Some of the things I've heard, just like the rationale behind it, it's the straight lack of education.

It is definitely tied in. The immigration, the education, all of that contributes to it.

**MODERATOR—“J,” LACK OF LONG-TERM JOB BENEFITS, RETIREMENT SECURITY.**

If we don't have something to look forward to, why should we care about the people behind us? That's not like a personal thing, you have to have a certain type of behavior, a certain type of thought process before you can act on anything.

You've got to get to the golden end of the rainbow. (inaudible)

Hope.

And maybe that's part of the reason why our generation is so money hungry now is because we don't have that security. We don't know what it is going to be like when we are sixty. So it's like let's get as much as we can now, we are like the little squirrels packing our cheeks with acorns because we don't know what the future holds with Social Security.

But I think we'd spend it. I don't even think...

Some do. I'm just saying as a whole.

I save too, but....

Lack of responsibility. I think that we want to depend on somebody else for providing something for us. We don't want to do it ourselves. That's why we have been at a negative savings rate for several quarters in the last couple years.

**MODERATOR—YOU DID SAY THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE IN YOUR GENERATION ARE DRIVEN BY SUCCESS AND MONEY. SOME OF YOU SAID THAT'S THE GOAL NOW SO YOU CAN GET TO A SECURE POINT. DO YOU THINK THAT'S IT, THAT YOU ARE DRIVEN BY A LACK OF SECURITY?**

I think it goes back to what she said earlier about trust. You don't really trust the government as much. You look out for yourself.

We'll never reach that point. The more you make, it is just greed. You'll never hit it. So, I guess...you always have to have that little nest egg put aside. You've got to have something.

Some Japanese Yen or some Euros.

Right.

It's all in your mentality now. Not everybody that makes a million dollars a year spends a million dollars a year.

The mentality is what is lacking. Talk about education, talk about the hope that we are working towards something, but everything is all reactive. There is nothing proactive at all about anything in my opinion that's in any sort of political arena at all. And that's the thing that bothers me. It all comes back to you having to have that sort of base system to expand from. The morals...it's like what came first, the material or the morals? And no one is focused on both, they are focused on one or the other.

**MODERATOR—OKAY, LET ME ASK ABOUT A COUPLE OTHER ONES. THE NATIONAL DEBT ONE, ONLY ONE OF YOU PUT IT IN YOUR TOP THREE. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT ISSUE? IS IT A BIG CONCERN OR NOT?**

I think it's so bad it's....

(many talking at once)

It's too far gone.

(many talking at once)

Not necessarily let it get worse, but at least keep it like it is. It is still an issue so try to keep it at least where we are now and not to let it get worse.

What is it? A trillion dollars now?

Oh yeah.

(many talking at once)

We've brought that back down to zero before when we've been near there, have we not?

Wasn't that with WWII?

**MODERATOR—THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DEFICIT AND DEBT. DEFICIT IS EACH YEAR. WE BALANCE THE BUDGET ON A YEARLY BASIS, BUT WE'VE NEVER ....**

You can't have your cake and eat it too. We, as a country, want our cake. And we'll pay for it for the next fifteen years. And that's the unfortunate thing. I think that if the voters said, okay, pay for this war and have tax cuts, that's just...

Like you said, the golden end of the rainbow. There's got to be some incentive to paying for something in cash. Credit card debt is...you can get a credit card that you can get like free gas or ...they offer you the incentive to just charge it. But if you pay for something in cash, what's your incentive? You already lost your money right there. It's gone just like that.

Those VISA commercials are like....they don't stop the rotation. If you don't use that little VISA card...

And they are giving you that incentive. I would rather have that credit card that gives me the gas as opposed to giving the cashier at the gas station \$50 to fill up my tank and there it went.

But you are paying for that gas.

(many talking at once)

Get a hybrid.

I thought they cost \$35,000.

**MODERATOR—ALRIGHT, THE INFLUENCE OF LOBBYISTS AND SPECIAL INTEREST IN OUR GOVERNMENT. WE TALKED ABOUT THIS, BUT THIS ONE DIDN'T RISE TO THE TOP FOR YOU GUYS. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT IT?**

There are too many hands in the pot. It all comes down to who has the most money to influence, who is going to be making the votes in Congress, which is going to determine what route it is taking.

Lobbyists make six or seven figure salaries. They get paid big bucks just to influence decisions.

It's a big machine that you can't stop regardless.

I'm not sending money to any politicians or any special interest groups.

Yeah, but the big corporations do.

Directly you are not, but indirectly you are. You can trace it back. Every time you buy gas you are indirectly contributing to special interest groups.

**MODERATOR—ALRIGHT WE'VE TALKED ABOUT THE PROBLEMS. YOU LOOK AT THIS LIST, DO YOU SEE PROGRESS ON ANY OF THESE?**

Building a war for immigration.

I think alternative fuels, bio-diesels, all that stuff, yes it does have negative affects in our agricultural industry, but it's...a little bit of progress.

It's only going to be reactive and that's what it boils down to.

We are trying to be a little bit more proactive on these.

Honestly, the only time I really thought about any of these ten is like now, so obviously they are doing something because I don't think about it. I go to work everyday and I don't think about education.

Every time I fill up my gas tank I do. Seriously, or illegal immigration. I can't even like communicate with some of them. So, yeah, it does affect us. I can't even tell them what I want to order half the time.

(many talking at once)

They are back in the kitchen cooking. They don't ...

But they work....my dad owns a company and they work for my dad. My dad is having to change his lifestyle to communicate with these people because they do work in...

Is he hiring illegal aliens?

I don't know. That's a good question.

I'm sure they have to have some kind of...I'm not saying they are illegal.

(many talking at once)

I'm sure they'd have to have some kind of form of identification to be here, but what I'm saying is that we are changing our society. It has to be a big issue and it has to have some kind of factor on everything. You say you don't think about it until today, but you have to think about it. It's not just my dad. I know some of the other people here, you either work with them or...it's on a daily basis. It's a very....

MODERATOR—OKAY, BACK TO ...

(many talking at once)

Just teach them English.

MODERATOR—ANYONE POINT TO PROGRESS THAT WE ARE MAKING ON ANY OF THESE ISSUES?

Yes. The war. The threat of terrorism. I do feel safer now than I did on 9/11. Or before 9/11, I guess. Not that it's fixed by any stretch of the imagination, I think they are making progress.

MODERATOR—DO THE REST OF YOU THINK THAT WE ARE SAFER NOW? I MEAN NOT BEFORE 9/11, I MEAN DO YOU THINK THE WAR IN IRAQ HAS MADE US SAFER?

No.

No.

No.

I think so.

About the same.

MODERATOR-ALRIGHT, SO WE ARE SPLIT ON THAT.

I'm more paranoid.

Yeah exactly.

But it's all because of what they did, it's because of 9/11.

Not Iraq.

MODERATOR—LET’S NOT GET INTO THAT. OVERALL, IT SEEMS THAT WE ARE NOT MAKING A LOT OF PROGRESS HERE. I THINK I CAN SAY THAT. HOW DO WE REVERSE THIS AND START MAKING THINGS BETTER ON SOME OF THESE ISSUES?

Focus on one area and make an impact. Grass roots.

I personally think that it would be education. And you start very basic and ...in my opinion, I don’t think that I’m going to leave the world a better place for my kids. I think I could possibly give them the opportunity to make the world better for them or for their kids, but education is what it boils down to.

I agree with that. It especially comes into play with the immigration part. People that are bilingual, that speak Spanish and English now are very desirable by high companies. So, if you start in elementary school teaching ...

That’s because of our immigration problem. That dumbs down our system too.

Yeah.

True, but you can teach financial responsibility.

You are building a house right now.

Yeah. You hire them because they are cheap.

I didn’t hire them, the builders do.

That’s why your house is the price that it is.

Yeah, my house isn’t going to be cheap. Nothing is cheap now.

MODERATOR—WHAT IS THE VEHICLE FOR CHANGE, WHERE DOES THE LEADERSHIP COME FROM?

It has to start at the top and trickle its way down.

See, I would think the opposite.

He’s one man. He has to listen to all of us though.

He has to be elected and everybody has a concern.



If it starts out grass roots, very bottom, that gives everyone else more of an opportunity, ideally, to rise up. And if you are coming from an audience that's a little bit better than the previous audience, you've got to do something a little bit better.

I think there is a major disconnect between the government and our generation. I'm guilty of doing this, I'll do that later when I'm older. I just don't feel like I have a lot of voice in it.

Sort of alienated.

**MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK THAT YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE? DO YOU THINK THAT YOU CAN FORCE GOVERNMENT OR OTHER INDIVIDUALS TO ENFORCE THE KIND OF CHANGE THAT YOU WANT?**

Not as an individual because every time we have an election we are always waiting on the tally of three or four states. And that's not just one person. We are waiting, oh hold on, Grandma didn't get to get down there. No, it's a whole state that they have to tally.

It starts with our mayors and the preachers in the community and it starts at your own house.

But also you are talking about it as if they were elected by popular vote. They are not.

But like he said, every vote counts. But it's not every one ...

It's not mine in Alabama.

Everyone as a whole.

It's only those few that are actually making the votes. The electoral college...

**MODERATOR—BUT AGAIN, THAT'S PRESIDENTIAL. ARE THERE OTHER WAYS THAT YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

(many talking at once)

Community.

It depends on how dedicated you are.

Right.

Whatever you believe in, follow it through and go with it. That means you have to give up everything else that you do in order to do that.

You are just another guy on the sidewalk holding up a Love Jesus sign.

MODERATOR—ARE THERE WAYS TO LINK THOSE PEOPLE TOGETHER?

Sure.

I think it's about organization. It's about your people that you work with, be it Habitat or something like that. Or a recycling project. You can start something and if you have an audience, I think you could finish it.

Like we all have an individual influence. If you are at church and they are going to vote on the lottery or whatever, you as an individual can give a speech to a group of forty people at the church. Half of those are going to think something different probably than what they thought before they came in. That makes a difference.

MODERATOR-LET'S LOOK AT SOME SPECIFIC ISSUES. FLIP TO HANDOUT #2. HERE IS A STATEMENT ABOUT SOME OF THE HEALTHCARE CHALLENGES FACING THE COUNTRY. I'LL READ IT OUT LOUD AND UNDERLINE ANYTHING THAT JUMPS OUT AT 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?

It plays on a lot of the key points. New generation, children.

Preventative.

Education.

You can't neglect healthcare. If someone is sitting there dying in front of you, I just can't see how you could just like let them be selfish ...if you go to the ER, I don't think any hospital if going to neglect...and they are going to give you that care. They are just going to bill you for it. But if you are an illegal alien, I can totally see that. Then who is stuck with the bill? The taxpayers. I don't think anybody can say, no, we ain't going to take care of this guy or girl, whatever. You just can't do that.

MODERATOR—DO YOU AGREE WITH THE PREMISE HERE? DO YOU THINK THAT HEALTHCARE IS GETTING WORSE BECAUSE EACH NEW GENERATION IS SUFFERING AN EPIDEMIC OF CHRONIC, PREVENTABLE DISEASES?

Yeah, definitely.

Definitely.

Are we sick in here?

Sick is like the flu or something.

Who is sick? I don't know. I don't see it.

(many talking at once)

And you are trying to sell pharmaceuticals?

I sell sleeping pills. There's a big difference.

MODERATOR—DO YOU GUYS AGREE WITH THAT PREMISE?

I don't.

Yeah.

The convenience.

I don't think we are suffering it, I think we are causing it. It's self inflicted.

Yeah.

Yeah.

MODERATOR—IT SAYS PREVENTABLE.

Yeah, it's preventable.

Yeah.

And I think parents must be taught education ....

Unfortunately, cheap food is the worst stuff for you.

Yeah, it's expensive to eat healthy. Chicken breasts are not very quick.

(many talking at once)

Whole Foods.

A smoothie is \$5.

It's awesome.

**MODERATOR—EVERY CHILD IN AMERICA, REGARDLESS OF RACE, CLASS OR INCOME SHOULD HAVE FULL HEALTH COVERAGE AND PROPER NUTRITION.**

That sort of sends up flares. Where is the demographic? Maybe ours, but we should think twice about including everyone else.

That's opening the door to illegal immigration as well, so maybe not.

Yeah.

We are still children.

You've got to draw the line somewhere.

You are going to have people who are just going to go to the doctor just to go because they think they are sick. I never go to the doctor...I work there, but I don't ever go have my check-up. I'm healthy as a horse.

(many talking at once)

They are children and they can't help who their parents are. And somebody has got to look out for them. They are just kids and they are going to be our future. If we don't take care of them in the beginning, it's just going to be a worse problem as they get older.

**MODERATOR—AND THAT'S THE CASE OF THE LAST SENTENCE. IF WE CONTINUE TO SPEND MORE AND MORE MONEY ON THE SYMPTOMS....RATHER THAN GOING INTO THE ROOT CAUSES TRYING TO GET KIDS HEALTHY....TRYING TO GET THEM PREVENTIVE CARE, TRYING TO TEACH THEM ABOUT NUTRITION SO THAT WE AVOID ALL THESE, THAT'S THE ONLY WAY WE ARE GOING TO DEAL WITH HEALTHCARE ISSUES.**

Reactive.

**MODERATOR—ON THE ECONOMIC STATS, HEALTHCARE WAS 7% OF OUR GNP TWENTY YEARS AGO AND NOW IT'S 16%. IT'S A HUGE....THAT'S GOVERNMENT SPENDING, THAT'S INDIVIDUALS, IT'S EVERYBODY. DO YOU AGREE THAT IT'S**

GOING TO KEEP GETTING WORSE AND WORSE UNLESS WE DEAL WITH THE ROOT CAUSES?

Definitely.

I feel like I'm beating a dead horse here, but the education just around the most simplest of things. I remember in college, college age young adults in human sexuality class they were just like, what? Seriously? About things that kind of worries me that those are the people that could possibly be reproducing.

And those are the ones that are in trouble.

(many talking at once)

MODERATOR—ALRIGHT, FLIP TO HANDOUT #3. THIS IS ABOUT ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

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.

Each investment, more debt.

Not everybody can afford to switch over what they've got now just to support this new plan to make the environment better.

I mean it's not going to be an overnight thing. This is definitely a long-term goal.

Look at the internet and the new technology, that didn't start yesterday. It had to develop. Like all good things, they've got to start somewhere. We can't now make an investment because it's going to cost money now for the sake of saving money later.

You can totally strike this as even possibly being true if you want, but I honestly believe that there has been actually cases where you have the high school or college science course that produced a very real possibility for fossil fuel alternatives and it disappeared. Has anyone seen the electric car? What happened to the electric car? I mean there are a lot of...it's going back to me being a little cynical if you haven't been able to tell...they are claiming that oil companies

have bought out these alternate technologies. Why? Because they have the monopoly. That's like the most prevalent monopoly that you see on our day-to-day basis.

And that's the government as well.

MODERATOR—OKAY, BUT WHAT DO THE REST OF YOU GUYS THINK?

Either way, it's going to cost more money. Whether we wait on this and end up spending more and more money each year for gasoline and energy or start now and reap the benefits in several years.

I think it's a good start, but it's also something you have to think about that ...you are talking about creating millions of new jobs. I mean you have to promise...it's just like...you have so many people who are in the oil industry, even down to your gas station workers who if you do change this over to a fossil fuel...you have to make sure that it's readily available. You have to replace those jobs or you are talking about looking at more and more debt, more and more people without healthcare. That just kind of tumbles down into everything that we are going through too.

MODERATOR—THE FIRST SENTENCE, IT SAYS OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL AND FOSSIL FUELS IS THE GREATEST THREAT TO OUR NATIONAL SECURITY....AGREE, DISAGREE?

I think threat to national security...I would somewhat agree. Maybe that's why everybody who drops a bomb in the Middle East goes, hello, that's where oil comes from. You are not going to shoot yourself in the foot. Quality of life, yeah, if you have a real high quality of life you are probably not too concerned with how much fossil fuels you are consuming each year.

MODERATOR—IS OUR QUALITY OF LIFE AND OUR NATIONAL SECURITY DEPENDENT ON FOREIGN OIL? IF SAUDI ARABIA AND OPEC DECIDED TO SHUT OFF THE SPIGOT...

We would be in trouble.

We are in trouble.

Move to Alaska.

I think it's important, but I don't think it's number one. I think we are the kind of nation that's going to do something where it actually hits us. If you stop the drugs in this country, you could have people going crazy. That's a big threat. You've got a sickness from within, so...

MODERATOR—SO DO WE WAIT UNTIL WE GET TO THE POINT OF \$10 OIL OR ...

No, there has got to be a huge movement all at once. The whole step by step on these sort of issues, I just don't see it being effective.

I'll tell you if our dollar hadn't declined 35% in the last seven years, we'd be paying less than \$2 a gallon for oil. I think it's all intertwined. The British don't complain about paying \$5 a quart for oil or gas.

(many talking at once)

Look at what they drive. They drive small energy efficient vehicles. Look at the Chinese, fifty-mile-a-gallon vehicles. I mean....

They walk everywhere.

We've dug our hole with our SUV's.

Every household has to have one car at least per person, if not three.

Look at thirty or forty years ago, the families were smaller, the cars were smaller, the yards were smaller. And they burned much more nastier. There have been ....

**MODERATOR—ALRIGHT, FLIP TO HANDOUT #4. THIS ONE IS ABOUT SOME OF THE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES.**

**WE MUST STOP OUR ELECTED LEADERS FROM SPENDING MONEY THEY DON'T HAVE AND PASSING THEIR CRUSHING DEBT ONTO OUR GENERATION. WE CAN'T DIG OUT OF THIS HOLE SIMPLY BY CUTTING SPENDING HERE OR RAISING TAXES THERE. WE MUST REBUILD OUR ECONOMIC BASE BY RESTORING THE INDUSTRIAL INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED TO PROVIDE THE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS FOR OUR DEFENSE AND BASIC NEEDS AND REVERSING THE DECLINE OF OUR MIDDLE CLASS, WHICH HAS ALWAYS FUELED OUR GREATEST ECONOMIC EXPANSIONS. THIS WILL IN TURN ALLOW US TO END OUR HUGE STRUCTURAL TRADE IMBALANCES AND MORE EFFECTIVELY COMPETE WITH COUNTRIES WHO CURRENTLY EXPLOIT OUR GROWING NEED FOR BASIC GOODS.**

I agree with this one more than any of the other ones.

**MODERATOR—WHY?**

It's sort of a very simple back to basics kind of thing. What saved us from the Great Depression? WWII. If we can cut ourselves off...I love the idea of globalization, it's a great idea, but the whole thing is that we are spreading ourselves too thin in my opinion. If we could pull it back and sort of start from square one and then grow up our own country first and then we can worry about policing the rest of the world.

I say spend away. I'm just kidding.

I think it ideally sounds good. It looks good on paper.

Yeah.

But is it feasible?

How is it going to play out?

Yeah.

It sounds like a speech that you'd get from a politician running for something.

Yeah.

How do you put a price on going to war?

**MODERATOR—THIS IS MAKING THE CASE THAT WE NEED TO START MAKING STUFF IN THIS COUNTRY.**

Spend more money? That's the problem with oil. Everybody is up in arms because oil is more expensive. But if you went to a store and clothes were 50% and your groceries were 50% more because it was done here in the US, you'd be bitching too. We can't have our cake and eat it too.

**MODERATOR—WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO PAY MORE FOR GOODS MADE IN THE US?**

You can't afford it.

I buy New Balance.

Probably not.

(many talking at once)

If there were some sort of certification where it would go back into our government, where it would end up benefiting us and people could actually see three steps ahead and realize...we are paying more for clothes, but at the same time we are able to actually not worry about healthcare issues. Not being a socialist, but this is basically what this is saying.

On the other side of that is, I mean, I think how many shirts do we need, how much stuff do we need? We have to clean out our closets, why did we buy that, we don't need that. And it's kind of like less is more. And if less is more then you could spend more money on US made goods.



You just have to make a conscious decision.

MODERATOR—DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS HUGE IMBALANCE THAT OTHER COUNTRIES ARE BASICALLY HOLDING US RANSOM, THAT WE CAN'T PRODUCE WHAT WE NEED TO PRODUCE HERE, SO WE HAVE TO PAY THEM WHATEVER IT TAKES TO GET IT.

If we don't pay them, where are we going to get it?

MODERATOR-AND WE ARE TAKING MUCH MORE OF THEIRS THAN WHAT THEY ARE TAKING OF OURS CREATING THIS HUGE IMBALANCE.

I agree. And it should make the US as a whole just mad that they are exploiting us to the point that you do something about it, you reduce your consumption. If everybody gets that mentality, then it will make an effect. It's not going to be overnight. It's not like when they said to everybody, quit driving...ten less miles a day...you can't.

What was that thing about the CITGO Oil? Refresh my memory. Why were we supposed to...

The Venezuelan president is not a big supporter of the Bush administration.

My aunt works for CITGO and that is one hell of a company to work for. When the hurricanes came through...

Yeah it is because look at how much money they make in a year.

They told her every employee ...she was put on a helicopter and out of there ...not Katrina, but the second ones. Take care of their employees.

MODERATOR—WE'VE TALKED ABOUT ALL THESE DIFFERENT PROBLEMS AND I WANT TO GET BACK TO SOLUTIONS. WHAT CAN YOUR GENERATION DO ABOUT THESE? WHAT CAN YOU GUYS DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THESE BIG PROBLEMS?

You can support local business owners. You can support things in your community that are good and give money back to the community. We don't have to shop at Wal-Mart.

MODERATOR—ARE YOU GUYS DOING THAT NOW? DO YOU BASE OUR BUYING DECISIONS ON THOSE KINDS OF FACTORS?

You do convenience.

I think people need to educate themselves instead of hearing rumors about you don't need to shop at Target because they don't support the veterans. Okay, I'm not shopping at Target. Do a little research instead of the fads that come about. Look it up.

We have the resources.

Make you own mind up, stand up for what you believe in, not what everybody else in your clique is going for.

But the media makes things looking so good...

If you have the money, are you going to really start buying this and that or are you going to just go and buy the Mercedes that's made in Germany? Or are you going to buy the one that's made...whatever...you know what I'm saying? Most stuff isn't always made here, especially like the finer things. Is your wine made here in Napa Valley, no it's Shiraz in Australia.

I get moonshine from right down the street.

I like moonshine.

(many talking at once)

**MODERATOR—IF YOUR GENERATION WERE IN CHARGE, HOW WOULD THINGS BE DIFFERENT?**

I'd probably just keep bitching about everything and do something about it. Put your money where your mouth is. Do something about it.

I think we as Americans can survive. If they cut stuff off, if they made prices so high, I think we would just be like hey, let's just stop and start doing this.

It's survival of the fittest.

But, prices are going up. Milk is more expensive to everything. And we are not making the money we used to like during the Clinton administration. It's very obvious. There are certain things we are going to have to start tightening our belt on as individuals. Everybody can talk and tell people what they can do, but it's hard for you as an individual to actually do it. I know for myself it is.

I think our generation is probably sick of politicians and they are sick of the rhetoric. I think that progressive is grass roots, it's new, it's fresh. And I think that our generation is probably more apt to be that way.

**MODERATOR—LET'S TALK ABOUT INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS. ON HANDOUT #5 YOU SEE A LIST OF ACTIONS THAT YOU AS INDIVIDUALS CAN TAKE. TELL ME WHICH OF THE THREE CATEGORIES, THINGS THAT YOU HAVE DONE OR ARE DOING ALREADY, THINGS THAT YOU MAY NOT BE DOING BUT THAT YOU'D BE LIKELY**

TO DO, AND THINGS THAT YOU ARE NOT GOING TO DO. WHAT ARE THE THINGS THAT YOU HAVE DONE SO FAR?

Voting.

Attending public meetings.

Sign petitions.

MODERATOR—DO YOU FEEL THOSE THINGS ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

I feel good about them.

At the time.

Yeah.

MODERATOR—WHAT ARE THE THINGS THAT YOU ARE LIKELY TO DO?

Attend public meetings.

Write a letter.

Running for office.

Me too.

Mayor Moody.

I'd vote for you.

Volunteering and working for a campaign, starting a business or an organization, running for office.

Join social or political groups.

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK THAT THOSE THINGS WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

It would be more of a stronger voice, more people behind it that would have more than say sitting in a meeting and possibly throwing in your two cents.

That would be part of educating our generation.

MODERATOR—AND WHAT ARE YOU UNLIKELY TO DO?

Write an article.

Sit in chat rooms.

Online chats. I'm not going to do that.

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK THAT THAT KIND OF ...DISCUSSING WITH OTHER PEOPLE, BLOGS, DO YOU THINK THAT THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE?

Yeah, you run in circles.

Like local forums, it's all about politics and people. That's what it is.

Yeah.

It's like it's the same people.

MODERATOR—IT SEEMS LIKE YOU GUYS ...GOING BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF OUR CONVERSATION AND LOOKING AT THIS STUFF, YOU GUYS SEEM TO THINK YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE WHEN YOU TRANSLATE INDIVIDUAL ACTION INTO A GROUP DYNAMIC. YOU GET MORE PEOPLE INVOLVED AND YOU START TO CREATE THAT MOMENTUM. IS THAT A FAIR STATEMENT?

Yeah.

Yeah.

Definitely.

(inaudible)

MODERATOR—SO HOW DO YOU TAKE IT FROM INDIVIDUAL ACTION TO A COLLECTIVE SOCIAL EFFORT?

Being a part of groups or organizations.

Changing mindsets.

Yeah.

Church.

Like he had said earlier, it has to become a real passion.

MODERATOR—BUT ARE YOU GUYS IN ANY OF THOSE KINDS OF SOCIAL DYNAMICS NOW?

Yes, I am.

At work.

At work and I have made a purchasing decision based on behavior of the companies. I do that from a project that I did in grad school. Everybody I know knows about it. I don't eat Smithville pork products. Look them up online and you'll know exactly why. And it has affected a lot of people just from reading my paper about them.

I think everybody who has a job.

Or your church.

Work or church.

Your neighborhood.

Your supper club.

MODERATOR—ALRIGHT, FLIP TO HANDOUT #6. MANY ORGANIZATIONS HAVE MISSION STATEMENTS, SOMETHING THAT CAPTURES THE NATURE OF THE ORGANIZATION, THE VALUES OR GOALS THAT IT STRIVES TOWARDS. BE CREATIVE AND COME UP WITH A MISSION STATEMENT FOR YOUR GENERATION.

What our current mission is or what it should be?

Should be.

MODERATOR—THANKS FOR COMING.....

**(end of session)**