

Affirmative Action and the Culture of Intolerance (Discussion)

Transcript of discussion held in Philadelphia on June 11, 1997

MICHAEL SANDEL: Chris, I have a question...

CHRISTOPHER EDLEY: Is that Michael?

SANDEL: Yes. Hi.

EDLEY: Hi. I'm sorry. My vision is—I'm getting old, but I recognize the voice. Hi.

SANDEL: I thought I detected a difference between the talk you gave, which I thought was terrific and which was a subtle and sophisticated and nuanced account of the different positions on affirmative action...

EDLEY: Uh-oh. Uh-oh. Uh-oh.

SANDEL: ...and difference between the talk you gave and the talk that Paul advertised. The talk Paul advertised was about how the debate over affirmative action exemplifies the culture of intolerance. And he talked about examples of the culture intolerance ranging from rude drivers on the highways to ugliness in political discourse.

And I was wondering what kind of talks that would be, whether that implied that people who'd disagree with affirmative action are themselves exemplars of the culture of intolerance or what exactly what the fit was. Now I understand why Paul advertised it that way because we're trying, in this conference, to discuss the public culture. But the talk you gave seemed, as I heard it, as I understood it, to be a model analysis of the way in which the debate about affirmative action and the disagreements over affirmative action reflect exactly what political debates should reflect—competing moral visions, competing empirical perceptions, different outlooks on society.

In fact, the debate about affirmative action—and you sketched these different views, these different moral positions—the range, the nuances between them, the absolute and categorical views which are principled in their own way—the clashing and contending and the more complicated views that weigh practical and empirical effects against moral costs. What you told us in the debate that you described seems a shining exception to the debased public discourse that we find in preoccupations with Paula Jones or the fare of Geraldo Rivera, and all that stuff that we're here wringing our hands about and trying to find alternatives to.

So am I right to interpret your talk about affirmative action as really calling into question the sense in which that debate, in constitutional law, in California, in President Clinton's review—isn't this an example of—isn't this debate far from an exemplification of the culture of intolerance, an example of the kind of deep moral and political disagreements that properly play themselves out in our public culture?

EDLEY: No. First of all, I have to plead guilty to not being directly on point to your enterprise. That's because I only have a vague sense of what your enterprise is. But let me try to at least draw a dotted line.

When people scream at each other, enraged, in front of a birth control clinic—abortion clinic—that, too, is a manifestation of a deep and important moral argument. So I think it's important not to confuse whatever intellectual structure we might seek to impose on a debate with the actual manner in which the debate is conducted. I do think that the debate on

affirmative action and race does show problems with civic culture of the sort you describe. And I guess I viewed my speech as sort of implicitly a critique of what I take to be rather apparent, in the way in which the discussions of racial issues have proceeded in this country—that is to say my criticism is that when we engage in the sound bite battles over discrimination, we are evading more serious and constructive engagement over this underlying disagreement about how one defines discrimination.

So what I'm saying, in a way, is that part of the antidote to the unhelpful and unhappy characteristics of civic discourse on race—one of the antidotes is, I think, to fill out everyone's appreciation of what the deeper structure of empirical and value dissidence is and to address our disagreements by addressing that deeper structure of disagreement related to empirical and value propositions.

I'm sorry. So let me—let me try to—was that clear enough? No.

SANDEL: Well, it's clear, but the things that...

EDLEY: It's long. OK.

SANDEL: ...you teased out—no, it's...

EDLEY: Right.

SANDEL: Well, you teased out exactly the right range, it seems to me, of positions underlying these debates. And we can never expect public debate to be as sort of clear and well-worked-out and transparent about its underlying assumptions as a discussion in a setting like this or in the sort of deft, sophisticated way that you have developed this. So it will always be, at best, public discourse will be an approximation, a gesturing, a groping toward the kind of nuanced sort of elaboration that you've given.

EDLEY: I'm with you.

SANDEL: But is it like—even the people screaming at each other in front of the abortion clinics—is that a phenomenon that's sociologically or morally

like or analogous, even, to rude drivers on the road screaming at each other? I doubt it.

EDLEY: I doubt it, too. I doubt it, too. But let me add one other factor that clearly is going on. What is the possibility of deconstructing the heated debate over race so that clarifying the debate over race so that we can understand what is real—let me—my intellectual aesthetic is to take the problem and not simply say, 'Well, here's my answer,' but instead to say, 'OK. Here's the problem. What is the dispute? What's the nature of the disagreement here,' first. Second, 'Why is that the disagreement? You know, why is that the term? Why are those the terms of the argument?' And once I understand those are the terms of the argument, then maybe I can try to develop a strategy for moving the parties. OK. I mean, that's the way I've tried to approach the race issue.

Now what I didn't talk about, but could have and maybe it would have been more helpful to this group is: What are the impediments to that kind of strategy? In race, one of the impediments is that we have our arguments about race very often in a context in which what's at stake is not simply the resolution of a particular dispute, but what's at stake is power in a broader sense, right? What's at stake is power of a political sort, like are you playing the race card in an election campaign; a power of an economic sort—who's going to get access to this set of jobs, etc.; power in the sense of, perhaps, sustaining or attacking a caste structure within a community.

So there's a bunch of incentives that the actors have that fight—that militate against the transformative exercise that I described. And I haven't said anything that would address how you—what you do about this environment of incentives that may complicate our ability to work things out in the context of race. That's it. Derek.

DEREK BOK: Now, Chris, I just wondered if we could pursue, one step further, the question of what is wrong with the debate? What disturbs us most about the debate, that one would want to direct the President or other leaders' attention to? Let me just throw out one possibility—and I may be wrong on this, because I think this is very different from abortion, where the

views have been relatively constant. I think there's one sense in which we could be quite optimistic and positive about the debate over race, and that is on the basic issues of value. This is one of the few sets of issues in American life in which attitudes have been changing fairly steadily and fairly positively.

Up to [the] early '50s people felt if there's a white and a black and a promotion opening and the black was better than the white, of course you gave the job to the white. I mean, nobody would say that today, and that goes through a whole series of others, and you're very well familiar with it. So I think there we've been making progress. It might be hard to know why we're making progress, and the progress has continued through the '80s, despite whatever may be happening on the policy. I think the views of the American people, by and large, got somewhat better.

Now it seems to me the big problem is—and I want to get Amy to correct me here—is that people are pretty confused about some basic facts. So there are really large segments of the American public who think—not only are wrong on things like simply how many blacks are there in this society, where they think there are more than twice as many as there actually are—which is a pretty gross mistake to make about the public, because that's not like saying, 'Who's the senator from Wyoming?' I mean, you ought to have some sense of what your own society is made up of, but also on questions like are blacks better off than whites or are they as well off, economically? I think the answers on questions like that are palpably wrong for a great number of Americans.

So I guess my hypothesis is that we ought to try to—number one, we ought to try to figure out what is really wrong with the debate, because if we don't diagnose what is wrong, we're not going to be able to say very much about what leadership should consist of. And my hypothesis is that the fundamental problem is much more a misconception about basic facts than it is about the ultimate values, the worth of blacks and whites, the question of, you know, 'Well, how do you feel about blacks moving next door?' I mean, lots of issues that are sort of personal values. I don't mean we're all the way

there, but at least the trajectory has been pretty good. But there are some very basic misconceptions about what the situation is that we confront.

And if you don't think that there is as much difference and disadvantage as there actually is, obviously your views about affirmative action on a lot of other questions are going to reflect that. You're going to think that's grossly unfair. They don't need it. It seems to me more that than it is, 'They don't deserve it because I don't care about their condition.' I don't...

EDLEY: Right. Well...

BOK: ... detect that as a central problem.

EDLEY: Well, let me give three quick responses, Derek. One is you're obviously right about the trend data, with respect to the attitudes and that the Gallup report yesterday has more of that information and the lines are moving in the right direction. The important point, of course, to note—everybody here, I'm sure, appreciates this subtlety—is these are reported attitudes. These are reported attitudes, not necessarily what people truly believe or how people act, but simply their reported attitudes. What kind of neighborhood...

BOK: I think the people...

EDLEY: ...would you—what kind of neigh...

BOK: Even the people report something that feel they need to report a different thing.

EDLEY: That's the point I was going to make.

BOK: That's a change.

EDLEY: That's right. So what kind of neighborhood would you like to live in, you know, all black, all white, somewhat integrated, etc.? Overwhelming majorities basically say somewhat integrated—they'd like to live in a somewhat integrated neighborhood. Black and white report that. What will they actually do, what they actually believe could be different. So the best

thing that this shows—these things show, reliably, is the force of the taboo, the strength of the norm—at least in an aspirational sense of the norm. And I agree that that definitely is progress, some we can work with—some we can work with.

Second, I also believe that you are right with respect to the amount of misinformation and misunderstanding. Another anecdote: There was a point during this mess with the President—excuse me—this glorious experience with the President, that we were preparing him for a press conference, and—so people sitting around the table in the Cabinet room throwing out questions. ‘Mr. President, what's your position on, you know, the space shuttle?’ ‘Mr. President, what's your position on what's happening in Tajikistan?’ ‘Mr. President, what's your position on affirmative action?’ Whereupon, the President launches into an answer, and the answer was a long recitation of statistics about the extent of discrimination. And he talked about tester studies and he talked about the econometric studies and so on. And he had all this stuff down. It was amazing.

And because discrimination remains such a fact of life in American society, we need affirmative action, both to combat and to prevent discrimination. Everybody says, ‘Great. Great. Great.’ And I said, ‘Well, wait a minute. Wait a minute. I mean, you're right. Everything you said is right. You read all the paper we gave you. You did your homework. You get an A. That's terrific, but the problem is that your audience isn't going to believe it. Your audience doesn't believe it. They don't think they discriminate. They don't think their neighbors discriminate. They just don't believe it. They are going to say, “Well, there goes old liberal Bill Clinton. He sees a racist behind every tree.”’

And the President, ‘OK. So what do you want me to say?’ I said, ‘I don't know. I have no idea what you should say.’ I said, ‘Well, maybe—look, how about this: People may not think that they discriminate right now. I'm in favor of your teaching the public that there is discrimination—relentless teaching—but you can't do it just in a Q-and-A at a press conference. It requires really a strategy, a communication strategy. It requires a relentless strategy. What you can say this afternoon, it seems to me, is that people may

not think that they discriminate, but they're likely to acknowledge that many of us have a simple tendency to prefer people who are like ourselves—who you go to dinner with on Sunday night; who you—you know, who you date; you prefer people who are like yourself. Now if you prefer people who are somewhat—you're looking for some affinity, and often you're looking for some affinity when you're deciding who to hire or who to promote or who to do business with.'

Now if you take that simple human tendency and you aggregate that, and color interferes with our ability to form an affinity and see someone as like us, then the result will be a systematic denial of opportunity. It doesn't matter, in some sense, really whether you call it discrimination or not. The point is it results in this denial of opportunity and that's not the kind of America we want, and we need affirmative action to tend against that simple human tendency.

The point I'm trying to make is this: I agree with you that there are sharp disagreements about the facts. I think that persuading people to change their view of the facts is extremely difficult. People are resistant. You know, think about Bay's theorem, those of you who are statisticians. It's very difficult to get somebody to leave their commitments to empirical propositions.

Finally, I'd say, I think you may just have a real disagreement on the values issue. I think the value disagreements are very, very important and, indeed, they're important simply because even if I could get you to agree with me on the facts, we would then have a big argument about what significance to attach to the facts. Even if we've got each other to agree about the extent of discrimination, we would then just move from there to a big argument about what kinds of remedies are appropriate and whether or not we should care that the opportunities of white small businesses are diminished by 3 percent in the aggregate in order to make room for minority firms. But perhaps it's a researchable issue, to what extent is values driven, to what extent is—Amy, I'm sorry.

Amy Gutmann and Anthony Appiah have written the most amazing book called "Color Conscious." If you haven't read it, you should please read it.

You could read it right after you read mine—no, you don't have to read mine, just buy mine. But you should absolutely read [it], it's a wonderful book.

AMY GUTMANN: I'll live down that comment. It seemed to me at the beginning of your talk you gave an answer to what's wrong with the public discussion that at least I think is the right answer—onto the right thing. And so let me just repeat it in different words and see if maybe that brings some of these other comments together.

As I understood it, what we're missing is a sense of collective striving as citizens for a society with liberty and justice for all. That is, there's a sense in the debate about race that it's been divided in a way that's not just a division of people into Republicans and Democrats or left and right, but a division that a lot of people feel into black and white, or black, Latino, white. And why is that? Now one reason that I think you gave in your advice to the President at the beginning of your talk is that it's not enough to have civility and it's not enough to come out with a program because we're not going to agree on a program. What we need is a more constructive public discussion that's not just a discussion but a deliberation that has actually some end point with decisions and programs coming out of it that help move us in that direction.

So your advice to the President is don't just give us lots of words, although we need lots of good words, but we also need words that show a way in which we can get to a society with liberty and justice for all, closer to it than we are today. And so let me just give you just an example of where that's been missing at the presidential level. I was invited once, you've been many times, but once in the last year to a dinner at the White House. It was actually in the blizzard of '96 before Clinton's State of the Union address. And there were nine academics, three of whom spent their five minutes that they had to give their initial opening comments to the President of what he should do it—what the state of American democracy; three of whom concentrated their five minutes on the issue of race. And the six others talked about education and Social Security and welfare and Bosnia and a whole set of issues.

In that State of the Union address that followed, President Clinton spoke about everything that we had talked about that night except race. It never came up in that State of the Union address. And in the debate—the last presidential debate, it was Vice President Gore who dared talk about affirmative action, not President Clinton. Now it seems to me that even though there's an intellectual debate about race, there's been a paucity of leadership on this issue of the sort that could be called deliberative; that is, that there's discussion coming to some decision about how we're going to move ahead concretely as a country. And so I guess I want to stop there. I'm just asking you, that's my view about what's been missing. It's not just civility or civic discourse, but without that at a leadership level, we're going to be lost or not move ahead. But it's also decisions that have real policy implications that are policies. And we have to put the two together and they're both necessary, neither sufficient to...

EDLEY: OK. Two points. Obviously, it does take sustained leadership of the sort. And we could have a very extended discussion about agenda setting and priority setting and all the rest of it and what that reveals about values and also what it might reveal about his own perceptions of what is possible for him to do and when. And we could all speculate about that.

I mean, in some sense it seems to me the more interesting thing for me is this struggling over the question of—I mean, he it comes to you and he says, `OK. You know, I believe what Gutmann said. I'm ready. I'm ready to lead. What do I do?' And it's the `what do I do' that I think poses ...(unintelligible). Now—so anyway, that would be that...

DAVID BROMWICH: Well, he ...

EDLEY: And I think it's right.

BROMWICH: ...repealed welfare and held on...

GUTMANN: Well...

BROMWICH: ...to affirmative action. Could there be some relation...

EDLEY: We just...

BROMWICH: ...between the two?

EDLEY: Well, absolutely there's a relationship between—which is why I was talking about the the thing with opportunity and I think it is interesting that in welfare the slogan was mended, no. Let's end it as we know it as opposed to mend it, don't end it. It could have been the flip. It didn't turn out to be that—it didn't turn out to be flip. I don't know. I wasn't in...

GUTMANN: Chris...

EDLEY: But let me go back to I think to the substance of Amy's first point. Yes, deliberation, and I was suggesting this element of deliberation. I think where I would differ a little bit with some of the stuff that you've written and I know that Cass has written also...

GUTMANN: Mm-hmm.

EDLEY: ...is that for me the issue is civic culture in the sense of community. The challenge is creating affinity. The challenge is creating affinity so that one has a sense of community. Certainly in this context that I'm talking about, race, where I'm trying to figure out how do you bridge the perception gap, how do you bridge the value gap or, to put it more precisely, what kinds of interventions, what kinds of experiences will change people's values? To me, the key to it is changing people's sense of community, which means affinity. I view deliberation as means to an end. I view civic deliberation as a means to an end, period, paragraph.

Finally, let me just say that different strokes for different folks. Let's not be reductionist. If the question is: How do you change somebody's values? Some people will change that through a process of civic deliberation; other people will change their values by reading a good novel—Right?—by seeing a movie, by something that's purely experiential. And so I think that since my bottom line is this issue of community and affinity, deliberation, —deliberation is one tool that will work for some people, but there's a range of tools that have to be—I think that are required.

MARI FITZDUFF: Can I talk about a very public initiative that took into account these needs? I, by the way, can I just say your speech was so transferable. I'm just busily thinking how I can get you across to Northern Ireland. The European Union was faced with how they would actually effect, as it were, reconciliation. And we've struggled with the same issues of equity and mutuality. Equity we've done through legislation; mutuality into dependence we've not succeeded in doing. Very interesting, we've now had the evaluations through the program, and the one thing that does seem to be working is concentrating on process and behavior, not actually on the discourse. I love the idea of a national conversation—I think we need that—but concentrating on process and behavior through a very interesting program where they gave roughly \$100 million, not that much, to the 26 local councils and said, 'You've a couple of a million each'—on condition that they combined the politicians, trade unions and business and community together. On deciding together about the future for their community and how a fairly small amount of money would...

EDLEY: Right.

FITZDUFF: ...be spent—a couple of million—it fulfills all that we know in psychological terms about getting people to focus together on their future as being the best way in which you can increase respect. That is the one program that is coming through with very significant, positive results. There has been—it doesn't matter what they spend it on. It can be fishery; it can be community development...

EDLEY: Exactly.

FITZDUFF: ...it can be women's issues. The fact is the process is the one they've got to get right. And the European community is making sure they do. And willy-nilly, whether people spoke or did not speak about their divisions, there's a very significant effect on both behavior and attitudes in terms of interaction and, indeed, in value changes. And I'd just thought that you're saying, 'What can we do.' And I love your emphasis on policy because, frankly, that's what we have to come down to. And I just thought that that would be an interesting initiative that might be...

EDLEY: That's absolutely terrific because I mean, I think one of—certainly one of my lines at the beginning—from the beginning of this has been, `Yeah, we've got to talk with each other. We've got to wrestle with the tough issues, but it can't just be holding hands together around the campfire singing "Kum Ba Ya." The question is: What's supposed to go on in this deliberation? What's supposed to happen that will bring to it this transforming character because community creating and talking are not mutually exclusive, right? There are ways that you can build a community. You can create an affinity by coming together and engaging in a deliberative way. I suspect that it's most likely to happen if you're working on something, if you're problem solving.

FITZDUFF: Yeah, it does, mm-hmm.

EDLEY: ...if you're—if something...

MICHAEL PIORE: But does all this mean...

EDLEY: I feel like I shouldn't be calling on people because I don't know...

JUDITH RODIN: Paul said you would call on people. I'm happy to do that. He thought you were...

EDLEY: OK. But maybe you should call on people because I don't—you want a structured discussion. I don't know...

RODIN: No, I think we've very structured.

PIORE: It seems to me there's a basic contradiction, though, here between community and deliberation. And it's not clear to me—I mean, what you've made a...

EDLEY: Is that Michael?

PIORE: Yeah.

EDLEY: Oh, hi.

PIORE: I mean, you made such an...

EDLEY: You—you...

PIORE: ...elegant presentation and one that's so attractive that, I really hesitate to break into it. But on the one hand you talk about presidential leadership and the President kind of orchestrating the conversation. But on the other hand, buried in your talk is this notion that you don't want to have to talk about race at a cocktail party or in the office and, I mean, it's there, it seems to me, that the break in the community comes through, because, I mean, it's so painful to have these conversations in day-to-day life. Who wants to be on the line in day-to-day life all the time on race? So you don't talk about it. And it's at that point that the community breaks down. And I guess it makes me wonder whether community really is a feasible approach to this issue, whether we should and whether we shouldn't be talking about negotiation, about a whole range of ways with dealing with an interracial society, but the notion that you could—given how painful it has become—that you could actually break down the barriers between these two communities, have the kind of conversion.

EDLEY: Well, th...

PIORE: I mean, don't you need to have face-to-face conversation to have a conversion? Can the President really produce the conversion?

EDLEY: Look, I agree with absolutely everything that you said. Here are two quick possibilities. One is—first of all, I try as a discipline not to say community building or community creating kind of stuff to me the right metaphor is community connecting. That is to say I don't—I mean, we could go—have a long discussion about that identity politics and nationalism vs. universalism and all that stuff. I think that's Chapter 10 in the book.

But in a way, I mean, let's just assume that there will continue to be some separation in these communities, the question is effective commerce between them, exchange between them, a bridge, if you will, a connection between them that a more modest ambition of that sort. Again, I don't necessarily—it's not assimilation and it's not convergence necessarily. So I agree with you that negotiation—that's another way. If you're—still, having said that—

second paragraph—it's hard even if it's just negotiation rather than conversion. It's hard. And my sense is that—look, I had a conversation with the superintendent of schools in Boston. I said, 'How are you going'—we were talking about his agenda. I said, 'How in the world are you going to pull this off when you've got the black, Latino, Asian, white polarization that exists in the city, on the city council, in the school committee? What is your strategy for dealing with all this polarization?' And he said, 'I don't have one. I can't figure it out. Not only can I not figure it out, I can't find any political allies to help me with it. It's too hard. And so one of my ambitions—if you ask, What can the President do? The President can't go into coffee things all around—but he can probably possibly—I don't know—maybe I'm on medication here—he can model for us some of what it takes. He can model for us some of what it takes.'

What I want is, I want a document that will be a resource for people like that superintendent, who are looking for suggestions, who are looking for help about how, in their community, in their organization, in their institution, they can lead effectively on these issues. The President can't come to that coffee club—coffee klatch. He can't come to every school district. But perhaps he can produce something that will be helpful to people who want to lead on this issue, who right now avoid it because it's so damned hard.

Lani.

LANI GUINIER: I really enjoyed listening to you, Chris, and I have some of the same skepticism that I think you're hearing in the room, and I don't think it's appropriately directed toward you. I think that the skepticism is really something that we have to address. You're doing your job, which is important, and I think what you said—and it also echoes some of what Jay Rosen said earlier this morning. He said, 'What would a reconstructed public dialogue look like? What sort of imaginative possibilities would be in it? Who would be in it?' And I think that those are the challenges for this Commission, and I don't think Bill Clinton will be in that reconstructed public dialogue that we're talking about, although he can make space for it.

EDLEY: Exactly.

GUINIER: And so whatever he does to make space for a reconstructed public dialogue, in my view, would be extraordinarily constructive. The reason I don't think he can do it is because he's a politician and for all of the other reasons that you identified. He is busy. He has other competing needs. And, most important, he has to deal with the national press corps, and they are going to sabotage any good-faith effort that he makes. That's one problem. I think he also has, in my view—obviously, this is not surprising—a credibility gap on this issue, and that's something he has to address.

EDLEY: Right.

GUINIER: I mean, he believes in redemption. I think he needs to come out and redeem himself and not just say, you know, 'I have an enlightened view of race and have followed it,' but, 'I have—I wish I could have been a better person on a number of issues.' And I think that would go a long way, in terms of giving people in this country a sense that he understands how complicated the problem is. But that's for you and Paul Begala and the President to work on.

What is more interesting to me is, really, how do we, as a commission, try and address Jay Rosen's question and talk about some of the other challenges? And I think you also had a taste of that when you said, 'How do we give the American people a conversion experience about this issue?' And nothing that Bill Clinton says or does is going to give them a conversion experience. He can make the space so that—and I think Mari's point—if he were to say, 'And I'm going to give \$100 million to 26 regional councils to have local conversations over a period of time to figure out how they're going to address this meeting, to function as public citizen juries on issues that have a racial overtone. I'm going to have facilitators helping them to deliberate—because I don't think, certainly, the research that we've done at Penn with Penn undergraduates shows it's not enough to bring people together.

EDLEY: Yes.

GUINIER: It's not enough to have them in affinity groups. It's not enough to talk. They also need skills to try to expose the way that they've been

processing information. They need help. And it's part of the reason they can't process the evidence that you're providing is that because of their, quote—and the psychologists can certainly say this better than I—but because of their racial schemata, because of the way in which they have processed—the shortcuts—the information shortcuts they've taken to process race, they have a very selective memory about the facts that you provide them. They also understand and interpret those facts, consistent with their information processing framework.

So you've got to uncover all of that. You can't do it on a national level, but you can do it at a local level. And I think if we got people to see that this is possible, it can be fun—it's not just having a fight at a cocktail party, but it can actually be a deliberative and conversion experience that not only makes you a better person, but enables you to work with other people from very different backgrounds to solve real problems. That's empowering.

If you give people the sense, 'Hey, I'm not just feeling better about myself, but boy, when we come together and we talk with these other people,' because we need their information processing schemata to check our own and because when we all put our different perspectives on the table, we begin to see, as you said, the complexity and the richness of the problem, well, then we can start solving it, because now we're beginning to understand this problem. And if we invite them to brainstorm creatively and innovatively about the problem—they're not stuck thinking inside the box. They don't have to come up with the same public policy solution in Austin, Texas, that they come up with in Boston, Massachusetts, because it's...

EDLEY: It doesn't have to be the same problem, even...

GUINIER: Right.

EDLEY: ...that they're working on. It can be...

GUINIER: Exactly. So I think it's really important for this commission to focus on your question, tied to Jay's question: What kind of conversations will enable ordinary Americans to have the conversion experience that gives

them confidence—and this is Amy's point—to believe that we can collectively strive to make a better neighborhood, a better community, a better society? And I think that's a challenge. I think it's a challenge that we're up to. And I would like to hear other people—not just you, but I'd like to hear other people talk about what kinds of conversion experiences have they participated in? What kinds of conversations have they had? What kinds of deliberations have they been part of? We heard some of this at the first meeting. I still quote James Fishkin's deliberative poll with the guy from Arizona talking to the welfare mother from New York. I mean, I think putting that on the table gives us a sense of possibility and gives us the feeling that we can start striving to something better.

EDLEY: Absolutely. And I agree with everything that Lani said and that that list of five things that I said it seems to me it's critical for the President to do, that fourth was identifying the promising paths towards the vision. I mean, that's what I'm talking about. I'm saying it's examples like the one you talked about in Northern [Ireland]—because the point is that those all over the country who would like to make progress on this issue do need help figuring out, 'Well, what is it that I could do that might make a difference? You know, what is that set of skills? What are the approaches that would do it?' And part of making space—that Lani was talking about—part of making space, it seems to me, is feeding those leaders, is giving them the ideas, is presenting some models that might be useful. That's—I mean, from my own—that's why I was—that's why, for me, the most important part of this was to get him to write a book, is that...

PAUL VERKUIL: Chris, can I just follow up on that? In the sense of whether the dialogue or the conversation is honest among politicians, like Lani said, I think we've got this phrase, as you use it, 'playing the race card,' is a big—it's in the way, because it means that it's hard to have a conversation that's honest because every time race is raised, people are very suspicious about motives, and it's either, you know, seen as I think playing the race card is largely played by one kind of politician. It's usually a conservative white politician and not seen as—you know, maybe a liberal black politician. But nonetheless, it's that kind of a phrase which has pushed some of the real

honest dialogue in the background. And I don't know if politicians even—including the President, are really qualified to reintroduce it. It needs a more broad based community. And I would add, you know, the corporate leadership, union leadership and community leadership, where they're not tainted by the motivation to get it going.

One thing that struck me—I was in Virginia when Doug Wilder won the governor's race, and he was ahead 15 points the day before the race and he won, as you may know, by about 1/10th of 1 point. He won by a handful of votes. And everyone concluded that there is this race effect, that people are not willing to be honest. And they will say who they're going to vote for, but when it comes time to pulling the lever, they won't do it. This, I think, Derek, occurs to me maybe—I think, maybe this is purely speculative, but it may have something to do with why people are moving in favor of interracial things when it comes time to ask them, because it costs them nothing, but they also think, for example, that minorities are much larger in the population and we're much better off. Maybe those are the real answers of how they feel about the other question, and they say it in a kind of passive-aggressive way. They think that, you know, all that's going on here is that minorities are doing more and they don't really want to know the truth. And so to get the truth out is a very complicated process, because we have to trust the people who are having the conversation.

EDLEY: I just want to say, I disagree with you on the race card point, and here's why. I think that there are helpful ways and unhelpful ways to talk about race. Helpful way—there's a right way; there's a wrong...

VERKUIL: Right.

EDLEY: ...and the difficulty is not so much that race gets injected into—but the way in which it gets injected. And one of the things that I think needs to happen in a conversation about race, be it national or local or community or whatever, is that people need to have some sense, I think, of what is a helpful way to talk about this issue and what is a destructive way to help in this issue. I mentioned the issue of platitudes as being an example of, it seems to me, what's not a helpful way of doing it, things that—you know, that we're all

familiar with the arguments about stereotypes and all the rest of—there are affirmatively destructive ways in which some political leaders—too many political leaders talk about the issue. And one of the things we need to do, if you will, is out those examples of bad leadership and fight against them. Sir.

ROBERT WIEBE: Whoops. I do want to pick up on what Paul said. I think that—I'm sorry.

EDLEY: No, no, no. That's all right.

WIEBE: I just wanted to pick up on what Paul said. I think that he brings us back to the beginning of your talk where I, at least, listening to you, thought you were structuring the world in which you needed to communicate the complexity and, indeed, the kind of inflammability that affirmative action raises in the political circles that Clinton presides over. You think it's simple. You bring up code words. But code words will mean many things to many people. They will elicit responses you aren't aware of. You then moved on and talked to us about, what I put down in my notes, 'differing visions of the good society.' Different people have visions of the good society. They may be utilitarian. They may be utopian. They may be all kinds of things. But race will have a very different meaning in many of these. And much of our discussion has been how, over the long run, might there be ways of allowing people with these different visions to understand one another better. How can you build these bridges across different visions, to mix the metaphor?

But to go back to the concrete political issues of today, it seems to me that if we presume that each of these code words will elicit volatile, sharply different, often hostile—I think, the prescription for public policy becomes almost the antithesis of the prescription for the long-term change; that is, long-term change requires that we bring out things that are difficult; we reckon with issues that are wrenching; we have to move our minds in ways that will be difficult and perhaps long term. The short-term policy issue is: Vote now. And voting now on a particular issue, it seems to me, almost by the logic of your talk, means you need to mask or to mute or to make as least significant as possible those code words that will be most likely to expose the

explosive feelings that do now exist and that we're trying to transform. So it's almost as if we have two worlds you have asked us to enter...

EDLEY: That's fair.

WIEBE: ...the world of today and the world of an indeterminate future that we hope will come.

EDLEY: That's fair. Let me just fence out, if I may, the particularly difficult context of sort of an electoral immediacy and talk more generally about what might happen in civic discourse.

Here's my experience of this. My experience with this is two things. It's—first of all, when you ask a politician, 'What do you believe in?' they say, 'I'm for equal opportunity, I'm against discrimination and I'm against quotas.' Point number one, bullshit. I mean, that's, you know, very nice, but what mainstream politician couldn't say those words, all right? David Duke believes that; not helpful. Right. Not helpful. Second context: I'm for merit; you're for equal results—proportional representation. Now my problem is that there are ways to use code words, that many of our code words not only mask the underlying empirical and value commitments but they lock us into a debate that has an oppositional character to it, it seems to me, that is inflammatory.

BROMWICH: Do you mean to say...

EDLEY: What I want to talk about is...

BROMWICH: Are you saying that merit is a racist code word? It's me...

EDLEY: Just—oh—oh, hi.

BROMWICH: ...David Bromwich. Are you saying that merit is a racist code word.

EDLEY: Well, it depends on how it's being used. What I'm saying is that...

BROMWICH: Because I would like, at this moment to testify to a conversion experience of my own, which is that people who do a job well are valuable for doing the job well. And from that point of view, one of the most racially destructive things done in the country in recent years was Bill Clinton saying he wanted a Cabinet that looked like America. Ron Brown should have been denied the job of Secretary of Commerce, not because he was black or white but because he was too corrupt and too much in the pocket of foreign investors and too unsympathetic to American labor. It is the existence of the idea of merit that makes it possible for me to speak thus idealistically. If you do away with that, you've done away with one of the few secular conversionary ideals that people hold. Good luck with your religious ideals, since you don't seem to be very religious. But there's going to be an enormous trouble starting the community conversations if you give up merit with the notion that it is a racist code word.

EDLEY: I did not say that—now, look...

BROMWICH: You were on the verge of saying it.

EDLEY: ...I know what I was on the verge of saying. Here's my position—OK?—which is in Chapter 7. My position is that the discussion we ought to have, in whatever the context, whether it's the Cabinet or whether it's admissions to the University of Pennsylvania, is, I mean, what do we mean by merit? And to make space for different conceptions of merit and have a discussion about which conception of merit is preferable. And the point I'm arguing is that the kind of leadership we want in the discourse, it seems to me, is not leadership that will speak in shorthand using code words, like 'equal opportunity' or 'merit,' but rather leadership that will help a community see to it that there's some important choices, important issues, at stake, and now let's discuss those. I think that that is more productive, ultimately, of the kinds of connections that we're talking about. Claude has been trying to...

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: Could—could—I'm sorry.

EDLEY: I'm—I'm sorry.

CLAUDE STEELE: Well, it's a little less relevant now, but in directing the President, one thing that was occurring to me is that so much of the time, I think the discussion is more constructively held at the level of particulars.

What's very difficult to achieve or resolve at a very abstract level and inevitably produces polarization and...

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: Mm-hmm.

STEELE: ...conflict can sometimes be resolved miraculously at the level of particulars and whereas the unit of thinking about this is often the entire society. And we talk about cocktail parties and we talk about discussions which are at that level. If you're talking about how to get more minority graduate students, for example, and how to train them and how to get a culture that works for—with them, you can be much more effective about it, and I think this is...

EDLEY: Yes, I see.

STEELE: ...there's a messenger back to the President. I think this is a very useful tack to take in this kind of discourse.

EDLEY: Edna? Edna just had her...

EDNA ULLMANN-MARGALIT: OK.

EDLEY: Hi, there. I have a list here now. Great.

MARGALIT: Thank you. Let me just say to you that I am one of the very few foreigners in this group, and—I mean, non-Americans. And as I was listening to you, I was really experiencing a kind of two-tier listening. One level was trying to learn from you as much as I could about the race problem in America, and I admit that I have learned a lot, and I really am grateful to your presentation and I join the other people here who have appreciated your presentation. I think that I've learned a lot about how to frame that discussion in this country and how to think about that. So this helped me there. The other level, which was simultaneous with this, was whether at all—and this goes back to Mari's point about Northern Ireland—whether it

can be translated into problems which are extremely divisive in my own country, which is Israel, and I think of at least two such extremely divisive issues. And there I'm stuck. I'm not quite sure to what an extent this is helpful.

And I want to go back to a point that I think Derek Bok made and also Michael Sandel. I think, basically, as difficult and complicated and painful and emotional and historically loaded the problem of race in this country is, basically, I agree with Derek Bok, that the basic value is not contested. It's perceptions and it's empirical—it's facts and it's perceptions and all sorts of things get into this. But basically, people are against discrimination; let's put it this way. Or, at least on the level that you call unhelpful, I think it is helpful. Even if it is, you know, a cliché and a platitude, the fact that people will say that they are against discrimination...

EDLEY: Right.

MARGALIT: ...it's not irrelevant and it's not trivial. It is...

EDLEY: Right. An inequality norm. Yeah. That's right.

MARGALIT: Right. Now—but there are issues where the division is there and it is a basic division and it is a division about values. And when you say, 'Let's get clear of the unclarity,' and once we clarify the underlying issues, we are safe. We are sound. We are doing well. I think that there are problems, and Michael Sandel mentioned abortion in this country. There are problems where when you—where you clear all the unclarity and you get to the bottom-line issues—this is where the problem is...

EDLEY: Right.

MARGALIT: ...and you are optimistic and I think rightly optimistic about race, because I think there can be progress. There has been progress. There are divisions about all sorts of things and about whether, you know, how we would deal with affirmative action and to what—when you laid out the spectrum, where do we want to find ourselves? Lots of problems like that. But the underlying issue is not the divisive issue, I think. And my question

to you is: What would your speculation, view, you know, comment be on how to deal with issues which are at the bottom level, are extremely divisive? When you clear all the unclarities, you are down there with two opposing positions where there is no reconciliation between them, and it's not a posturing or a framing of the debate that makes it a polar issue; it is a polar issue.

Let me just say, in my case, I'm thinking of two things. One of them is what to do with territories, hold on to them or compromise on them—OK?—territories gave them...

EDLEY: Who is a Jew?

MARGALIT: ...th—30 years ago...

EDLEY: Yeah.

MARGALIT: ...and the other is the sort of religious w...

EDLEY: Who is...

MARGALIT: ...the nature of public space, you know, in terms of religion.

EDLEY: I see.

MARGALIT: And when you say, 'Conversion experiences might be helpful,' I am very weary of that because, you know, I'm familiar with conversion experiences which are...

ABNER MIKVA: Suppose you come to a mikvah...

MARGALIT: ...and which can be manipulative and which can be extremely dangerous, and when I hear this expression, I shrink. And you just have this recent book published here in this country about the codes in the Bible and you have no idea what effect it has on people's lives and it is a kind of conversion experience on people's lives. And it's extremely dangerous, and that's not the way to solve that particular problem.

EDLEY: I see.

MARGALIT: So when the divisive issue is such that this is what Michael Sandel described before, when people—you described the abortion clinics and the way this gets played out in front of the clinic. And in my country, it gets played out in various ways. But the problem is that the other side is entirely delegitimized in the eyes of—there are two sides, and each side delegitimizes the other. And the question of how to—I mean, it's not a question of community. They all belong to the same community. It's not a question of community building or community connecting. It's a question of how to go on, when there is this extremely divisive basic issue where it's clear that there are two positions. No conversion experience is going to bring people to the light because there are two lights.

EDLEY: I'm with you.

MARGALIT: And what would your views on this be?

EDLEY: Well, I think my—the right answer is probably the framework that I have wouldn't work. That's probably the right answer. But let me try this. I think what I'm suggesting has two pieces to it. The first piece of it is you improve the discussion by finding the deep sources of disagreement and trying to engage people about those. I mean, let's not argue: You're in favor of merit; I'm in favor of proportional representation. Let's argue about what the mission of the institution ought to be, what the mission of the university ought to be, point number one.

And point number two, my assumption is that there will be situations in which we can get people to come together on their differences and values and their differences in values, not in the sense of—not simply in the sense of personal values but in the sense of civic values. We can get people to change their views by changing their sense of who is in their community or what communities do they feel connected with. So the conversion experiences I'm looking for, obviously, are ones in which people reinvent their sense of with whom are they connected.

Now the problem is that I'm perfectly prepared to admit that there are certain circumstances in which there are communities that simply have chosen to be at war with each other. And it's...

MARGALIT: The pro-life and pro-choice in this country—is this a good example or it's...

EDLEY: I think it's—to me it's a...

MARGALIT: How would you?

EDLEY: To me, it's an example where I really doubt that the communities can come together. The hypothesis in the terms that I'm talking—my hypothesis would be that notwithstanding their polarized disagreement, there may be a way to change the nature of the discourse so that it is less inflammatory and there can sort of be an agreement to disagree, or there can at least be a 'cold war' rather than a 'Hot War' so that the struggle continues, but it continues using different weapons in different venues. That would be the kind of shift that I would take.

But I want to go back to my first point, which is, I'm not confident at all that what I've thought through in the context of race can be easily exported to others.

Jay Rosen is the person...

JAY ROSEN: I want to go back to the question that Michael Sandel asked you, the first question, and maybe address some of the points that Lani was making, because I had a different experience than Michael did, although I listened to the same talk. I heard you articulate a very nuanced, complex view of the choices and consequences and difficulty of affirmative action, of race issues, for us. And the problem of the current climate of public discourse was represented in your story, essentially, by Stephanopoulos in the room. You know, Stephanopoulos says, 'OK. That's great. But how am I going to explain that?' Right? And in saying that, Stephanopoulos is representing the current climate of warfare and public discourse; he's representing the Capitol press corps, which he knows is going to ask certain kinds of questions about that

position; he's thinking ahead to the 30-second ads—Right?—in the next campaign and what people could do with that, so he's representing the political consultants when he says that, right?

And so in that sense, Stephanopoulos and the concerns represented by his remark, which are everybody's concerns, I would assume, in that environment, are cutting against the very clear and very compelling and elegant discussion and sort of architecture of the public issue that you're providing us here.

So this is very good, because it places us in an imaginative space where we have a problem that's relevant to this Commission, which is: If an argument about affirmative action or race needs to be conducted in the way that you suggested to us, but Stephanopoulos is also right—or he's representing real world concerns—then what would leadership look like in civic discourse, right?

EDLEY: Gre...

ROSEN: Now OK. Now...

EDLEY: OK. All right.

ROSEN: So that's a problem, you see, that we can deal with as a commission.

Now I have some ideas about that. These are not ideas for Clinton; they're ideas for us to think about—OK?—because—I've thought about this a little bit, and especially the problem with the press, because one of the things that I assume people are saying in that room is, 'Look, if we say that, we're going to get killed, you know, tomorrow in the press room, because they're going to ask us, "Are you coming out for quotas?"' or whatever—all this stuff, and they're just going to recycle the current terms of the debate, right?

I liked your five-point program, by the way. So here's my five-part program. But, again, this is for the Commission, not for the President. Suppose the President comes out and he says, 'Here's my public position,' let's say on affirmative action, and it's something like what you suggested—you know,

`Affirmative action's important to remedy and prevent discrimination and increase diversity,' right? Then he also, on the same day, at the same event, comes out with the President's public exposition, OK? And this is a lengthy document that does what you just did for us and lays out the reasoning behind the President's position; lays out his thinking in some detail; lays out the architecture of the issue in terms of values, choices, priorities; and most importantly, leaves room for further debate and argument, right?

EDLEY: Right. Right.

ROSEN: And that is published too...

EDLEY: Right.

ROSEN: ...OK? And think of it as being on the Web...

EDLEY: Right.

ROSEN: ...Right?—now. So then you say to Stephanopoulos, `It's OK, George. When the press corps says, "Are you coming out for quotas, Mr. President?" you simply have the president's spokesman say, "Did you read the exposition?"' You see? `Until you've read the exposition, don't ask me that question. It's in the exposition,' you see? And you encourage people around the country, like us, and everybody else who's on the Web—which is a lot of people who are not like us; they're just people—to read the exposition—Right?—in addition to the position.

EDLEY: Right.

ROSEN: And you do direct battle—You see?—with the sound bite culture by coming out with a position and an exposition.

Now the art of it, obviously, would be...

EDLEY: `Don't ask; surf the Web,' right? `Surf the Net, sir.'

ROSEN: ...that the position would have to relate to the exposition and vice versa.

EDLEY: Yes.

ROSEN: The position would have to relate to the exposition; the exposition would have to report out the position.

Now if the President could do those two things and then also say, 'Therefore, here is my present course of action. More to come. Here's my suggestions for the nation's course of action,' and all the things people can do, as you were saying, 'More to come. And,' as Lani was saying, 'here are my personal public reflections on race,' you see? All five of those things at once—that would be leadership in civic discourse. And you just take on the sound bite mentality directly—you see?—by giving people a map of a possible conversation, putting it out there. And when they come back with the, you know, truncated terms of public dialogue, you say, 'You know, we've tried to address that,' and just put it out there and see what happens. That would be leadership.

JAMES FISHKIN: Could we hear what Paul would think of that? I'm fascinated. I don't want to lose this moment. Would the press pick the exposition apart for potentially embarrassing sound bites so the sound bite culture would win, or would the press actually read the exposition and acquire a nuanced-enough account...

EDLEY: I think three of them would...

FISHKIN: ...of the President's position that would—or how would that work? I mean...

PAUL BEGALA: Hey, Jay, actually, I think it's a very good idea to begin with, and I'd be surprised if we don't see something like that out of the race initiative that Chris is working on.

EDLEY: That's what I've recommended.

BEGALA: I think you will see that. But the target audience is less—you know, say Paul Taylor, who's covering us day to day, because Paul's got to go, and you've got, you know, special counsel Bromwich is indicting our secretary of commerce that day and, you know, Mikva's up for the Supreme Court. And, I

mean, he's got to cover three or four things, and he can't read 500 pages on race.

ROSEN: Right.

BEGALA: But maybe Calvin can. Maybe others who have a little more space and time—I mean, I've been a great press basher, but it's not always their fault; there is a larger system and a job that they've got to do.

ROSEN: Oh, yeah.

BEGALA: But, yes, they'll pick it apart, or if not them, than, you know, someone at the Manhattan Institute—you know, whoever's got Betsy McCaughey's old job; I guess she's got it back now—is going to go through all 1,342 pages of that, like the health-care plan had, and pick out things that are completely out of context or, even worse, dissemble about them.

Still, given all those risks and problems, it's still a very good idea, and I bet you it's one he winds up doing.

EDLEY: And look, I think that's my point about how the report from the President, the book from the President, that—you know, that I want to see in 1998, not 2002...

ROSEN: Mm.

EDLEY: ...the report from the book—from the President that has that quality to it, and I agree that it has to be open to create space...

ROSEN: Open, yeah.

EDLEY: ...I think is extremely important. Having said that, let me just say a word in George's defense. I think—the interesting point, I think, is that there's a George everywhere.

ROSEN: Sure.

EDLEY: And in particular, I view George's role in that kind of a conversation as the person who's thinking about, 'How do you teach, given the constraints that you, the leader, have in your context?' Now different leaders...

RODIN: Whom do you teach is what George is thinking about, in addition to how.

EDLEY: Yes. That's right. But, one of the other things about the President, unlike many other leaders, is that when he speaks, in a way, he's generally talking to everybody and he doesn't get—so there's that. But I—what I'm saying is that different leaders have a different context and have different constraints on how they can teach. The President subjected to Paul Taylors of the world—right?—can only, you know, can only squeeze a little bit through the haze. And, therefore, what George is saying is, you know, 'Nice, complicated analysis, Edley, but we've got to make it so Paul Taylor can understand it and his...

ROSEN: Yeah.

EDLEY: ...and more challenging, Taylor's editor can understand it, right?

ROSEN: Right.

EDLEY: But the leadership issue and the constraints of teaching and so forth that the superintendent of Boston has—they're quite different, or that a minister has or that you have would be quite different. So I guess what I'd view it as this very nuanced sense of what the teaching possibilities are for leaders being highly variable.

ROSEN: Mm.

EDLEY: And then I'm instructed to talk to...

RODIN: Can...

EDLEY: Oh.

RODIN: Did you want to comment on this?

MIKVA: You know, we have a little bit of different recollections. I enjoyed everything you said, Chris, but I remember that press conference preparation very well.

EDLEY: Mm-hmm.

MIKVA: But I remember when he finished his answer—I forget who I was sitting next to, but the consensus on our side of the table was, if he could only give that answer out there...

EDLEY: Yes.

MIKVA: ...because that one was the pulpit, and he had full control of it. I'm sorry, Lani, but when he uses that as a pulpit, he has great credibility. Unfortunately, we primed him and prepped him.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: Maybe not.

MIKVA: The "Bell Curve" was a big thing there. And they didn't ask him, and he volunteered it and it came out a wash. Whereas, the affirmative action speech he made was a plus because he did use the pulpit, not a lot of it came through. And a lot of the nuances that you've worked on didn't come through, but I hope he uses this opportunity out in California just to use the pulpit. Maybe it's to create the space; maybe it's to remind us that our values are now more common than they were 50 years ago.

He doesn't have to educate people about equality. He isn't breaking through the segregation of the armed forces or letting the first black in Ole Miss. He now just has to use the pulpit to tell us that things aren't as great as some of his critics are saying they are and that they don't have to do anything. And it's not going to be the nuanced program that we need to figure out how to get other local leaders to do the things they have to do. It's not going to get us to the kind of thing that Paul Begala was talking about at the lunch table—maybe getting us to start focusing again on diversity as a plus rather than just talking about it as equality being fair, to start reminding people that the rest of us have a stake in this issue.

But those aren't things the President can do, and not in that one speech out in California. And the book, yeah, someday, I'd like to take a poll of how many people have read the books that presidents or presidential candidates have written, and I suspect it'll be very small—nowhere near as many people as can be influenced by this speech.

EDLEY: That's all right. But you'll read it. You'll read it. Lawrence Long.

RODIN: Go ahead.

EDLEY: Lawrence—Lawrence Long?

RODIN: Lawrence Lessig, maybe?

EDLEY: Lawr—oh, Lawrence Lessig. Ah, that's—I think—OK. How are you?

LAWRENCE LESSIG: Actually I wanted to go back to something that I think Lani and Mari were both pointing to, and your point, which I take is absolutely right, that what's necessary—I think you used the word 'transformation'—'What's necessary is to bring about a transformation,' opens up an empirical question on its own. And one presupposition we've had here is that transformation is brought about through dialogue, right? And each of us have a conception of what dialogue is. But I guess I want to take an extreme position and say, 'Why dialogue?' I mean, think about the experiences of transformation that any of us have had or people—you know, the people that are really out there to be transformed. It's not the kind of transformation through this kind of dialogue, right? It's a transformation through different types of experiences.

So when Mari's pointing to a kind of community theater experience, which is not overtly teaching in the way that you described the President overtly teaching, although I think the President can overtly teach, that transformation comes about through a different structure. And so, I guess and I think even Lani's really complicated dialogues that she's constructing in experiments I think both in your class and also in experiments are really quite elaborate in attempting to bring about experiences that change the way people see the world as opposed to arguments, right? And I think arguments have

their place, but what we're talking about is changing how people see. And changing how they see is done through many techniques.

I guess there's an empirical question, and you pointed to it, but I wonder how much, you know, you know, you're trapped in the White House, how much you're allowed to think about it. But there's an empirical question about the extent to which techniques other than, you know, the dialogue and expression are the techniques that are necessary for transformation to the extent to which those are possible and how we bring them about and what they are. Empirically, are they more effective than the techniques of dialogue?

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN: Could I—and it's right on this point, if I may just follow up on it...

EDLEY: Please, go ahead.

ELSHTAIN: ...because I'm skeptical about the conversation metaphor model a bit, too, and here's why. I'm thinking of some of the conversations I've had, reports from community organizers who say things like this. They say, 'The last thing you want to do is to say to folks, "Oh, well, let's get together and talk about race.'" What you want to do, in fact, is to get people together to work on certain concrete issues and areas and problems. 'What about the streets? What about the schools? What about the question of jobs?' And you do that in a biracial, triracial sort of setting. And when people have the actual experience of working on concrete issues and problems together, then, after a while, you can begin to think about, or even deal with—or if people discover that along the way, certain issues about race are, in fact, being dealt with because they've learned to work together with people and to cooperate on certain concrete issues and problems.

I'm worried about the conversation metaphor in part because I think our notion of conversation is terribly corrupted in this society right now. It's corrupted by, for example, the media issues that we've talked about a bit and that I know we'll be talking about more—sort of talk show phenomenon. What is a conversation? What is honest dialogue? It's sort of, you know, it's

slicing your chest open and showing your beating heart, you know? It's spilling everything. It's getting out all the deepest, darkest...

EDLEY: Right.

ELSHTAIN: ...most horrible things about oneself. And then you —you know, you poison the atmosphere so deeply that people have a terribly hard time having a conversation with one another, much less trusting one another and working together.

And one of the big concerns at present, as many of you know, is a sort of plummeting level of social trust—the fact that we don't trust government; the fact that we don't trust one another very much. So I think that the issue, again, of what are the institutional structures, what are the frameworks, what are the mechanisms that will bring people together or across certain kinds of lines so that they can work together concretely, and then, from that, begin to build toward greater racial trust and amity and so on. And I think that's the real...

EDLEY: Yeah. Right. I want to resist sort of corner solutions reductionism here. It seems to me that on a spectrum from just talking to experience—whoops. I mean, this is psychoanalysis, right? It's the talk itself can have an experiential dimension to it. And I'm sure that what Lani is talking about, for example, is a kind of engagement that is largely oral but that is experiential, that takes on an experiential dimension in this transformative or conversion-like sense. Again, it is an empirical hypothesis—is that those are the kinds of experiences that will make a difference.

Now for many people, I don't know which they will be. My deep belief is that it is researchable and it is teachable. That's my hypothesis about what the President's going to do over the next year, that part of his game plan ought to be figure that out. Find the examples. What's the best information we have, the kind that you two were talking about, about the kinds of discussions in institutions and communities and so forth that will work, and then write it down in a tool, put it on the Internet, whatever, and hope that there will be

leaders around the country who will read it and use it as a resource to help them do this thing.

As to whether or not the object of the group deliberation engagement should be explicitly race-related or not, I'm agnostic. My guess is—again, a buoyant — not to be reductionist—is that there should be some of both; that —like, I mean, I'll tell you, if you're trying to do it around schools in Boston, race is going to be about three microns beneath the surface, and so that the leadership of that group is going to have to have a strategy for figuring out how to deal with race. It's not that we sit down and we say, 'What do you all think about the Gettysburg Address'—I mean—sorry—'the Emancipation Proclamation?' It's not—you know, it's not talking about race explicitly in that sense, but it's being very clear, being very self-conscious about the fact that we have different communities here and we need a strategy for figuring out how to create some affinities, how to create some connections.

RODIN: Thomas?

THOMAS BENDER: Could I just—along this line, to change it a little bit, I think, obviously, there are a variety of ways in which people can change, ranging from psychoanalytic model to the more behavioral experiential and actually doing things. My inclination is that doing something political that brings different people together ought to be favored, actually—but that's neither here nor there. There seems to be an assumption in a lot of the discussion, and I don't know whether I'm right in my nervousness about it, but it seems to have a logic that first, you've got to get people in a kind of agreement on the question that divides them, and then they can work together and other things will proceed. It may be just the opposite, in fact; that you have to have people learn that there is a distance between one's private self and one's civic self. And you don't have to have a perfect match. You can't be wildly out of sync, but you don't have to have everyone purified before they can actually participate in the civic sphere. And what we need to have is a place, a civic sphere, in which people who aren't in total agreement—this is the problem with republicanism and some versions of communitarianism—there is this space that is —however you want to

characterize that—that makes for a civic dialogue, then, after a reasonable amount of success, building some social trust—I mean, ultimately, we have to get at these issues, because some of them are quite malignant, but not all of them. Some of them are just differences. And I think that it may well be the process works the other way around; that the building of a certain degree of social trust out of working—and, again, whether or not it's directly a racially inflected issue, although there are few that aren't, or some other issue in the society that that's where the preparation work for the kind of—well, it's the psychoanalytic work yet to come—that there's a transference issue here.

RODIN: Go ahead, Rochelle.

ROCHELLE GURSTEIN: This follows on what Jean Elshtain was saying about sort of the bad condition of conversation today, and I was thinking about—I have been reading Dr. Johnson lately or Haslett on Northcoats and their conversations and how conversation in the 18th and 19th century was this polite art—that's how they thought of it—and that it wasn't about deliberation—at least, it doesn't seem to me that's what they were doing. It was about being witty and charming and having something to say. And I was thinking about James Fishkin's presentation last time about preparing people before they just talk, that that seems to be something that we haven't talked about at all. And people come together if—those of us who teach in schools know that you have to—in a seminar, unless everyone's done their reading, there's not a lot to talk about, or it's not very interesting. And that might be something, that a conversation metaphor, at least the way people thought of it in the 18th and 19th century—it was a social, polite art that was about being witty and reporting back on events of the day, and it wasn't at all problem-solving. I mean, that was the last thing they would have thought that was dull or not the thing that you're supposed to do. So I think that whole idea of conversation needs to be refocused and that if we want people to be able to talk, we have to imagine they're going to have something shared. And I think the deliberation that you showed us last time was perfect for showing that, that it raised the whole level of what was possible.

RODIN: Claude, last question.

STEELE: Yeah, I was going to endorse the trend that this discussion is taking, as a psychologist, I'm biased toward the fact that attitudes and values often follow behavior as much as precede behavior, and so in any of these complex domains like this, I think if where controversy has the potential to split things apart, this is a very valuable and useful approach. But it's—coming from California, it almost feels a bit like a luxury now, because we're in a sort of an all-out war to maintain the policy at all, or any kind of commitment to the policy.

And I think it's that that has sort of shoved the issue up into the very general kind of principled, valued debate and arguments over all kinds of things that makes progress on the sort of everyday, pragmatic, institutional life much more difficult to see. And it's in this domain where the President, I think, has some effect, where very forceful, clear, national leadership on this even leadership that would expose him, maybe, to a little political risk would be a dramatic demonstration in behalf of this. And then we could get back to the business of how to do it down on the ground level.

RODIN: We will go back to leadership in Paul's discussion and in the next session. Let me end, if I may take the luxury of that, by reframing it back, Chris, to part of a broader set of questions with regard to attitudes and behavior. It is the case, as psychologists have known as Claude has indicated, that the more specific the question, the more specific the attitude, the more closely it's correlated with a real behavior when you get to questions that are asked that sound more normative, the paradigmatic social psychology experiment during the period of major Chinese immigration—you know, if a Chinese couple came to your house, would you invite them in? And 97 percent of the population says yes, and then the experiment was actually conducted and 14 percent of the people actually ever let them in. And so there really is—when you have that kind of disconnect, and the data are very clear there, one wonders what is really driving behavior and whether it's useful to look at attitudes at all. You have been arguing in a very civic-minded way that there are people waiting to be led, that there are well intentioned as well as possible citizen leaders waiting for the new kind of language and the new kind of model that would allow them. That may be true, and there may be

some or many such individuals. Maybe there are also people who really do, to get back to Edna's point, even on this issue of race, hate one another and are truly intolerant and really feel unable to like one another or work together or come together, and that's producing some of the rhetoric and some of the intolerance. If that is true, what do we do about that?

EDLEY: I think there are two things. First, it does seem to me that this is an issue—race, color—I mean, the seeds were planted long before the revolution. And in some respects, our difficulties over color antedate many of the civic values, political values that are the rest of your conversation. So immediately, it's quite clear that this is a very deep problem and has the potential to challenge those civic values.

Nevertheless, going back to Derek's point earlier, it's the equality norm has taken hold, at least as aspiration. There are resources available that can be tapped to bring to bear on this challenge as ancient as it is. Tolerance and, indeed, community are, I think, part of our political culture, part of our ideal, and that's not true of every society on the planet. And in too many subcommunities within America, that's falling apart. But it does seem to me that the first answer to your question is: A leader has to make a decision—and we had this conversation with the President. You've got different kinds of Joe Six Packs sitting on bar stools. Some of them may be confused about the facts. Some of them may be confused because they have different ideals about the kind of community they want to live in. Some of them may be bigots. They're just racists, and they're proud to be racists. When you're talking, are you trying to talk to all of them? Are you trying to engage all of those Joe Six Packs?

My proposition is that, yes, you are. Yes, you are. Is that not necessarily within the expectation that they will agree, that you will convert them, that you will trim your sails in order to plead with them, to get them to agree with you, but still, with the notion that there will always be an open door to come into the community and that, therefore, there has to be a continuing engagement with them. So that's part one. Continuing engagement—no outlaws in this exercise.

The second point is that I think that the analytical exercise of trying to understand the disagreements in empirical understandings and in value commitments that animate our disagreements is useful for two reasons. It's useful both because, I mean, maybe we can shake up this fight about merit. With respect, you've got me wrong on merit. I'm in favor of merit. I probably have a different view of merit from yours. Let's argue about why we have different views of merit. Let's at least get our disagreement straight respectfully and go on from there. But it's also important analytically to understand what's at stake, because there, I think, you can identify what kind of project of connecting communities is going to be needed in order to change those values, change those empirical understandings. It tells you the kinds of experiences and information that need to be added to the civic discourse, to the civic experience in order to try to find that common ground, to use that expression.

The summary on that second point, then, is I use the expression 'searching for the kernel of truth in what the other side is saying'—that if I can approach a discussion—a complicated issue like this, prepared to search for the kernel of truth in what the other person is saying, then it seems to me, then, I'm entitled to insist that they do the same with respect to me. No outlaws; search for the kernel of truth. Thanks.

RODIN: I'd like to thank Chris for an extraordinarily nuanced talk. So take a 10-minute break and then return.