

1.

IAN Make no mistake we have seen grim times.

ACACIA On November 5, 2004, just three days after the election, Edward J. Deal, a young man of good education, who had a good job and who had recently become engaged to a young woman in Iowa, and who was described by his friends as “calm, upbeat, and fun-loving,” drove his car all the way from his Georgia home to New York City, to the site where the World Trade Center once stood in lower Manhattan. He was in despair over the election and he climbed down into the gaping pit, and shot himself in the head.

NICK Some people chose other forms of escape. The day after the election, the Canadian government's website for immigration received so many hundreds of thousands of visitors that it crashed.

ELENI Suicide, leaving your country; these are desperate acts, but they bespeak the moment. People were not just upset, they were distraught. Even those who stayed put found themselves going through their days just trying to get over it. It was not upsetting in the way it usually is when your candidate loses. It was a sense of loss, yes, but in the sense of something leaving, something beloved getting away. And to an unprecedented degree, people did *not* get over it; they could not understand how to mourn this loss.

IAN It was an election that turned on drastic issues with no middle ground: You voted for the war, or you voted against it. You voted for gay people, or you voted against them. You voted for Church in government, or you voted against it. You voted for a man who stole the previous election, or you voted against him.

MICH And this “us or them” mentality was all part of the plan. Modern conservatives are driven by rage and they view politics as war. The goal is to demoralize and destroy the enemy, seize his territory and gain unconditional surrender.

JEN Liberals, on the other hand, are driven by guilt. They worry that if they do evil they'll become evil. Therefore they engage in politics as a contact sport in which the game ends, people shake hands, and they set aside their differences. The Republicans financed a vicious, 7-month, no-holds-barred assault on John Kerry's character and the Democratic Party's response was, approximately, "Hey man, no fair."

ACACIA This is *the* key question for our party at this time: Can we fight fair and win? If we adopt more aggressive tactics, will we lose the very soul of liberalism? Can we win and still sleep at night? Still look ourselves in the mirror?

ELENI The question is understandable because even for those of us who are active in the political process, even for us there are times when we feel discouraged, when we get cynical because it seems as if power is always trumping principle and that we have leaders who are long on rhetoric but short on substance.

MICH And so maybe every two or four years we do our bit and we knock on doors or we pass out literature, and then we go into the polling place and hold our noses and vote for the lesser of two evils, and sometimes we even vote for the winners. But then too we worry that politics and government are never going to improve our lives. At most, we hope they do us no harm.

NICK Now, in a century that is still very young, our faith has been shaken by war and terror and disaster and despair and scandal and corruption. Modern politicians make us sad and hurt us deep down in ways that are hard even to name, much less talk about. It's a lot easier to roll your eyes and not give a shit. You probably don't even want to hear about all this right now. You'd probably rather do just about anything else. And now that the 2008 election season has kicked off, no doubt much sooner than we all would have liked, you'd

probably prefer, just like I would, to simply curl up under the covers and ignore the whole thing.

2.

ACACIA America was going through a terrible year. The levees broke in New Orleans and when bodies floated in the streets, the Republican Congress saw an opportunity for more tax cuts and consolidation of the corporatopia they had created for their moneyed donors. The Democratic Party was clueless and written off, practically at death's door.

IAN The year was 1927.

ELENI In New Orleans, Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover promised to build the city a great wall of protection, then smiled large and left to play golf with the Ken Lay-style railroad-baron of the day.

ACACIA But, as the Mississippi waters rose, one politician, the state's electricity regulator, stood up on the back of a flatbed truck and shouted for all he was worth.

IAN "Listen up! They're lying! The President's lying! The rich, fat jackals are drowning you and they'll do it again and again and again. They lead you into imperialist wars for profit, they take away your schools and your hope, they take away your jobs and your hope, and when you complain they blame Blacks and Jews and immigrants. Then they drown your kids. I say, Kick'm in the ass and take back your share of the wealth that you created."

ELENI That man was Huey "Kingfish" Long, future Governor and Senator for Louisiana. In that disobedient moment, he created the modern Democratic Party. It was the Kingfish who established the principle that a government of the people must protect the people, school them, build the infrastructure, regulate industry, and share the nation's wealth. He was a bold man who scared the party establishment witless as America entered its most revolutionary period since 1776.

ACACIA 1933 - Franklin Delano Roosevelt, inspired by Huey Long, creates the New Deal to provide relief for the unemployed, recovery and reform for the economy and to guarantee what he calls "Freedom from Fear and Freedom from Want."

IAN Before the New Deal, if you got old and starved, well,

ALL *tough luck.*

IAN If you lost your job or your home blew down in a hurricane,

ALL *too bad, Jack.*

IAN If the power company charged you half your wages for your light bill; or the grain monopoly refused to buy your crop for more than the price of dirt; or if you worked 60 hours in the steel mill with no overtime pay; or if you joined a union and got busted over the head, it was

ALL *that's business, buddy.*

ELENI Roosevelt envisioned a government that would take ultimate responsibility for protecting its citizens' from misfortune and injustice. In his first 100 days in office, Roosevelt passed through Congress a firestorm of legislation that created the minimum wage, the forty-hour workweek, and social security.

IAN January 11, 1944. The United States war-effort is going well, and President Roosevelt wants to focus on the highest principles. His State of the Union Address begins by emphasizing that "our supreme objective for the future is captured in one word: security."

ACACIA "Necessitous men are not free men. And so we have accepted a second Bill of Rights

under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all – regardless of station, race, or creed.”

IAN The right to a useful and remunerative job that provides adequate food, clothing and recreation.

ELENI The right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad.

ACACIA The right of every family to a decent home.

IAN The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health.

ACACIA The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment.

ELENI The right to a good education.

IAN “America's own rightful place in the world depends in large part upon how fully these and similar rights have been carried into practice for our citizens, For unless there is security here at home there cannot be lasting peace in the world.”

ELENI As America won World War 2 and entered the Cold War, Intellectuals and policymakers expanded Roosevelt's view to describe America's international perspective. The 1947 Marshall Plan's premise was that the survival of European democracy depended on its ability to deliver economic security. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. compared communism to an intruder trying to enter a house. The American military could keep it from knocking down the door, but if the people inside were sufficiently desperate they might unlock it themselves.

3.

JEN November 4, 1952 – Ike Eisenhower is elected President of the United States by a landslide. He fills his cabinet with several businessmen, a General Motors president, and a pair of used car dealers.

ELENI November 1956 – Eisenhower is re-elected, but the Democratic party begins its 40-year domination of the congress.

NICK 1960 – 9-year-old Karl Rove, a Nixon supporter, loses his first political battle when he gets beat-up by a young, female Jack Kennedy fan.

JEN The 60s were a time of great hope and difficulty. Led by great and sometimes tragic figures like JFK, LBJ, MLK, and RFK, democrats returned to the spirit of the party as defined by Thomas Jefferson, who wrote, “The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only legitimate object of good government.”

ELENI JFK created the Peace Corp and Robert Kennedy made himself an apprentice to the civil rights movement. Lyndon Johnson declared a “war on poverty,” conceiving a “Great Society” that would provide education, housing, and medical aid for “all, not merely a few Americans.”

NICK July, 2 1964 - LBJ finally signs the Civil Rights Act, but simultaneously laments, “There goes the south for a generation.”

ELENI July 16, 1964 – Against the wishes of half of his own party, Barry Goldwater, the anti-Civil Rights candidate becomes the Republican Presidential nominee, crying, “Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice, and moderation in pursuit of justice is no virtue.” Goldwater gets crushed, winning only 52 electoral votes to Lyndon Johnson's 486. His loss, however, inspires a conservative crusade.

JEN November 1966 – Ronald Reagan, an unabashedly Goldwater-style Conservative, becomes California's governor and George HW Bush is elected to the House of Representatives.

NICK March 4, 1968 - On the night that Martin Luther King is assassinated, mere weeks before he himself will be murdered by Sirhain Sirhain, Robert Kennedy speaks eloquently to a nation on the verge of violence and calamity. “We have to make an effort in these United States,” he says, his eyes filled with tears, “we have to make an effort to understand and to go beyond these rather difficult times.”

ELENI That was liberalism. And it was incredible. It was muscular militarily and ended fascism. It led toward civil rights. It was the party of the people. It had a heritage to be proud of.

JENN When did Democratic leaders stop being able to communicate effectively about their moral vision?

ELENI I think it was 1968. I think our moral vision was assassinated along with Martin Luther King Jr., and Bobby Kennedy. I think we've been afraid to talk about moral vision ever since. And this coincided with a massive level of organizing and strategizing on the right after the Goldwater defeat.

NICK August 5, 1968 – Reagan announces his candidacy for President.

JEN August 8, 1968 – Nixon becomes the Republican Presidential Nominee, employing “the Southern Strategy” by demonizing blacks in the South to curry favor. The results take one week to count but in the end Nixon wins by 500,000 votes.

- NICK 1970 – George HW Bush of Texas loses his first run for the Senate.
- ELENI 1971 – Lewis Powell writes a memo laying out the framework, goals, and ingredients for the conservative revolution. Two months later, Nixon appoints him to the US Supreme Court.
- JEN June 23, 1972 – The Watergate break-in.
- ELENI September 6, 1972 - George HW Bush becomes the Republican Party National Chairman.
- NICK November 1972 – After running a notoriously dirty campaign, Nixon wins with 60% of the popular vote.
- JEN January 22, 1973 – A 7 to 2 decision in Roe v Wade strikes down Texas's abortion laws.
- ELENI In the 70s and the Reagan-era 80s, Democrats fell into the more or less reactionary position of fighting against change to protect the programs that had been achieved in the 30 year period between the New Deal and the Great Society.
- NICK And here's the rub: Despite 40 years of trying to gain a majority and failing, there are few indications that the Democratic establishment is even rethinking it ways. Most of the important victories of the 2006 midterm elections were won by upstart, underdog progressives who bucked the beltway's directives and allied themselves with party outsiders and forward-thinking new leaders. Howard Dean, the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, was crucified by his peers for his visionary 50-state plan. And only after Bush's Iraq plan began to lose it's shine did centrist Democrats publicly declare their opposition to the war. The predominant view seems to be that we just need to raise more money, buy more TV time, prove that we're tough on terrorism, and stick to the game plan that hasn't convincingly won an election since 1964.

3.5

MICH Allow me to introduce myself. My name is greenmom127. Well, that's the name you would know me by online. And let me tell you, the moms I know aren't just blogging about recipes or sleeping tips – we are sharing opinions about the direction this administration is taking our country. We are talking about why gas prices are going up, how Big Pharma is the new Big Tobacco.

What are my issues? Do you really want to know? I am only asking because the political strategists think they know what I am thinking sometimes before I know I am thinking it. I mean, seriously just because I have a couple of kids and I don't work "outside the home" they labeled me as a "soccer mom." And before I could really adjust to that title – or even understand what it meant – I was told "soccer be damned, now you're a "security mom".

Apparently, I'm concerned about my safety here in the Midwest from terrorists who will taint my water supply, blow up my bridges and bomb my mall. Apparently I'm against gay marriage and quickly becoming pro-life. Well, slow down a minute. Abortion or gay marriage? Let's start there. If I am not thinking about it on a daily basis – why should my Congress? Let's see, what else...

"No child left behind" has done just the opposite. Now kids are taught only the exact information they need to pass the numerous tests required to move up a grade. This leaves no room for things like music, gym, art, and even recess. With no outlets for creativity it is not surprising that kids are shooting each other. They never get to stretch, to run, to socialize. And with the rising costs of secondary education I am not even sure my kids will get to go to college.

Does it bother anyone in Washington that it was 70 degrees in Ohio this past November? When the winter never comes the pollen and mold never really die. My daughter is only 3 and already has awful allergies that will likely follow her into adulthood. Did you think I wouldn't notice when you lowered air quality standards and then told me that chemical plants were "in compliance" with the law. I noticed. I noticed when our city had triple the number of "ozone alert days" than the last 8 years combined this past summer.

Oh, and don't spend my money on a fence. Even I can see how ridiculous that is. Instead of protecting me from the big bad Mexicans who want to come to America and earn money for their families by washing my windows, building me a new house, making my French fries or sweeping up the bathrooms at the hospital or any of the other jobs that we don't want to do why not focus on what you will do for me when the next big natural disaster happens. At the rate you're going you'll be cleaning up New Orleans until 2015. Maybe next time you'll do it right.

The whole point is: as parents we try really hard to set good examples for our kids. We teach them to treat others with respect. To share. To be kind to your neighbors. Don't steal. Don't cheat. Don't lie. I simply wish that you, our politicians – the people who represent us to the world abroad had the same ideas. So, look out. Greenmom127 is online with millions of other moms. We're organized. We're educated. And we vote.

4.

- IAN November 1973 – Karl Rove meets fellow Young Republican George W Bush when he delivers the youngster's car keys.
- MICH July 1974 – Nixon's approval drops to 30%.
- IAN August 9, 1974– Nixon resigns
- MICH November 20, 1975 – Reagan announces another run for the presidency.
- IAN March 1976 – Karl Rove goes to the Virginia GOP and raises \$400,000 for the previously broke group.
- MICH August 1976 – The so-called Goldwater Republicans take over, writing the official party platform. But the Democrats, led by Jimmy Carter, win total control of the federal government.
- IAN January 1977 – Karl Rove moves to Texas to raise money for George HW Bush and advises George W Bush on his congressional campaign. Rove's work gives Texas its first Republican governor in 104 years and Rove becomes his chief of staff. George W Bush loses anyway.
- MICH January 1978 – The now minority Republicans begin building their base by espousing the moral authority philosophy of being the opposition party.
- IAN November 1978 – Newt Gingrich takes to the House and 32 year-old Bill Clinton becomes the youngest Governor in America.
- MICH November 4, 1979 – The Iran hostage crisis begins.
- IAN 3 days later, Ronald Reagan announces another run for the Presidency in Neshoba County, Mississippi – where the Ku Klux Klan famously murdered three civil rights workers in 1964.
- MICH The symbolism is not lost on the millions of Southern Conservatives who rally to his side, leading him to victory.
- NICK November 1980 – Morning in America. The Republican Party's co-chair Mary Crisp leaves in disgust. Reagan's acceptance speech includes a silent prayer and the Republicans control the Senate for the first time since Eisenhower.
- ELENI January 1984 – In Texas, Karl Rove builds the nation's first voter database.
- NICK November 1984 – The Reagan/Bush election machine crushes Mondale/Ferraro.
- MICH August 1987 – The FCC abolishes the Fairness Doctrine - allowing for a wave of conservative programming. Among the first to take advantage of the opportunity is Rusty Sharp AKA Jeff Christie AKA Rush Limbaugh.
- IAN November 1988 – Rove wins 5 judges' seats in Texas, shifting big business money to the Republican Party. Meanwhile, Bush blatantly lies about “No new taxes” and Quayle forgets how to spell Potato. None-the-less, Dukakis/Bentson is no match for the Republicans.
- ELENI September 1992 – Karl Rove leaks information to the press and gets fired from the Bush re-election campaign.

- NICK November 1992 – The Republicans create the family values plank but can't deny that “It's the economy, stupid.” The Democratic VP candidate does this [play “War Room” speech audio]. Bush/Quayle lose to William Jefferson Clinton and Al Gore.
- IAN January 1993 – Grover Norquist convenes the Wednesday morning group to battle Clinton's health care plan. Guess who wins that battle.
- MICH November 1993 – Karl Rove uses his “dirty tricks” to help the GOP take total control of Texas. Just for shits and giggles, he does the same thing in Alabama.
- ELENI 1994 – Newt Gingrich tours with the socially conservative Contract with America platform. With Ross Perot's help, Al Gore alienates a third of the nation. In the midterm elections, NO Republican Incumbent loses and the GOP wins 67 seats and 6 of the 7 big states. In a victory speech Gingrich calls-out the counterculture liberal elite. Anyone confused by the term is pointed to the draft-dodging, marijuana-smoking, saxophone-playing hippies occupying the White House. And ... George W Bush becomes the Governor of Texas.
- NICK October 7, 1996 - Fox News open for business.
- MICH September 9, 1998 – Kenneth Starr, a man with more connections to high-level Republicans than most high level Republicans, releases his eponymously-titled Report, accusing Clinton of being promiscuous and worse, forcing him to almost lie about it.
- IAN 1999 – Karl Rove teams with Grover Norquist and the younger, prettier George Bush announces his run for the White House.
- ELENI Feb 2000 – Bush loses the New Hampshire primary to the unbelievably credible and patriotic John McCain by 19 points.
- NICK March 2000 – Bush questions everything from McCain's commitment to pro-life policies to his mental health, even alleging that McCain fathered an African-American child out of wedlock. He even gets Veterans -
- ELENI Are you Serious?
- NICK Yeah.
- ALL Damn.
- NICK - he even gets Veterans to testify that McCain does not support them. Bush wins the Republican Nomination.
- IAN August 2000 – In the rush to separate himself from his former buddy Bill, Al Gore hastily discards most of his wit and charisma and names pseudo-liberal Joe Lieberman as his running mate.
- MICH November 7, 2000
- ALL A very close election.
- JEN 2am, The Day after election – Bush staffers hook-up with James Baker III in Florida.
- ACACIA Dec. 12, 2000 – The Supreme Court declares George W Bush the President of the United States. The sea change is complete. In his grave, Barry Goldwater does this -
- NICK/IAN (*Fist in the sky.*) I rule!

- ELENI February 8, 2001 - Bush Drops Clinton's Mideast Peace Plan.
- MICH March 2001 – The Rove Republicans get their hands on the Scarborough Research consumer insight report, and change the game.
- IAN August 10, 2001 - U.S. and British planes bomb Iraq.
- ACACIA August 23, 2001 - Bush withdrawals from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.
- JEN September 2 - Congress and President Bush return from their vacations.
- ELENI September 9 - Violence rises in the Middle-East.
- NICK September 10 - Terrorism expert John O'Neill reports for the first day of his new security job at the World Trade Center.
- MICH September 11, 2001 [9/11 happens]

4.5

JENN

I am 13 years old.

I am a sweet-faced, stubborn, Catholic feminist girl in a small Texas town. Our middle school dances sandwich Pearl Jam between “Boot Scoot Boogie” and “Friends in Low Places.” I will forever be an expert in early 90s country music from 1992-94.

I am 14 years old.

I lug my new acoustic guitar to lessons. Waiting in the middle of the small music store, a grinning, stoutly middle-aged mother says how nice it is to see a girl with a guitar. I look at the alternaten boys browsing through Nirvana tablature, and agree.

I am 16 years old.

The principal and vice principal of my Catholic high school are yelling at me (me, an honor student) for designing, producing and selling to classmates a t-shirt.

I am 17 years old.

On a television in my physics classroom I watch President Clinton raise his thumb and quietly, tiredly insist that he “did not have sexual relations with that woman.” I won’t be able to wear a black beret for years. I read Hillary Rodham Clinton’s *It Takes a Village*, impressed by her logical, kind theories.

I am 19 years old.

As a freshman in yet another private institution, politics for me consists of mocking look-alike sorority girls and rugby-shirt-wearing frat boys. Drinking shiner bock and smoking in dark quads, us arts kids strum guitars and practice monologues.

I am 21 years old.

Classes are canceled by our theatre professors, who are desperate for New York colleagues and friends. My two roommates and I watch tv, alternating between the news and a VHS copy of “The Princess Bride.” Flipping back and forth, I accidentally press record, and forever, in the middle of the fire swamp, Dan Rather weeps before an image of the twin towers collapsing.

I am 22.

As Bush stands in the Senate calling for war, I refuse to believe the country will buy into his propaganda. I’m sick over the sudden preponderance of plastic flags, refusing to put on patriotism like a fad - I’m just as American today as I was last year. I refuse to allow my shock, sorrow and confusion to be manipulated by this nonsense.

23 years old.

My cousin puts his fist through a wall when his army unit is ordered to invade Baghdad. Toby Keith can kiss my Texan ass.

I am 24 years old.

I stop going to mass after receiving a church bulletin telling me how to vote in the upcoming elections.

At noon I read John Kerry’s 1971 “Vietnam Veterans Against the War Statement” into a microphone in the center of the city, as business folk chug coffee and street people bum

cigarettes. Young Kerry's words again make me proud to be an American, and I want this version of Kerry to be President.

I am 25 years old.

The city I live in slashes the social services budget to shreds, with arts following suit, in an attempt to amend financial mismanagement by city officials. I shave my head and sit in the live audience of a televised mayoral candidate debate. The man who speaks directly into the camera, and never glances at his live audience, wins the race. Downtown a friend of mine is jumped, beaten and robbed while walking home.

Today

I am tired of feeling alone.

SOURCES

BOOKS

Crashing the Gate Markos Moulitsas Zuniga / Jerome Armstrong
Armed Madhouse Greg Palast
What's the Matter With Kansas Thomas Frank
Party of the People Jules Witcover
The Greatest Story Ever Sold Frank Rich
America: The Book Jon Stewart et al
What We Do Now D.L. Johnson / Valerie Merians
Start Making Sense Don Hazen / Lakshmi Chaudhry
The Impossible Will Take a Little While Paul Rogat Loeb
Consider the Lobster David Foster Wallace
Don't Think of An Elephant George Lakoff
The Audacity of Hope Barack Obama
Moral Politics George Lakoff
The Truth: With Jokes Al Franken
Class Matters A New York Times collection
The Democrats Robert Allen Rutland
The Republicans Robert Allen Rutland
Ain't You Glad You Joined the Republicans? John Calvin Batchelor
The Shape of Things to Come Greil Marcus

FILMS

The War Room
So Goes the Nation
Karl Rove: The Architect
RFK
Why We Fight
Outfoxed
Fahrenheit 9/11
The Fog of War

WEBSITES

DailyKos
MyDD
PoliticsTV

5.

A short play about Oil and Iraq.

Prelude

ACACIA *Dear Abby:*
My father is a businessman who travels.
Each time he returns from one of his trips,
his shoes and trousers are covered in blood-

but he never forgets to bring me a nice present;
Should I say something?
Signed, America

Scene One

ELENI FEBRUARY 2001

SAUDI It's been too much, for far to long. Oil goes up, oil goes down.

BIG OIL Jerking the prices left and right and every which way. It's despicable. The whole market's unstable.

BAKER 3 I agree, I agree, my friends. But, what it is to be done? We put him there. I myself have smiled upon his claims to power time and time again.

SAUDI As we are painfully aware, dear friend.

BIG OIL But, dear friend, have you not said that our winds of fortune have changed direction? Isn't that why you called us here?

BAKER 3 It is indeed true. The twin gods of avarice and vice have given us old friends with new powers.

SAUDI Can this be true?

BAKER 3 I assure you it is.

SAUDI Well, then. *(Produces a suitcase of money from under his robe.)* Have you the plans?

BAKER 3 Of course, dear friend. *(Produces the secret plan.)*

BIG OIL *(BIG OIL snatches it away, reads it, begins laughing.)*
Ha ha ha, ha ha ha! It's brilliant! A masterwork! You've outdone yourself.

SAUDI May I?

(BIG OIL shows it to the SAUDIs and to the audience. It reads "Saddam must go.")

(They all laugh maniacally. DICK CHENEY enters.)

DICK Hullo?

BAKER 3 Dick! Good to see you my friend.

DICK What's ... uh ... what's with the robes?

BIG OIL It's a secret meeting Dick. Where's yours?

KARL *(Off-stage.)* Dick?

DICK In here, Karl.

SAUDI Is that Karl Rove?

DICK Yeah. Don't worry, he's a good guy.

SAUDI I don't trust him.

BAKER 3 Yeah, I'm not sure I do either. You sure this is a good idea, Dick?

DICK Well ... uh ...

SAUDI I cannot wait for him to answer. I must begone.

BAKER 3 Yeah. Here Dick. *(Hands DICK the plan.)*

BIG OIL Adios.

KARL Where'd everybody go?

DICK Well ... uh ...

KARL Is that it? *(KARL grabs the plan. Reads it.)* Not bad. Not bad. *(KARL hands the plan back to Dick and takes off.)*

Scene Two

ELENI SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

KARL Where's the president?

DICK I left him in there.

KARL What?

DICK He seemed happy. The kids are reading a book about goats.

KARL Well, shit, Dick. Don't you think you oughtta go get him?

DICK Well ... uh ... *(He walks off. Returns momentarily with the President, who is a sock monkey.)*

KARL Get on the plane.

(They exit.)

Scene Three

(Karl stands at the podium with the sock puppet.)

W I can hear you! I can hear you, the rest of the world hears you, and the people ... and the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon!

(Meanwhile in the war room.)

RUMMY INSERT NEW LINE HERE. Hey, I gotta go.

DICK *(To RUMMY.)* Hey Rummy, have you seen this?

RUMMY Have I seen it? No. Do I want to? Yes. (*Snatches it away.*) Where'd you get this?

DICK A "dear friend" if you know what I mean.

RUMMY Do I know who you mean? Yes. Do I like what I see? Yes.

(*KARL enters with the puppet. Tosses it to DICK.*)

RUMMY Karl! I've got a new plan. Fuck Afghanistan. Did I wanna blow-up Afghanistan? Yes. Do I have a better idea? Definitely.

KARL (*To DICK.*) Do you have any idea what the fuck he's talking about?

RUMMY What am I talking about? Iraq, Karl, Iraq! There aren't any good targets in Afghanistan. Let's bomb Iraq.

DICK Iran?

RUMMY Iraq!

DICK Iran?

RUMMY Iraq!

DICK Iran?

KARL Iraq! Of course, the secret plan. Dick, get on this.

Scene Four

(*DICK and the sock puppet, on TV.*)

ELENI SEPTMBER 16

DICK In the past there have been some activities related to terrorism from Saddam Hussein.

ACACIA October 26, 2001 – The Patriot Act passes in the Senate 98-1. Only Russ Feingold opposes it.

ELENI NOVEMBER 26

W Afghanistan is just the beginning. As for Mr. Saddam Hussein, he needs to show us that he is not developing weapons of mass destruction.

ELENI DECEMBER 9

DICK Well ... it's been pretty well confirmed that an Al Qaeda operative did go to Prague and he did meet with a senior official of the Iraqi intelligence.

v/o Iraq is harboring terrorists?

DICK Correct.

ELENI DECEMBER 20

(*KARL crosses. RUMMY hands him a report.*)

KARL What is this? (*Reading.*) Iraqi defector ... secret facilities ... biological, nuclear weapons ...

Saddam Hussein ... This is bullshit! I told you that a week ago.

(RUMMY starts walking away. KARL stares at the report.)

KARL Wait, Rummy. *(Hands the report back to RUMMY.)* Publish it.

(RUMMY hands him the new plan.)

KARL What the fuck is this?

RUMMY New plan.

KARL What the fuck is this?

RUMMY Just read it.

ELENI MARCH 24, 2002

DICK This is a man of great evil, and his is actively pursuing nuclear weapons.

Scene Five

(KARL enters with the new plan.)

RUMMY Did you read the new plan?

KARL Yeah I read it. Our dear friend isn't going to like it.

RUMMY Maybe, but it'll be over before he knows what happened.

KARL Sell it all?

RUMMY Sell it all.

KARL You realize we have no proof.

RUMMY The people I work for aren't worried about that.

ELENI JUNE 1

W If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long.

ACACIA June 2002 – Rove's secret PowerPoint presentation, describing the war on terror as an ideal campaign issue, is found in a DC park.

ELENI AUGUST 7

DICK What we know is that he has continued to improve the capabilities of his nuclear mumbleumble ... and ... uh ... he continues to pursue a nuclear weapon.

ACACIA November 2002 – For the first time since 1934, the standing President's party gains seats and the Republican Party wins control of the United States Congress.

6.

NICK If indeed the house is burning, we should warm ourselves by the fire.

ACACIA One interesting fact that gives the political Establishment such depressingly disproportionate power is the simple failure of many mainstream citizens to get off their asses. And the horrible fact is that it is to some very powerful peoples' advantage that a lot of us do hate politics and don't want to get involved. And this deserves to be thought about, if you can stand it.

IAN If you're bored and disgusted by politics and don't bother to be politically active, or worse yet, you don't even vote, you are in effect voting for the entrenched Establishments of the two major parties, who please rest assured are not stupid, and who are keenly aware that it's in their best interests to keep you disgusted and bored and cynical and to give you every possible psychological reason to stay at home watching Desperate Housewives instead of marching or canvassing neighborhoods or phone banking or meeting-up. By all means stay home if you want, but don't bullshit yourself that you're not involved. In reality, there *is no such thing as "not involved"*. You either campaign by campaigning, or you campaign by staying home and tacitly doubling the value of some diehard's work. You're political whether you like it or not. You make a choice whether you choose or not. You're voting whether you want to vote or not.

JEN Of all the political initiatives I could mention, the most vital by far is the most simple: ordinary people taking power into their own hands - standing up, speaking out, and showing up in large enough numbers to effect change. Bringing reform to every level of the political food chain, from school board seats on up – that's how revolution will happen in America.

ACACIA Politics infuse everything, from our religion to how we raise our kids to what we think of our neighbors. So we might as well get organized and coordinated around a vision of what we think an American life should be. I know we've cried, we've kicked and screamed, but now it's time to get to work. Because it's very clear that no politician, Republican or Democrat, is ever going to simply take care of the country for us.

IAN We have a tendency to believe that history corrects itself – that if the political pendulum swings too far in any one direction, it will sooner or later swing back and settle somewhere in the middle. There's some historical truth to that, and it may seem that the pendulum has begun to swing our way but it's not going to continue to happen simply because it's an historical trend.

NICK Changing the world isn't pleasant or easy. If it were easy, everyone would do it. The fact of the matter is that it's more like crawling out of your warm bed in a dark room one December morning at five A.M. and plunging yourself into a tub of ice water.

JEN Progressive populism is a real movement now, a movement so strong that in 2004 it almost defeated an incumbent President during wartime. Grass-roots contributors gave more than \$300 million and hundreds of thousands of regular folks who had never before been involved participated in the political debate, volunteering, contributing money, voting, and getting out the vote. And they liked it!

NICK Now it's our party. We bought it, we own it, and we're taking it back.

IAN Just look at the results of the last election.

ACACIA Sometimes I look at it like this. We're trying to rebuild belief. "Believing in something" is such a decimated idea. Broken down by cynicism and by the co-option of our culture. Building post-ironic belief is like fighting World War Two – everyone has to pitch in, not only for ourselves and our families but for our neighbors and our nation. We have to blow

up belief and rebuild it and reclaim it.

NICK Let us never forget: The greatest progress we have made and the greatest progress we have yet to make is in the human heart. In the end, all the world's wealth and a thousand armies are no match for the strength and decency of the human spirit.

JEN So vote. Please vote. And make sure your family and your friends and your neighbors vote. And then remember that voting is not enough. Voting gets you a D+ if you want to live in a healthy democracy. If you want an A, you have to vote *and* you have to work in a campaign for a candidate for any office for three hours a week.

IAN *And* you have to send your favorite candidate five or ten or fifty dollars.

ACACIA To get an A+, you have to run for office yourself. Run for the school board, county supervisor, state legislature, Congress. Run for student council or library trustee.

NICK If ordinary Americans don't run, people from the extreme right wing or the Christian Coalition or Al Franken and Al Sharpton will and that's how we get where we are now.

JEN Now's the time to play the Save the World Symphony. You are not required to take a solo, but you are required to figure out what your instrument is and play it as well as you can.

IAN It is not incumbent on you to finish the task. But neither are you free to give it up.

ACACIA I have just realized that the stakes are myself.

7.

NICK *Some children have fathers who live far away and send money or clothing
Some children have fathers who live nearby and visit regularly
Others have fathers who raise them alone.
Some children have fathers who share home and caring duties with their mother
Others have fathers who look after them full time, so their mothers can work*

*Some children stay with their fathers at weekends and in the holidays
Others have fathers in jail*

*Some children have fathers who are too poor to provide for them
Some have an uncle or grandfather who fathers them
Some children have a father who is a child himself
And some children have no father figure at all*

*There are fathers who read bedtime stories to their children
And there are fathers who cannot read*

*Some are confident in their parenting role and take great pride in it
Others are frightened of these responsibilities
Some fathers run away from their children
Others, desperate to see them, are prevented from doing so
Fatherhood can be so different in so many ways
But one thing is universal
What fathers do ... matters to children*

What does it mean to be a father?

Everyone you ask that question of will give you a unique answer. Often the people who think they have the most to say on the subject aren't fathers or parents themselves; and that's fine. I am not here to discount anyone's views or opinions; just to share what I'm personally learning on a daily basis.

I'm a new father, and let me tell you, I could have read every parenting book that's ever been written before my daughter was born, and there is no doubt in my mind that I would still be challenged, confused, uplifted, overjoyed and scared out of my mind every single day at the prospect of being physically, mentally, and financially responsible for everything this beautiful child will experience in the amazing time we'll have together.

Responsible. That's the word. In my mind, if someone asked me to say the first word I thought of that describes a father, that's it: Responsible. After my little girl was born it hit me like a ton of bricks. I am responsible for the life of another human being, 24 hours a day, every day for the rest of my life. Period. It's quite a wake-up call. Once you become a father, it's not about what's good or convenient or best for you anymore. You're second on the list now.

Unfortunately there are many fathers who don't realize that this responsibility exists or worse yet, they ignore it.

To me, this is the worst thing a father can do; to know that he is being depended upon and to selfishly say, "I don't care, I'm going to do what's best for me."

There is one certain father here in our country that seems to have abandoned some of the core responsibilities his so-called "children" have entrusted him with. He seems to have dismissed the fact that he is liable for the well-being of us all. He is personally responsible for every soldier he sends into combat. He is responsible for the deaths of thousands of troops and the subsequent hardships of their countless family members and friends who have had to suffer their loss.

I may not be the most experienced father in the world, or the wisest or worldliest, but I do know what is right and what is truly wrong.

You know who he I'm talking about. And speaking for fathers everywhere, shame on you, sir. You know what you are doing is wrong. I hope someday you are father enough to admit it.

8.

MICH The poorest county in America is on the Great Plains, in a region of struggling ranchers and dying farm towns. In the election of 2004 the Republican Candidate for president carried it by a majority of greater than 80 percent. “How,” we ask ourselves, “could so many people get it so wrong?”

ACACIA It is, in many ways, the preeminent challenge of the road that lies ahead. The answer is a fairly new phenomenon alternately called the backlash or the culture war. While earlier forms of conservatism emphasized fiscal sobriety, the backlash mobilizes voters with explosive social issues which it then marries to pro-business economic policies.

JEN For the Republican Party to present itself as the champion of working-class America strikes some liberals as such an egregious denial of reality that they dismiss the whole phenomenon, refusing to take it seriously. By all rights, they figure, these two groups – business and blue-collar – should be at each other's throats. Many believe the Great Backlash is nothing but crypto-racism, or a disease of the elderly or the random gripings of religious rednecks, or the protests of “angry white men” feeling left behind by history.

ELENI But to understand the culture war in this way is to miss its broad power and popular vitality. What you have to understand first is what motivates it – and at the bottom of it all is a way of thinking and talking about social class.

MICH This class issue was not a problem for Democrats fifty years ago. The idea of liberals being elite would have been laughable because the Democratic Party was the natural home of hard-pressed, unglamorous America - autoworkers in Detroit, sharecroppers in Alabama, manual workers, dirt farmers, small businessmen just one bad month away from bankruptcy. They proudly considered themselves the bone and sinew of a “people's party.”

ELENI But something happened along the way. It first came snarling onto the national stage in response to the partying and protests of the late sixties. Around that time, Southern Republicans began pairing the word *liberal* with *elite* in the minds of many Americans. The result is that The Democratic party is now effectively portrayed as most concerned with Social Issues and "special interests" - abortion rights, gay and lesbian rights, gun control, environmental regulation, labor unions, trial lawyers, and feminists. In the backlash imagination, it's a persistent civil war: on one side the unpretentious millions of authentic Americans; on the other side the bookish, all-powerful liberals who run the country but are contemptuous of the tastes and beliefs of the people that inhabit it.

MICH Ah yes, the *latte liberal*. This has been one of the conservatives' dearest rhetorical maneuvers: the suggestion that liberals are identifiable by the tastes and consumer preferences that reveal their essential arrogance and foreignness. While a more straightforward discussion of politics might begin by considering the economic interests that each party serves, the “latte liberal” motif insists that such interests are irrelevant.

ACACIA Instead -

JEN “You tax-hiking,

ELENI government-growing,

M+A Starbucks-drinking,

J+E sushi-eating,

M+E+A Volvo-driving,

J+A *New York Times*-reading,

MICH body-piercing,

ELENI tree-hugging,

ACACIA imported cheese-munching,

JEN jazz-listening,

A+M hundred-dollar-jeans-wearing,

ALL George Clooney-loving,

J+E Francophile,

J+A atheist,

MICH left-wing

ALL freak show!"

JEN If you want to know why this stereotype is so hard to shake, just take a look at the democrats on TV. For the past two presidential elections, the party has selected blue-blooded candidates with little or no ability to communicate with the average working "stiff". John Kerry is a good man, but he couldn't connect with blue collar America if he was handing out Budweisers and Slim Jims. Progressives are quick to decry the faux populism of George Bush, but the Democrats haven't even cared about ordinary Americans enough to fake it.

MICH "You racist,

ALL sexist,

ELENI ignorant,

A+J red-state-living,

MICH Confederate flag-waving,

M+A Limbaugh-listening,

J+E NASCAR-watching,

ACACIA gun-hoarding,

MICH war-mongering,

J+E+A pickup-driving,

M+E fairy tale-worshipping,

JEN bad country music-listening,

A+M backwards,

E+J backwoods,

M+A+E homophobic,

J+A+M Republican

ALL asshole!”

ELENI How did this happen?

M+J Why did this happen?

ALL Why did it happen to us?

MICH In 1992 the Democratic Leadership Council, a group of business-class collaborators, forced their way into party dominance, preaching that the party could be saved if Democrats stripped off those New Deal ideals and dressed up in something a little more Republican.

ELENI That year Bill Clinton took the White House with a dismal 43% of the votes. Bush 1.0 was pulverized, receiving 36%, the lowest percentage of votes of any republican since Alf Landon lost to Franklin Roosevelt. But wait, where'd the other 20% of the votes go?

ACACIA The Reform Party, led by Ross Perot. America hadn't seen anything like it since 1860, when Abraham Lincoln's revolutionary new Republican party destroyed and replaced the Whigs. (And before you ask: Ralph Nader, the so-called “decider” of 2000, received a mere 2.7% of the popular vote.)

JEN Perot had fired up the resentment of his 20% by alerting the nation that the wealthy had joined forces to cut jobs and wages with NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement. His message woke up working-class Republicans *and* Democrats by the millions, who in turn voted for Perot in hopes of holding onto their jobs.

ACACIA The night of November 9, 1993, a year after the presidential election, Al Gore had the opportunity to change history. That night *Larry King Live* became the most watched cable program *ever* when Al Gore debated Ross Perot on the subject of free trade. Here was the Democratic Party's chance to win over that 20%, those 19.7 million who were now up for grabs, to re-align the party structure and create a working-people's majority that could rule the roost for decades to come.

MICH But - they blew it. Al was swaggering and self-congratulatory, and he had the gall to chuckle when Perot told the working class to listen for the “giant sucking sound” of jobs being drained to Mexico. He had the nerve to snicker at the 19.7 million Americans who were clinging to their pensions, health insurance, and union cards and who feared a future they knew was not being conspired for their benefit. Gore laughed, he mugged at the camera and taunted Perot. And the 20% knew that he was making fun of them too.

ELENI One year later, November 2, 1994. a stunned Bill Clinton, incoherent and lost before the TV cameras, could not explain what had happened in the elections the day before. He and Al had done what no other Democrats had ever accomplished: they lost 67 Congressional and Senate seats – and both houses of Congress.

ACACIA And in every election since, we've had the opportunity to combat this trend. But rather than embracing Perot's 20% we've continued to ignore them, or worse, patronize them. In 2006, we could have selected Kucinich or Dean, or we could have found and drafted another candidate. We could have selected someone who actually reflected our own worldview. Polls indicated that over 68 percent of Democrats thought the war in Iraq was wrong, but we selected John Kerry, someone who had voted for the war and still maintained that the war was the right thing to do.

JEN Why? The reason we selected Kerry, we quite openly proclaimed, is that we imagined that "the other", those Americans who were not smart enough or good enough to share our moral opposition to the war, would vote for Kerry because he could be presented as a tough military man with a strong background from Vietnam ...

ELENI Privately, we told ourselves and each other, "Kerry is not really for this war. Once he's elected he'll feel less pressure and then the real John Kerry will re-emerge and save us.

MICH In short, what we were saying was this: "Kerry is an opportunist, and that's why we support him. He's just saying all this stuff to fool the American majority, but once in office he'll flip-flop and do the opposite of what he is saying now."

ACACIA Please understand the contempt for the American public conveyed in this. Liberals were saying: "We can trick the other, less intelligent Americans into voting for someone who we ourselves don't believe stands for what he says he stands for."

JEN And the response of the Republicans was very effective: "This guy is a flip-flopper and our proof is that his own supporters actually think there is a good chance he'll flip-flop once in office. At least you know where we stand."

MICH So why did we follow this path? Because we deeply, deeply, deeply, believe that if we were ever to present our own highest vision of a good world and a good society, the American public would reject it outright. So we tried to lie to the American public, based on the assumption that they are too stupid or too evil, racist, sexist, homophobic, or militaristic, to ever respond to our most visionary progressive ideals.

ACACIA Shame on us.

ELENI Shame on all of us.

8.5

ACACIA Although sorority is derived from the Latin word for 'sister,' there isn't a single shred of sisterhood in any of them...or an IQ above room temperature for that matter. They're all about catering to the sexual fantasies, pro-patriarchal/misogynist ideals of your typical frat-boy. and training college women to be submissive, two-dimensional, immature, synthetically bisexual, Girls Gone Wild bimbos. They're an embarrassment to college women everywhere who are struggling to be taken seriously while they're pursuing a higher education."

I've heard this all before. I was in a sorority.

I will be honest- though we do give a lot of money back to charitable organizations- there are few of us who joined for that reason. Neither did we join to party (we could do that easily enough without the sorority) or to improve our image (which is probably damaged since there is so much animosity directed toward sorority girls). We joined because we wanted to make a big group small, to make our best friends, to be a part of something. And we did that.

For most 18 year old girls (who no doubt feel incredibly self conscious upon entering the new environment of college), that is the allure of the Greek System. You belong. You're part of an extended family.

And I loved my sorority. We were not all thin white blondes, our chapter was actually made up of women of many backgrounds, but even more importantly we had diverse personalities and interests. In that house, I made lasting friendships with the first women I ever felt like I could truly be my geeky yet fashionista self with. I learned to mentor younger sisters and try to provide the same inspiration I got to be the woman that I was and do it with every ounce of energy that I had.

I loved my experience, and would take none of it back. Yet I am still troubled by the Greek System. Exclusivity was appealing at a big school and made me feel included. But, years later, I still remember the nerdy girl from the dorm next to mine who wasn't asked to join ANY sorority. I ached for her tears, and they were real.

But Sororities and Fraternities are not unique in this exclusion. Mainstream liberalism may not be kicking anyone like me out of the treehouse, but it's certainly not lowering the ladder, either.

Being a progressive is hard enough without having to defend yourself from attacks from within. I can be a conscious consumer and be in a sorority. I can be an environmentalist and a gay rights advocate AND I can party with my sisters. But to most of the political activists I meet, I will always be the sorority girl. I have this problem with my radical feminist friends, too. The bulk of outreach done by mainstream women's organizations is targeted towards those who already consider themselves feminists.

I want a better country, I want to bring people together. But when I come to these meet-ups, people talk to me like I'm, well ... a Republican.

When you have that kind of attitude about people who are just a little bit different how can you expect us to listen to you? To respect you? Why do you think we'd want to follow you? And if a true blue democrat like me feels excluded, then how many people on the fence are deciding to lean the other way?

9.

An over-the-top voice-over.

“These are the times that try men's souls.” So much so that the feeling of hopelessness seems utterly overwhelming.

For at least two generations, the Democratic Party has declined to quarrel with the notions that sustain the Republican dream of heaven:

That the best government is no government.

That free market capitalism is the eighth wonder of the world, a light unto the nations and the answer to everybody's prayers.

That democracy is a fancy Greek name for the American Express card and the Neiman Marcus catalog.

That history is at an end. Having reached a final stopping place on the road to the ideological perfection, mankind no longer need trouble itself with any new political ideas. These troubling times end now.

Ladies and gentlemen. I give you, Al Gore.

An over-the-top entrance.

Al Hi there. I used to be the next president of the United States.

Thank you, thank you. Actually, Tipper came-up with that joke. I'm not funny.

(Pause.)

What I want to talk about today is a 6-Step Plan for Winning at national electoral politics. I know, I know what you're thinking - What does Al Gore know about winning elections? Let's just put it this way, I did it once. And someday I'm gonna do again, and do it better.

So, let's get started.

He does it the old-fashioned way.

Step One: Grow Some Balls

We've been plagued by a Democratic Party unsure of itself, unable to express any core principles or offer a compelling alternative to the conservative acolytes, and who have even found themselves parroting Republican positions on any number of issues in the mistaken belief that it might help them capture independent voters.

We've spent far too long accommodating the Right. We've allowed deceitful, hate-mongering politicians to bully us by appealing to the worst impulses of our citizenry: fear, sloth, grievance, greed, and denial.

But you don't accommodate bullies. You don't play nice and hope they'll stop. You punch them in the mouth. Period.

So, that's the first step. To talk about Step Two, I'd like to bring out a friend of mine. We haven't been hanging-out much lately, but this project has been a great excuse to get the

band back together again, so to speak.

Ladies and gentlemen, my dear friend, President William Jefferson Clinton.

BILL refers to, or tries to work, the slide-show. Some business.

BILL Hello, hello. Thank you, Al. Thank you very much. It's great to be here today to talk to you about step two: Applied Learning.

Now, when a right wing politician decides to seize on a moral issue, like gay marriage, the proper response is not to compete for evangelical brownie points. It's to point out that *they are bigots*. Some of you may be saying, it's not right to go on the attack like that, but I gotta tell ya, it's not an attack, it's self-defense. As we used to say around the White House, "It's awful hard to talk back when I've got my fist in your face." (*BILL laughs at his own joke.*) See what I mean, Al? Funny.

Part two, when a politician proposes huge tax cuts for the affluent, the proper response is to point out that he is fostering inequality and greed. It is to call him a liar – directly, that word, *liar* – every time he tries to sell his plan as "tax relief for the middle class." And then to provide a concrete example: the top one percent of Americans received a \$60,000 tax cut.

\$60,000? Wow. I remember not too long ago, back when I was a little slimmer and little hairier, I used to dream of making that much. And look at me now.

AL (*With noticeable contempt.*) Yes, just look at you.

BILL What?

AL Pardon?

BILL Bitch.

We could go on and on, but the basic idea is the same: when faced with a bully, you don't convene focus groups, or consult polling data or pundits. You speak the truth, as loudly and as often as possible.

AL Thank you, Mr. President. And now, folks, we've got another very special guest. It's been my pleasure to work with this individual in the past, and I look forward to more collaboration in the future. Please welcome, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton.

BILL casts about, clearly taken by surprise.

HILLARY Oh, God bless you Al, what a nice introduction. Bill.

BILL Hello, my love. My one true love. You look beautiful today.

HILLARY Save it, Bill.

BILL Sorry, sorry, Hill, I just miss you so much.

HILLARY I'm here to discuss Part Three in Al Gore's ambitious 6-Step Plan for Winning: Defending Yourself Is Not the Same as Going Negative.

BILL Now, you see what I'm sayin' -

HILLARY Bill.

AL Jesus.

BILL Yes dear.

HILLARY In every political campaign that John Kerry ever ran, he faced the same questions about his service in Vietnam. He knew it was coming, it was no surprise. In fact, he'd been facing off against John O'Neill, the leader of the Swift Boat Veterans, since 1971. He should have been prepared. On the day the Swift Boat Vets began running their ads. John Kerry should have called a press conference and said the following:

“I believe, in this time of war, that the American people deserve a full accounting of the choices we made during the war of our youth. Therefore, I challenge George W. Bush to stand with me and to answer questions, once and for all, about his service and mine. The President has ordered tens of thousands of young men and women into battle. The very least he can do is explain why *he* sought to avoid combat, and why, even more astonishingly, records indicate that he was AWOL. A President as resolute as Mr. Bush would be a coward if he did not embrace the chance to clarify his record.”

He should have issued this challenge every single day. Instead, he sat around whining to his advisors.

AL He should have known better.

BILL You should talk.

Kerry's best chance to unmask Bush was during the debates. I won't labor his mistakes, I will only suggest that he could have won the election rather handily had he said the following, directly to Bush's face.

“You can dress up in a fighter pilot costume and pray with families after you've sent their sons and daughters to die, but you can't know war. Because everyone in this auditorium knows, Mr. President, that back when you had the chance to defend American values overseas, you used your father's connections to avoid combat. I have seen combat, sir, and I have been shot at. I have been shot at on foreign soil. And you can be damn sure that I would not send the sons and daughters of America into a barrage of bullets based on false information and the whim of a coward.”

AL Here, here.

BILL Damn, she's tough.

Well, that brings us to Step Four: Wake Up and Smell the Newsprint: The Media is No Longer Interested In the Truth

AL Do we really need to cover this one in detail? Is anyone out there still confused by this? Hello? Fair and balanced? Hey, Bill, do your Sean Hannity impression!

BILL Oh, not now, Al. I lose a piece of my soul every time.

(They all laugh at this.)

Step Five: Work together, for God's sake. Al?

AL The Democratic Party stands for everything, and yet it stands for nothing. It's a gaggle of special interests groups often in conflict, and rarely working together, so that the whole is no longer greater than the sum of its parts.

HILLARY For ten years we've been losing on almost every single issue - global warming, worker

protections, abortion rights -

BILL The gun control groups are essentially dead. The various race, ethnicity, and identity groups are still alive, but the issues important to them are filed under the "won't ever see daylight" category in the basement of Republican headquarters.

HILLARY Meanwhile, conservatives have opened new battlefronts with creationism, anti-gay legislation, media consolidation, and so on.

AL Even groups that have no business being politicized, like scientists and teachers, are now forced to beat back right wing attacks.

BILL If we really want to build a modern movement, then the "Democratic Coalition" must be replaced by a new progressive movement, made-up of forward-thinkers of all stripes and flavors, and from all regions of the country. We have to learn to tolerate and respect our differences, to debate but not to fight, to understand that we are all playing different positions on the same team.

AL Well, folks, now we have another, very special guest to bring out. You'll probably recognize him from recent covers of Time, Newsweek, Time Out New York, New York Magazine, Mother Jones, The Nation, Harpers, and the New York Times magazine. Ladies and gentlemen, the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Mr. Howard Dean.

DEAN Thank you, Mr. Gore. Thank you Mr. President, and thank-you Mrs. Future President of the United States.

I've got one very important piece of advice for anyone who thinks they have a shot at winning in national electoral politics. It's Step Six: Start Mobilizing the Base NOW.

Liberal politicians need to come out of hiding and propose specific measures that will provide some concrete sense of what the Left plans do when in power, in contrast to the right. We should propose bold solutions, even solutions that may lose and lose badly. Let's say that the first \$80,000 of everyone's income should be tax free. Let's offer to pay a mother and father to stay at home and raise their child.

Let the conservatives fight against motherhood. They are cloaking themselves in motherhood, but they don't really care about mothers.

An opposition party doesn't negotiate, it fights. We all want a healthy and effective progressive political agenda enacted into law, and we all want to bury the conservative ideology six feet under. So we should fight everything. Anyone who tries to negotiate right now should not be welcomed.

AL I have made it very clear that any leader who compromises on global warming should bear the wrath of all of us.

DEAN That's right, Al. It's a fight, so let's fight, all of us, together.

BILL Look: on the day after Bush was installed as president in 2000, Karl Rove was crunching voter data and setting goals for voter registration. In March of 2004, the Bush campaign had volunteers in every single precinct in Ohio. Kerry had a staff of twelve.

HILLARY This is what we're up against. And it's going to require a fundamental retrenching to take the country back.

It's no longer enough for Lefties to find religion at the eleventh hour. We need to start planning for 2008 right now.

DEAN We've got to say what we mean, to stand up for who we are, and to fight battles that define and advance the values of a true people's party. When I ask people on the street how they think of the Democratic party, I want to hear them say, "They're the party on our side."

I want my country back! We want our country back! I'm tired of being divided! I don't want to listen to the conservative fundamentalists anymore! I want America to look like America, and that's a dream that we can only reach if we're all in this together - black and white, gay and straight, men and women moving forward.

We, above all nations, must find a way to summon the better angels of our nature to espouse a positive vision for the future around which a movement, a party, and an American consensus can be built to crash the gates and save the nation.

9.5

ELENI Nothing is more American than being from somewhere else.

I'm entertaining the thought of upgrading from "resident" to "citizen."
A piece of paper that gives me "the most important right."

I already have a house, have work here, have taxes to pay, the only thing I don't have is "the most important right" I have to apply for citizenship to get that.

That's what the INS citizenship exam calls it. The most important right: The right to vote.

Of course there are rules for gaining citizenship, of course, ... otherwise floods of immigrants might change the practices of the nation.

One the one hand, that's bullshit. The whole "give us your tired, your poor" isn't Americans doing the "huddled masses" a favor, Americans ARE the "huddled masses," just from 300 years ago, rather than 5. It's a post-colonial settler society. Nobody is really native here.

But on the other-hand, the group that pushes Florida RED every election is comprised of naturalized Cuban citizens. They vote Republican based on one issue alone, an international issue. Republicans are against Castro. It's not even a national issue, and it changed the whole course of.....

So anyway there's a citizenship exam, an oath of allegiance, rules. I have to be at least 18 years old, check. Be a lawful permanent resident for five years, try 20, check. Be able to understand, read, write, and speak basic English, check. Be a person of good moral character—what does that even mean? Good moral character? Convicted felons lose the right to vote, so as long as I steer clear of that avenue? That's an awfully subjective rule. Check?

With this exam and these rules what is really being asked? That as a prospective citizen I prove allegiance to American principles? Or to American majority values?

There is something unfair about asking me to demonstrate belief in "your" values, renounce the citizenship of my own country and take a US citizenship exam dealing with US history, US customs and US social workings that so many natural born US citizens couldn't even pass. By accident of birth a person knowing NONE of this is automatically considered a citizen with the right to vote.

Give it a try:

What is the supreme law of the United States? Pretty vague huh?

It's the Constitution.

Here's a good one. How many representatives are there in congress?

If Representatives is spelled with a capital R it's 435, if it's a lower case r, then the answer is 535. Nice.

The seemingly simple solution is to require ALL potential voters to pass the citizenship test in order to be able to vote. Although does that then screw with the 15th amendment? Is a citizenship exam basically a literacy test at root? A natural citizen doesn't have to be literate but a naturalized citizen does?

We need to fix the system. I have to be careful. I said "we." I consider myself an American. I've lived here for over 20 years. But when I say "we" nobody thinks I'm talking about America. And that won't change with citizenship.

The system needs to be fixed.

Right now who is allowed to be ignorant? ANY U.S. citizen

Who is allowed to have no working knowledge of the U.S. system of democracy? Of U.S.

history?

Who is judged on moral character?

And who gets “the most important right?” Oh.

10.

NICK So what do we do now?

MICH First of all, we've got to stop mocking the red states. We've got to spend less time hating our neighbors and we've got to give up the cheap pleasures of making fun of people. I know, I know, it's hard. It's SO MUCH FUN. But we can't lead a country we don't love. We can't lead people we don't love. I'm so far left that if I were on the left side of Pluto, I'd be on a pogo stick trying to get further left. But, we need to get over it. We're the people's party. We're supposed to be better than that. So let's be better.

IAN Some on the left are convinced that conservative ideas are inherently more simplistic than liberal ideas, and thus conservatives have a natural advantage in a public debate dominated by media forums that favor brevity, certainty, and appeals to emotion. Conservatives win because their ideas fit so neatly on a bumper sticker, though liberals are in fact correct on the merits.

NICK Nonsense. In their full form, conservative ideas are just as complex as liberal ones. What's true is that there are plenty of very smart conservatives who have thought long and hard about how to reduce those complex ideas to simple expressions of values and beliefs. Whether you perceive them as correct or not, all depends on your worldview.

MICH We have a metaphor for the nation as a family. We have the Founding Fathers. The Daughters of the American Revolution. We "send our sons" to war. Democrat, Republican, or Independent, it's all about family. And this is how and why the nation splits in two. The strict father family and a nurturant parent family. You already know which is which, so let's get into it a little bit.

IAN Consider what the strict father model means for social programs.

NICK It is immoral to give people things they have not earned, because then they won't develop discipline and they'll become dependent and wicked. This theory says that spending money on social programs is immoral. That's how they're trying to eliminate them on moral grounds.

IAN What you have to do is reward the good people - the ones whose prosperity reveals their discipline and hence their capacity for morality. Of course, this isn't pure generosity, because we all believe deep down that we're good people, and that one day our lives will bear the fruits that are our just rewards. So let's give 'em a tax cut, a tax cut big enough so that there is not enough money for social programs. By this logic, the deficit is a good thing. As Grover Norquist says, it "starves the beast."

MICH Are conservatives against all government? No. They are not against the military, they are not against homeland defense, they are not against the current Department of Justice, nor against the courts or the Department of Treasury and Commerce. And government subsidies for industry and corporations, which reward the good people, are great. No problem there.

NICK Their ideas have a solid grounding in their moral structures. That's why they're not merely a bunch of crazies or mean and greedy or stupid people. And they have supporters around the country who have a strict father morality and who apply it to politics and who believe this is the right way to govern. And they vote Republican.

MICH Now let me talk a bit about how progressives understand their morality and what their moral system is. We call it the nurturant parent model. The assumption is that children are born good and can be made better. The world can be made a better place, and our job is to work on that, to nurture our children and to raise our children to be nurturers of others.

IAN Nurturance means two things: empathy and responsibility. If you have a child, you have

to know what every cry means. You have to know when the child is hungry, when he needs a diaper change, when she's having nightmares. Empathy and responsibility - you have to take care of this child. And you can't take care of someone else if you're not taking care of yourself. All this is very difficult. Anyone who has ever raised a child knows that. You have to be strong. You have to work hard at it. You have to be very competent. You have to know a lot.

MICH And all sorts of other values immediately follow from empathy and responsibility.

NICK If you want your child to be fulfilled in life, the child has to be free enough to do that. So freedom is a value. And you don't have very much freedom if there's no opportunity or prosperity.

IAN If you really care about your child, you want your child to be treated fairly by you and by others.

MICH You have to have honest, two-way communication. That becomes a value.

IAN Your community will affect how your child grows up. Therefore community-building, service to the community, and cooperation become values.

NICK If you empathize with the child, you will provide protection. What do you protect your child from? Crime and drugs, certainly. You also protect your child from cars without seat belts, from smoking, from poisonous additives in food. So progressive politics focuses on protecting the environment, worker protection, consumer protection, and protection from disease.

MICH These family-based models, strict father, and nurturant parent, in this day and age, determine how we vote. People vote their values. They vote for their identities. And this is how we want it. After all - why else would anyone with money support a Democratic candidate who honestly says - "I will try to take your money and give it to other people?"

IAN This comes into politics in a very important way. It is assumed that voters will vote their self-interest. "How," Democrats keep asking, "can any poor person vote for Bush, when he hurts them so badly?" Their response is to try to explain once more why voting Democratic would serve their self-interest. In the 2000 election Gore kept saying again, and again, that Bush's tax cuts would go only to the top 1 percent, and he thought that everyone else would follow their self-interest and support him. But poor conservatives still opposed him, because as conservatives they believed that those who had the most money - the "good" people - deserved to keep it as their reward for being disciplined.

MICH I honestly do not believe that more than half this country is dumber than George W. Bush. I will not acclaim it. But I do know that smart, honest people are often the victims of con artists.

NICK We need to actually be liberal, to view the world as being made up of varying points of view and to court those we would not normally meet for coffee. We need to show that we're not going to take away their guns, that we don't want to burn their flags, or ban their Bibles. We have to give up the Us/Them mentality. You know, the one we find so disgusting when employed by George W. Bush.

IAN If we really are sick and tired of media consultants, spinners, pollsters, polls, and corporate donors controlling our lives, then it's time to jump into the fray, to take the momentum that began with the last few elections and to build on it. It's time. Now is the time to lose your grief, find your courage, and to fight for our country.

10.5

IAN For just a minute or two, step into my life. I am an American soldier in the Army Special Forces. I am near the end of a one-year tour of duty in Iraq, where I live, share meals, sleep and fight beside my Iraqi counterpart as we battle insurgents in the center of a thousand-year-old city. I wake in the cold and dark of each morning to the sound of a hundred different muezzins (mew-ezins) calling Muslim men and women to prayer. These calls reverberate five times per day throughout a city the size of San Francisco. Above this sound I also hear two American helicopters making their steady patrol over the rooftops and the blaring horns of armored vehicles as they swerve through dense traffic.

The Iraqi base where I now live was once a small American base. The anxiety and distress of American soldiers in years past are scratched in the ceiling over my bed. "The mind is a terrible thing...," "keep a sharp look-out during your descent," "happiness is a temporary state of mind," "control is just an illusion" and "nothing is as it seems."

I have befriended a captured insurgent. He used to be a college professor. "I love Americans I but hate your army," he says. "You have come here because you want our oil and because of your support of Israel. You bring democracy, but the Iraqi pays the price. Almost every hour of my life I hear some noise or see some sight of the American military. Soldiers talk with Iraqis only from behind a gun, from a position of power and not respect. It is how you act and how we are treated that makes me fight."

I have slowly come to understand that if we are to succeed in Iraq, we must either change the way we perceive those we want to help or we must disengage the great percentage of our military. And so I do more than just train, advise, and fight with my Iraqi friend. I approach my personal interactions as opportunities to battle the insurgency and I realize that my every contact with the Iraqis does have lasting and even strategic consequences. To be a moral person is my daily struggle, but the difficulty is that I am being asked to instill social morality in a culture that is not my own. So I go out of my way every single day to disprove the "Ugly American" label that is attached to me.

"I know the American military cannot now leave Iraq," says my Iraqi friend. "If you did, we would all start fighting each other until one person killed enough enemies to come out on top. But only when I stop seeing your military shooting at civilians on our streets will I stop fighting."

So what is the balance between protecting, succeeding in our mission, and surviving? Between taking charge and just abandoning the country?

I tell my insurgent friend, "I want to leave your country. The only reason I stay is because Iraqis are dying. I hope for the best, but I fear the worst. I want to leave, but I've pledged to serve. All I want to do is help." I ask him, "What can I do?"

11.

A short play about Oil and Iraq, Part Two.

Scene Six

(In the war room. DICK, RUMMY, KARL, and several puppets.)

RUMMY It's very simple, see if you all can follow this. We invade Iraq. We take control of the oil. We increase production.

DICK The ... uh ... Saudis ... uh ... OPEC won't like that.

RUMMY Will the Saudis like it? Hell, no! Is that the point? Hell, yes! We sell off Iraq's oil to the 10 highest bidders. Production goes through the roof. Supply goes through the roof, lowering prices world-wide. When the prices drop, the Saudi's profits drop. Without all the money, the Saudis don't have all the power. Once we bring the Saudis to their knees, we can take the whole Middle East!

(The sound of record scratching or something as the scene grinds to a stop. In flies Greg Palast, superhero of clarification.)

RUMMY Who the hell is that?

KARL Awww ... shit.

DICK Uh ... uh ...

GREG P. Freeze! *(They do.)* Fear not, humble citizens, it is I, Greg Palast, courageous journalist, filmmaker, and author. But you may call me THE SUPERHERO OF CLARIFICATION. I have donned this cape and cowl for one purpose alone, to shed light on the dastardly deeds of the greedy and powerful.

(A humble citizen raises her hand.)

GREG P. Humble citizen, you have a question?

CITIZEN Yes, Mr. Palast. What's going on here? Why are we so afraid of Saudi Arabia? And I thought we wanted to get Iraq's oil. Why does Donald Rumsfeld want to sell it off? And what the heck is OPEC?

GREG P. Those are excellent questions humble citizen. Luckily, the answers are all right here in my newest book, Armed Madhouse. Stand back, I'm going to attempt to clarify the situation.

OPEC stands for Oil Producing Exporting Countries - it's the worldwide oil cartel. In the U.S., organizations like this are illegal, but ... that's another debate for another time. Its members include Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Algeria, Angola, Kuwait, Indonesia, Libya, Nigeria, Iran, and Iraq and George Bush.

CITIZEN What?

GREG P. Just kidding. Sorta.

Though there is no official leader of OPEC, the 100 lb gorilla in the room is Saudi Arabia, because they have the most oil. And the country with the second largest proven oil reserves is the subject of all this debate, Iraq.

It's like this. Saudi Arabia has the most power, so they get to impose production limits on OPEC's

members, limiting supply and thereby controlling prices. Iraq has tons of oil, but the Saudis won't let them make money by selling it. And that, not U.N. sanctions, is the main reason Iraq has remained relatively powerless for the last 20 years or so.

And Saudi Arabia has ways of making sure that no one steps out of line. For instance, in 1997, Venezuela attempted to feed their economy by increasing production, hoping to sell more and bring in more money. Well, Saudi Arabia didn't approve of the plan, so they ramped up production, increasing supply, and lowering the worldwide price of oil enough to bankrupt Venezuela, despite their increased production. You see, the Saudis have so much money in the bank, that they can just hold their breath economically if they need to drop the price of oil for a little bit.

Hence the controversy. Most oil people think Rummy's plan is crazy. The Saudis have *way* too much money for that to work, and there's nothing to stop them from crushing Iraq the same way they did Venezuela.

The one thing everyone agrees on is that Saddam wasn't interested in anyone's big plans except his own, and so he had to go. That's the one item that is present in both invasion plans – the one Rummy got from his neocons in 2002, and the one that Cheney got from the Big Oil companies in February 2001.

CITIZEN Wow. I get it!

GREG P. I'm glad, humble citizen. However, there's no need to thank me, it's just what I do. Wait ... what's that? I hear another citizen in trouble? Someone's trying understand what happened in Ohio in 2004! Damn that Kenneth Blackwell. What a fucking asshole! I must away!

(GREG PALAST flies away. The evildoers un-freeze.)

DICK What happened?

RUMMY What happened? I don't know.

KARL I have the strangest feeling that the citizenry may suspect something.

DICK Well ... uh ... we can put a stop to that.

Scene Seven

ACACIA OCTOBER 2002

W Saddam Hussein has held numerous meeting with Iraqi nuclear scientists, a group he calls his “nuclear mujahideen” - his nuclear holy warriors.

DICK We know that Iraq and Al Qaeda have had high-level contacts that go back a decade. We've learned that Iraq has trained Al Qaeda members in bomb-making and deadly gases.

W If the Iraqi regime is able to produce, buy, or steal an amount of highly enriched uranium a little larger than a single softball, it could have a nuclear weapon in less than a year. Saddam Hussein would be in a position to pass nuclear technology to terrorists.

RUMMY Facing clear evidence of peril, we can't wait for final proof. We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud.

Scene Eight

ACACIA JANUARY 2003

Back in the War Room.

RUMMY Happy New Year, everyone, Happy New Year! I've got great news. Half the country believes that not only does Saddam give Al Qaeda direct aid, another 45% percent believe that half the terrorists were *from Iraq!*

DICK Not bad.

(A voice in the shadows.)

BAKER 3 Not bad, indeed, my friends. It seems that everything is going according to plan. Soon Iraq will be in our hands and the market will return to the stable ascension of profits for Saudi Arabia and her friends in Texas. Karl, my dear friend, we never should have doubted you, you played your cards brilliantly.

KARL Well, thank you, Mr ...

BAKER 3 Ah – ah - ah – you never know who might be listening.

RUMMY Fine point, fine point. Well, I guess that just about wraps things us here ...

BAKER 3 Mr. Rumsfield, why so anxious to leave? I've only just joined you. Why don't we sit down and chat about our future conquests.

RUMMY Really, I'd love to, but Dick and I ...

DICK Me?

BAKER 3 Alright then, please relax. I don't need much of your time. I come, in fact, with a gift, from our fellow patriots in the Middle East.

DICK The Saudis?

BAKER 3 Yes, indeed. The Saudis have agreed to pump oil at full capacity until the war is well under way.

KARL Full capacity?

BAKER 3 Yes, full capacity. The price of gas should stay plenty low until the citizenry are fully committed to the war and you've got thousands of troops in harm's way.

RUMMY That's incredible. I don't know what to say.

BAKER 3 Don't you have to be going?

KARL Shit! The State of the Union. Dick, get the President!

(DICK reaches into his briefcase and pulls out the sock puppet, RUMMY, KARL, and DICK all race out of the room. BAKER laughs it up, maybe pulls out a cigar.)

CITIZEN But, wait! Greg Palast! Can you hear me?

(GREG PALAST flies in.)

GREG P. You called, humble citizen?

CITIZEN Yeah, I called. Who the hell is that? *(Referring to JAMES BAKER III. Maybe even unmasking him. Revealing another mask. Revealing another mask, etc. ...)*

GREG P. That, humble citizen, is James Baker the Third, Secretary of State under George the Elder, and superstar lawyer for superstar clients like Saudi Arabia and George the Second.

CITIZEN Saudi Arabia?

GREG P. That's right, humble citizen. Jimmy defended Saudi Arabia from the ruthless families of the victims of September 11. They wanted information about Saudi Arabia's funding of Al Qaeda, but they won't get it. Hell no, he's a good friend to the Saudis. He even let them get their 2 billion cents in on the Iraq invasion plan that he drew up for George Bush in 2001.

CITIZEN Bush hired him?

GREG P. Well, no. Actually he let the Saudis pay for it. But the invasion plan wasn't the last favor he did; Jimmy 3 was also Bush's lawyer down in Florida after the 2000 election.

CITIZEN I can hardly believe it.

GREG P. Well, believe it, buddy. Ever since he was Ronald Reagan's chief of staff back in the 80s, Jimmy Baker's had the ear of the Republican's biggest boys and their friends in Saudi Arabia.

CITIZEN Wow!

GREG P. In fact, I've heard, through I can't confirm it, that it's Mr. Baker who uses the Oval Office desk while the President just plays on the rug.

CITIZEN Oh my -

BAKER 3 Very impressive Mr. Palast, but not impressive enough. You see, our agenda is not dead yet, I managed to infiltrate the Iraq Studies Group.

GREG P. Infiltrate? You were appointed!

BAKER 3 Yes, I was appointed. And now my plan has been turned into an official document of the U.S. Government.

GREG P. I hate to tell you, Jimmy, but that just makes it even less likely that Georgy Porgy is going to pay any attention to it.

BAKER 3 Why, you insolent -

KARL Greg Palast!

GREG P. Good evening, Karl.

KARL Jim, what are you up to tonight?

JIM Well, Karl, I was just about to leave for Afghanistan, to register voters for that new democracy we just gave them.

Both laugh their asses off.

JIM Goodnight, Karl, Greg.

JIM BAKER leaves.

KARL I'm surprised to see you here, Greg. I didn't think we'd let you back in the country yet.

GREG P. I guess Homeland Security decided that covering-up the Katrina failures is no longer a priority.

KARL You'd like to think so, but that's not the case. You see, Greg, you don't matter anymore. You and your whole flock of debunkers and "journalists." Journalists. Ha! What a wasted bunch of hollow men. Flushing away your time, desperately trying to draw so-called truth from the reality-based community.

GREG P. I know it must seem like a waste to you, Karl -

KARL It is! It is a waste! You believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality, but that's not the way the world really works anymore. We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality -- judiciously, as you will -- we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors, and you, all of you, will be left to study what we do.

(KARL storms out.)

CITIZEN Mr. Palast?

GREG P. Humble citizen?

CITIZEN My name's Judy.

GREG P. Do you have a question, Judy?

CITIZEN Did he really say that?

GREG P. Yes, Judy. Yes. I'm afraid he did.

We hear the 2003 State of the Union as the lights fade.

ELENI Feb 24, 2004 – Bush announces his support for a Constitutional amendment banning gay marriage.

NICK June 2004 – Karl Rove gets John McCain to embrace President Bush on national television.

MICH Aug 2004 – The Swift Boat Veterans publish "Unfit for Command".

JEN Twelve days before the November 2004 election, James Carville stood in a Beverly Hills living room surrounded by two generations of Hollywood stars. After being introduced by Senator John Kerry's daughter, Alexandra, he told the room - confidently, almost cockily - that the election was in the bag.

IAN "If we can't win this damn election," he said, "with a democratic Party more united than ever before, with us having raised as much money as the Republicans, with 55 percent of the country believing we're heading in the wrong direction, with our candidate having won all three debates, and with our side being more passionate about the outcome than theirs - if we can't win this one, then we can't win shit! And we need to completely rethink the Democratic Party."

MICH January 23, 2007 – Bush announces his plan to send 22,000 more troops into Iraq. The Congress, the Senate, and the American people trumpet their disapproval.

ACACIA JANUARY 31

ELENI U.S says Iranian weapons are killing Americans in Iraq.

ACACIA FEBRUARY 2

MICH Suicide bombers kill 60, injure 150 in Iraq.

ACACIA FEBRUARY 28

IAN Cheney denies plans to attack Iran.

ACACIA MARCH 1

NICK U.S. Concedes uncertainty on Korean Uranium effort.

ACACIA MARCH 9

JENN Iraqis seek a role in rebuilding their nation.

ACACIA MARCH 16

ELENI OPEC says it will not raise production.

ACACIA MARCH 18

MICH Iran vows to defend its nuclear program.

ACACIA MARCH 21

IAN Defense department ups surge numbers to 30,000 troops.

ACACIA MARCH 24

NICK U.N. council imposes sanctions on Iran.

ELENI DATE

ACACIA INSERT NEWS OF THE DAY.

12.

- ELENI Our country has been tested as never before. And it's going to take the skill, the talent, and the will of all of the American people to make it right.
- NICK I've got to say, what I dislike most about George W. Bush is not something he's done. It's something he hasn't done. He has never really asked Americans to step up for any shared sacrifice and to actually be part of the solution.
- IAN After 9-11, I – and you – and all Americans would have done anything, anything at all to stand up for our country. But the President never asked.
- ACACIA After our troops were in harm's way in Iraq, I think I – and you – and all Americans would have been ready to take a new approach to energy to make us less dependent on the Persian Gulf. But the President never asked.
- MICH After Katrina, all of us wanted to do something, anything, to make sure that no Americans had to die in the streets because government couldn't deliver basic services or maintain a 21st century infrastructure. But the President never asked.
- JEN Instead, we got the politics of division. Of Red and Blue America. Of leadership that stokes the fires of the past while failing to put forward a vision of the future.
- MICH Well I've got news for them. We worship an awesome God in the blue states, and we don't like federal agents poking around in our libraries in the red states. We coach Little League in the blue states, and yes, we've got some gay friends in the red states.
- NICK The American people are willing to step up. They're ready to answer that call. They understand that we are living at a time of transformative change...of harrowing threats and historic opportunity.
- IAN There is a hunger in this country that goes beyond any particular issue or cause. Each day it seems that thousands of Americans are going about their daily routine - they're dropping off their kids, they're driving to the office, they're going to a business meeting, they're shopping at the mall, they're trying to stay on their diets, and they're coming to the realization that something's missing. They're deciding that their work, their possessions, their diversions, their sheer busyness is not enough. They want a sense of purpose and an assurance that somebody out there cares about them, is listening to them. That they are not just destined to travel down that long highway towards nothingness. And that's where we come in.
- ACACIA We're liberals, progressives, humanists. Which means that we wake up in the morning driven by a higher purpose and trying to figure out how to make the world a better place.
- ELENI We believe that poverty is morally wrong.
- JEN We believe that obscene concentrations of wealth are morally wrong.
- ACACIA We believe that the interests of people should come before the interests of corporations.
- MICH We believe that a war on poverty is not the same as a war on the poor.
- IAN These are our moral values.
- NICK A livable wage is a moral value.
- ELENI Affordable health care is a moral value.
- ACACIA A decent education is a moral value.

- JEN A common sense foreign policy is a moral value.
- MICH A healthy environment is a moral value.
- IAN Full participation in our democracy is a moral value.
- ELENI It is a moral value to make sure that we don't saddle our children and grandchildren with our debts.
- NICK Moral values mean equal rights for all, special privileges for none.
- JEN For alongside our famous individualism is our belief that as one people we're all connected. If there is a child on the south side of Chicago who can't read, that matters to me, even if it's not my child. If there's a senior citizen somewhere who can't pay for their prescription drugs and has to choose between medicine and the rent, that makes my life poorer, even if it's not my grandparent. If there's an Arab-American family being rounded up without benefit of an attorney or due process, that threatens my civil liberties.
- ELENI It is that fundamental belief - I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper - that makes this country work. E pluribus unum. Out of many, one.
- ACACIA If we believe in all these things, and if we fight for them, then I guarantee you America will look to us to lead. And then, it won't be a Democratic agenda or a liberal agenda or a progressive agenda; it's going to be an American agenda because in the end we may be proud progressives but we're prouder Americans. And fellow Americans I say to you: We have more work to do.
- IAN These are the times that try mens souls, but I believe that we have a righteous wind at our backs and that as we stand at these crossroads of history, we will make the right choices and meet the challenges that face us. I have no doubt that we the people will rise up to reclaim this country, and then, out of this long political darkness a brighter day will come.
- MICH The great work begins.