

**Transcript: The Changing Face of the South – Rethinking Culture,
Community and Politics**

New Strategies for Southern Progress conference

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Speakers:

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The Hon. Joyce Elliot, Arkansas state representative

The Hon. Raul Martinez, mayor of Hialeah, FL

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PROFESSOR SIMPKINS: Good afternoon and welcome to the last panel of the day, Changing the Face of the South. My name is John Simpkins. I'm the Associate Director of the Richard Riley Institute at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, and I'm also one of the founding directors of the Center for a Better South. And I can say that it's a pleasure to be with you and it's been really encouraging to see the number of people and to feel the energy around issues of Southern progressivism, and hopefully we can take that energy and harness it into something positive for the region.

I'm joined today by, to my far right, Jim Clinton who's the executive director of the Southern Growth Policy Board. Larry Griffin, who's professor at the University of North Carolina. Arkansas State Representative Joyce Elliott, and Mayor Raul Martinez of Hialeah,

Florida.

With all the questions that have been raised today and last night, of course, it falls to the last panel to answer them. We will dispense with that in short order and then take your questions.

But before we do that, as I've been listening to the speakers and to the questioners and to the comments, I was reminded of a comment that someone made to me when I was living outside the South. It was a policy consultant who did some work in the South, and he loved working in the South. And he said, you know, you know why I like the South? You know what I love about the South? As soon as my plane touches the ground, I know I'm the smartest person in the state. And I've been called a son of a lot of things, but I am a son of the South. And that was something that struck me and it stayed

with me.

I recently moved to Greenville, South Carolina just over a year-and-a-half ago. And Greenville, as some of you may know, is the home of that liberal bastion Bob Jones University. Bob Jones University is so conservative that people in South Carolina look at them and say, they're pretty conservative.

And I think about Greenville, and I wonder if this guy landed in Greenville. The folks I've met there, you know, two guys who clerked on the Supreme Court, a combat-tested fighter pilot -- and this is just one law firm. A guy with a JD and an MBA and an undergraduate degree all from Harvard. He couldn't get away from Cambridge. Some people say that politics isn't rocket science, but just in case it is, Greenville County Council has a rocket scientist, someone who worked with Warner Van Braun at NASA. And outside of that, people who are possessed with something that we call mother wit, common sense. To turn the phrase on its head, people with more sense than money in a lot of cases. But a lot of people who are extremely intelligent. And I think if this guy landed in Greenville, South Carolina, he wouldn't even be the smartest person on a block on Main Street much less the smartest person in the state.

But that just goes to show that the South never is what it appears to be. And believe it or not, it is constantly undergoing change. And it's hard to believe this if you hold fast to images of wealth and well-manicured, lily-white, all-American

neighborhoods of the same person, the same religion and the same social club or you have these nostalgic images of cocoa-colored villages collectively providing for every person, young and old, in the service of a common goal of uplifting the race. Those things might have existed but they don't really exist anymore. Things have changed. And the South is still changing.

I have witnessed this change. As a matter of fact, I feel as if I've grown up during this change. It's important to note here at the end of February, the shortest month and often the coldest month, and therefore the month that we dedicate to Black History, that here at the end of February, if he were alive today, Dr. King would only be 76 years old. In South Carolina, he'd still have a few terms to serve.

So the time span during which these changes have occurred isn't that long. It's not that long. I'm 34 years old. I used to be able to say that I was young, but I'm getting older by the day. And I'm 34, and I was -- well, if you think about it this way, when I was born in 1970, in 1970, the hospital in Columbia where I was born was for blacks only, in 1970. It doesn't seem like that long ago but that was a big change. In 1970 when I was born in Columbia, South Carolina, the schools in Lexington South Carolina weren't completely integrated and they wouldn't be integrated until the year before I went to school. Now you think I'm a youngster, but a lot has changed, a lot has changed.

When I was born, the people who had

worked in this hotel would have been my relatives. They would have been my grandparents. And that has changed. And I think it was -- it was interesting about what we heard earlier today because the kids of those people may be on this stage in another 20 years, in another 15 years. Let's hope it's even less time than that.

In the school that I went to, the school that I graduated from, a public high school in Lexington, South Carolina, emerged as a haven for those fleeing integration because it was overwhelmingly white. 2,400 students in that high school, and we walked around one day and counted all the black people and didn't get to triple digits. Things have changed.

And today we're going to talk about the times as they continue to change for the American South. Larry Griffin and Jim Clinton are going to give us an overview of some of those changes, and then Representative Elliott and Mayor Martinez are going to talk about how they operate in this environment of change. And we're going to start with Larry Griffin, who's not only going to talk about the changes, but he's going to talk about some of the sameness, and I think that sameness is what makes the South the South, and it also is what makes the South many Souths, not just one place, but a place of many different flavors and varieties. And we'll start with you, Larry.

MR. GRIFFIN: Thank you very much. Is this on? Let me say first as an academic in this room with religious leaders and public officials and political strategists, I feel like a

one-legged man in a butt-kicking contest. Pretty useless. But I'm going to try to -- I'm going to try to give you some thoughts about this changing and also maybe not-quite-so-changing South.

One thing I would like to underscore, John talked about, I grew up in the Mississippi Delta in the 1950s and '60s, and that was a hard time in a hard place. The South today is not only different, it feels viscerally different, and we heard that last night. It is genuinely a different place. And toward the end of my few minutes, I will probably sound as if things have not changed. I do not believe that for a moment.

Again, this is a new South, and it is important humanely, decently new. And what makes the South so complex, politically and morally, is coexisting with this new South is also an older South, the South that antedated the Civil Rights movement, that existed before 1955, that goes way back. And I'm going to try to talk a little bit about the tensions between these two kinds of Souths.

First of all, the new South, many of you, and I suspect just about all of you, know that the demographics of this region have changed dramatically in the last generation or two. You have some data in your packet that we've given you, and I'm just going to underscore a couple of those points, and then I want to talk a little bit about economics.

We are intensely more diverse religiously and ethnically than we've ever been. The greater Atlanta area

has, as of 2003, more than 350,000 Hispanics. It's got over 100,000 Asians. The greater Raleigh area has over 100,000 Hispanics, over 43,000 Asians. And more than 80 languages are spoken in the national public schools. That is genuinely important.

Number two, in terms of economics, the American South now is substantially more prosperous than we've ever been. In fact, just about 50 years ago, the great historian of the American South, C. Van Woodward, defined the South in terms of what he called the collective experiences of the Southern people. And Woodward was talking overwhelmingly about white Southerners, but he did tap into something that black and white Southerners shared as of 50 years ago.

One of three defining characteristics of my region and my people, poverty, that is no longer nearly so prevalent. Our industrial base is substantially more diversified and, again, we're delivering substantially more affluence. Just last week there was an article in the New York Times about a nanotechnology firm that moved from southern California to Hattiesburg, Mississippi. That's a change of import.

The third change of import I think is the most dramatic and in some sense I believe it's unleashed other changes. And that's the change in the way that this region organizes rights. America itself has been, from its inception, remarkably racialized but nowhere, nowhere was race more harshly structured, more bloodthirsty, more violent than in the American South. And that has changed dramatically.

And it has done so in my lifetime. That is something that we ought not to forget and especially I ought not to forget it as I move into the second part of this talk.

One concrete example, my home state in Mississippi has more elected black and local officials than any state in the country. Over 900 of them. Crucially, 100 of them are in law enforcement. That is an extraordinary change. And again, driving part of these changes and reflecting these changes is a reversal of 100 years of black outmigration from the American South.

Since the mid 1970s, roughly 650,000 more African Americans have come back to the South than have left it. Every region of the country is losing African Americans to the South. I know of no statistic that would better example a new South, a more fair, more just, more equal South than that one.

Now, all of that said, there continues, however, to be vestiges of an Old South, and it's an Old South that I think many of us wish we could put behind us. We heard a lot of discussion this morning about voting patterns and about opinion polls. And I'm going to touch base real quickly just on a couple of those, maybe to sort of dramatize my point.

First, I want to go back to the issues of economics, and then I'm going to try to tie that briefly into race. I'm the culprit who asked the question about labor unions this morning. That means there are five of us in this room. There are 12 states in this

country in which labor unions represent less than 7 percent of the labor force. Nine are in the American South.

In terms of educational attainment, nine of the 13 states are below the national average. For every Arkansan who graduates from college, more than two graduate from college in Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire and four other northern states. Consequently -- and these data, the figures I'm going to give you now are -- it's in your packet. As of 2003, the American South, our per capita personal income is still only 9 percent of what it is for the national average. Four of the 10 most tax progressive states are in the American South. Six of 10 of the most extreme income inequality between top and bottom income earners are in the American South. Poverty and inequality take its toll. Seven out of the 10 states with the highest infant mortality rate are in the American South.

One organization that assesses health-care using 21 indicators of health and access to health has indicated -- has suggested that Southerners generally are appreciably in poorer health than the rest of the nation, seven out of 10 states are in the American South. My state, Mississippi, at the very bottom. Point one.

Point two -- and I've got two or three minutes. The second point about voting. We did hear a lot this morning about that. I'm just going to underscore in some sense the depth of racial cleavage voting in the American

South. 14 percent of Mississippians voted for John Kerry in 2004. 20 percent South Carolina, Louisiana voted for Kerry. 25 percent of Georgia and North Carolina. To the extent to which there are clear economic differences between the two parties, that voting pattern, I think, will be detrimental continually for the have-nots and the have-too-littles in this region. Those malnourished still, the infants who do not get precisely the kind of material care they need.

One final thing and then I'm going to turn it over to Jim. In terms of our changes in race relations, again, they're very real. That said, in 2002, white Southerners, substantially more racially conservative than white Northerners on very real matters. White Southerners, three-and-a-half times more likely to support laws barring interracial marriage than the white North.

50 percent of white Southerners attribute racial inequalities to a lack of will on the part of African Americans, and another 17 percent believe racial inequalities are due to inborn disabilities. That's in the white South today, 2002.

My final point. Today, this morning, we were told, and I think properly, that white Southerners -- we ought not blame progressive losses on the racist and the white South, I agree. That white Southerners vote their culture, I agree. Here, however, is the problem with that. It is as if there is the culture of the white South here and then there's race here, as if the two were independent.

And let me ask you the following. I do not believe this is a racist culture but this is a culture of race. Where do your kids go to school? Where do we go to our synagogues and our churches? Where do we live? With whom do we socialize? With whom do we work? This is a culture of race. It is true for all of America and it is still most unfortunately true for my region. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. CLINTON: Good afternoon. I've got five minutes and five points. The race is on. Not a pun. But we will come back to there. I want to start -- my first point comes from a peculiar perspective of being on the Southern Growth Policies Board, when I watch the news, when I hear public discussions about what's going on in the South, particularly in elections, I always see these maps with a sea of red and kind of this -- that everybody's making a decision in every state on the basis of political party.

But the Governors of 13 states are, by our charter, on my board of directors, 13 Southern states. So I have a little different view of it. And what you may not realize from watching the news is that in the last 13 gubernatorial elections in those states, 11 have resulted in the party in office changing. I'm sorry. 10. 10 have resulted. 11 have resulted in new governors. Only two governors have held an office in those states.

In those Southern growth states there are in fact seven Republican governors, but there's six Democratic governors. And that balance has been

true, give or take one or two, for the last decade. Of the six Democrats that are in office now in those states, four replaced Republicans, replaced Republicans.

What I see as a larger pattern in the Southern states of people deciding, pretty much, whatever we've been doing, let's do something else. And one of the reasons for that is it's been a tough time to govern. It's really hard to be governor when you can't write checks and it's been hard to write checks in the Southern states for the last five or six years. So I think people are responding to that, and that's a pattern that we need to be aware of as we're thinking about where the South is headed.

Point two, I find that professionally and in the public discourse, economic development gets talked about over here and quality of life gets talked about over here as if they were separate things. Increasingly what I know is they are the same thing. They are inseparable. You can't do one without paying attention to the other. There is no quality of life without economic health, there is no economic health in the absence of quality of life. They're inseparable.

Especially as we move more and more towards a knowledge economy, the best companies and best workers can choose to locate wherever they want to locate. They will choose to locate in places with high quality of life. They will live and work in communities with high quality of life. Now, quality of life means different things to different people. For some it's access to hunting and fishing. For

others it's access to coffee shops and bookstores.

As communities and as regions, we need to be aware of the need to match those things. That a quality of life, the particular nature of the quality of life goes a long way to determining what kinds of economic opportunities will go with that.

Point three. We spend a lot of time talking about the loss of the manufacturing base in the South. And if you -- if you listen to people in communities, you will see a lot of blame being assessed for that. But our reality is, we lost our manufacturing base the same way we achieved our manufacturing base : low pay, cheap land, low taxes. That's how we got it and that's what we lost it to. We shouldn't really be surprised, after all these years, that there are people in other parts of the world willing to work more cheaply than we are currently willing to work.

But it leaves us with a fundamental decision. Are we willing to work more cheaply or are we willing to prepare to work smarter? Those are our two options. A region's performance in a knowledge economy can rise no higher than the sum of the knowledge of its people.

Point four. Public and private leaders throughout the South, economic development professionals, have worked tirelessly for the past several decades to improve the Southern economy. The lion's share of that effort and the lion's share of the resources have been devoted to industrial recruitment, that component

of economic development.

How well have we fared during that time? From 1950 to 1980, the answer is, we fared quite well, and we closed the gap between Southern economic performance and the nation's economic performance. Since 1980, the 13 Southern states that I have responsibility for have lost ground relative to the national economy. We have not grown as fast as a region as the nation has grown. We have shrunk in importance, we have shrunk in our impact. Why?

We've been slow to embrace technology and innovation. Slow to see the fundamental importance of technology and innovation to our economic well-being. And we continue, continue to undervalue and underinvest in education. Most of the growth in any given economy occurs from within. It occurs from entrepreneurship. It occurs from expansion of existing businesses. But we continue to focus most of our economic development resources on trying to get someone to move from over there to over here rather than in building from within.

I don't have a problem with industrial recruitment. Everyone's going to do that, and I certainly support that. But while those efforts may have been necessary, they have not been sufficient. If they were sufficient, we would have grown better than the national average, and we would have continued to close that gap that still exists.

Lastly -- and it sounds like we wrote our speeches together or our

presentations together and we didn't -- but I couldn't agree more with Larry about race in the South. And I start by saying that nothing defines the South so much as race and our attitudes about it. I think that Southern Growth does a really good job of listening to people in the South. I think they conduct more community forums and focus groups and kind of build our work from the ground up better than anybody. This week we have focus groups in Pocahontas, Arkansas and Selma, Alabama. We've got community forums in Kentucky and Alabama and Mississippi, and all of that filters into our work. It forms the foundation of our work.

I've attended literally hundreds of community meetings over the last five years throughout the region, in every state of the region, and I know that this continues to be true.

Our history is one formed of collective scar tissue, and it doesn't matter if we're talking about slavery in the Civil War, the euphemistically named Reconstruction Period, the grim reality of the Jim Crow era, the disappointment that we experienced when the legal integration of the schools disintegrated into decades of white flight, the rise of private schools. And, crucially importantly, I think, the cultural weariness that has fallen over us on matters of race.

Yeah, we can talk about it safely within the halls of the academy, but we don't talk about it on the golf course. We don't talk about it at the corner bar. We don't talk about it in the workplace, and most of the time

we don't talk about it in that largely segregated set of institutions that are so important to us, the Southern churches. We don't talk about it there. But it's reality, and all of its associated mythologies.

Our unwillingness or our inability to effectively come together, work together, that reality holds us back. It prevents us from becoming what we could become. It prevents us from finding common ground before we can find higher ground. That reality retards our quality of life. It retards our economic performance. And if we're ever going to make it to higher ground, we have to summon anew -- and I speak here mostly to myself, mostly to me -- we must summon anew the courage, the patience, the strength, each of us and all of us, to forge on the smitty of our souls a new and as yet uncreated conscience for our new South. Thank you.

REPRESENTATIVE ELLIOTT:
Thank you. I'm from Arkansas, and already Arkansas has been mentioned twice. That would be good were it not in this context probably. First, I guess I should say thanks so much for even allowing me to be in North Carolina again, because I've spent more time in North Carolina than any other state other than Arkansas. And that is because -- and I promise you, I'm not pandering when I say this -- because all of my friends who know me know I'm always saying North Carolina is our most nearly perfect state. And here is why. You have beaches, you have mountains, you have rivers. And I have -- and wilderness that I love, and those are all the things I love to do. I am forever

here in search of another river, another piece of land where there's not been feet, which is probably, you know, one of the major reasons I don't have hair because it's too difficult to have black woman's hair, and you don't know drama until you've experienced that. It's too difficult to have black woman's hair and do all the things I love coming to North Carolina to do. So I tell you that I really appreciate that.

I can tell you just how Southern I am probably by telling you about my Uncle James. Uncle James was a World War Two veteran. He was one of those veterans who came back to Arkansas and who thought he would come back and be welcomed with open arms. And unlike a lot of people, he didn't just stay and slog through all of the -- what he called the segregation that just sucked the breath out of him.

So what he did was move to Kalamazoo, Michigan. Not only did Uncle James move, everybody in the family moved. My grandmother and my grandfather, his brothers and sisters and everybody moved. And they were very much in age, and especially my grandmother and grandfather. And I had just been born when my family moved to Michigan at that time. But when my mother and father's marriage dissolved, I moved back to Arkansas just about time to start first grade. So that made me Arkansan through and through.

But what I remember more than anything else, I remember this so vividly because we lived in a house that was on a dirt road, and I

remember that red dirt getting on me.

And I said to my mother, I'm never going to be clean again. And she looked at me and said, get the number three tub and get over it. And that's basically what happened.

But the thing I think that really says how Southern I am -- although I pick and choose like multiple choice which of the Southern identifiers pertain to me. But my uncle who by then -- I was his favorite, everybody knew that.

And he said to me, you're smart, you've got good grades, you need to come North and go to school. If you'll come to Michigan and go to college -- I'm 17 years old now, and I grew up like a lot of you, didn't have squat, had no notion how I was going to get the money to go college. He said, I'll pay for you to go to college anywhere you want to in Michigan. I prefer you go to the University of Michigan, but I'll pay for you to go anywhere. I'll buy you a car. I'll pay for your apartment. I'm 17 years old. I don't have anything. You know, there are still three of us sleeping to a bed. And somehow I said no, but I think I was thinking deep down inside, he's going to say, you know, okay, that's fine, I'll help you anyway. He had said, if you stayed in the South, I won't help you. And so -- but I had the fortitude and I had a Southernness about me at 17 to say no. I just knew I needed to remain in the South, but I also kind of thought he was going to help me. He did not. He meant what he said. I got not one dime from him, but it turned out okay. Because I knew that for some reason -- and it didn't have anything to do with anything that's an identifier for me right now -- but I innately knew I

needed to be here. So I stayed. And needless to say, I made it through.

And so why would anybody -- you know, everything we've heard about the South today, you might wonder why would anybody want to be in politics in this climate? You know, why would you do that of your own volition? Well, in Arkansas, I also grew up next to the Louisiana line, and I loved the drama of the Louisiana politics. But I was also 10 years old when John -- when John Kennedy was running for the presidency. And by then, I mean I would read the newspaper with my grandmother, and I was fascinated, fascinated with John Kennedy.

And I just sensed that something was changing and it was due to politics. I remember my teacher trying to teach me long math, long division math in the fourth grade, and I wanted to debate. And finally she sent me to the principal's office and told the principal, who happened to be her husband, please teach this child something because she's getting in the way of everybody else's learning.

But that taught me though, all the things growing up in the South taught me that as an African American woman, as a Southerner, and much, much of the time also being a very poor person, I never had the convenience of even thinking I was entitled to expect to get things to go my way. And that's been a blessing.

I never -- so I'm not apoplectic over the idea that I have to make deals with all kinds of people and figure out how to deal with the NASCAR crowd and

why I need to know what's happening with King of the Hill and why I need to know about that fictitious Arling, Texas, and why on my radio my buttons are now tuned to every kind of station, not just the one where I listen to Tom Joyner.

You know, I have always had to do that. So it served me well in politics. But these things have come intuitively -- and I have to say this too, not as a plug, but because it's been reality for me for having any kind of success.

When I was first elected to the Arkansas legislature, I don't even know where this invitation came from.

But for some reason I got an invitation from a group called the Center for Policy Alternatives. And they said, we want you to come to DC to help you get prepared for the term, and we are especially concentrating on legislators who are term limited. Well, we have the most severe term limits in the state -- in the country, in Arkansas. So I went, and I was a Flemming Fellow with the Center for Policy Alternatives.

But this is what it did for me. It kind of, if you will, codified what I knew intuitively and helped me learn how to use it. Because what they do -- and a lot of the training we need as progressives -- what they do is help you learn how to find common ground and use this as a way of life. Not as happenstance. So that has been immensely helpful to me.

Now, when I start wanting to introduce something, I'm always mindful, you know, you and 50 other people have to get together. I mean that is tough. And in my legislature,

although we are 72 Democrats in the House and 28 Democrats in the Senate, that doesn't always translate into progressive folks. So I have been so fortunate to come from the standpoint of, if you want to get something done, first thing you have to do is know you've got to work for it. So I don't spin my wheels talking about how difficult it's going to be. I just get with it.

So there's three things that we're going to talk about, I'll touch on that real quickly as a background. When it comes to culture, being one who is not the majority culture, long before I heard the word cultural competence, I already had it. I had to have it. And it always struck me that people didn't know about my culture, but I always had to learn about everybody's else culture. That's a good thing. What it does, it puts me ahead when people think that I'm not.

You know, I have always been aware that there are people who look so differently from me and sound differently from me, but they are fantastic people because that's the way I always wanted somebody to see me. I didn't care if they saw me as different. I am different. But that's -- the differentness is what makes us, I think, a terrific country. And I kind of mean it when I say it, you know, because I've had to live it.

And when it comes to community, I -- you know, I remember growing up and reading about communism and thinking what a great idea. Communism. I am not kidding, what a great idea because it is a great idea. It's just that it doesn't work very well.

But it's a great idea. But to me it was about community. It was about community, and I always knew that we had to work very, very hard if we were going to be a community.

And so when I was a school teacher, and I was for 31 years, and I worked at a school where there were students who were from parts that were very, very fundamentalist. But I always let them know, I will be your teacher but I'm not here to proselytize, because I was absolutely comfortable that they would accept me into their community once they knew I was there to do my job and I could do it well. And as a result of that, of course, then they wanted their kids to be in my class.

So -- and last night -- and I've got less than a minute here so I've got to go fast -- David Pryor introduced me, and introduced me as one of those young persons, you know, that she's young, she's taught 31 years -- that's because I'm not.

But I just introduced legislation in Arkansas -- this was the reason I was on the front page of the newspaper. I just introduced legislation in this climate that would require the state of Arkansas to allow students who are undocumented to be able to go school in our state and pay instate tuition.

(Applause.)

And the most controversial part, and also get a scholarship. And you ought to see my e-mail today. Some of it's not too pretty, but some of it is. But this is how I did that. When I go back to what I said before about I've always had to work for it. I don't have a

sense of entitlement. I spoke for this bill, but after I spoke, four white males stood up and spoke for this bill who were not going to.

One African American male stood up and spoke, by the way who's a minister and he said things I could not say. And one -- and two females spoke for the bill, one black, one white. All of this was not planned before we got there. But it happened nevertheless. But it's because I had worked with them, they knew my heart and they know me as the person who's about humanity, not about what your sexual orientation is, not about if you're labor or not labor. But it's those kinds of things, I think if you recognize that to be right doesn't mean you have to be righteous about it. And if you're willing to accept others and not just mouth it, it is possible, I think, to be successful in a nonprogressive environment.

And the next thing you know, people are referring to themselves -- people are saying to me, we did it. That's great. So now they're saying they're progressive. Isn't that wonderful? Thank you. I look forward to talking with you.

(Applause.)

MAYOR MARTINEZ: Thank you very much. Thank you for inviting me, but I have to confess to you that I've been confused for the past couple of days. First of all, when I was invited, I was told that I was coming up North, because this is not the South. The South is Miami. And then when I get to the hotel, I'm putting my bags away and I'm

listening and there's a conversation in Spanish. And I say, where am I? So I thought that I had come back to Miami and got into one of the hotels.

The panel is about the change of the South. You know, if anything for me to say to you is that, first of all, do not despair because change is here. When you hear the numbers of what's happening in the population, change is here.

And I remember when I started in politics, before John was born, in my community of Hialeah, we had the same situation. And I first ran for office in 1977, and I got elected, and we told the mayor at the time that change was coming. And four years later, I beat him out of office. And that's when real change began in our community.

We need to -- and I've heard a lot of the panelists talk about, you know, the progressiveness and what we need to do. And rather than being someone that is academic, I always say that whenever I finish with politics, I probably want to go maybe teach a course in practical politics. Let me tell you something, that what you need to be able to do as an elected official -- and I have run 10 times and never lost.

And in my community, Cuban American community in Miami, if you're not a Republican, you're an outcast. But those same individuals that vote Republican consistently and are registered Republican keep voting for me. And the Republican party has tried to oust me out of office. They've done everything possible to get me

out of office and they have not been able to. And it's because I connect with the voters. Sometimes elected officials depend too much on polls and depend too much on who tells them what to do. You got to have it inside you. You've got to be able to connect with the electorate. You've got to be able to go to the churches and speak to them with the truth even though they might not agree with you all the time. And some of the questions that were asked here today do not have a black or white answer, because if you look at life 1 percent is white, 1 percent is black, 98 percent is gray.

And what happens with those progressive thinkers, which is nothing but liberal in disguise, as they said last night, is that we want to ask ourselves a question and if we don't answer what they want to hear, they immediately become opposed to us. Instead of understanding and saying, why are they saying this, we start attacking ourselves. And one of the other things that I've always said is, why, if we have a better agenda, a more humanistic agenda, if we care about the community, why is it that we are getting beat up? Why cannot we express that agenda in that 30-second commercial that they now have? And that's something that we all will have to think about because it's not only what we think is good but how do we convey that message that it is good for them, not good for us.

As Congressman Meek indicated, his kids are not going to have any problems, my kids are not going to have any problems. But does that mean that I have to forget my roots,

that I have to forget that my parents brought me to the United States of America in 1960 with \$100 in their pocket? That we had to struggle? Does that mean that now that I have a job, that I have a retirement, that I have benefits, that I have to forget those that are coming up? That I cannot or should not think about those people that are cleaning the rooms like we did when we first came?

You can't forget your roots. And what's happening to this part of the United States, which you call the South, is that you're going to have the migration from the North, people coming from the North, coming back to this area, and also the immigration from the South and from the West. And that's where the changes are going to be, you'll see the changes. But with that, you're going to get a lot of resistance from what is being called the Old South. Because they're seeing what's happening in other parts. Not only because of Hispanics or people of other colors or whatever. It's the traffic, the condominium, and everything else that goes along with progress.

So when you're talking about you-all got the jobs that we lost because of the cheap labor, because we were not willing to work in those factories anymore, the factories that my mother and my relatives had to work years ago in the South, came up here because of that. And until we start realizing that when we talk about global, not only are we talking global meaning the world, we need to really talk about being united as one within our own country.

And we have allowed the other side to take over the agenda. If I criticize the president, I am un-American. I don't deserve to have been allowed to be an American citizen. Well, different than him, I had to swear allegiance to become an American. He just happened to be born here. And that's a big difference.

(Applause.)

If we talk about the lies and the nontruth that they talk all the time, they immediately say that we need to protect our borders. They'll change the conversation. They'll go to the theme that creates fear in our communities. They talk about homeland security. That is the biggest farce that there's ever been in this country. Don't you let them make you believe that we're safer today than we were in 2001. Because we're not.

I happen to run the city that I'm in. Not only am I the political mayor, kissing babies and old ladies, I also have to manage the city. And when they tell you about all these monies that are going for homeland security, it's baloney. They're telling you, we'll send you \$200,000 and this is how you spend it and this is the companies you got to buy the products from. Then when they talk about homeland security, the Congressman and I know and the people that live in Florida know, almost every day there's 20 or 30 Cubans coming in a raft to this country.

Luckily those people are looking for freedom, they're looking for work. Because if they were terrorists, this year alone we would have had over

2,000 or 3,000 terrorists come into this country. So don't let them kid you.

But what we need to do is to engage them. They're not -- they don't have more values than I do. They're not more religious than I am. They're no better than I am. But if we don't engage them, we lose because we have given it up. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PROFESSOR SIMPKINS: Before we start to take your questions, I have one question for Representative Elliott. We've talked about practical politics and we've talked about the racial nature of the South. And I understand last night when you were telling me about the bill that you got passed, you mentioned frames and how frames were important.

Can you talk a little bit about what you meant and how you use frames in order to accomplish this?

REPRESENTATIVE ELLIOTT: Yes. Because when I got ready to introduce this bill, I was kind of on an island alone, you might say. And most -- none of our House, I think, had even put this bill on their radar because the assumption was it was never going to get past committee. And I must say that was not a bad assumption, and that was really pretty safe.

But I had determined that I was going to frame this issue in a way that people couldn't say no. And I thought about this very carefully. And I should -- I said, I know, I taught

language and composition for years and years, and rhetoric. And if I think about this, I know how to use words enough I can do this. So I, first of all, studied the issue very, very, very carefully and anticipated the other's questions. Remember, I'm pretty familiar with other people's culture because I've had to be.

So what I decided to do was make sure people who wanted to talk about illegal aliens, every time, before they even got their mouths open, I always started the conversation with, this is a bill I want to talk to you about families and children, children and families. That's what I said every time we talked about the bill.

Every time somebody asked me a question about illegal aliens, I never responded to that. I would go right back to children and families, children and families. To the point that when the bill was presented in committee, and I am the chair of the education committee, and so I asked my chair -- my vice chair to make sure that I knew who was going to speak against the bill, who was going to speak for and against the bill before I went to present it, and I did.

And so when I got the list, and I saw that there was nobody who had come forth and signed up, I wanted to make sure that they did not speak up. So when I gave the presentation, I started off talking about this is a bill about families and children, families and children. Every time I told the story, I always went back to, this is about a child. And I know there were people in the room who intended to speak against the bill, but they didn't come

forward because by then to have come forward would have been to come forward and speak against a child.

And I could easily have gotten into an argument of whether or not this was a bill about illegal aliens and I would have lost. And the same thing happened on the floor. And I think that's really important to -- and it sounds like a simple, simple thing, but I had to work very hard to keep the conversation focused in a way that I actually made it about family values. Because I even -- you know, if you know the issue well enough, you know that there are -- there may be a worker here, maybe even in this hotel, who is here legally, but might have brought his family with him later on because he just can't stand seeing his family, you know, only two or three times a year. And those children may now be undocumented.

So I posed the question of who among us would be willing to try to live family values and live without your families? How many of you would do that? Or would not want to have your children with you? So it was a -- I did that, and I also framed it in terms of something the mayor said.

I also talked about why it's good for you from the economic development standpoint. And those two things really just cut off a lot of the -- a lot of naysayers. Even though they wanted to say something, they did not.

And by the way, the picture that was on the front of the newspaper? There was a person who was congratulating me, I guess it was, over my shoulder, there was a white male's head right over my shoulder, and I'm patting him

like -- it looks like something from a (inaudible) from a long time ago but it was a head of a white male who was in a congratulatory moment, but I thought that was so symbolic of what we can do when we, when we steer the conversation. And this was not a man who intended to be on my shoulder, but he was there.

PROFESSOR SIMPKINS: All right. Let's open it up for questions.

MR. LESLIE MCLEMORE: I'm Leslie McLemore from Jackson, Mississippi, member of the Jackson City Council. And I grew up in the Delta too, Professor Griffin. I'm struck by short-term and long-term. The consultants that we had in the panel this morning, are they still here? Any of them still here? Did they leave? Oh, one is here. The moderator. So I'm glad the moderator heard you, Larry, and maybe you know him. Okay. So you-all can talk. But that's short-term. I mean it's -- how can you get somebody elected president as opposed to looking at the long-term issues?

So when you spoke about culture and race as if they were sort of miles apart, you know, clearly the panel this morning didn't get it and didn't understand. But clearly if you are short-term and you are being paid to get somebody elected, that's exactly what you do, but you're concerned about what happens 10, 20 years downstream.

But my question to you, Professor Griffin, is, this Old South, is the Old South getting older or is it getting younger? Because you said the

lingering Old South, and I'm trying to figure out, is it actually getting older or is it getting younger and how do we deal with that in such a way as to deal with the issue of race and culture. Thank you.

PROFESSOR GRIFFIN: I think that's an extraordinarily good question, and I've done a bit of work in looking at the degree to which age is a moderator for these sorts of racial attitudes and some racial actions. On the one hand, there is reason to believe in real genuine progress. The students that I taught here and where I've taught previously at Vanderbilt certainly have more progressive and more humane understandings of race than I did at their age. There is no doubt about that.

Simultaneously, I do not sense a great willingness on their part to implement those understandings in national policy or in personal relations, meaning, I think -- I think they're substantially less bigoted, but they're not particularly interested in moving forward in terms of concrete policies to redistribute wealth, from the racial haves to the racial have-nots or to open doors that they themselves believe ought to be theirs. So I'm ambivalent.

MR. ADAM SASLOW: My name is Adam Saslow. I'm from Atlanta, Georgia. And in the last 24 hours I've been struggling with an issue and may need -- my name is Adam Saslow. I'm from Atlanta, Georgia. And since I got here a day or so ago, I've been struggling, and like many of us, I think. So this is kind of a question for everybody and whoever wants to pick

it up.

I guess I'm struck by some of the things that I've heard. For example, if we don't agree with the president, we're un-American. If we think that the war in Iraq is wrong, we don't support our troops. These are the arguments that we hear in the public domain. If you're an environmentalist, you're against growth and you're against jobs. And throughout the last 24 hours we've heard that it's an imperative, a moral imperative to engage in dialogue and to engage in discourse.

So my question to you folks is, how do we engage in this dialogue and discourse in an era of intolerance?

MAYOR MARTINEZ: By fighting back. By calling in the radio talk shows. By calling the newspaper, by writing e-mails, by standing up. I tell you what was going on in my community during the last election. People would come to me and say, Mayor, I'm going to vote for John Kerry. And I say, why are you saying it to me in a whisper? It was funny because one day I was having dinner with Cam at Versities (ph), which is the typical restaurant in Miami. Every politician that runs in Miami, every affluent politician, comes to Versities because they want to have a shot of the Cuban coffee. And you should see their faces when they put it in their mouth. That's like for me to come up to the central part of the country and say, let me have some moonshine, you know.

People were afraid. People were afraid. We cannot be afraid of the

country of freedom. We have to engage them, whether it's in a -- in a supermarket or whether it's in a park or anywhere. We need to be able not just to back away and say, I want to be a good neighbor and back away, because they don't back away. They lie consistently, they lie and lie and lie and lie. And it gets to the point that that lie becomes truth. It's that, you know, if you want to start a rumor in this corner, and the rumor goes around the room, by the time it gets back here, I believe that that's the truth. So I'm now saying it like if it was something that was true. We need to be able to engage them, not only ourselves and I'm saying myself as an elected official, which I do all the time. I don't keep quiet. But also the people in Congress.

I remember that after 9/11 I met with then-minority leader, or the leader, Dick Gephardt. And you know, he was telling me about all this stuff because I thought I was going to run for Congress and whatever. And I said, look, let's cut down to the chase. Why aren't you engaging the president more? Well, you know, I have a constituency, I have some Congress people on this side of the aisle, I've got some other Congress people within our own party. Everybody was looking for cover. Everybody's looking for the reelection. They're not looking to say what is right or what at least we think is right. They're just looking for reelection.

And you heard it from -- I could almost say my son because I've known him since he was a very, very bad child, and he was, he was terrible.

Don't let him kid you.

REPRESENTATIVE MEEK: Please don't tell them that you're my father.

MAYOR MARTINEZ: We kind of look alike. But he will tell you, he's got to be telling people continuously, I love the armed forces, I respect the armed forces. You know, of course we love them, of course we appreciate them, of course we feel sorry for them being there. They shouldn't be there. But we're afraid because the pundits, that liberal media on Fox News, they'll take it around and change it.

They don't ask me to appear because when I engage on debate, I don't pussy around. I go for the throat, go for the jugular. That's how you win. That's how you win.

(Applause.)

The Congressman knows. He doesn't have any relationship with our Governor. Neither do I. The Governor doesn't want to get in the same room with me because I go to his throat. What is he going to do to me? Take the citizenship away? You know, I've got a couple of countries that would take me.

MR. CLINTON: I want to come at that question from a different point of view, and part of the reason has to do with what I get paid to do for a living, which is balance those governors and fine things that both sets will do. So I'm not going to talk about how you win a political debate and I don't do that.

I think what I want to talk about is

how you win -- how you improve a community. How do you do that? Because I care more about that ultimately. And I think that to -- I don't think that most Southerners get up in the morning and say, you know, I'm feeling so conservative today, I think I'm going to get up and do something conservative just to show how conservative I am. I don't think people walk around with that label. The average person, in the average community.

The label comes when you've got to make a decision on an election. And most people go do the best thing they can do, based on feelings more than facts. And that's the reality. So how do we change our communities? How do we address all of these issues, aside from electing public officials, which we clearly need to do. And I think that there we need to move beyond the labels. There we don't need to come with a conservative idea or a liberal idea or a regressive idea or a progressive idea. We need to come up with an effective idea, something that works and where we can measure how it works and how it will improve people's lives.

And if we do that, I think we can engage people at the community level. People who are not as concerned about labels and are not concerned about winning a debate. They're concerned about improving the quality of life in their community. And I think we need to build better habits and skills on consensus building in communities. Consensus decision-making. Grass roots involvement, people making decisions at the community level based on

involving everyone in the community, listening to everyone's challenges, engaging everyone.

Politicians will follow that. They will move with the community. I think our larger task is to move the community.

PROFESSOR GRIFFIN: If I may very quickly, by -- I was shaking my head, not because I thought the premise was incorrect. I thought it was a devastating question. So it was like, oh, heavens, what do we say to that question?

PROFESSOR JESSE WHITE: Jesse White from UNC Chapel Hill. The mayor's passionate portrayal, which I think is accurate of sort of this Kafkaesque world we live in in terms of how the political debate has been Shanghaied and new language created and in many ways big lies told. Reminds me to recall that one of the three sponsors of this program today is the UNC Program on Southern Politics, Media and Public Life, my good friend and colleague Ferrel Guillory.

So my question to the panel, which is something we really hadn't heard much today, is what is the changing role of the media in helping us craft a progressive agenda? There's certainly been a lot of changes of it in my lifetime, but I would love to know the perspective of any of the panelists and what we can do about it to improve it.

MAYOR MARTINEZ: That's very, very difficult to answer. I don't know if Hodding Carter's still around. I wish that he would have been the

publisher of the Miami Herald rather than be the president of the Knight Foundation because there's a perfect example. The newspaper was a great newspaper when they would publish what I would say were neutral things. But then they started pandering to the right. And I have to buy the Sunset, you know, which is the newspaper in upper Broward, to really know what's going on in the world. And you take the news, it's totally slanted, and they're afraid because they might lose readership in the community.

What I think has happened -- and I've seen many publishers come and go -- and the Herald they've always been after politicians, and I've always beaten them including the last one when that was leaving before I do. The problem has been that for 40 years the extreme right has been attacking the media as being liberal. And then they started saying, well, maybe we need to go a little bit to the center, without us realizing that the right was Shanghaing the media and controlling the media.

And today, even in those channels, CNN, even people that work in the Democratic administration, they try to be fair, they try to be balanced. Now when you get only one side in two or three other stations, and then you are fair in one or two others, what do you think's going to happen? People are going to believe what they're being told continuously. Whether it's true or not. And the latest example is the famous book that this guy put out, Wehd. Here's the president that was attacking Al Gore for drug usage, here's a president whose life began at 42. He's the only person that was

born at 42. You know. You-all kid, yeah. So we cannot know about his past. He can attack everybody else's past, but we can't touch his. And now that he has been exposed -- and I don't know whether he did it or not -- well, this guy's a traitor, this guy's committing treason to the Bush family. And that's what's happening. You will see that fade away because the media is afraid. Why? Because now the media is not independent anymore. CBS is owned by Viacom. NBC is owned by General Electric. ABC is owned by Disney. And who controls Wall Street? The Saudis. That's the truth. And who's going to control banking in the United States? The Chinese. And that's the truth. And they'll tell you, oh, we don't tell him what to do editorially -- oh, come on. You believe in Santa Claus.

REPRESENTATIVE ELLIOTT: All righty then. Two things on that question -- well, I guess maybe three because the first one I realize is there is not a great deal I can do about the media itself. But one of the things that has happened, we don't exactly have a liberal media in Little Rock, Arkansas. So I think we have some control though as progressives to be patient and just continue to do and do and do the right thing. Stop -- you know, not just talk about it, but actually demonstrate it. Because sometimes you know the question that was asked about, how do we -- how do we engage the other side? One of the mistakes I think we make about anything is we will try it one -- a time or two, and if it doesn't work, we just go away.

You know, suppose other folks who

have made tremendous differences in this country, because they were not successful the first 10 times they tried, they quit. And so because we're not being real successful with mainstream media doesn't mean that we should not continue to just do and do and do and say the right things. For example, in the media market in Little Rock, Arkansas, they do -- our newspaper does a horrible thing. They name like the 10 best and the 10 worst. You know, what do you think -- what do you think I was on that list last term? 10 best, 10 worse. I was on their 10 best. Because I just simply have not paid them any attention, and the people know who me, the people know by my example and by what I do that I'm not a bad person, that I'm a good person and so does that newspaper.

Now, there's somebody that didn't always say good things about me, but that's not the point. The point is that they said bad things about me didn't mean that I changed who I was and what I was doing. And the second thing that I think is important about the media, I think we have a responsibility as progressives to help people think about and understand that there are other sources out there.

And I don't refer to them as alternative sources because that would be to suggest they're less than -- do you watch Link TV? Do you watch the BBC? Do you read the Ugly Reader? Do you read Mother Jones? Most -- and The Nation, that's exactly right. Most of the people that we are trying to engage and that we want to be progressive don't even know those publications exist. But we never help them know that they exist as well.

And so I just concede I can't do anything about the conservative media. But I can do something about being the example that I know is the right thing to do. And not ever -- I have -- maybe it comes from teaching school, but I have the patience of Job and I am just simply not deterred by what they do. I'm not responsible for them. But I do think we have a huge responsibility to help our constituents know that there are other places out there, and the Internet as well, where you can get -- you can get good information.

MS. LAUREN GLENN: My name is Lauren Glenn, and I also work for the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation in Oxford, Mississippi.

Dr. Griffin, you said earlier that we do live in a culture of race in the South. And yet today we've heard from so many of these political speakers that race is a very divisive issue and not to focus on race when one is focusing on the next election, and if you do focus on race you're going to lose the white moderates that we're looking to bring over to the progressive agenda.

So if that's true and if race is such a divisive issue and yet we work in these communities in Mississippi where, you know, we see the Mississippi is still dominated by a culture of race, then where does race fit into the progressive agenda? And that's my question.

MR. CLINTON: I have to say, again, I think that there may be, for my way of thinking, too much faith in existing leadership. I don't think our challenge is to change the hearts of people who

have been elected to office, based on what -- based on who they have been.

I think our challenge is to change what's going on in communities and to redefine that debate so that we choose better leaders. So we choose leaders that are responsive to all of us.

We always end up getting the leaders that we deserve. Well, maybe not always. I'll rephrase that. We often get the leaders that we deserve. We often elect the people that the majority of us in fact want to elect.

So if we're going to change that, we have to change what's going on in that conversation among us. I think the -- our challenge is not so much who our leaders are now, but who we want them to be and how we're going to go about making that true.

PROFESSOR GRIFFIN: Very quickly. First, thank you for being in Mississippi doing that.

(Applause.)

And I have absolutely no answer to your question. But I do believe not raising race will not make it go away. I can be wrong and my heart says one thing and my head the other. And I hope that my heart is right, but my head says no. I believe when this nation, and particularly this region, talks about taxes, we're talking about race. When we talk about spending, we're talking about race. When we talk about family values, we're talking about race. When we talk about jobs, when we talk about fairness, I think we're talking about race. And that means not talking about race means simply that we're not saying what we are already saying.

REPRESENTATIVE ELLIOTT: I think that race fits into the progressive discussion kind of in a stealthy way because it is difficult to be a progressive and talk about race if you're not living what you're talking about. And somebody mentioned earlier, posed the questions, where do you live and where do your kids go to school, and with whom do you socialize? If you don't have credibility, if you can't speak about race and look at yourself with social authenticity, you know, you just don't need to be talking about it because nobody's going to believe you.

One of the things I have been very, very careful to do, not because I want to be a politician, but because it is core to what I am. I live by design in an integrated neighborhood. If I'm in a room with a group of African Americans, I will not tolerate from African Americans the putting down of another group just because we're the only people in the room. I will not do it. And it upsets some of my friends when I do that. But I think as a progressive I have got to be true to myself, that I know when I open my mouth -- and I will say this. I do talk about race, but I never speak about race in a way that I get into confrontations with people where I'm not believable because people know me and they know how I live. And they know when I talk about race, I'm talking about race, not in a way of pointing fingers, but to reach resolution. And if all you want to do is talk about race and say it's bad and it's in the room and it's awful, then of course, it's going to be a conversation that's divisive. But it doesn't have to

be.

If you come to a conversation with resolution in mind instead of blame, and most of the times we come to the discussion with blame in mind and it gets us nowhere.

MS. SARAH BROWN: Hi. I'm Sarah Brown from Greenville, South Carolina, and I work for the Greenville News. I just have a quick question for you guys. I'm kind of getting panicky because it's the last panel and this is called the New Strategies for Southern Progress. And I've got a notebook full of problems. Seriously, I've been voraciously taking notes since yesterday. And I'm really upset about the state of the South, and I really haven't seen a clear strategy coming out of this panel. So I was wondering -- and it's not criticism -- that is, I hope that in the next few minutes we can really, really approach things in a positive manner and talk about strategies and it's not just problems.

REPRESENTATIVE ELLIOTT: Let me give an answer to your question and I don't mean this flippantly at all, but I think that question is kind of central to what is really a part of our problem. As you know, you mentioned problems. Because I don't know that I came to this session thinking I was going to go away with solutions because it is the first session we have done here. And so that while I have absolute sympathy with your desire to have some answers and -- but that's part of what I see as our problem. Remember the conservatives are in charge because they toiled for years and years and

years to find the answer.

I don't know that I'll have the answer.

I know some things I've done as a politician and as a person have worked such as -- and here's some things that I think are useful, but I don't posit these as the answers.

The first thing I think we need to do is not just pretend we have respect for the other side but genuinely respect the other side. Learn about the other side and talk to them as if they should be spoken to as dignified people. For example, now, we've talked today about the lottery and whether or not the lottery is a good or bad thing. And I just have to say this because I argue with my friends about this all the time. Some people in this room legitimately say the lottery is a bad idea because it will just use poor people. I just find that so incredibly offensive to say that. Because what it suggests is that if you are poor you don't have the ability to decide how you want to spend your money, even though you worked harder for your money than everybody else did.

So to me, that is talking down and demeaning. And I bring that up because I think it's also the way sometimes we can talk about the people on the other side in the conservative movement. So if we can't start out from a point of respect and -- you know, listen to that country song. You know, do you really know what NASCAR stands for? You know, those kind of things.

When you talk with people, do you just require them just to listen to you or do you actually listen to them?

And do you understand that in spite of their looking totally different from you there really is some common ground that you can find. And I think it is a difficult, difficult thing to do. But in the end, I think we must absolutely look at this as a human issue. And if we ever just start looking at everybody else as a human and, you know, recognize race and all that's part of it, but start thinking, what can we do to find common ground, I think is what we absolutely have to do.

But I don't think that's the total answer because I'm sure there are answers out there I will discover the minute I shut up and tomorrow that, you know, I can't even iterate to you today, but I think patience is in order here.

MR. CLINTON: I wanted to -- I guess my answers would fall into two interpretations of the question. If the question is, what are the strategies to win elections and pursue a particular agenda, then those questions are for the political people to answer and that was -- this morning's consultants can give you all the wrong answers for that. But if the question is, how do we improve communities, how do we do that? How do we build quality of life in the South, I don't think any of those are mysteries. I think that MDC and the Winter Center and Southern Growth and Southern Arts Federation and the Council of the Southern Community and half a dozen other organizations I can think of without even working at it have been developing those strategies and they are out there. They're available. Our Web site is full of them.

The question is, where's the political will? Do we have the political will to embrace change at that level and to make the kinds of differences that we hope to make?

MAYOR MARTINEZ: If you want instant gratification. As a Cuban, I would tell you, let's start a revolution. That's -- we can start right now. But I think that what makes us different than them is that we have been able to be here for two days and discuss all kinds of diverse opinion. And from here, you know, hopefully we are -- we have all learned from the discussions. If it was them, it would be like a cult, everybody has to follow the line. They'll send you the script in the morning and they'll all repeat the same thing over and over and over again.

And in deference to my friend here, if you want to have better communities, get better elected officials, because they'll make the difference.

PROFESSOR SIMPKINS: I'm getting the wrap-up sign, so I think that's a great subject to close on. That this is really the beginning of a conversation, and that conversation will continue. Tomorrow we'll talk about more concrete strategies that we can use to make this a Better South. And with that, I'll close our panel. I'd like to thank our panelists.

(Applause.)

MR. GUILLORY: I too would like to thank the panel and all of the panelists who were here today. We're going to break in just a few moments. Alys

Campaigne has been listening to all of you and would like to -- I'd like to call her up to summarize and to try to bring our conversations to a conclusion. And then I'm going to come back here and we're going to go have some fun. Thanks.

MAYOR MARTINEZ: I was only kidding about the revolution.

MS. ALYS CAMPAIGNE: It's a tough job to stay between both the bar and the revolution plot that's happening in here. So I'll be very brief. So I just really want to take time to thank you and to say just a couple of things. When work on the conference began, we made a pretty deliberate decision to explore both the policies and the specific nuts and bolts of what kinds of things we could do to tackle the South's current challenges, but we also did want to talk more about what the progressive narrative might be that could help to bind these policies and policies more tightly. And there was a reason for that. And that's because we were thinking that outside of Washington, you know, Americans really aren't thinking in terms of policies and proposals and programs, and instead they're thinking about the goals that we have for ourselves, the goals we have for our families and the obstacles that we need to overcome in order to reach those goals. And that's true everywhere, of course, and it's especially true here in the South. And that's why at this moment we're convinced that what progressives need to offer isn't really a laundry list of new government initiatives. Instead it's a clearer vision of the kind of America that we see. And it's a nation

where families join together to lift each other up, a nation where no one's left on the outside looking in and where everybody has a seat at the table and an opportunity to try to make our dreams come true.

That's the vision that we as progressives can begin to offer. It's a story that we can begin to tell. And I really am so grateful for all of your participation here because the conversations we've had, I believe, have really moved us forward in this endeavor. And I particularly want to thank a lot of questions that have come up here because it's true that we haven't found all of the answers here today and I don't think that it would be possible to do it in a one-day, two-day or probably a ten-day conference. But what we heard from you is that we really need to dig deeper and look at some of the things that we talked about like, how will we strengthen the right to organize in the new economy, how can we address the concerns of not just the NASCAR lovers among us, but also the full and diverse multicultural community that we live in and how can we better tap the talents of the kind of innovators of the future that we heard about today, this afternoon.

So I hope that many of you, as John was saying, can come tomorrow and join us for the discussion about the Center for a Better South that's committed to furthering the development of these new approaches. And for our part, I want to tell you that we're committed at the Center for American Progress to doing what we can and doing what it takes to build on the conversations

that have begun here and to take a lot of the learning from these kind of conversations back to Washington to help shape the discussion back home, which is also a critical piece of this dialogue.

We are in fact planning a series of get-togethers like these throughout the country. But the bottom line here is, if we're going to be successful, whether it's here in the South or anywhere elsewhere, we would need more than your best wishes in this and indeed what we really need is your best ideas and to keep these kinds of conversations going. And so with that I will turn back to Ferrel who can bring us closer to the Old Well room and the cocktail that is deserved for all of your participation here today.

(Applause.)

MR. GUILLORY: John, thank you for coming, being a force behind pushing us here. Andy. I hope in the further conversations that Alys spoke about that we have already set a high standard. This has been a wonderful turnout. I can't speak for the whole university, but from my little pod of it, you have honored us by your presence in such great numbers. And now we're going to continue the conversation in a more relaxed and personal atmosphere. The Old Well room, you turn left and you go down the hall and you just sort of bear left. It's the room with the kind of the sunken dance floor. It's a very gorgeous room actually. And we will have some time for food and drink and conversation. And thank you very much for being here. It's been a pleasure.

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