

Transcript: Opening remarks

New Strategies for Southern Progress conference

Feb. 25, 2005

Carolina Inn, Chapel Hill, N.C.

Speakers:**John Podesta**, president of the Center for American Progress**Ferrel Guillory**, director of the Program on Southern Politics, Media and Public Life at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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MR. PODESTA: Good morning, everyone. For those of you who weren't here last night, I'm John Podesta, with the Center for American Progress. I just want to state again the wonderful panel that we began this conference with last night. David Pryor, Hodding Carter --

(Applause)

I think that it was not just a powerful vision that was expressed on that panel, but the lives that those gentlemen have led that really provided an inspiration to all of us here throughout -- at this conference and in the days ahead that something really is possible. When you put your mind to it, put your soul into it, you can get a lot -- you can get a lot done. Everybody heard me last night. I'm not going to repeat what I said, but I'm about to turn the program over to our partner, Ferrel Guillory, but before I do that, I want to take a moment to thank the staff here at UNC because it was their leadership in organizing this program, being such wonderful hosts, that really made this

thing possible. And, Ferrel, thank you but thank also your staff. I think it's no exaggeration to say this conference would not have been possible without you and your staff.

And as I mentioned last night, the New Strategies for Southern Progress Conference partners are not partisan educational institutions that do not seek to advance the interest of any particular political party or candidate for office, but we do seek to advance a progressive agenda.

Today we want to continue our efforts to identify the policies and ideas that can help shape a moderate progressive narrative in the South. I think those of us here would probably be in agreement, as most of the panels were last night, on some of the most important components of that: Better schools, affordable quality health care, new business investment, to promote sustainable economic growth and jobs, jobs for the future and jobs with a real future. And I think all of those things are linked together, and we'll be exploring them during the course of

the day.

We seek -- in short, new strategies we seek have less to do with struggle than with advancement and seeing to it that every Southern family has the opportunity to work hard and grab hold of the American dream. To help us in that exploration, we're lucky to be joined by a very talented group of current leaders and scholars who will explore in greater detail some of the challenges facing this region and the progressive response. And with today's discussion, we hope we can begin to craft a progressive framework for developing those responses that are going to lead us into the future.

To help get us started this morning, we're going to -- we'll have a brief introduction by Ferrel. Then take a little bit of a break so that people can refresh their coffee and then we're going to start with the panel. But to help get us going this morning is our partner and host, Ferrel Guillory, Director of the Program on Southern Politics, Media and Public Life at the University of North Carolina.

(Applause.)

MR. GUILLORY: Thank you, John. I want to reciprocate genuinely in thanking you and Alys Campaigne and Drew Warshaw -- wherever Drew is -- and the staff for the Center for American Progress. You've been wonderful to work with and have been stimulating collaborators. I'd like to also thank Andy Brack for his collaboration. Andy is here today and tomorrow to take a big step toward realizing his dream of creating a Center for a Better South.

John mentioned our staff. The vast staff includes Eric Gautschi. Eric is here. Eric is the assistant director of the program, and I mention that so that you will know that we have graduate students here who are working on our new blog. And so this session -- these sessions today are going to be reported in almost real time on the web, southnow.org. We invite you to visit us. There's a lot of data on the South there too.

I want to recognize my colleagues at the Center for the Study of the American South, Bill Ferris, Harry Watson -- I didn't see Harry come in but I think he's here -- and Judith Wegner, the chair of the faculty and our esteemed colleague in the law school back here. Thank you, Judith, for being here. And thanks to all of you for showing up in numbers far beyond what we had originally anticipated and even budgeted for, but somehow we'll manage.

Let me take a couple of minutes here just to frame the conversation we're going to have today at this podium and the table and around the tables where you are sitting. The academic plan for the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill broadens our university's concept and commitment to public service to encompass the concept of public engagement. The plan envisions that the university works to identify the major issues facing us in our time and place, and that it would contribute to the development of policies to address those challenges.

The plan also says that the future of

society at the state, national and international levels requires greater understanding of how the next generation of leaders can be nurtured effectively to become the best possible decision makers for the public and private sectors.

Since its inception, the Program of Southern Politics, Media and Public Life has sought to serve as a connecting tissue between the university and the public realm of our state and region, and I'm especially indebted to the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation -- some members of its board and staff are here -- for the funding that has sustained us. And I owe a special debt of gratitude to Tom Lambeth back there for his leadership of the university and of our state.

As its director, my twin goals have been to build stronger capacity at Chapel Hill for informing the state and regional agenda in nurturing public leadership. We gather here in keeping with the mandate for engagement and in keeping with the history and the tradition of the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.

In his 1941 book, *Tar Heels, a Portrait of North Carolina*, Jonathan Daniels devoted a chapter called The Village Citadel to the University and its special meaning to North Carolina and the South. Daniels described the University at Chapel Hill as the freest university in the South, as free as any in America. And he saw that its distinctive strength resided in its -- illuminating and advancing the state and region's long-marched progress. While it may seem like a miracle --

that was Daniels' word -- that our state produced the South's premiere public university, Daniels concluded by writing, there is hardly any place in the South which makes such a light.

More than 50 years later, George Brown Tindall, who is a professor emeritus of history here at UNC Chapel Hill, observed about the university, by casting down its buckets where it was, the university achieved a national and world recognition which few, if any, had anticipated as a result of such seeming parochialism.

Throughout the last century, two powerful currents in an amalgam of culture and economics and ideology have coursed through the region's political landscape, and our panels and I have talked about this. One stream has its head waters in the traditionalist, isolated churchgoing, rural communities that mark our state and much of the South through the first half of the 20th century. And it now winds its way through sprawling suburbs where it picks up strength from economic Libertarians and moderate Christian fundamentalists. There's a competing stream that flows out of a public private partnership devoted to educational advancement and economic modernizing. Out of this stream have come leaders, both public and private, who work toward racial change. And it includes a network that still exists of civic business and political leaders.

Of course, state by state differences exist in a region that stretches all the way from the Potomac to the Pedernales. If I were in my native state of Louisiana right now, I would

have to say a few words about Longs and anti-Longs and about party politic divided among three cultures. But here in North Carolina, I can say that this progressive stream has been augmented by a strong philanthropic sector and nourished intellectually over the years by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

It makes sense, therefore, that in this place where Howard Odom and Frank Porter Graham and Bill Freiden and Terry Sanford and our current governor -- whom I hope you'll meet in a few minutes -- Mike Easley, the place where they learned and learned to lead, that we gather to consider the course and the condition of the progressive stream in Southern life. This is an intellectually significant subject, and in tackling it, we should be prepared to think deeply and rigorously about the South of today as it is actually lived by its citizens.

At the university, with an abiding commitment to its public character, we ought to encourage discussion and full-throated debates as we have through an array of forums that foster a clash of ideas across the ideological spectrum, deliberation and debate through which a democracy thrives. I look forward to the university serving as an even livelier hub of Southern studies, policy analysis and leadership development.

Having dismantled legal racial barriers, the South has grown in population and economic prowess. It is a dynamic changing region, capable of national leadership. Still progress is not automatic. Politics won't inevitably improve. We've got to

work at it. Democracy must be attended to day by day, and that's what we're here to do. And I thank you for coming here today to take part in a discussion at a great university that surely will lead to a more robust democracy in the American South. So thank you for being here.

(Applause.)

Okay. We've got two dashes to make. The panel and moderator are going to dash up here and some of us, including me, are going to dash to the coffee pot, and then we're going to get started in about three minutes.

(A recess was taken.)

Transcript: Mind of the South: Understanding Public Attitudes

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Speakers:

Andy Brack, president of the Center for a Better South

David Beattie, Hamilton Beattie & Staff, Fernandina Beach, Fla. (moderator)

Susan Howell, Director, Survey Research Center, University of New Orleans

Ruy Teixeira, Joint Fellow, Center for American Progress and The Century Foundation

Mac McCorkle, principal, McCorkle Policy Consulting

David "Mudcat" Saunders, Political Consultant

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MR. BRACK: Good morning. Good morning. That is what is called progress. You-all did better the second time. My name is Andy Brack. I'm from Charleston, South Carolina, and I'm the president of the New Center for a Better South. We want to welcome you-all here and thank you for coming this morning.

A fellow last night that was sitting over here from North Carolina asked, what does it mean to be progressive? And I started thinking about it last night, again, and I think it means doing better for everyone. Working on policies and programs and procedures and this, that and the other to move things forward for everyone regardless of whether you're black, white, brown, yellow, blue, green, purple or polka-dotted. And I think that a lot of people in the South these days don't look to do better by everyone.

They don't seem to remember the incantation, love thy neighbor as thyself. They don't seem to remember things like, let's leave this earth a better place than when we found it. And I think that the challenge that exists for my generation is to overcome a culture of hate that has seemed to infect Southern politics and Southern policies and legislatures, to overcome the stalemate, to get past the intellectual gridlock that has matured in legislatures all around. That's my preaching for the day.

I want to get over a couple of housekeeping matters, and then we'll move straight to our first panel. First of all, tomorrow morning we will have a meeting of -- an organizational meeting for the Center for a Better South to which you-all are all invited. There will be breakfast at 8:30 and the meeting starts at 9. We'll be happy to welcome former Georgia Governor Roy Barnes who will speak and who

will help make a case for a new Southern progressive think tank. There's also an op ed that was in yesterday's News and Observer that you might pick a copy up outside that tries to make that case as well. Tomorrow's meeting is on Saturday so anybody who wears a tie gets shot.

I also want to thank my friend Lynn Clark, who's in the pink in the back here, and she is doing the official transcript for today's proceedings. We'll have some from last night too. And in two or three weeks we hope to send an e-mail around to all of you-all for people who have e-mails to give you results of the conference. So you don't have to take notes, because she's taking notes for us.

Also I want to thank all of my friends from Charleston who have come here. Most of the time the guys wear the typical Charleston uniform, which is a blue blazer and khaki pants that most of us would call high waters. But they're disguised throughout the room so you-all watch out for them. Thank you-all from Charleston and from South Carolina for coming. And I also want to thank the Center for American Progress, John Podesta, Alys Campaigne, Drew Warshaw and Ferrel Guillory for all they've done to make this panel and this conference possible.

What we're going to talk about first -- last night we kind of framed the discussion. What we're going to talk about this morning is to get the observation and analysis of some leading pollsters and some leading political figures about where the South is. What is the mind of the South

right now? What are we dealing with? It's not Jethro and the Dukes of Hazzard and grits. The South now is a black, white, brown and yellow society. And we need to understand more deeply how this society is functioning if we seek to make progressive changes in it.

This panel also is going to be important because the observations that are voiced here will help lead to what I hope is an annual Better South Poll, and that isn't a global warming type thing. That's going to be an annual poll that the Center for a Better South comes up with to measure how we're doing on implementing and thinking about progressive issues.

So let's talk -- let me introduce this morning the panel to you. Starting here on my right, your left, is Dave Beattie, who's the moderator. Dave is president of Hamilton, Beattie and Staff which is a Florida and Washington polling firm. He is a talented young pollster, and you can read about his bio in the thing, as for everyone. But I think that you'll find that he likes looking behind the numbers to figure out what does it mean to attitudes.

Next we have our friend Mudcat, David "Mudcat" Saunders is a rural political consultant in partner with Steve Jarding in the Rural Renaissance Consulting Firm in southern Virginia. I think you'll enjoy listening to some of his stories.

Then we have Ruy Teixeira, who is a joint fellow at the Center for American Progress and the Century

Foundation. You-all might remember he wrote an outstanding book about a year and a half, two years ago called the Emerging Democratic Majority. That really put a -- showed how progressive folks can move forward and how the numbers are on our side.

And finally we have Dr. Susan Howell from New Orleans who is the director of Survey Research Center at the University of New Orleans and a professor of political science. She's got some slides that I think you'll really enjoy. So without further adieu, thank you-all again for coming and let me give you Dave Beattie and he'll get rolling.

MR. BEATTIE: Thank you-all for being here today. To me, it's actually really an honor to be here because I applied to the University of North Carolina twice and was rejected. So I'm happy to be here today.

I have a basic premise that I think people on the panel, in the room, some will agree with some of what I have to say and what we have to say. And obviously there's going to be debate about what we say. Because if the answers are clear and there was one right and one wrong, it would be simple, and we could just hand out bullet points and walk away.

I've got a basic premise that if you can't win in rural areas, you're going to be a minority voice in this country because of how our system is set up. That we have a system that leans towards rural areas is where the power is in much of our country. And it's a lesson really that America learned from Vietnam. You can't hold the

cities and lose the countryside and expect you're going to win the war.

Now, what seems to have happened is that we failed to articulate the principles that are at stake, and faith became a debate about gay marriage and partial birth abortion, which is a very narrow concept of right and wrong. Americans really believe in much more than that. Equal opportunity. Kindness to strangers. Treating others as we like to be treated. Repaying our debts. Standing up to bullies who prey -- who prey on the weak. Those are ideals that Americans agree with, and when we articulate them, they agree with us.

We have to move away from the image, the appearance, that we cater to an intellectual elite, and we have to overcome a fear of taking a stand for something that may not be popular with everyone but is important to us. What happens is we do portray this elitist attitude to blacks and to Hispanics and to rural whites, and they get that. And progressives, I think especially in Washington, seem to be unable to talk to people of faith, so sometimes they fail to talk about people of faith with respect. And someone told me this recently, that if we talked about blacks in the same tone that we talk about people of faith, in the same derisive tone, we'd be called racists. And I think that that's how some of the rural whites feel, that they're discriminated against and people don't understand.

Now, Republican success comes from their mythology of small government and personal wealth. They have this icon, Ronald Reagan, that they

attribute his -- they attribute any of their ideals to, whether Reagan either believed them ^4on the ^ or not. Now -- and voters like this vision, this positive grandfatherly figure and the picture that is painted, even if that picture that's painted isn't their own reality. And they use one word to describe progressives at every level, and that's liberal. From the statehouse to the White House they use the same word, and it gets to be an echo chamber. But we also play into their hands. We talk about policy but not the ideals behind what we stand for and what we fight for and why we're fighting. And we seem to be this out-of-touch -- out-of-touch elite, and to many Americans we are that party, the out-of-touch elite. They're in the party of the Republican party, the party of the common person. In the South obviously we face unique challenges. Kerry won (sic) every state in the South. He won (sic) 90 percent of the counties that are majority white from the South. And over the last 40 years, basically the South has transformed from a racially divided bastion of Democratic strength to racially divided enemy territory. And it's too simple to say that it's ignorant, racist Southern whites who refuse to vote their economic self-interest that's the problem. It's this rhetorical disconnect that is the problem. And the rhetoric of belief and rhetoric of ideal and a commitment to a higher purpose and a higher power, it's not something that a party can define. It's something that people have to define.

And people have to stand for and fight for, from individuals.

Now, our panel is going to look at where voters are, how attitudes are

affecting them and how language is affecting them. Again, some of them are going to agree and expand on what I said because it's brilliant, or show me exactly where and why I'm wrong. And at the end we will have time for questions. And we're going to come down -- come down, have the panel -- starting with Susan.

And one of the things I would like to point out, which I think for some reason is unfair, that if you work in politics you get a name in quotes. Mudcat and Mac, and then the rest of us don't get our name in quotes. So if you think of one for us, we feel like we'd like to earn one through the panel. So Susan.

DR. HOWELL: Thank you. I have to stand up because I'm short and because I'm a college professor and I have to stand up and talk.

In my six minutes here -- in my six minutes, what I'd like to do is outline what I think where the room -- okay. My clicker -- is there room for a progressive agenda in the South from a public opinion standpoint. There's bad news and there's good news. But if by way of background, let's look at what happened in the 2004 election.

Bush increased his share of the vote in every Southern state except North Carolina from 2000 to 2004.

(Applause.)

All right. The North Carolina delegates. This increase went from 1 to 6 percentage points. So the Republican, or the nonprogressive, agenda gained -- certainly we can

point to the reasons like the war and Kerry's candidacy -- but Bush gained in the South. Most importantly, there was no Southern state where Bush did worse in 2004 than in 2000. So where did this come from? We know from national exit polls that the change from 2000 to 2004 was concentrated among working class whites.

So recognizing the importance of this group, I have identified the working class whites in the South in a number of national surveys, carved them out and taken a look at their opinion. The working class whites -- there are some barriers obviously, we know them, when you tie it to a progressive agenda. On the positive side though there is a strong populist culture to build on. By populist, I mean an anti-elitism and a belief in ordinary working people as the real authentic Americans. But of course, there are barriers to a progressive agenda among the working class whites. One of which is there's little class polarization among whites in the South. If you look across polls, there's not much difference between what working class whites believe and what upper middle class whites believe in the South. And that obviously is a problem when you're trying to create an interest group based on economics in the working class. Working class whites do not perceive much in common with African Americans, and African Americans are, of course, part of the heart of a progressive agenda. So we have a race problem there and then we have the lack of economic polarization.

The populism of working class whites in the South is conservative populism.

Conservative populism means the enemy is government. The enemy is regulation. The enemy of the liberal -- cultural liberals, the Northeastern elite, et cetera. So that's the bad news.

But more of the bad news, when we look at the party identification of working class Southern whites versus the -- and I debated -- you know, I just made it a dichotomy here.

Anybody without a college education, I'm calling working class. With a college education is everybody else. So recognize that that's a fairly crude separation.

But look at the largest group of identifiers among those in the working class are Republicans. So you have this high degree of Republicanism in the working class which is obviously a serious problem for a progressive agenda. Another problem and illustration of conservative populism is that part of the culture of the South is that big government is a bad thing. And you have here two-thirds of the working class believe that the federal government controls too much of daily life. I don't know what they're referring to, but they believe it.

Now, let's go to the good news. Progressive populism. There is antibusiness sentiment across the board in the South. One of the speakers last night referred to the global corporate elite. There are many people in the South, working class and middle class, who believe that big business does not serve the public interest. The progressive agenda can certainly build on recent events highlighting business abuses, Worldcom, Enron, et cetera, which I don't think have been utilized to the

maximum to appeal to the working class. Not just in the South but across the board.

More progressive populism. Southern whites do not believe that the rich pay enough taxes. Now, this is another basis for a progressive agenda. There is a feeling that upper income people are getting away with something. They have unfair advantages. And in the area of health-care, we find that a third of the working class whites in the South cannot afford needed health-care, which of course, is one of the main issues of the progressive agenda.

One of I think the problems with the progressive agenda compared to the conservative agenda is the question of who will be the foe, who will be the enemy? Republicans have -- just talking political strategy here, Republicans have used big government and the Northeast liberal elites, the media as their foe.

We can use something too. We can use -- here's some ideas. The top two. The corporate elites. The corporate elites who have abused working people, endangered their retirements, the CEOs get away with their money and stick it to the working people. Wealthy people. There are -- there is a populism of the working class can be appealed to here, that higher income people are not paying their way in this society. They're getting too wealthy. They have unfair advantages. They can afford expensive colleges. They don't pay their fair share into Social Security.

Now those two -- the global enemies

there can be used to support an agenda on Social Security and health-care and college tuition. I include college tuition here. This has not been spoken about a lot, but we're getting to the point in this country where there's two classes of colleges. Where there are the prestige -- it's 30,000 and up and it's 10,000 and down. There's nothing in the middle. And the working class people cannot afford, without huge debt, or if they have a genius kid, to go to what they consider to be one of the better colleges or a top college or a private college.

Social Security is an issue where we can argue -- and actually even President Bush argued this -- I hate to be quoting him about this, but that the upper income people are not paying their way. Health-care can play into the corporate elite because the drug companies and insurance companies are driving up the costs.

One of my favorite issues on the progressive agenda is that the progressive agenda must embrace religious voters. And this is a theme that we've heard already this morning. America is a religious country, not all churchgoers are politicized to the right. In fact, for many churchgoers, the religious right is somewhat offensive to them. The value that is embodied in the Christian-Judeo tradition that is progressivism is humanitarianism. We do believe in America that we are our brother's keeper. We are a giving culture, we are a helping culture. This is particularly true of the South. And this value has not been emphasized enough in a progressive agenda.

Another -- going to the culture wars, I believe a progressive agenda can and should take a strong stand against violence, pornography, TV, video games, Internet. Under the Republican watch, which has been the last, let's say, 20 years, this has gotten worse. They're the ones that are supposed to be against this stuff, but there are primetime television shows in the central time zone -- not here, but central time zone -- that the whole thing is based on sexual innuendo. It's on at 8:00 at night. Now, I'm not a prude, but as a progressive agenda here, I think we can stand up for families, we can protect children, we can help parents by taking a stronger stand. Also from a political standpoint, who's going to be against this? The Hollywood crowd is not doing us any good here. They're the ones making money off of this stuff.

Okay. So in summary, the progressive wedges and issues that I think can be identified, all of which are perfectly consistent with the culture of the South. There is an abusive corporate elite that's taking advantage of working people, and the wealthy people are not paying their way. There's a widening gap between the rich and the poor. America is becoming a two-class society. And the working class people increasingly cannot afford health insurance or adequate health insurance, and cannot afford the colleges that they might want to send their children to, and we can take greater control over what's available to our children on the Internet and through video games, et cetera. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. BEATTIE: What is the emerging democratic majority?

MR. TEIXEIRA: Mr. Numbers Teixeira?

MR. BEATTIE: Let's do numbers. All right, Mr. Numbers.

MR. TEIXEIRA: I thought what I'd do to just kind of help set up a basis for discussion is look at some data comparing 1996 to 2004. Because things have changed a bit over the last eight years. For example, in 1996 Clinton split the Southern vote with Bob Dole 46 to 46 and carried five Southern states, where I defined Southern states as the Old Confederacy plus Kentucky and Oklahoma, which is pretty standard. So split the Southern vote 46/46.

Now, in 2004, Kerry lost to Bush 57/42 in these 13 states, and he lost, of course, every single Southern state. So what happened? Well, part of it is definitely kind of tied to what Susan was saying. It's kind a white working class story to some large extent. In 1996 Clinton lost white working class voters in the South by about 16 points, which may not sound that good, but think about how John Kerry did in 2004. He lost white working class voters in the South by 44 points. That hurts. 72/28.

I think it's kind of hard to do well in this region when you're losing white working class voters by 72 to 28 percent. It's also interesting to look at the shifts that have taken place

spacially, different types of communities in the South. What my data show is that since 1996 there's been a shift of 12 points away from the Democrats in metro areas, looking at the presidential level. There's been a 24-point shift in what are called micropolitan areas, which are rural areas that are based around a small city, a small urban area. They're typically more denser -- denser, more urbanized and different than the much more straightforwardly rural areas. This is a new definition that's complicated by -- and if you want to read more about it, you can look at my Web site where I explained it in excruciating detail.

But I think it's an important distinction. Anyway, these micropolitan areas, there's been a 24-point shift away from the Democrats since 1996. And then if you look at the nonmetropolitan rural areas, which I think is what most people really think of as rural areas, where there's really no city to speak of and it's pretty diffuse, pretty dimly populated, there has been a 29-point shift away from the Democrats since 1996.

And I think there's a couple ways you can look at this. On the one hand, you can say, well, since it's only been a 12-point shift away from the Democrats in metro areas, that's really where the Democrats can make some headway, there's the least hostility. Maybe that's where they should concentrate. On the other hand, you can look at the huge shifts in the different types of rural areas and say, well, you've got to stop the bleeding there. Even though they're smaller in

terms of population, there's fewer votes, you can't afford to have those kinds of margins in rural and micropolitan areas. So I think that's just a subject one could debate. I don't think there's a clear answer.

One thing that's worth noting though is that the metro areas in the South where all the growth is, if you look at the popular vote, the national vote since the 1980s, the Southern share of the national vote in presidential elections have gone up by 5 points, 5 percentage points. That's entirely in metro areas. There's been no growth at all in rural and micropolitan areas.

It's also interesting to note that if you look at 2004, for example, that the key political changes going from 2000 to 2004 weren't necessarily in these rural and exurban counties where Kerry did the worse, but rather were in metro areas, particularly in medium-sized metro areas. So they don't get, I think, as much attention as they should.

If you look at Florida, for example, you can explain most of Bush's increased margin in 2004 relative to 2000 by increased performance. Better performance in areas, metro areas, like Jacksonville Sarasota, Pensacola, places people don't think about, but are really important politically because there's a lot of voters there.

Yet another way to look at what's happened since 1996 in the South is by ideology. Now, you may not know this, and why should you, but Clinton actually carried Southern white moderates in 1996 by 46/44. Now,

where are all the Southern white moderates going? we might well ask. Well, in a sense they've gone nowhere.

And by that they're as numerous as they've ever been. If you look at the exit polls, the ideological distribution in the South in 1996 was 17 percent liberal, 44 percent moderate, 39 percent conservative. In 2004, 17 percent liberal, 43 percent moderate, 40 percent conservative.

So almost unchanged. And even if you look among white voters in particular, 1996 we have 15 percent liberal, 43 percent moderate, 43 percent conservative. And then in '04 we have 14 percent liberal, 41 percent moderate, 45 percent conservative. It's only a slight shift over that eight-year span. So what on earth happened? Well, what happened is that you go from 1996 where Clinton carries Southern white moderates by a couple of points to a 58/41 deficit by Kerry relative to Bush in 2004 in the South. So it's not that the Southern white moderates have gone away, but they are voting Republican. They seem to trust the Republicans more on some key issues. For example, if you look at Southern white moderates in 2004, 56 percent said they trusted Bush to handle the economy, 44 percent said they trusted Kerry to handle the economy. Then if you look at terrorism, it's a wipeout. 69 percent said they trusted Bush to handle terrorism. Only 36 percent said they trusted Kerry.

So those are some facts to think about, I think, maybe in some ways they're not the most pleasant ones to contemplate, but this is the kind of thing we have to deal with. And I

think arguably, looking at these data, you could say our target voter in the South is a white moderate voter, and perhaps in a medium-sized metro area.

And if the Democrats can just make the choice between Democrat and Republican, progressive and conservative competitive again among this group of voters, Southern white moderates, moderate living in metro areas, I think then you're a pretty good piece down the road to making the South competitive again for the Democrats. We've got to push that needle back in the other direction. So hopefully that gives people something to think about and I'll yield to the next panelist.

MR. BEATTIE: Now one thing that's so depressing when you look at the presidential race is that Bush won everywhere. But it's important to realize in every state that Bush won, Democrats were elected. There isn't a state where there's not Democrats that were elected. And in fact, there's Democrats elected statewide in the top of the ticket.

Mac McCorkle works with Governor Easley, but he worked with several governors working on policy and connecting an agenda that a candidate can talk about that is appealing to voters at the local level. I think that that's where, when we look nationally there's this disconnect. But there are people winning and successful in the South, and we need to take those lessons and adopt that language so we can continue to win the South.

So, Mac, do you want to talk a little bit about how you make that translation?

MR. MCCORKLE: Can everybody hear me? First I have to disclose that the reason I'm known as Mac is because my real first name is Pope and I'm Presbyterian. So for obvious ecumenical reasons I stay away from that problem. So my name is Pope McCorkle. I'm also a political consultant, and as Andy has already suggested, don't confuse me with the facts. These are wonderful facts, and I'll try not to be too factual and maybe try to be a little bit more provocative.

I remember my son, we were driving to Thanksgiving a couple of Thanksgivings ago to my sister who is married to a former Jesse Helms aide who also now runs the North Carolina Family Policy Council. So we always have some very immensely interesting Thanksgivings. Louis, my son, unbuckled his seat belt. He was talking to Chip, his older brother in the car in the back, about whose father and mother were lawyer, doctor, Indian chief. And he peered around the corner, looked at me as I was driving, he said, Dad, are you some kind of political insultant? True story. I always remember that.

So what I try to do at these events sometimes is maybe be a little insulting, but only in a good natured way to be a little provocative. I'm originally from Memphis, Tennessee. As Hodding Carter knows, that means most of my relatives are from Mississippi and Arkansas. And so I span the South, but I also have always thought of Chapel Hill and UNC as the Great Oasis, the City on the Hill, and I'm happy about being here and living here. I'm a Sanfordite all the

way down. That doesn't mean that he would agree with everything I think or do, by any chance. But I had the privilege to work with him and work in his law firm. And I don't pretend to channel him, as some people suggested that you do of great figures and political figures, but I do try to carry on something of a conversation in remembering the history that he brought to the state.

I worked for a number of Southern governors, that sometimes gets to be a declining quotient of Democrats, but have worked for Governor Bredesen in Tennessee as well as Governor Easley in North Carolina, helped steal some elections in South Carolina and Alabama in 1998 for Governor Hodges and Siegelmann. But it's a tough situation.

I thought what I would do today rather than trying to talk about a particular state is just draw a composite of what the war is like out there, and some of these comments will have relevance to the state level. Some of them will have relevance to the national level. Again, I'm not going to even try to be systematic. But let me just start with North Carolina, and I use that as pretty much of a base. If this is the most advanced outpost of liberalism in the South there historically, maybe we should just start there.

Here we won. We won 56/43 -- Governor Easley won 56/43 in a situation where President Bush was winning 56/43. We added seats in the state legislature. And as Susan's pointed out, our claim to fame is that the Bush margin did not increase in

this state from 2000 to 2004. So you could say that, well, maybe we're doing something right, whereas Georgia went completely Republican this time, and numerous other states are going that way. And I think that that's probably right. Governor Easley's coming in a little while, and you can hear from him on that. But I also have some real concerns, and let me just go over the positive.

In North Carolina at least, and I think again in the South in general, still the calling card for Democrats is education, education, education. Governor Easley came into the office with a massive fiscal deficit he was facing and still pushed forward on Pre-K. We were -- I think Mississippi and North Carolina were the only two states without Pre-K for their at-risk kids. We pushed forward with that with class size reduction, a number of education initiatives in the face of massive fiscal deficit.

Also pushed forward with a very innovative prescription drug program. So those are all good progressive calling cards. And now that the election's over, we can plead guilty. Governor Easley in his first year decided to raise taxes. Now we tried to claim that that's about 500 million. Our opponents claim it's a billion. We closed corporate loopholes. We raised the income tax on the rich. We raised sales tax. I plead guilty to all that now. But we thought all along -- and we're going to raise cigarette taxes in North Carolina, it looks like this time. So on the taxes score, that is -- we've got to get that through.

So all of that is that taxes were

involved and we survived. So that's good news perhaps. But let me just tell you though in many ways that -- and I'm just going to create two polarities here that aren't really fair to either side. But let's talk about the liberal, white, educated Southern mind and let's talk about the popular Southern mind. And let me just tell you where I think there's some massive disconnects. And I'm not going to argue for a while at least pro or con. I'm just going to tell you what you feel out there when you're looking at polling numbers, when you're trying to communicate with people.

We've already hit on religion and moral values. That's going to be the subject of another panel, and I'm just going to mention it. I think everybody's real clear on this. Mr. Jefferson's wall of separation, if it is supposed to apply to faith and politics, is not real in the South. That is not what people believe, and the idea that we're going to have a neutral secular politics is simply incomprehensible to most Southerners.

So that's one disconnect, if we have a view that -- if we can have a secular or neutral politics, the wall of separation doesn't exist. Now whether that is not exactly church and state, but in terms of faith and politics and candidates expressing their religious faith, that is a given. That's an inevitable.

Another one that -- let me get to the ones that aren't always mentioned. Free trade. Again, I think the educated position on that apparently, of course, is free trade. It's something

we have to accept. It's progress. Everything's going to work out for the best. And I think you're seeing that people simply do not buy that. And they're very worried about the situation. I think that is part of the problem with the white working class.

There are other problems that we can get into, but free trade is another one of those things that I think if people simply do not buy, we have some trouble.

Another example, incentives. Business incentives. I understand what Susan's talking about when she talks about people being mad about abusive corporations. Of course, they can be used as people you would want to get. But if populism gets in the way of jobs, then people in the South will reject that every time. The jail deal that the Governor has been criticized about is overwhelmingly popular among people. It is only among again the liberally -- maybe overeducated mind that sees problems with incentives, and I know they're good policy arguments, but -- some good policy arguments. I think they're overdone. But in terms of people needing jobs in this state and throughout the South, the idea of bringing in major corporations and their spin-off ability, people believe in. That doesn't mean they believe corporations are always good citizens and they're not suspicious of them, but if our kind of populism gets in the way of being a job producer and generator, we've got -- we have problems.

Then the whole thing -- the last one that I would mention is the whole area of taxes, revenue and spending. I've

said we've already pleaded guilty to what we had -- to what the Governor had to do to really save education in many cases. And Lord knows in the 1990s we made a number of education advances in this state that really weren't paid for in many ways. Our revenue base was hurt badly.

So there is obviously a question about adequate revenue base that has to be addressed, and taxes have to be part of that picture. But the idea that we can get further, especially in a place like North Carolina, by relying on taxing the rich has got to be subject to serious question. We now have the highest income tax rate in the South. It is -- on personal and corporate. The facts of the real matter is the burden overall is relatively low, but in terms of particular kicking up the tax rate into a 10 percent corporate tax rate or a 10 percent income tax rate on individuals, that simply is not a winning formula for people. That is a shining ball that people can grab ahold of, and we've got to accept that.

Now, the alternative the governor's mentioned -- it's in almost every state in the South -- the one thing we don't have here is a lottery, and I know there's a lot of educated opinion against the lottery. Wildly popular. The poor don't see it as a tax, they see it as a choice. Less than half of the poor play the lottery. There are a lot of canards about how the lottery is an unstable source of revenue. Tell that to Georgia where they're almost at a million dollars and tell that to anybody who's looked at what happened to the income tax rate -- income taxes in North Carolina, how unstable that is. So again, I think there's a huge

disconnect between the liberal educated mind of the South and the popular mind.

Okay. On all those you can just say, well, you know, practical politicians like Governor Easley, we understand that on one or two of them you've got to depart from the elites and you've got to be practical. Well, my concern is those are too many. Oh, and one other thing I left out. Spending. We seem to act like that government spending is just one of those things that the reactionary conservatives should worry about. The secret of Governor Easley's formula to me in many cases is he is pro education, but also said he would veto anything that -- any state spending that went larger than the economy.

Those two elements unite in people's minds, and they say he's pro education, he's not pro government. That works. And so the idea that we can't focus on spending discipline in the state of -- again is a real problem in trying to connect with the popular mind.

So on all those, there can be an example of, yeah, practical politician's got to desert the ship every once in awhile, but the ship's too heavy. There are too many things where there's a disconnect in the popular mind to be able to survive, I think, going forward. And certainly these problems are even greater in other states than North Carolina.

What do we suggest? I think it's very important that we get very serious about reconnecting with people and reconnecting where they are and not

think that this is a one-way street. Perhaps because of the great success we had in the civil rights days that, you know, of fighting the good fight that there's a sense in which the liberal elites need to be the one-way communicators telling the people in the South what to do.

It's really got to be way more of a two-way street now. The issues are more complicated and I think we need to reconnect with people. I also think that one serious problem is that with the Republicans, even in North Carolina, the barbarians are at the gate. The kind of moderate Republican has died in the South, I think, for a while. It's died in this state. And the people who would replace Democrats in this state are very seriously reactionary in many ways many who can really destroy a lot. There was a time in this state where you might not have said that, that is true, so I think it's very important we go forward. At the same time what do we do? You know, John Stuart Mill talked about the best thing for liberals was to engage and fight with conservatives in an intellectual way. I think he talked about Coleridge and Ruskin as the people he read to get himself fired up, thoughtful. And I feel like what we do is we talk too much among ourselves. We preach to each other. We talk to the choir and we act like, to be honest with you, the conservatives, Southern conservatives are still all just racists and they really don't have anything to say. I think that's scary. Now, they're wrong, in the end they're wrong, of course, but they would help us be more right. And I think we're kind of running on fumes in many,

many cases.

Let me throw out just some quick ideas on these issues so I won't sound so negative. On religion, I think, again, I think it's bad form for us to suggest in any way that religion should be taken out of the public square. Martin Luther King should have taught us that religion can work for progressives and the idea that we can say, no, no, no, we can't do that and that's really bad, is not -- I think the conservatives have a point there. David Price and a number of people are going to be talking about religion. I think David, who is a mentor of mine, has a very eloquent way of expressing theologically and politically a progressive point of view, and I'm not going to get into that. You'll hear that later today.

On trade, I think this is very important in terms of connecting with working people. Somehow or another, we've got to start working on a way to be more direct about national interest without being xenophobic. You'll notice that Paul Samuelson economics 101 and a number of economists are starting to dispute a lot of what their disciples have been saying about how everything's going to work out in a free trade regime and we don't need to worry about people being hurt.

Erskine Bowles talked a lot, tried to bring into the conversation place-based economic aid, not just helping individuals but helping regions. I think that's going to be very important. Again, I'll just say in general we can be populists when we have abusive corporations but jobs,

jobs, jobs. And the idea that somehow that the states are going to be able to call a truce to this, I don't know how they're going to be able. And the idea -- we got lot of comments, oh, well, Dell was really going to come here anyway and Dell wasn't going to go to another state, please, now -- that's just not the way things work. People want us to compete and to get jobs in.

Fourth, I wish people, at least in North Carolina, would reconsider the lottery. I think a lot of the stuff that is said about how progressive it is applies to sales taxes way more than to lottery. I think that you've got look at what people want, and the idea that we're going to be able to impose a new regime of taxes and not -- and skip the lottery, again, I think is going to add to popular distrust.

I think the way to go on a more progressive way of taxes would be to go to earned income tax credits that the Clinton administration successfully expanded where you lower the load on the working class. But the idea that taxing the rich has a future and that there's that much revenue in it is subject to real dispute, to me.

Again, go back to -- I think the main thing we could do is again follow John Stewart Mills' example and talk about really engaging conservatives and not being to so hermetically sealed ourselves and really engage in some of their debates. I try to do that as much as possible. Again, in the end I'm not saying the conservatives are right, but I think they've advanced to a certain level of discussion on taxes and spending especially that we need to

take great care and caution and a lot of sophistication towards. Thanks.

MR. BEATTIE: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. BEATTIE: I do want to expound on one thing that Mac said because it is very important. Right now the Democrats are seen as the party of no. That Republicans over the last 20 years have been seen as having more ideas. Even if they're the wrong ideas, at least they were new ideas. And that's something we have to realize when we're combating them. We need to fight on the playing field of ideas and ideals, what we're going to change and how we're to move forward.

Mudcat, I'd like to ask you just kind of -- listening to the discussion and from your experience, what do you view as the difference between successful and unsuccessful candidates in the South.

MR. SAUNDERS: Well, first off, I want to say to Jennifer Palmieri, you didn't tell me all these smart people were here, the liberal educated part of the South. I represent the popular undereducated. The difference between success and failure in the South has to do with the successful candidate gets more votes. You know, we sit here -- I'm an angry Southerner. I'm angry. You know, when I see us start out this last presidential election -- you know, I don't get it. Why are we conceding ground? We concede 20 states to start out with, 164 electoral votes, just turn our back on these people. We talk

about tolerance in the Democratic party. I'm a white Southern male. I am pro gun. Unfortunately for Mac, I am against the lottery. It's class distinctive. People buy lottery tickets because they think it's their only way out. The odds in Virginia of winning a Pick Six are one in 7 million. The odds of getting struck by lightning in Virginia are one in 600,000. But the odds of winning the lottery and getting struck by lightning in Virginia is 10 times greater than winning the lottery. It is a tax on people who have no other way.

Time magazine did a study -- and I'm not going to get on the lottery -- but on prayer. You know, more of us pray now than we ever did, which is good. I don't like the word religion. There was no system of religion in Jesus' teaching. His teachings were purely spiritual and metaphysical. That's the way it was. There's seven volumes of Jewish law, 60 books to the volume. 4,200 books of Jewish law. They asked, Jesus, what are the most -- are any of these laws important? He said only two. Love God with all your heart, mind and soul and love your neighbor as yourself.

Now, the Republicans believe love the Cross. You know, they get all caught up in the messenger and they don't listen to the message. And I say, let's take them on. They want to talk about family values, we'll talk about them.

(Applause.)

As I go north here to Henry County -- and I'm not prepared for anything

and I'm not going to talk a long time because I want to hear your questions. I want to hear what you-all have to say. But we've got white males. Let's take the average family in Henry County, Virginia, where Globaltex is located, other textile industries. We can go all the way around here and head South into South Carolina and Georgia. We can go all over the South. They took our damn jobs is what they've done. But you've got a fellow up in Henry County, Virginia. This is what's happened to him. He's lost his job, and he don't have any health-care. His wife is working at the Wal-Mart store with no benefits, cleaning houses on the side. His kid's sick. And he says, well, some judge up in Massachusetts said two gay guys are going to get married so I'm going to vote for George Bush. Now what the hell is wrong with that picture?

But the -- what we've got to do is our party is cultural. You know, there's been a lot of talk about policy and, you know, this ain't about policy. This is about getting through the culture. The policy of the Democratic policy, our message is and it's the reason I'm still a democrat is because we're right. And we've got to focus on that. We've got to take these Republicans on where they live. Like I say, if they want to talk about family values, let's talk about family values. What's the family values in cutting the child immunization program? What's the family value to not fund No Child Left Behind? What's the family value of calling a damn ketchup a vegetable? You know, let's talk about family values. Let's get on it. Let's get into the real message of spirituality and the power of spirituality. And I like what

Susan said about -- you know, I pray a lot. I'm a heathen and I cuss too much, but I do. And I know this for sure, and I'm sitting here today to tell you this, God don't give one damn about your political party. He cares about your heart is what he does. And most Southerners, you know, will agree with that. And if our heart's in the right place and we get through the culture -- and that's all it is -- I mean we've -- you know, you don't ever talk about the -- you know, the last election, very much, you know, going into the next because you're judged by your next. But in Virginia with Mark Warner, in 2001, we got through that culture is what we did. We got 51.4 percent of the rural vote. The first Democratic candidate in Virginia to grab a majority in rural Virginia in a generation. But it was getting through the culture. We're going to have to make -- we're going to have to get together. The problems of urban America and the problems of rural America are the same. So what do we do? We let the damn Civil War stand in between us, both of us do. And I'm just as guilty. I'm a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, and I'm as guilty, you know, as anybody else. I let culture get in my way. We've got to have -- in this damn Civil War, we've got to get past all this stuff. They've used racism against us, they've used every single issue that will divide us. By God, let's come back together. And I'm glad to be here.

(Applause.)

MR. BEATTIE: I want to touch a little bit more on getting through the culture and also to give Susan a chance to talk a little bit more about

(inaudible) to expand on what Mac was saying. But opening up, what is the way to get through culture in the South? How do you connect with voters? And we'll start with Susan and open it up to the panel.

DR. HOWELL: Well, I certainly agree with a lot of what's been said up here. Culturally the South is characterized by populism. And the way -- one of the ways in which the progressive agenda can appeal to that populism is by appealing to working people. I mean everybody thinks that they're a working person. They're working class, they're middle class. Not many people believe that they're unfairly advantaged and in the upper crust. So we can appeal to working people who feel the crunch, the crunch of health-care, the crunch of college tuition. And the facts that demonstrate -- I want to ask Mac about this in a minute -- that we are becoming a two-class society. The distribution of wealth in America is getting worse from a progressive standpoint. The gap between the haves and the have-nots is getting broader. And there is really not much of a voice to defend the have-nots or the people that are getting increasingly squeezed at the bottom. That we have to speak to that. And I think the economic and the cultural things mush together, they merge together. That is, humanitarianism as a value are giving culture our religiosity that -- I agree with Mac that the separation between church and state doesn't really -- let's face it -- exist much in America. I mean we are a religious country. And to pretend that we can have these policies that don't speak to values is absurd. Policies are values.

They are expressions of values. And providing health-care for lower -- health insurance for underprivileged people or even for working people, working-class people. Protecting children from pornography and violence. Improving public schools. All these are moral, Judeo-Christian, humanitarian issues. And they merge with the values of America and they merge with the values of the South. I don't see the disconnect between the economic and the moral as much as some of my colleagues do.

MR. BEATTIE: Ruy, what are your thoughts on the culture and how do you get through the clutter?

MR. TEIXEIRA: I'm tempted to say that it beats the hell out of me. But I would -- I mean I think it's a tough problem because I think the -- judging from what people have been saying on the panel, there's two different ways to approach this in a way. One is -- sort of in the most extreme form, one is just to say Democrats are progressive or whatever, we basically already have the right policies, it's a matter of the rhetoric. It's matter of how they're framed. It's a matter of how we present ourselves culturally. That's one position.

And then another position might be, well, you know, maybe that's important but we actually have to have something new to say that might actually capture people's imagination, the kinds of things Democrats and progressives tend to say don't really grab people. People aren't that interested in them. Which of those is true and maybe both are true, I don't

know. Because the broad experiment is really what we're talking about here.

If it's rhetoric is a problem, if Mark Warner just runs for president in 2008 and says exactly what Democrats have been saying and progressives have been saying for the last 10 years, is that enough? Because he'll talk about things in a different way, how things are working for him, it will be a different approach. Is that --

MR. SAUNDERS: That's not a guarantee.

MR. TEIXEIRA: So that's kind of the debate in my head about how to approach this. Is it really all about rhetoric or is there actually like a component here, actually has something to say.

MR. MCCORKLE: Let me just answer the first culture question. I think Mudcat's exactly right. I think that's the initial thing that has to be addressed. And even though I do think Governor Warner would be a wonderful senator, presidential candidate, and is a good friend of Governor Easley, I would point out that Governor Warner just buys and rents NASCARs. Governor Easley drives NASCARs, and sometimes even wrecks NASCARs. And that had nothing to do with his popularity.

He did not go up in the polls with that. That's a total myth. No --

MR. SAUNDERS: Is Governor Easley running for president?

MR. MCCORKLE: No. I was just pointing out a difference. They're all good friends.

MR. SAUNDERS: I want the one that will win. That's the number one rule.

MR. MCCORKLE: Governor Warner would be a wonderful president. But one way Governor Easley did get through the cultural barriers is he does drive NASCARs. He does speak explicitly -- in his rhetoric he does cite Bible verses, but he probably tries not to cite the -- to be a -- do it ostentatiously. But you see it in his rhetoric, in his State of the State speeches on numerous occasions he has done that. And then I think the other thing that he has that cuts through is that he's a former prosecutor and that people relate to that. And he approaches government I think legislators think sometimes too much like a prosecutor. But I think again that people understand that and relate to that and have a strong tie to that.

Just what was being said here, I think though after the cultural we still have another challenge, and that is -- and I hate to use the dreaded boring word of policy, but let me just talk about taxes. We still have to find a way in the end if we're going to attract people to find a way how we're going to pay for education and all the investments we want to make. And the idea that just getting over driving NASCAR and just doing these -- and speaking religious verses and having the right language, that's not enough. We do have to deal with the issue of how we're going to pay for the progressive things that we're talking about.

MR. TEIXEIRA: So how do we do it?

MR. MCCORKLE: Well, we won. I think it's a real question. I think, again, we have to go back and maybe if people don't want a lottery here -- of course, they have it in the other states -- a progressive consumption tax. People need to look at those kind of concepts where the burden is lowered on the poor through earned income tax credits and other tax relief measures directed towards the poor. And that we start thinking about even higher sales taxes which are huge revenue generators. The idea in a Southern state or any state being able to depend on the income tax again is the progressive fulcrum, where are you going to be able to pay for things? Just look at the numbers. The money is not there. How can you win -- do you think you can win any race in the United States with a 10 to 15 percent income tax rate in the state? Pretty hard to see how you're going to do that and pay for health-care and education and everything else. So these are the kind of issues we need to deal with. We need to deal with culture, no question, but we have to deal with some issues on the policy side as well.

MR. BEATTIE: I think that that's an important point is that rhetoric alone will never do it and rhetoric has to be credible for our candidate. I mean every individual has their own beliefs, things they do, their hobbies and you can't adopt someone else's hobby. You have to be true to yourself, and I think that that can be a problem when you focus on rhetoric over substance. You have to believe in what you think is right and wrong, and you have to do the things that you naturally do

because voters watch a lot of TV, and you can't fake it. You've got to be who you are. And if you do things that connect, then you should do those. But if it ain't natural to you, you shouldn't be doing them. Any other comments from the panel before I open up to questions?

DR. HOWELL: I'd like to -- go ahead, Mudcat.

MR. SAUNDERS: I like Mike Easley. I hope, certainly hope Mike Easley, when he runs for president, doesn't talk about raising taxes because one thing for sure --

MR. MCCORKLE: We'll try not to.

MR. SAUNDERS: -- if you want to hit a voter in the heart, aim for his wallet and you'll get him every time. But, you know, I think this culture thing, we've got to get it. I mean when I got to Washington -- and, you know, I'm sitting down at home and, hell, was minding my own business. And an old boy called me one morning, as I went up to get an egg sandwich, and I ended up in the middle of a damn presidential campaign.

So -- but I do know this. That as I look around here, there's people from all over the South. And I mean let's get to the crux of it. This gentleman sitting next to me. He's, you know, an outstanding, you know, Southern pollster. I think that it is pretty simple. What happened to us is we lost the white male. You know, I mean we can ponder over numbers. And we didn't lose them because of policy, we didn't lose them because of

the principles of the Democratic party, which were right. We lost them because we got out of touch with them. I mean, you know, we start talking about worker retraining programs. I mean what does Bubba sit there, what does he think? He said, Jesus, they want me to go to school. Hell, I didn't go the first time. (Inaudible). You know, it's a slap in the face. You've got to -- you know, you've got to understand how to talk to him. And the first thing that we've got to understand is we've got to accept the truth. And the truth is, where I come from and where many of you come from, if you're white and you live in the South, it is socially and culturally unacceptable to be a Democrat. And that is the truth and that is the reality. You can ask these people sitting next to me, the smart people, and they'll tell you the same thing. I'm a soldier is all I am. But we've got to accept that as reality. We've got to work together. We've -- and I mean arm in arm, and get through the right stuff. The guns, I mean, Christ -- and the gay issue obviously. I think that I crafted a great position on gay marriage. I am absolutely opposed to gay marriage, but I'm also absolutely opposed to marriage between a man and a woman. I mean there are ways to --

MR. BEATTIE: Susan, do you want to follow that?

DR. HOWELL: I think we need to absorb that for a moment.

MR. BEATTIE: I'd like to open it up to questions. Please, if you can, when you -- there's some microphones. Stand up and we'll give you a

microphone. Please say your name and where you're from and also please ask a question. We want to try and get as many people as we can.

MS. ANNETTE HOLLOWELL: Good morning. My name is Annette Hollowell. I'm from the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation at Ole Miss, Mississippi. This is the Mississippi table.

MR. BEATTIE: Welcome.

MS. ANNETTE HOWELL: Thank you. I wanted to just kind of touch back to what you were talking about in your presentation, Dr. Howell, about how there's a disconnect between white voters and seeing that they have a lot in common I guess with black voters. And I'm kind of curious, what are some of your ideas as far as ways to close that gap? Because we've talked about culture and reaching the white Southern male, but how do we make them realize that we all want the same things out of life and that all of our interests, there's one. Anybody, please.

MR. SAUNDERS: This was a -- I don't want mean to jump in on your question. But it's absolutely preposterous to me that the problems of urban America and the problems of rural America are the exact same. Now think about that. And I mean we're struggling over racial divisiveness when our problems are the same. We don't have opportunities for our kids. Our education system is crummy. Our infrastructure is crumbling. And the problems of urban America and rural

America are the same, and we never articulate it because we can't sit down, we can't get together because we don't accept each other's culture.

DR. HOWELL: To address that, I think that what the progressive agenda has to do, and just being, you know, bluntly political, we have to deemphasize the racial angle, and emphasize the advantage, disadvantage angle, which is the takeoff on what he just said, that poverty's poverty. It doesn't matter what color you are. And that this is what we have to deal with. We have to deal with a widening gap between the haves and the have-nots, and the have-nots are mixed of all colors. And so dealing with that agenda has to be in that rhetoric, not in the civil rights rhetoric.

MR. BEATTIE: I just want to point out that I think that one of the problems that Democrats do that I think exacerbates the problem, and that is there are times when I think Democrats -- white Democrats communicate with blacks simply saying civil rights are the most important issue, as if health-care and jobs and education, the common issues, aren't important to blacks. It's the same issues, and we need to talk about them the same, not like they're different issues. I think we -- we -- we exacerbate that problem sometimes.

Next question in the back.

MR. LARRY GRIFFIN: Thank you. Can you hear me okay? My name is Larry Griffin. I'm going to be talking later today. I teach at UNC. And just one question. I was very intrigued and

informed by everyone's comments. One thing I did not hear anything about, and I'm not sure it's any longer pertinent, but I think it might be, trade unions for working class folks. The South is the least unionized of all America. North Carolina leads the country in working union free. One in 34 North Carolinians is a union member. From the 1930s through the '60s and into the '70s, trade unions were the one thing that brought blacks and whites together on economic interests.

We can talk about jobs and we ought to talk about taxes. Should we also talk about how we can organize working class people in terms of their economic position and their economic interests?

(Applause.)

MR. TEIXEIRA: Yes, they should do that. And I think this is a very important goal for the progressive movement in general, not just in the South, that reversing the trends for deunionization is critical, but it's going to take awhile. So even if it becomes more of a substantive goal for national progressives than progressives everywhere. In the meantime however, most people we're going to have to reach aren't in unions. That includes working class people, white working class voters and in particular who are among whom Democrats are getting totally hammered in the South are overwhelming nonunion.

So if you want to reach them in the short-term, and probably the medium-term too, we are talking primarily about reaching white

working class voters, not --

MR. MCCORKLE: In North Carolina, even though we are I think still the most -- the least unionized state, the labor organizations have played an important part in the coalition in -- and probably are some of the most realistic and pragmatic political players in the Democratic coalition. At the same time, I would have to echo the same thing, that given where we are now and where we have historically been, the idea that that's going to have an immediate impact on changing the political dynamic, it is tough.

I mean I know that Andy Stern at SCIU and a number of the other labor leaders are in an internal debate now about where to go, and I think that's important. But again, that might be part of the new emerging Democratic majority in many -- in some decades from now. But just in terms of immediate help, I don't know that the numbers are there or that the numbers can change. Somewhat like I think Superintendent Lee said last night -- again, I'm dealing with a short-time horizon. I'm dealing with the next election. And probably in the long-range view there's some real possibilities there. But in the immediate, I think it's hard to see it.

DR. HOWELL: I'd also like to add to that that I think that going back to the forum that unions have had in the past is not going to happen. That that is something we are -- we are passed -- in the global economy, we are passed that. And industry based unions, I don't think we're going to see that in the near future, the

revitalization of them. That it has to be based more on your place in the economic order. That crosses industry. And there's huge numbers in the new economy, as Mudcat pointed out, are not in unions. Service workers, health-care, clerical, all of these people are not going to be unionized in the near future. We just have to reach them where they are.

REVEREND JIM MCDONALD: Reverend Jim McDonald, African American Leadership Council and board member for People for the American Way. I want to get to the culture issue again and see if I can take it to another level. The South has also been identified as the Bible belt. And it seems that in being identified as the Bible belt, the evangelicals of the South have been able to steal the symbols and the language of our Judeo-Christian tradition, and in so doing, has created a culture of fear. There are times when I go to my closet that I look and see if Osama Bin Laden is in there. And this election and many state and local elections seem to have been based more on fear than on issues and policy. And they have been very astute at causing all of us across racial lines, economic lines, all lines, to vote based on our fears rather than our faith.

Being a person of the cloth, I think it is important that we get back to our faith. And my question is, what role do you feel that fear has played? We can juxtapose that to issues and policy if you desire, but I think the overriding umbrella under which all of these things emerge is fear. What role do you think that fear has played in

our electoral politics?

MR. SAUNDERS: This is wonderful.

First off, I'm a country boy traitor, and there's two big tolls in the South, beer and gravy. And you know the way that this bunch of knuckle heads across 1600s, they dealt with that -- you know, this fear of -- let me just put it like this. We had a president one time who believed in rural America, who believed in the South, who believed in being a president for all people in our darkest hour. He said, the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. We had an American president who in his last election said, the only way I can get reelected is to make the American people fear fear itself. And --

(Applause.)

And it's an absolute shame. You know, like I said, I don't believe that -- I don't believe God cares about whether we're Democrats or not. I really don't. I think he looks at our heart and I think the good Reverend back there, you know, will agree, you know, with that. But that said, you know, something's wrong with my heart and I'm doing something wrong and, listen, I've got a lot of character flaws and, you know, I've got to pray.

It's part of my life as a Southern white male and Southern Baptist. But when I pray about something in my heart, something I've done, I get an answer. When I pray about politics, I don't ever get an answer. So that tells me that God don't give one damn about politics, but I can tell you when he does give me answers is when I pray -- I have to live in a state of Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. Any time

that I pray about those boys, I hear a little voice say, peel the hide off of them because they're Pharisees. We ought to call them what they are.

(Applause.)

MR. MCCORKLE: I'm going to follow right into Mudcat's trap here by admitting that I read a book lately that -- and in response to your question, there's a book called Stone of Hope by David Chappell from the University of Arkansas that's very important I think. It talks about Martin Luther King's use of religious language. It talks about the power that that had even over the resistant Southern white mind in a way that secular liberalism never would have achieved. Now it's a whole other work. It's kind of unfair to a lot of good secular northern liberals, but it's fun reading and I think it has some real truth to it that's important. And that we can -- we, again, to try to keep religious language out of the public sphere after what Martin Luther King has shown the power of seems to be bad form to me and really seems to be short-sighted. The other thing I would say on the evangelical question is -- and I know this because, as I said, my brother-in-law is a former Jesse Helms aide and certainly of a -- definitely of a certain view about religion. But as Governor Clinton pointed out, I think Kerry got 15 percent of white evangelicals and Governor Clinton -- President Clinton would get 35 percent. That was the line I think -- I don't know exact numbers, but President Clinton obviously did better. We need to not let Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson be seen as the only white evangelical

voice and search out -- there are white evangelicals who are -- who are embarrassed by Jerry Falwell, who are embarrassed by Pat Robertson, and that we can have a discussion with. Now, are we going to win a majority of white evangelicals? No, but if we are going to be able to get to the level that President Clinton did, we'd better. So those are the two things I would say is that the religious language, we have power there, Martin Luther King showed that. And the other issue is I think we might be too short-sighted if we let Falwell and Robertson simply pose as the only mind and voice of white evangelicals in the South.

MR. SAUNDERS: Can I come back with -- I thought the Book said we were supposed to heal the sick, feed the naked -- I mean, feed the naked. Feed the hungry -- clothe the hungry and feed the naked. He was right. The last book I read was the Hardy Boys Sleepy Mystery Number 12. But the Democratic message is a message of Jesus. It's a message. I mean, love God, love your neighbor as yourself. I mean Pat Robertson has a house. He's built a 12,000 square foot mansion. I mean it looks like the Sultan of Brunei or something. And he'll be saying that all his mansions, you know, he'd be jealous of this place. In fact, a friend of mine ran into town, wanted to get a picture, wanted a picture. He was doing a story on it. A damn guard comes out there, Pat Robertson's got security guards. And the guard came out there and pulled a gun and dropped it down the side of a mountain. I thought that was good. But let's don't back off on these spiritual discussions. Let's don't back off a bit. Let's take on that

argument and let's throw it right back at them because it's -- you know, it's not real what they're doing.

MR. BEATTIE: And I'm sorry, but because we've got to keep the panels moving on and there's going to be a lot of great panels throughout the day, we do have to wrap up. If anyone on the panel has a last word -- and I know there are a lot of questions. I apologize for that. We're going to take a 10-minute break. And you don't have more than 10 minutes.

(A recess was taken.)