

- Edited Transcript -



Civil Society and the Future of Conservatism



Tuesday, November 27, 2012
12:00–2:00pm

Program and Panel

12:00 p.m. Panel discussion
1:10 Question-and-answer session
Harry Boyte, Director of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at Augsburg College
Jimmy Kemp, President of the Jack Kemp Foundation
Yuval Levin, Founding Editor of *National Affairs*
Robert Woodson, Founder and President of the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise
2:00Adjournment

WILLIAM SCHAMBRA: I'm Bill Schambra, director of the Bradley Center for Philanthropy and Civic Renewal here at Hudson Institute. Kristen McIntyre and I welcome you to today's panel discussion entitled, "Civil Society and the Future of Conservatism." As the Bradley Center's many faithful followers know, in our monthly panels, we try very hard to put aside whatever our own political inclinations may be, in order to bring you discussions that are not only lively and thoughtful but also scrupulously balanced. Ideally, you could watch our panels and not be able to fit us into a well-defined ideological cubby hole. But there's no escaping the one bias that we have here at the Center, inscribed in our very name: our determination to help American civil society survive and flourish.

But we were struck, in the course of the presidential election of 2012, how infrequently that topic arose. This absence was particularly evident and particularly surprising in the discourse of the Republican Party, which theoretically considers a healthy civil society the primary alternative to an overbearing central government in the solution of our nation's problems.

Republican candidates in the past have managed to talk about civil society and to try, however clumsily, to promote it once in office. We recall President Reagan's private sector initiatives, President George H.W. Bush's thousand points of light, and President George W. Bush's faith-based initiatives. Over that period, we don't recall much by way of civil society discourse from the Dole, McCain, and Romney campaigns, and do note that we also never have occasion to refer to them as president.

But an alarm about this conspicuously missing thematic piece and the electoral damage it might cause was sounded in a couple of major essays in both of America's leading conservative journals during the election, *The Weekly Standard* and *National Review*. Both were written by a young commentator described a couple of weeks ago by David Brooks in the *New York Times* as one of the right's two or three most influential young writers.

We thought those two essays, plus several others, were good candidates for assigned reading for this panel today as we tackle this question. What, if any, is the role of civil society in the future of conservatism? And we are pleased to have with us this afternoon the author of the essays just mentioned, Yuval Levin, editor of [National Affairs](#).

We'll hear first from him and then we'll proceed to Harry Boyte, director of Augsburg College's Center for Democracy and Citizenship, and one of the leading theorists of progressivism's version of the civil society argument, although he will take issue with that momentarily. Those of you who have read Stanly Kurtz's book, [Radical in Chief](#), his treatment of President Obama's intellectual development, will recognize Harry as one of the key figures in that development, helping the young Barack Obama to understand that he could best promote his fervent socialism under the guise of community organizing. Stanley came to this insight during one of these panel discussions here at the Bradley Center, featuring Katz and Boyte. So the center is proud of its role in helping to expose the Red Menace. [LAUGHTER]

Then we'll hear from Jimmy Kemp, president of the [Jack Kemp Foundation](#). Jack Kemp was one of the few conservative public figures in the recent past who understood the importance of civil society. Finally, we'll hear from Bob Woodson, founder and president of the Center for

Neighborhood Enterprise. And, forgive me, Bob, the grand old man of conservatism's civil society argument.

I should note that both Jimmy Kemp and Bob Woodson were present at and provided advice for one of the very few campaign speeches from 2012 that did, in fact, address the importance of civil society, namely Congressman Paul Ryan's speech at Cleveland State University in late October, a speech with suspicious echoes of the Levin argument. So Yuval.

YUVAL LEVIN: Thanks very much, Bill, and thank you all for being here. It's a tremendous privilege for me to be on the panel with these folks, and it's humbling, too. I'm a relative newcomer to this work, which all of you in various ways have been advancing for such a long time. I'm certain there's not much I can say that you couldn't say better, and so I guess I'm grateful to have been asked to speak first just so that that's not too obvious.

What I thought I would do is talk about why the experience of this past campaign year has left me thinking that this set of issues is more critical than ever, both for meeting the needs of the neediest Americans in helping address some of the enormous social problems that we confront, and for reinforcing the strengths and addressing some of the weaknesses of American conservatism at this moment in time.

I should say to begin with, our subject this afternoon is civil society and conservatism, and that's mostly what I'll take up. But obviously that should not be mistaken for suggesting that civil society somehow belongs to us conservatives. It is a passion for many on the left as well as on the right, and more importantly, the left might gain enormously from considering the value and the virtues of civil society, as Harry Boyte has shown so ably, and I'm sure will again.

But I do think that a focus on civil society can provide enormous benefit to the right today, because it would help to remind us of what the conservative vision of society has been all about, what we are for, not just what we're against. It would help us speak to groups of fellow citizens and voters that we've had some trouble with lately. It's a necessary complement to any effort to reduce the role and size of government in social policy. And most importantly, it offers some hope that the disastrous social breakdown that afflicts so many poor communities in our country might actually be eased or reversed to some degree in the only way in which it possibly could be, which is one community at a time, one person at a time, directly, face to face.

The question of civil society presented itself with particular force in this campaign year, because that question, or really the glaring absence of that question, was powerfully evident in so much of what was said by both parties during the presidential race. On the face of it, this was supposed to be an election about the president's economic stewardship. But over and over, almost in spite of themselves, the two parties were constantly drawn into a deeper argument about what really ought to matter most in American life.

Each party was drawn into that argument by a strongly held criticism of what it took to be the other party's understanding of our society. Democrats complained that Republicans were radical individualists who imagine that successful people got to be successful all by themselves and owe

nothing at all to the larger society. They equated Republican hostility to the growth of government with hostility to common action and mutual interdependence in general.

And that was in part because they far too easily equated common action with government action in their own thinking and rhetoric. When the president spoke of things we do together, he talked almost exclusively about public works projects and federal investments. Others made this point even more explicit at the Democratic convention. Barney Frank, for instance, said, “There are things that a civilized society needs that we can only do when we do them together and when we do them together that’s called government.” So presumably, Republicans don’t believe in government because they don’t believe in doing things together, in this line of thinking.

Meanwhile, largely in response to this line of thinking, Republicans committed something like the equal and opposite error. They criticized the Democrats for advancing what Mitt Romney called a government-centered society, and for denying the importance of individual success and drive. In response to the president’s assertion that business owners didn’t really build what they have, Republicans mostly assured those business owners that they did build that. And in moments of particular candor, including moments they didn’t realize were being recorded, Republicans also expressed concern about how that government-centered society would undermine self-reliance by creating dependency.

Again and again, Republicans accused Democrats of ignoring individual achievements and overvaluing government achievements, and Democrats accused Republicans of ignoring government achievements and overvaluing individual achievements. This made for some interesting arguments, but it was also notable for what it took for granted, and therefore what it missed. To see our fundamental political divisions as a tug-of-war between the government and the individual is to accept the premise that individuals and the state are all there is to society, that these are our only options.

The premise of conservatism has always been on the contrary, that what matters most about society happens in the space between those two, and that creating, sustaining, and protecting that space is one of the key purposes of government. That space between the individual and the state is filled not only with civil society institutions, it is also home to the family and to the private economy.

However our society in particular stands out for its extraordinary array of groups of citizens brought together by common beliefs or priorities, and moved by their desire to improve our common life, working toward social purposes. This is the vast array of associations that Alexis de Tocqueville encountered to his constant amazement in America. As he put it, where in France you would find a government official at the head of a project for social improvement, and where in Britain you would find a wealthy benefactor at its head, in American you would find an association of citizens. To ignore what happens in the space between the individual and the state, especially to ignore the mediating institutions of civil society, is to ignore the heart and soul of American life. And that is more or less what the arguments that filled this presidential campaign year did.

It is a little easier to see how the left might do this than the right, since among some American progressives there has always been an inclination to want to rationalize civil society out of existence. Some progressives in America have always viewed the mediating institutions with suspicion, seeing them as instruments of division, prejudice or selfishness, and seeking to empower the government to make the life of our society more rational by clearing away those vestiges of backwardness, and putting in their place public programs and policies motivated by a single cohesive understanding of the public interest.

The idea is to level the complex social topography of the space between individuals and the government, to break up tightly knit clusters of citizens into individuals, and then unite all those individuals under the national banner, allowing them to be free of the oppressive authority of family or community norms while building solidarity through the common experience of living as equal citizens of a great nation. This would make people both more secure and more free.

Dependence on people you know is oppressive, the progressives suggested, because it always comes with moral and social strings. But dependence on larger, more generic, and distant systems of benefits and rules can be liberating. It frees people from the moral sway of traditional social institutions even as it frees them from material want. A healthy dose of moral individualism, combined with a healthy dose of economic collectivism, makes for a powerful mix of freedom and equality.

Conservatives have always resisted that kind of rationalization of society and insisted that local knowledge, channeled by evolving social institutions, from civic and fraternal groups to traditional religious establishments to charitable enterprises and, even in some respects, complex economic markets, will make for better material outcomes and a better common life. Moral individualism mixed with economic collectivism only feels like freedom because it liberates people from responsibility in both arenas.

But real freedom is only possible with real responsibility. And real responsibility is only possible when you depend upon and are depended upon by people you know. It is, in other words, only possible in precisely that space between the individual and the state that too many on the left have sought to collapse.

To permit the national debate to devolve into an argument between those who value individual accomplishment and those who value public action is therefore to give up the game in advance, at least as far as conservatives are concerned. It is to accept as a premise a vision of society that denies some key conservative assumptions. That social problems are almost always first and foremost moral problems. That moral problems are best addressed through direct face-to-face, hand-to-hand contact, rather than the cold and neutral transfer of resources. That local knowledge embodied in community and civic associations often contains a lot more practical wisdom than a technocratic national program could hope to attain. And that society is strengthened rather than weakened by the lawful chaos of different people pushing in different directions and trying different things at the same time.

I think it's worth noting that a basic distaste for that diversity of purposes is at the heart of a lot of the progressive distaste for civil society. It seems to be driven by a desire that society be

moved by a common notion of the common good, and not pulled in countless directions all at once, an understandable desire, but it presents itself in the form of an intolerance of nonconformity.

This year gave us a powerful example of where that kind of intolerance points, in the Department of Health and Human Services' rule requiring religious employers to provide free abortive and contraceptive drugs to their employees under the healthcare law. There is a lot that I've disagreed with in what this administration has done in various arenas. But to my mind, that rule and the very idea that it could be done, that it could be proposed, is easily the most troubling development of the past four years, and precisely for what it says about the government's attitude toward civil society.

The HHS rule did not assert that people should have the freedom to use such drugs as they wanted, which of course they do have. It didn't even say that the government should facilitate people's access to them, which it does and has for a long time. Rather, it required that the Catholic Church and other religious entities should themselves facilitate people's access to them, despite their religious convictions, and aim to turn the institutions of civil society into active agents of the government's ends, regardless of their own ends and concerns. It implicitly asserted that our nation will not tolerate an institution that is unwilling to actively ratify the views of the people in power, that we will not let it be and find other ways to put those views into effect, an extraordinarily radical assertion of government power, and a failure, I think, of even basic toleration.

The rule most likely will be reversed in court, but the fact that it was attempted at all should worry us about the attitude of our government toward civil society and the mediating institutions. But that worry should raise a question. What should that attitude be? It's not an obvious question. And here I think conservatives have some real thinking to do. The fact is that our approach to that question is today much too defensive.

In this arena, as in too many others, we have a much clearer sense of what government shouldn't do than of what it should do. We know that government should not try to invade the space taken up by our civil society institutions. We have a general sense, too, that it should seek to help those institutions do their own work where it can. It's vital for conservatives to stress this point, because a political movement that wants to restrain the role of government in providing social services needs to be able to offer the public a concrete and plausible alternative, a different path to meeting the needs of the vulnerable and the poor.

We've seen for half a century that the approach of the Great Society welfare state to meeting those needs tends, in many important respects, to exacerbate the problems it's trying to solve, often because it refuses to see those problems as fundamentally cultural and moral problems that require a restoration of community and family structure. And by failing to see that, the government has tended to further weaken the communities and families of America's most vulnerable people by seeing that is not, in itself, a solution.

Civil society does need space to thrive, and the state should guard and sustain that space. However civil society needs more than space to thrive, especially today. It needs a revival, a

renewal, which in turn would need to drive a broader cultural renewal. And that presents a more complicated challenge for conservatives thinking about public policy. If we accept the importance of civil society, then we have to recognize that a revival of civil society today would require more than government getting out of the way. And the question of what the nature of that ought to be should be on the minds of conservatives far more than it is. I don't have the answer to that question, and part of the appeal of this gathering today for me is that it puts me in the company of people much better suited to offer guidance. We do have some past examples of success and failure to draw on. In thinking about civil society, conservatives should take comfort from the fact that, in conservative fashion, this is not the first time that we've had to do this.

From the intellectual heavy lifting of Robert Nisbet and his successors in the middle of the last century to the deeply thoughtful efforts of Richard John Neuhaus and Peter Berger in the mediating structures project in the late 70s, to Jack Kemp's heroic political efforts on behalf of empowerment, to the Bradley Foundation's groundbreaking work in the 90s and through compassionate conservatism, the question of how to turn conservatism's concern for civil society into practical projects that help the least among us has been much considered and debated on the right. The history of that conversation does not yield a simple conclusion, as no serious intellectual effort could, but it does suggest that an emphasis on civil society can be immensely helpful to conservatism, both as a matter of political messaging, and much more importantly, as a counterweight to the excesses of a purely market-oriented conservatism, and as the organizing principle of a vision of society that is finally what conservatism is all about.

How it translates into practical policy in day-to-day work, however, is a subject which I'm probably the least well-qualified person on this panel to address, so I'll gladly leave it to my fellow panelists, and take careful notes. Thanks. [APPLAUSE]

HARRY BOYTE: Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to be here. I'm delighted that Bill Schambra organized an event four years after the last one, and I want to suggest another way to describe the theme today—civil society and the meaning of democracy. I'll pick up on the discussion four years ago, which Bill referred to, in the middle of the 2008 campaign. I'm glad you had this conversation after the election; so much better time for this conversation.

In that forum, Barack Obama as a community organizer, I argued that the politics that had schooled him in Chicago as a young organizer for the Gamaliel Foundation was what in the language of organizing is called organizing politics. And it differs from the politics that dominates today in both civil and electoral campaigns, which is mobilizing politics. Acorn is a good example of mobilizing politics, but it's everywhere.

Mobilizing politics has become highly sophisticated. Its roots are deep in the 20th century mass politics on the left. In the 70s, it crystallized into techniques like door-to-door canvassing, using a formula that part of mobilizing politics is to divide the world into a Manichaeism battle between the forces of righteousness and the damned. Modern telecommunications speeds the process. It promotes the profoundly dysfunctional fantasy that we will be fine if we can get rid of the evil half.

Organizing, by way of contrast, develops people's capacities to self-organize and to work together across their differences. In the general public discussion, I would say David Brooks, although focused almost singularly on the former political process, is an articulate and often deeply insightful critic of mobilizing Manichean approaches, including the column he had this morning in the *New York Times*.

Today, I want to argue that we need a different kind of politics that doesn't demonize, that doesn't divide the world into the forces of the righteous and the damned. That points beyond elections. A people's politics, a populous politics that defines citizens as the foundational agents of democracy and of change. Democracy in these terms is best understood in a Tocquevillian sense as society, not simply or mainly as a system of elections, and we are all involved in the work of building it everywhere. We need to see such politics on a large scale. That is my argument today.

And I would simply contrast the thinness of contemporary discussions about tax rates and budgets, as relevant as they are, to the enumeration of the challenges facing humanity by Pope John Paul II in his great encyclical in 1995 on human life, a brilliant piece of work. I don't agree with his approach to criminalizing abortion, but I think he had brilliant insights. In one simple listing he wrote:

Whatever insults human dignity, such as sub-human living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator.

John Paul, in that encyclical, goes on to say that this culture of devaluation of the human person is increasingly characteristic of the modern age, and modern technologies and discoveries can easily feed it. He talks about a culture of efficiency, an uprootedness of the human condition, a spread of the consumer society which I was reminded of when I saw the hordes of people shopping this last weekend as if in a rock concert.

So how are we going to deal with these enormous problems that can't be solved by dividing the world into the evildoers and the righteous and hoping to get rid of one half? It can't happen that way. I want to argue that conservatives' call for attention to civil society has much to contribute. Institutions of faith, family, ethnicity, voluntary group, are crucial to building a decent society, and they need not only defense but they need reconstruction.

There are other deep insights from conservative thinkers. The critique of technocracy has been much more trenchant and penetrating on the conservative side than on the left, and I would say the sense of the sacredness of the person is more developed, and especially central to our work, the concept of work itself. Human labor that creates and co-creates the world is central to a decent society. The dignity, the purposes and nature of labor argued in piece that Bill sent out, that the civic dimensions of labor have largely disappeared from the conservative vocabulary,

which is a tragedy, but it's the concept of work that has largely disappeared from the Democratic vision.

However I think there is something missing on the conservatives' side, and that is attention to power. We need not only responsible and caring citizens, we need powerful citizens. We need citizens who see themselves as productive, as builders of the world, not simply consumers of the world. Productive labor, of creating things and building things of common value, has been at the very heart of the American democratic experience, warts and all. Not to romanticize the American story, but it has been the democratic genius of America.

David Matthews, president of the Kettering Foundation, gets at it when he describes it as sweaty, hands-on, problem-solving politics. The democracy of self-rule was rooted in collective decision-making and acting, especially acting. Settlers had to be producers, not simply consumers. They joined forces to build forts, roads, and libraries. They established the first public schools. Their efforts were examples of public work, meaning work not just for the public but by the public.

I learned about the concept of populism, and more broadly, this concept of a different kind of politics, in the Civil Rights Movement, which we called on the ground the Freedom Movement. I'm delighted that Gerald Taylor, a great young leader in the Freedom Movement several decades ago, is here with us today. And Bob Woodson was also a major figure in the Civil Rights Movement. I worked in the citizenship education program of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The movement was a great moral crusade against segregation, but it also taught on the ground a different kind of politics in the citizenship schools that I participated in. My dad was on the executive committee, so I was a little league college student, a field secretary. But I was shaped by that experience.

In the new book by Dorothy Cotton, [*If Your Back's Not Bent*](#), she tells the story of the citizenship education program and the thousands of people who went to Dorchester to go back to their communities and create citizenship schools across the South. She talks about the practical problem-solving politics that ordinary people learned in the citizenship classes across the South, which transformed identities from victims to agents of change and first-class citizens. We need that again today in the 21st century on a large scale.

I have considerable sympathy for Yuval's critique of the 2012 elections for the sliding of the role of civil society. I do want to note that President Obama talked, in both his acceptance speech and his victory speech, about citizenship and the work of self-governance. Mainly, I want to emphasize that it's not up to the President to revitalize civic life and civil society.

To talk about the challenges today, I want to highlight another figure, forgotten, largely, today in the public conversation. Saul Alinsky, as in Stanley Kurtz's book, gets the credit and the blame for birthing community organizing and educating the young Obama, but it was Geno Baroni, in my view, who was much more important in the history of community organizing, and a much more significant voice for today's politics. So let me briefly conclude with talking about his legacy.

Baroni was passionately concerned about bridging the divide between blacks and white ethnics, the kind of people who often vote for Rick Santorum today. This is personal to me because Martin Luther King assigned me to organize southern mill workers and community organizing. I did that for seven years in Durham, from '66 to '72. Baroni came from an Italian-American coal mining family in Pennsylvania, became a Catholic priest in 1956, served in a couple of coal mining regions, and then took an inner-city parish in Washington D.C. where he became a major figure in the Catholic Church's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. He was the liaison to the march on Washington in 1963, and he led the Catholic delegation to the march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965.

In the late 1960s, there developed in America an increasing divide which alarmed Geno Baroni. He saw on the one hand what he called Universalist liberalism for whom the term "white ethnic" was a term of contempt, and he thought the focus on redistributive justice delivered through the government and focused on rights was the wrong agenda for those concerned about justice, and more broadly, about human progress and development. He also disagreed with the neo-conservative turn that saw the solution as a kind of hunkering down and bashing the liberals. He thought there needed to be a different politics, and he called that the new populism.

This was what Baroni said was his vision. The organizer has to believe that ordinary people can build bridges across racial and ethnic lines. The organizer has to get ordinary people in touch with their roots and their heritage. The organizer has to give ordinary people hope. Baroni was an extraordinarily important figure in community organizing. He was, along with Father John Egan, the architect of the Campaign for Human Development, which continues to be the major funding arm for groups that empower the poor. Baroni was the architect of the National Commission on Neighborhoods, the driving force behind the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act, which made public the lending practices of banks, an enormous resource for poor and minority communities.

I could go on and on. But I want to conclude with three ways it seems to me that Geno Baroni's populism is prophetic and relevant to our time. First of all, his populism weds citizen empowerment, citizen responsibility, and the productive identities developed throughout what we call public work. Public work is collective effort that solves problems and builds common resources. It is different than consumer politics of, what can we get? And interestingly, in Barack Obama's history, you see an attentiveness to the problem with community organizing groups which have a simply consumerist framework.

Baroni believing that every culture in America has tremendous democratic resources and potentials, and the task of organizing is to bring them out, gave many, many speeches like Barack Obama's race speech in Philadelphia during the 2008 campaign. Populism, in Baroni's terms, is not anti-government. Government is a space and a meeting ground and a resource that needs to be reclaimed. Secondly, Geno Baroni believed in the mediating structures of civil society, which Levin and others champion. Congregations, families, ethnic groups, neighborhood groups, he would have agreed that we need civic reconstruction, not simply defense. We need a broad movement to reconstruct the foundations of civil society.

But here's the difference that Baroni would have had with contemporary conservatives that I share. He saw these not simply as sources of virtue, or refuge, havens in a heartless world, in

Christopher Lasch's terms. He saw mediating institutions as centers of power, independent power. And this was not simply defense against concentrations of power, it was that, whether in giant economic or governmental institutions, it was also the power to act constructively on the problems that face communities, as I'm sure Bob Woodson will talk about this.

Local centers of power in these terms can include not only congregations, but they include small businesses and union locals and schools that are grounded in the life of the community. Interestingly, Hubert Humphrey's whole career was built around this vision. In 1952, he argued that the purpose of small business is not low-cost goods, but citizens who have the confidence to stand up to government and anybody else. Do we want an economy where there are thousands upon thousands of small entrepreneurs, independent businesses, and landowners who can stand on their feet and talk back to anybody? Humphrey derived from the sense of independent power the belief, the conviction that America was populist in its very constitution. He called himself a populist. Enshrined in the, we the people, the notion that the people create government to be our instrument.

Now, this point that small property, by the way, is a foundation of democracy and small, various centers of power, is a central theme in a collection I edited for the [Good Society](#). Gerald Taylor has a great piece on small property and centrality in black populism in the black freedom struggle.

Finally, Geno Baroni believed that populist politics, a people's politics, a nonpartisan, cross-partisan, practical politics, its democratizing power could be practiced anywhere and needs to be practiced everywhere. Baroni's own life was a reflection of that. He organized in communities. He created the National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs and organized with hundreds of ethnic groups across America. Under the Carter Administration, he went into HUD, Housing and Urban Development, as the assistant secretary and created the Office of Neighborhood Self-Help, and used that office as a foundation to rework government categorical grants in just the ways Yuval was talking about—how to become resources for citizen initiative, citizen self-help and citizen organizing. So there is a tremendously rich legacy about policy and transformation within government itself. Of course, Bill Schambra tried to do this also in the first Bush Administration in Health and Human Services.

I want to conclude by saying that we have followed in this tradition in our own work. We believe that populist organizing, cross-partisan politics of empowerment needs to be practiced not only in community groups, but has to be practiced everywhere. We have especially focused on the challenges of education, working to revive and create schools, settlement houses and colleges that are grounded in the life of communities that push back against the detachment of professional systems from civic culture. That's a pattern we see as very central to the problems we face in our world today.

Our work over the years also involves something called Public Achievement, which is in a number of countries. I want to express appreciation to Bill Schambra and the Bradley Foundation for supporting Public Achievement as a youth initiative in which young people develop skills and identities of productive citizenship through doing public work projects. In the strongest of

cases, helping to transform schools and community groups into centers of power in the life of communities.

Our work led the White House Office of Public Engagement to invite me, in 2011, to create a coalition of colleges, universities and educational associations to promote the idea of higher education as a public good, not simply a private benefit. And we've continued to work with that.

We see a receptivity in a time of enormous crisis to the idea that we need to renew things like the old land-grant tradition of democracy colleges, colleges that are part of places, not partners with places, and that have central concern with educating citizenship. So I would say we need a citizen-centered democracy that includes but goes beyond civil society for a successful future, and to build such a democracy, we need populist politics that goes well beyond the spectacle that we see today, that masquerades in politics. [APPLAUSE]

JIMMY KEMP: Like the other panelists, it is a privilege to be here. My name is Jimmy Kemp. I'm president of the Jack Kemp Foundation. I haven't studied these issues and worked in them as long as these gentlemen have, or with as much focus as they have, but what you and I know together and what my father was able to demonstrate through his political career, is that we won't make any progress in this nation unless this is a nation that has vision. We have got to have leaders with vision.

I work here in D.C., live in Northwest D.C. in a pretty much a liberal neighborhood. And it's incredibly gratifying, whenever I go places and people find out that I'm my father's son, they say, 'Oh, he's a Republican I can stand. I like Jack Kemp.' And it's fascinating now running the foundation and having worked with my father from 2002 after my football career, I played in Canada.

I've got to tell a quick aside. I grew up the son not of a congressman. My father was elected in 1970 from Buffalo, New York. I was born in '71. And in elementary school, I was the son of quarterback Jack Kemp, not congressman Jack Kemp. It worked pretty well for me. My brother Jeff is 12 years older than I am and worked with an organization called Family Life down in Little Rock, Arkansas. Jeff's life passion is now focusing on marriage, which I think is one of the key components to building a civil society. But Jeff, before he discovered this calling, he was an NFL football player for 11 years. So I was the son of an NFL quarterback, the brother of an NFL quarterback, and I thought that I was going to be an NFL quarterback.

Lo and behold, after my Wake Forest career, I got a call from the Canadian football league and ended up playing eight years there. But my future wife and I met, she was a reporter and she had to interview me and I was a rookie for a United States football team in the Canadian football league, the Sacramento Gold Miners. And she said, "Now, they tell me that your dad was an NFL quarterback and a politician, and your brother was an NFL quarterback. Let me get this straight. You're a fourth-string quarterback on a Canadian football league team in Sacramento, California. What are you doing?"

And this story actually relates to what we are here talking about. My answer to her was that I believe God has a plan for my life. And yes, I was fourth string quarterback, but I knew that if I

worked hard enough, that I could earn my way. If I wasn't good enough, they'd cut me. It didn't matter that my dad had played, it didn't matter that my brother had played. I'm sure that helped get the door open. But I had to perform once I was on the field and that was ingrained in me from my father. Every day we'd go out the door of the house and dad would, if he was sitting in his chair, Bob probably remembers the chair, my mom still lives in the same house. He'd be sitting in that chair and you'd walk out of the house and he'd say, "Hey. Be a leader."

And what our country needs are visionaries, leaders, people who care. One of the key reasons my father was so successful and part of the reason why I am called to run the Jack Kemp Foundation is because I know a secret behind my dad's success. Many of you who know my parents know it as well, but it's also the key to success in this country. My mom understood the power of the personal. And any time my mom and dad went somewhere, dad would do his thing. But my mom would ask questions of people. She'd find out what was going on in their lives. And what I've heard and what we all innately know is that if we end up living in a country where the power of the personal is taken away from families and people and placed in the hands of government, that's a dangerous position. You don't have to be a Democrat or a Republican to understand that. We live in a liberal, small L, liberal, free society.

The great privilege I have is to try to help remind people the reason so many loved my dad was that he was able, with my mom's significant help, to identify the power of the person as that distinctive American trait that here, more than in any other country, the power of the personal, the power of your willingness to work, whether it's football or economics or teaching, whatever it is, you can achieve what you can here in this country. It's why people want to come here.

One of the other key components is an understanding of the dynamic nature of life. Harry, when you were talking about the righteous and the damned, we all have to have an understanding that we are all the damned and none of us are looking down upon others as we are righteous. That is the whole premise behind the power of the personal that my mom preached so well and hopefully I learned from, is that you treat people with respect and you approach them with humility. And you find out about their stories. Once you do, then it unleashes the possibility for whatever that relationship can possibly be.

This coming Tuesday night the Kemp Foundation is hosting our second Kemp Leadership Award Dinner. The mission of the foundation is to develop, recognize, and engage exceptional leaders who champion the American idea. The Kemp Leadership Award is our effort to recognize exceptional leaders who champion the American idea. We all know that the American idea is, really, at its root, the human idea that's described in our Declaration of Independence and embodied in the Constitution, and that continues today. Despite however discouraged we are, it continues.

The American idea is the human idea, but it's really the divine idea, the reality that a creator created us and we are not the creator, but we were created to engage the world, to engage others. So next Tuesday night we are honoring an exceptional leader, Senator Marco Rubio, who has an ability to communicate these ideas that is critical to providing the vision for the country. At the Kemp Foundation we want to encourage politicians of any stripe who have a desire to see the American idea more fully realized.

Last year, we honored Paul Ryan as our award winner, and it was a great evening. We had Paul give the speech after Redskins linebacker, London Fletcher, who is amazing. If anybody doesn't like football, just pay attention to London Fletcher if you have to watch a Redskins game. London has played 160 straight games. Just three games ago, he pulled a hamstring, had to come out of the game. The next week, he was back on the field. When I introduced London, I said, "London, it's appropriate we're having you speak here today because we're honoring the middle linebacker of Congress." And that's what Paul Ryan is. He believes the American idea has to be protected, and he is committed to the vision that he learned in part from my father when he was working at Empower America with dad, Bill Bennett and Jeane Kirkpatrick.

London told the story of when he really learned responsibility and accountability and what it means to be a man. And London's answer was that it wasn't when he was in college. He went to a small division three school, John Carroll in Cleveland. It wasn't when he was a free agent acquisitioned by the St. Louis Rams or when he was traded to the Redskins. But London said, "Marrying my wife is what turned me into a man." And in this country, civil society, that place between individuals and government, we have got to have community organizations that actually do the work at the grassroots level that make a difference in people's lives, that deliver the power of the personal, that really are the channel for our creator to work here on the Earth, to be the hands and feet. So we certainly need a vision.

I am privileged to be working with and learning from Bob Woodson. Just the other week, he said he had some research for me and so he sent me over to Northeast D.C. I had the opportunity to learn what a homecomer is. A homecomer is an ex-convict who has come home and wants to get reintegrated into society, who recognizes that he or she was a part of the problem, but now wants to be a part of the solution. And then he sent me out to House of Help City of Hope. Bob is introducing me to folks right here in our backyard. They are the key to unleashing real civil society and getting the American idea realized where it matters most in our neighborhoods and communities where people have been tempted with that promise of a handout.

We certainly need a safety net, but we have got to make sure that the ladder of opportunity exists. The basis for that is the right economic and tax policies. We at the Kemp Foundation care a little bit about tax policy, you have got to get tax policy right, but you have got to *empower* people. You do what dad did when he was working with Bob in Congress, and make sure that when you find places where the government is actually keeping people, essentially, in jail like the public housing projects used to be, you figure out how to unleash that, change it and come up with creative ideas.

Kimi Gray is a name some of you may remember. Kimi was a public housing resident who was a part of the tenant management movement and initiative. Because of dad and Bob's work and many others, tenant management became a part of our country's laws. And Kimi had this to say that I think epitomizes much of what we're talking about when we talk about civil society. So Kenilworth Parkside Courts in D.C. was where Kimi lived and then became a tenant manager. She said, "We used to be accustomed to calling downtown, marching on HUD and cussing everybody out. And then we became downtown and now we only curse ourselves out. When pipes burst, we're the first ones there and we stay up all night until the problem is resolved. What

we did was to return respect and pride back to the residents of the community, to give them back the responsibility that was rightfully theirs, to maintain the community in which they resided.”

That focus of empowerment and looking for places where people have lost that empowerment is, I think, the key mission. And you’ve got to do it block by block, people by people. So at the Kemp Foundation, while we want to recognize leaders with vision, we also want to engage community leaders who are making a difference on the ground. And that’s part of the reason I’m privileged to be working with Bob.

I also want to remind everyone that my dad was a member of the Republican Party, and he was a proud member of the party. One of the quotes that he always loved to use was, “We serve our party best by serving our country first.” Dad attributed that quote to Abraham Lincoln, which was incorrect, and I know you’re shocked to hear that my father didn’t quote somebody perfectly. But he loved Abraham Lincoln, so anything worthwhile saying, he’d just attribute it to him.

My friend David Von Drehle recently wrote a book about Abraham Lincoln, and he has Lincoln saying that owning slaves was the sign of “A gentleman of leisure who was above and scorned labor.” But in a healthy society, Lincoln believed, nothing was above labor, neither wealth nor aristocracy nor dictatorial power. The prudent, penniless beginner in the world labors for wages a while, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself, then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him.

This is the just and generous and prosperous system which opens the way to all, gives hope to all, and consequent energy and progress and improvement of condition to all. No men living are more worthy to be trusted than those who toil up from poverty. Or in my case, from the Canadian Football League. These good citizens must never surrender their power. Regardless of political powers or parties, people need to believe again in the system.

And this is a great system. It’s far from perfect, but this is a great system. And it’s a privilege and a calling for me to help remind people of the incredible opportunity we have because of the great work that can be done, is being done. I know you all are here because you care similarly and it should give us all hope. So thank you. [APPLAUSE]

BOB WOODSON: Thank you, Bill. It’s a privilege to be here. I thought I’d lighten it up a little bit with a joke that I think serves as a good preamble to my remarks. You might have heard it, so just bear with me. A man was drowning 20 feet from shore, and a liberal came along and saw him drowning and reasoned that it was 20 feet, so he gave him 40 feet of rope, because that’s what he had, but failed to tie it to the shore. Then a conservative came along and saw that he was 20 feet from the shore, decided to throw 10 feet of rope and let him swim the rest of the way. And then a neoconservative came along and saw the man drowning and went home and wrote a column about it. [LAUGHTER]

And that’s the dilemma we face. What frustrated me most is that neither political party running for office addressed the needs of the least of God’s children. Neither one. I came from the tradition of the Civil Rights Movement, I helped Native Americans, worked a lot with Caesar

Chavez and farm workers, and then led demonstrations in Philadelphia and Westchester, Pennsylvania. I had to realize the reality that the strategic interest of liberals at that time were compatible with the strategic interests of the poor. But like any other tax loophole, it always starts as a tax incentive. However strategic circumstance evolved. Unfortunately the Civil Rights Movement over the decades has morphed into a race grievance industry.

Back in 1965 I was working with Geno Baroni and the others, the West Minister Association, where government intervened for the first time in the economy on behalf of poor people. In the first year of that movement, they really were represented by community organizers who were indigenous to these communities. But when these community organizers began to challenge the decisions of local politicians, something had to be done. So what the government did was a simple policy change that altered the whole course of that movement. They said that community outreach workers, from now and forward, had to be college-educated. A simple change that changed the whole nature of who delivers services to the poor.

So government intervened for the first time in the lives of the poor, or the second time, rather. First time was with FDR. But the second time they intervened trillions of dollars were directed to help the poor, but they were translated into services for the poor. Seventy percent of all those dollars went to a professional class of people who were college-educated, who were tasked with designing remedies for the poor that were parachuted into their communities with the expectation that the poor participate.

This meant that the indigenous institutions of those communities were now set against the interests of a provider class of people, so that the competition there was not people who are good or evil, it was a professional class of people whose proprietary interest was contingent upon having poor people depending on government services. They asked not which problems are solvable, but which ones are fundable this year. And unfortunately, it had a racial component, too, since two out of every ten whites with college education works for the government, unfortunately six out of ten blacks with college education works for government. So it has a racial component.

So whether or not a person is compassionate about the poor or are promoting self-sufficiency, their strategic and economic interests are hostile to the mediating institutions that are indigenous to these communities. As a consequence, you see this tension that has evolved over the years, and that is what caused me to move to the right of center, when I realized that a lot of the people who suffered and sacrificed most in civil rights did not benefit from the change. So I began to look for other strategic partners, and I found them in conservatism.

As my friend John McKnight said, as he was building a cabin in Wisconsin, the electrician was a drunk and the carpenter had one leg. His interest in that electrician and the carpenter was their capacity to perform. But if your income depends upon the alcoholism of the electrician and the one leg of the carpenter, you don't care about their capacity because your strategic interest is hostile to the strategic interests of the person suffering these maladies.

So that is the big dilemma. What the Center and I have done with my life is go into these neighborhoods and realize, as Rachel and Don Warren did when they went into low-income

neighborhoods and they asked questions that social scientists very seldom ask, where do low-income people turn to in times of trouble? And their studies revealed that the first institutions that poor people turn to in times of crisis are institutions within their same zip code. They are local churches, local ethnic sub-groups. The last institution they turn to is a professional service provider. So we tend to deliver services to the institution of last choice of the poor and then wonder why we fail. The Office of Juvenile Justice, for instance, identified 300 programs around the country that service juvenile delinquents. They went into those communities in seven cities and surveyed people who service youth in those communities, those mediating institutions. Less than 5 percent of the people could even name the organizations that were funded by the billions who served them.

As an illustration of the disconnect, I'll give you three quick examples. Philadelphia was wracked with youth gang violence. Forty-eight gang members were killed a year. They placed their Vietnam deaths next to the gang deaths. Traditional social services didn't work. An enterprising woman, Sister Patal and her husband found out that the oldest of their six sons was a gang member, and invited him to bring his 15 members home. She cleared out the furniture in the house and brought in all these young men. In the course of three years, 100 gang members from all over the city found a sanctuary in her small neighborhood. They all worked and cooperated, retired the mortgages and expanded through five houses.

She then, using them as emissaries in 1973, sent them throughout the city and organized the city-wide gang conference summit, and the city closed down the Mummer's Day Parade. They said anyone who does this is crazy. But the reality was, the city went from 48 gang deaths a year down to two in one year, and they sustained that.

In the 80's, Jack Kemp came to our office and said, Bob, you are working with residents of public housing, this Kimi Gray that Jimmy talked about. Here's a woman abandoned by her husband at age 21 with five children and on welfare. Got off welfare in three years, and sent all five of her children to college from this one public housing development. Then she inspired the other residents. In a ten year period, she sent 800 children to college from this one development, almost eliminating teen pregnancy, and they cooperated and drove the drug dealers out.

In the 90s, we were working with a group of intermediary institutions. We went into a gang territory where there were 53 gang murders in a five square block area in two years. Again, because the leaders of these communities had the trust and confidence of the young people, we brought the warring factions into our office and negotiated a peace. And as a consequence, that area went from 53 gang deaths down to zero, and that peace lasted for 12 years.

In neither one of these situations did university evaluators come into that community to ask, what is it that they are doing that we can learn from, to evaluate them? Nor did liberal foundations pour in. Instead, the Annie E. Casey Foundation spent \$100 million on a program that they designed for poor people and parachuted it into five cities with the goal of surrounding poor kids with professional service providers. Their own evaluation, after five years, revealed that the children who were part of their control group were not worse off than the kids who receive no attention from these grants. But nobody from these foundations ever gets fired. It's not a scandal. They go on and do the same thing. In other words, in the funding community, you can waste

millions if it's well-managed by well-intentioned people. But you can't risk a dollar supporting a mediating institution.

And so what is the conservative response to this? Well, Bill Bennett described the dilemma. He said, "When liberals look at poor people they see a sea of victims and when conservatives look at poor people they see a sea of aliens." Conservatives, I think, reinforce sometimes the notion that they have the correct doctrine but not the correct deeds. Dr. King said, "The highest form of maturity is the ability to be self-critical." With the exception of the Bradley Foundation and very few others, conservatives tend to stand on the sidelines and be judgmental about what the people do. I think sometimes they confirm the stereotypes about themselves where they're clinking wine glasses while bemoaning the irresponsible behavior of the help.

I'm working with conservatives because poor people need allies. People who are part of the poverty, industrial, race grievance industry have a proprietary interest that is hostile to the interests of the poor and therefore, no matter how well intentioned they are, it's very difficult for them to support initiatives by untutored people that may place them out of work. They have got to weigh their economic interests against the interests of these mediating institutions. By contrast, conservatives have strategic interests that are compatible with the poor because they don't benefit from higher taxes and the dependency of people. If you own a business, you need someone who can show up to work on time and be responsible. So therefore there is a natural relationship.

That's why when Paul Ryan called and said, 'Bob, this campaign is not addressing the needs of the poor, can you help us?' we brought him together with 20 grassroots leaders in Cleveland. Some of them shared their efforts to help themselves. As a consequence, Paul called each of the four that he highlighted in his speech, so he personalized it. And I think what conservatives must do, in the words of Michael Joyce, in 1996, he said, "Now we need to be honest about our shortcomings in political discourse."

We talk about the need to shrink the federal government simply because it costs too much, when we focus exclusively on balancing the budgets, as tricky as those undertakings are, we do begin to sound like crabby, small-souled bookkeepers. We play right into liberalism's caricature of us as heartless, uncaring conservatives. When we put on our green eyeshades, it enables liberals to put on the armor of righteousness, and that sets up a contest for public opinion that is difficult for us to win. So it seems to me that what the conservative movement has to do is begin to build bridges into those communities and they must overcome this penchant they have, and that is once they achieve power they tend to sacrifice old friends to appease old enemies.

Therefore I think the conservatives will never accomplish what I have outlined here by practicing identity politics: If they can just recruit a black who used to be a Democrat who is now a professed conservative, or if I can just get the right Hispanic. It is *not* the race or sex of the ruler that determines winners and losers, it is the nature of the rules. And conservatives need to come to low-income people and offer to be an agent, to be like a venture capitalist to a social entrepreneur. These are the new kind of alliances we must have in America, because conservatives have interests that are politically, economically, and morally compatible with the

needs of low-income people, they've just got to overcome their elitism and recognize that poverty makes you frustrated, but it does not make you stupid.

There is a book that you all should read by Richard Watts, who was on a panel, and it's called, [*Fables of Fortune: What Rich People Have That You Don't Want*](#). If we are concerned about the debilitating effect of dependency and a sense of entitlement, this applies to rich people, too, that their children are growing up detached from work, detached from personal responsibility, and the kind of pathological behavior that we're witnessing on the part of low-income people is also true of the sons and daughters of the wealthy. So I believe that the Josephs of this world have much to contribute to this society not only in reducing poverty, reducing, but also reducing the moral and spiritual poverty of the wealthy who are locked in gilded ghettos of America. God bless you.
[APPLAUSE]

WILLIAM SCHAMBRA: We'll go to Q&A in just a second. We have a terrific audience here. But I was on a radio program yesterday with Hugh Hewitt. I thought it was going to be a friendly interview with Hugh, but as it turns out, I was the brunt of some point he was trying to make and the interview was about this panel. He said that he and several of his friends received the invitation to this panel and, as he put it, the hair on the back of his neck rose at yet another gathering of Washington intellectuals speaking, as it turns out on K Street, talking about civil society when, in fact, we are just locked in this little shell here in Washington and we have no capacity to understand what real civil society is all about.

First of all, I explained to his listeners that Hugh used to be my boss at the Office of Personnel Management, and that he's still mean as a snake. [LAUGHTER] But after the personal insult, I ventured various explanations. However he said to put that comment to the panel on his behalf put the question: Why are you elitists sitting here in Washington talking about civil society, when in fact you have almost no connection to the real world? Is this just another Washington panel talking about the same old stuff? Bob, you were sort of getting at that in your comments --

BOB WOODSON: Yes, 80 percent of my closest friends are ex-something; ex-prostitutes, ex-drug-addicts. And the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise spends all of its time and its resources working in these communities helping people to develop within their own remedies to their own problems. So if that qualifies me as being an aloof elitist, I plead guilty.

HARRY BOYTE: Well, I come from Minnesota.

WILLIAM SCHAMBRA: That's right. I forgot to point that out.

HARRY BOYTE: And I grew up in Georgia. My family was called rednecks. But I want to go to a point Bob made. I agree with you about the problem of the detached professional service delivery culture. You look at institutions in the Twin Cities or anywhere, and even neighborhood nonprofits have become detached in the life of places. At the settlement house on the north side of Minneapolis, [*Phyllis Wheatley Community Center*](#), there was a rule that everyone who worked there lived in the neighborhood and had to get to know everybody in the neighborhood. They didn't use any term service, it was not part of their vocabulary in the 20s and 30s. They talked about clubs. They saw everything they did as about the development of the leadership of

the people in the community. So it was what I would call a mediating structure that was a center for power.

My difference with Bob, just to draw some distinctions, is that I don't think we can write off the professional system. In the tradition of Geno Baroni, it has to be transformed. We have to revive traditions of citizen professional, rather than detached professional. We have very powerful stories of professionals whose identities have changed, so they no longer see themselves as fixing people, like Bill Doherty who works with African Americans, Native Americans, leading family social scientist, family therapist. He calls himself the citizen professional. And his premise is that most of the energy, wisdom, and capacity to address problems comes from communities and from family networks.

We have seen all sorts of movements develop in communities, because it basically involves getting out of the way and unlocking energies, and then being a catalyst and bringing some resources, but not thinking you can fix people. So I think the challenge is, how do we develop a politics that brings an organizing, democratizing perspective everywhere? I believe Geno Baroni was a great example of that tradition.

BOB WOODSON: There are strategic reasons that make it very difficult for many people. I have a Master's degree from the University Of Penn School Of Social Work, so I'm part of that, at least by training. However if you have an institution like the foster care system that spends \$72 billion a year, and you're running a home and you only get reimbursed by having children that are separate from homes, you have no proprietary interest in placing those children. The more you keep the children, the more they deteriorate, the higher your reimbursement rate is. So how do you democratize a corrupt relationship where the interests of children are hostile to the interests of the parents and of those children?

HARRY BOYTE: I would agree it's a big challenge. And I don't think --

BOB WOODSON: I'm telling you it's a big challenge, it's not an answer.

HARRY BOYTE: No, look, but I'm not denying that there's a problem.

WILLIAM SCHAMBRA: Don't make me come between you two. You'll go right over Jimmy.
[LAUGHTER]

JIMMY KEMP: I'll handle it.

HARRY BOYTE: I don't think the change is going to come from the system itself; it's going to come from people inside and outside the system who are trying to experiment with doing things different and have some cases to build on, and also building other centers of networks of support. There are good stories of that in the Twin Cities. I mean, our view of education is that we have to put work at the center of education.

Education has to come consequential, especially for poor kids and minority kids. It has to be about who they're going to be in the world and what they're going to do. So a great story that

can be learned from across the whole country is the Chicago high school of agricultural sciences, which has twice the success rate in academic scores of any other inner city school in Chicago. It's a working farm. Kids learn math and science by building things and making things, and it's a very good integration and a challenge to the vocational education approach.

Now 88 percent of those high school students go to college. They are inner city kids, 65 percent black and Latino. It is because it's a different kind of education. It doesn't make a distinction between work and learning. It says, work experiences can be profoundly educational. And everybody in that school, every teacher thinks of themselves as a citizen teacher working with community people.

BOB WOODSON: Harry, let me just one quick response. Marva Collins with the Eastside Academy in Chicago demonstrated the same thing, Jaime Escalante in L.A. did the same thing, got all kinds of awards. Where are the Jaime Escalante institutes? Why aren't we seeing 20 or 50 of them? Why aren't we seeing 30 or 40 Eastside Academies? Having a model of excellence that demonstrates that poor kids can learn in that environment is insufficient.

You have got to change the rules of the game. Liberals and conservatives, if they are sincere, really need to challenge them to say, change the reimbursement formula that places a greater emphasis on children being united in families. Unless we are prepared to change the rules of the game, talking about effective examples that illustrate that children can learn is useless.

WILLIAM SCHAMBRA: Anybody else want to get in on this until we go to the Q&A? Yuval, you're going to tell us how we can preserve the professional systems while encouraging civic renewal.

YUVAL LEVIN: Let me first plead guilty to Hugh Hewitt's criticism, being that I am from Washington.

WILLIAM SCHAMBRA: He said very nice things about you, incidentally. He said you've been on the program a number of times.

YUVAL LEVIN: That's true. He wasn't nice to me, either, though. [LAUGHTER] I would say this, I think you want allies everywhere. And you certainly want allies where there is power, as Harry suggested. And it's true, if I came across a problem, and I would think, how can I add value here? What can I really do? Maybe I would go and write a column, and maybe that's ridiculous. But you also need some people to do that.

BOB WOODSON: That is true.

YUVAL LEVIN: You have to have people doing their best where they are; especially if you need a transformation of the rules. It's very important to have people in the places where rules are made thinking about what the end is you're trying to achieve. What is the goal you're trying to serve? We have enormous resources in the hands of the federal government, but we're dealing with a set of problems that do not amount to a lack of resources. They often amount to an

absence of opportunities, and I think even more frequently they amount to a misunderstanding of the nature of the problem.

There are ways in which models of past successful social movements can help, but I think the sorts of problems that the poor in American have to deal with are not fundamentally problems that require a transformation of the shape of our society. They require changes in the way people think about their own lives. Not just the poor, everybody else. As was suggested here, the wealthy aren't in a great position to tell anybody much about work, either. Nobody is and that's the problem. We need models. And we need people thinking about what kind of models need to be created.

I think the solution would have less to do with changing power relationships in society and more to do with changing people's attitudes about what it is that a good life, a thriving life consists of. That is very hard to do. It is much easier, as a political matter, to change social institutions, although it's far from easy, don't get me wrong, than to change people. And the fact is, government, especially a distant government, will always have a terribly hard time coming in and helping people change themselves. So you have to ask yourself, how do people successfully change themselves?

The answer's never going to be obvious. It's always going to consist of a very diverse set of practices and institutions that have grown from the bottom up. And you have to ask yourself, how can we help? Or at least, how can we not hurt? I would not suggest that the answer would be easy, but I think it's very important for people in Washington to be asking that question, because otherwise they are not just not doing enough good, they're doing active harm. They are using the resources of the American public to get in the way of people who are actually solving problems on the ground, the very problems that we want to solve. So it seems to me it does matter that people here give some thought to these kinds of questions.

WILLIAM SCHAMBRA: Let's go to our audience for some Q&A. We have a number of figures in the audience who have been important in this debate. Gerald Taylor, as Harry pointed out, is a distinguished leader in the industrial areas foundation tradition. And we've got Michael Baroody who helped establish this mediating structures argument with the Reagan administration. Stanley Carlson-Thies did the same with the George W. Bush administration. Gertrude Himmelfarb, of course, has written just marvelous accounts of, what she described as, the need to remoralize America.

Q: I'm Martin Wooster. I'm not distinguished. I'm just a guy in the suburbs.

HARRY BOYTE: Do you live in Washington? That's the question.

MARTIN WOOSTER: Hell, I was born in Washington. My question is this. Compassionate conservatism as practiced by the Bush Administration was not very much of anything, was it? It just fizzled out into conferences and not much else. It is fair to say that compassionate conservatism was a failed policy. What can we learn from its failure?

WILLIAM SCHAMBRA: Good question. And incidentally, other conservatives have gone even farther, as you may know. In Jonah Goldberg's book, *Liberal Fascism*, he cites compassionate conservatism as an example of fascist tendencies in the conservative movement. So this is actually something we need to discuss. Compassionate conservative was an attempt to institutionalize this civil society approach, and things went wrong. Why?

BOB WOODSON: Frankly, from my experience, it was hijacked. It became part of Karl Rove's campaign. Also, those of us who were there at the beginning, never once wanted government to fund faith-based organizations. It was never to be an object of funding. What we talked about is government removing the barriers, stepping away. We are saying there should be tax credits, so we empower individuals to have a choice. But it was never intended to be a big-government giveaway program of money to faith-based organizations. We opposed it. So it got hijacked and marginalized and became irrelevant and did a disservice to the whole neighborhood empowerment movement.

YUVAL LEVIN: I think compassionate conservatism as, to the extent that it was more than a rhetorical device, saw itself as, in practice, existing to change the rules that prevented federal money from flowing to certain groups who were trying to address social problems. And as Bob says, that's not the essence of the problem. When you focus on money and when you focus explicitly on faith-based groups rather than ask the question, what's working, you do run into trouble. You create a different form of the problem of government deciding how to spend money by their own criteria.

I think compassionate conservatism did do some good. I think even the faith-based imitative did do some good. But it certainly didn't live up to its ambitions. And you know, I think part of that is that it necessarily understood itself as thinking about how to reallocate federal resources. It's actually difficult for someone at the upper levels of the federal government to not think that way, because you have such enormous resources at your command, you see that in these instances, a lot of the time they're being used in actively harmful ways, and you try to think, how can we at least mitigate that problem? But you know, I do think at the end of the day, the criteria were not the right ones. But it's not self-evident how the federal government can use the levers that it has to help in a real way.

BOB WOODSON: If you were to go to 20 cities controlled by conservative Republican governors, and go to 20 controlled by liberal Democratic governors, and try to find out what is the difference in their funding pattern as to who they rely on for advice in terms of delivery of social services, they would be indistinguishable. That is because, unfortunately, Republicans have a difficult time governing these policy changes into practice.

They have to rely upon the same liberal professionals who are in their bureaucracies, and they know it. So they just wait for the politicians to arrive just to roll out the same remedies with the consequence that it doesn't matter who is in public office, as long as we don't understand that it's not enough, that the task doesn't end getting elected to office. It is, how do you begin to administer these policy changes into practice?

Q: Thank you very much. I'm Irwin Stelzer. I came in here depressed, and now I'm distraught. [LAUGHTER] At the Kennedy School where we're teaching economics, we used to say, get the incentives right, which is essentially what Mr. Woodson was saying. What I don't see is a solution to this problem. The incentives are all wrong. The example you use for foster homes. It's clear the incentive is to do bad things. The people who create the incentives have an incentive to create the incentives that exist. If that's true, how can you ever make progress in this area? Everybody has the wrong incentives, including the people who make the rules. I mean, this is a lovely conversation, but in other words, why should I not despair?

BOB WOODSON: I think there is a potential consensus around how we reduce violence. There's no argument that violence should be reduced. I don't think there's an argument that children need to be raised in two-parent households. So you have a church in Somerset, New Jersey, a black church that took on this challenge. They had babies who were languishing with drug-addicted parents. This was an economic and social problem. The church stepped up, took these babies, put them in a home, and as a consequence, they have now 280 children who are in adoptive homes. Because the government is running out of money, they are now forced to look at alternative and more efficient ways to deliver services. So now we have an opportunity, because of the budget shortfalls, for innovation that ends up solving the problem to be enacted. There are other examples from other areas where as long as some intervention has the consequence of lowering costs, reducing government, then we'll get an audience. So we'll get an audience now that we would not have gotten when there was plenty money to spend. So that's the incentive.

IRWIN STELZER: I'm feeling better. I'm feeling better. What you're saying is that starving the beast works?

BOB WOODSON: Yes, sir.

HARRY BOYTE: There is another approach. Baroni represented another approach to policy change. So the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act required banks to publicize where they were loaning. And it wasn't government regulating the problem of bank loans, it was giving people information which they were able to use to target redlining policies.

IRWIN STELZER: Yeah, and look where the housing situation got.

HARRY BOYTE: Baroni was doing this in the late 70s, but it was an enormous prod, as was the Community Development Block Grant Program that he helped initiate, as was the Co-Op Loan Bank. Basically, Baroni's approach was small initiatives that would be catalysts and resources for people to self-organize. And that was remarkably successful. It had some kinship with the Berger Neuhaus mediating structures approach, but it was more conscious about people becoming powerful agents and building powerful centers in the life of communities.

I think we need that kind of policy again. There are a lot of examples. In the Clinton Administration, that Gore didn't pick up on in the 2000 election, was the fact that there was some shift towards civic environmentalism that Bill Schambra was a champion of, in which you shifted from a regulatory approach to environmental change to government setting certain contacts and providing community resources to figure out how to meet broad environmental

goals. Now that was not government telling industries and local businesses what to do. It was creating a context in which people developed the capacities to figure it out. I think those kinds of policies are what we need to identify.

WILLIAM SCHAMBRA: Yuval, you've written eloquently about the budget problem. What do you say about this proposition, which is that granted the incentives have always been bad in the past, are we in fact running up against the final limits of what we can afford? In other words, we have constructed a massive, inexpensive service delivery program which, in spite of Harry's best efforts, the professional networks continue to be expensive and detached. Are we finally bumping up against the limits of what we can do? Even if the incentives are not there, we're forced to begin to look at that church in Somerset, New Jersey, pastored by Buster Soaries, for alternatives?

YUVAL LEVIN: Well, I hope so. I'm not as confident that that's the case. I think that the starve the beast idea has a certain intuitive appeal. But we have an awful lot of capital to burn in this country, and I don't know that you get to a point where you simply don't have enough money to keep making mistakes any time soon. It's true, especially at the state level, and to a lesser but serious degree at the local level, that the governments are running out of money and they do have to reconsider some of what they're doing. They have a fairly strong case to make that social policy is not the reason they're running out of money, but nonetheless they have to find savings where they can find them. So maybe those policymakers at those levels that are inclined to these ways of thinking can propose to the public ways of addressing these problems that happen to be less expensive at the same time that they are also actually better solutions.

I hope that's right, but I would say if you think about the fiscal questions that confront governors and mayors of large cities right now, they need to cut spending, and they also need to show voters that they're not just slashing things. That means they're going to end up cutting in other places than in social policy. And they still have enough capital to burn that they are not at the point where a simple lack of resources is going to force them to fundamentally reconsider how they think about the poor. But I hope they do.

WILLIAM SCHAMBRA: Yes, Mr. Taylor, please. And again, thank you for coming, It's an honor to have you here.

GERALD TAYLOR: A couple of thoughts, questions. I'm always struck that the conservative argument about civil society never includes a discussion about the private sector's role in undermining civil society. The populist revolt in the 1800s was a civil society revolt against a change in the economy that was taking place in the last 1800s.

Then, I'll give you a second example and get your response, the building of highway systems in the United States was not simply a federal government decision, it was a private sector construction industry role in that process which destroyed thousands and thousands of homes and institutions in civil society of minority families and working class ethnic families. In the present environment, the corporate sector participates through the government's role in privatizing, for example, the prison industry. I met with the guy that heads the CCA, and he said, what do you do? We said, we organize. He said, 'Well, I hope you all are unsuccessful.' And we said, why?

He said, 'Well our prison industry is based upon failing children in schools. So it is in our interest that children fail in education because we base our bed distribution on the failure rate of kids in public schools.' That's the private sector, not the government.

And the last point is that the private sector focuses on the disruption of civil society on a constant and continuous basis. Advertisers are constantly trying to break up family units into individual consumption focuses that they market to. So I want to hear, when is the conservative argument going to deal with the role of the private sector and the destruction of civil society?

YUVAL LEVIN: Well, let me adamantly agree with that. I would actually go further. I think that the basic character of the market economy, of which I am a defender and a champion, is not conducive to the kind of citizen that is required in a free society. It has to be balanced by another set of ideas, by other forming institutions that create the kind of citizen that is capable of the level of responsibility that our kind of society requires. And that the market itself requires.

Democratic capitalism relies on a sort of citizen that it does not create, and therefore relies on social capital that has to come from somewhere else. Which means that it is not the case that the interests of the private sector in our kind of economy and the interests of society as a whole, of the moral future of our country, are always aligned. They are in tension. I think that tension is actually a healthy tension, in many respects, that they balance each other off.

I also think they need each other. It's true that the market economy can't exist without a certain kind of citizen, but it's also very hard for a moral society to exist without some wealth, rather a lot of it. And the market economy does create a lot of it. So we need economic growth, the poor need it more than anybody, but we also need institutions that form citizens that are able to resist the worst inclinations of the market economy. We need both and right now we don't have both, and that's a serious problem.

BOB WOODSON: I think it's a false dichotomy to argue government versus private. The issue is effective versus ineffective. You have some government programs in the 60s, old people in Miami were dying with no food in their stomachs. Government intervened and we don't have that problem today.

By contrast, you've got some private sector people who are doing some things that are equally as egregious as the public. So what the standard, it seems to me, ought to be whether an activity is life-affirming or if it is not. And that's the standard that should drive what gets supported, not private versus government. That's a false dichotomy.

HARRY BOYTE: I would agree, except I would also say the question is, how can businesses develop civic roots? I mean, we've lost businesses which feel accountable, as a very fine book, called *The Tumbleweed Society*, which talks about the loss of any sense of responsibility on the part of employers to the communities and the employees which they employ. And there's a bifurcation of culture here. It's a very interesting study. Workers continue to want to do a good job, they have a strong work ethic, they feel that they owe it to the places they work. Employers basically have come to see, and this crosses private sector and higher education and other institutions as well, have come to see workers as expendable units in an abstract economy. It's

exactly what John Paul worried about, the kind of culture of efficiency which radically depersonalizes. We have to take that on and that means a different understanding of business.

YUVAL LEVIN: It is very important to remember, though, that businesses respond to incentives like everybody else. And it's not the case that they're inherently evil because they're involved in the private economy, or that they're evil at all. Business does a lot of good, too. I would not say that we've entirely lost the ethic of businesses caring about their place in society and their workers. There is an enormous amount of that happening. I think there are ways for government to be helpful in organizing incentives in that direction. I also think there are ways for consumers to be helpful, since at the end of the day the incentives businesses respond to our consumer pressures. So they're not the essence of the problem, either. But there has to be a sense of the end we're going for, of the sort of society that we believe we ought to have.

HARRY BOYTE: The tremendous role of higher education, which has lost the sense of teaching businessmen to think of themselves as citizens.

WILLIAM SCHAMBRA: I just wanted to say in response to Mr. Taylor, and in backing up what Bob and Yuval were saying, no one was more eloquent in the criticism in the atomizing and destructive effects of unfettered capitalism than Robert Nisbet in his book [*The Quest for Community*](#). He is of course sort of the leading theorist on this point, and there are conservatives today who make exactly that point. The folks gathered around a website called [Front Porch Republic](#) have a strong tradition of the defense of localism against corporate interests, overbearing corporations as well as overbearing central government. So just to reassure you, there are a few.

IRWIN STELZER: To add a touch of gloom --

WILLIAM SCHMABRA: We need more gloom.

IRWIN STELZER: The Republican Party absolutely blew it on the issue of bankers, excessive compensation, that whole range of things. They took any criticism to be an interference with the market. Nobody ever understood a market to produce those kinds of results where the head of Goldman Sachs said, "I do God's work."

But you've got a much bigger problem than that. The pressures on the private sector have changed substantially. When you see a merger, for instance, of two banks, the exiting bank has to promise to continue giving money to the United Fund in the city it was leaving just to bribe the politicians.

You have a problem. The problem is globalization. It's not that suddenly corporate people have turned evil and want to exploit their workers more than they ever did, the problem is that they're now competing, especially unskilled workers, with another billion people who have entered the workforce. Now, the solution to that is rather simple. Protectionism. Raise tariffs, redistribute wealth that way. You've got another solution.

The fact of the matter is, we have a monetary policy which robs from savers to give to people who borrow by setting interest rates at zero. Unless the Republicans are prepared to come to grips with the fact that they don't want banks to get zero interest money to use to lend at a profit, they're never going to have anything to say about these basic problems. And I don't see any hope outside of the offices of the *Weekly Standard* that any of this is going to happen. So on that cheery note.

WILLIAM SCHAMBRA: Why don't we let our panelists have two minutes for concluding thoughts and final reactions to this discussion.

BOB WOODSON: I really believe that, in terms of the 2,500 grassroots organizations that we represent across the country in 39 states, this is a very promising time because we can demonstrate, through our actions, that it is quite possible to expand help for the poor while reducing the cost of programs and therefore help more people. We have demonstrated it at our Violence-Free Zone program. We can come into the worst schools and reduce violence 25 percent in the first three months. In a competitive environment like that innovation thrives. So I say, thank God for our budget shortfalls.

WILLIAM SCHAMBRA: And let me say, Jimmy, I thought your observation about the power of the personal is very important, because it goes to this argument we were having about the character of professionalism and professional structures. The whole point, of course, of professional organizations is the power of the impersonal. And that, I think, gets very much to the root of this debate between Woodson and Boyte about our ability, at some point, to infiltrate professional structures with civil values.

JIMMY KEMP: I think a critical component to this whole discussion is understanding the human condition, and that we have very different views in this country and in the world about what the human condition is. Our country was founded on Judeo-Christian principles that acknowledge that we do have a serious human condition. Therefore, you can't have professional systems which are perfect, nor can you have a market economy which is going to be perfect.

So recognizing that perfection is not attainable is a starting point, but certainly it does not mean that we cannot improve in our society. We have fixed many problems in this great country, yet we're never going to become perfect. My dad was the ultimate optimist, and I distinctly remember an argument with him in elitist Vale, Colorado. And you can tell Hugh that I am part of the problem. I guess I am an elitist. I live in Northwest D.C. But I said, "Dad, do you really think that humans are perfectible?" And he didn't answer the question as clearly as I wanted him to, and it actually turned into one of the more serious arguments I had with my dad. But he really believed that we could be increasing. And I don't understand how the human condition is as it ever is, yet there can be progress up and down.

The thing that strikes me most is that we've got to ask the question, what works? We have got to think about incentives. It comes down to so many things that have been talked about. Monetary policy is so critical, and we don't understand our monetary policy and the global impact that it has with the dollar as the default currency, which is effectively a fiat dollar. And that has all kinds of impacts that my friend John Mueller in the back knows much better than I do.

The other thing that I come back to, and I'll close on this, I have hope, in part because of the success we've had in broaching incentives in education. I'm on the board of a charter school here in D.C. called Hope Community Charter School. It is not a perfect school. I deal with all kinds of stuff, when upset parents want to talk to someone on the board, they call me. However the great thing is that our school leaders have the opportunity to fire bad teachers and figure out how we can attract good teachers. We are not going to get rid of the education system, but we certainly can improve it. And I would say education is one of the dynamic areas that has got to be focused on, and we need to align incentives along the lines of what works. So I like the example, but how do you get that throughout the system? And I would say charter schools is one of the ways. Is it a perfect way? No. But it's one of the ways. And we have to relentlessly pursue those things that improve systems which we know we are not going to get rid of.

HARRY BOYTE: So I have hope, but it's different than incentive structures and systems and blueprints and policies, all of which play a role. My hope is in the people. I'm an American, Southern populist, who believes the real talent and the capacity and the future of America comes when the people become sober and serious and constructive. I saw that in the freedom movement. I think there are many stirrings of that today.

Just two examples, on a large scale. One is, it seems to me, different than either protectionism or banking, there is a serious movement to reclaim local economic life. You can even see it in this last weekend with the shop local movement. That is about local, economic institutions. That's a people's movement. It has policy implications and dimensions controlling capital flow. But it's a people's movement. And I must say, just to note, Diane Sawyer is a big champion of this on ABC News.

Secondly, there is definitely a movement within the professional world, which is anchored, after all, in colleges, and is in profound crisis. I've done hundreds of interviews with professionals of all kinds. People feel in crisis because their model isn't working. It's dehumanized, it's abstract. There are all sorts of examples of ferment, some of which we talked about in our populism collection, that is about the transformation of colleges, and the professional systems connected to them, so that they become part of the life of places again in the old land-grant tradition, not apart from places or simply partners with places. And I think we're seeing a populist stirring in the middle of educational and professional worlds, as well as in the economic world.

YUVAL LEVIN: I guess I'm incapable of gloom about America. One of the things that stands out about this country should make us especially hopefully about it now, which is its incredible capacity for unexpected renewal, precisely in the face of gloom. We've faced a lot of problems in the past that have seemed, for serious reasons, to be insurmountable, and that have been surmounted by a kind of revival from the bottom, often a religious revival, a cultural revival. That's not something you can call up from Washington or from anywhere else.

So our history does give us reason to be hopeful. Hopeful doesn't mean optimistic. Optimistic means you expect things to get better. Hopeful means you believe they can. And if you believe they can, you want to do something about it. I think hope should drive us to act, to try to fix the rules, to try to do what we can to stop doing harm, to try to do what we can to use the resources

that we have access to, to improve the situation and fix the problem. I have enormous hope. I don't see how you can live in America and not have enormous hope about its prospects. But that in itself doesn't solve the problem, and so we need conversations like this to think about how to solve the problems.

WILLIAM SCHAMBRA: Great. Let's give our panel a hand. [APPLAUSE]