

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
ALA ANNUAL CONFERENCE
PRESIDENT'S PROGRAM
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>> LESLIE BURGER: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to the 2007 ALA President's Program, "A Contract with our Future." I'm Leslie Burger, ALA President. I'm delighted to see so many of you here this afternoon. Thank you for taking so much time in your busy schedule to join me and your keynote speaker, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., for a discussion about why our environmental policy is good business policy, good economic policy and good policy for posterity.

By taking steps to ensure that our libraries have sound environmental policies and procedures, we can contribute to the transformation of our communities, our nation and our planet.

Today's program topic is of special importance to me because of my year-long focus as President of ALA, which

has been on exploring many ways that we could transform our libraries and, by extension, transform communities. We know that when libraries are transformed, either by news service programs, renovations or new buildings, the communities we serve are, in turn, transformed. Our users' relationship with the library changes and they become advocates and passionate supporters for what we do.

As President, I developed a series of projects and initiatives that I hope will have a lasting impact on each of you, on your libraries, on our Association and our profession. I've identified 120 of the profession's emerging leaders and brought them together in a year-long program that included full-day workshops at the Midwinter Meeting in Seattle and at this Annual Conference. The emerging leaders worked virtually between conferences on a series of 23 projects that culminated in the closing session of this week. The first group, now called the "emerged leaders," has accepted appointments to ALA and division committees for 2007-2009, and a new class of 2008 emerging leaders is already in formation as this project moves into its second year.

Are any of the 2007 emerged leaders in the group this afternoon? If so, would you please stand?

[Applause.]

So, here's the pitch: If you know someone who is young, under 35 preferably, a librarian with leadership potential or someone of any age with fewer than five years of experience as a librarian, or if you fit these criteria yourself, please consider applying for the next class of emerging leaders. You can find information about this program on my website, which is <http://lb.princetonlibrary.org> .

One of my announced goals when I was elected was a national agenda for libraries -- a clear network of priorities that we could use with our legislators, our courts and the public at large. I convened a meeting in December here in Washington that brought together librarians and individuals representing organizations that are our allies and partners to begin the discussion about what the National Agenda might look like.

I then invited feedback from ALA's Divisions, Round Tables and Chapters. The result is ALA's first Agenda for 21st Century Libraries, which will be presented to our legislators on Tuesday during our Library Day on the Hill. I had hoped to have copies in the back of the room, but I forgot them. So we will bring them to the ALA Membership

Pavilion in the exhibits area and you can pick them up there.

I envision this agenda as the first step toward the development of a fully articulated National Library Agenda as we receive more feedback from members, legislators, decision makers and librarians over time, and as we hear more about its utility, appeal and sustainability.

If you would like to lend your voice to this discussion, please visit my website. The address was up there previously. [Http://lb.princetonlibrary.org](http://lb.princetonlibrary.org) .

As I mentioned, another one of my goals was to seek ways we could transform our libraries and, in turn, transform communities. I hope you had an opportunity to attend one of the series of transformation track programs presented at this conference in a specially created program track. If you attended three or more of the programs and got a voucher at the program, don't forget to stop by the ALA office area and get a library transformer T-shirt, which looks like this. It's very cool.

If you didn't attend the program and if we still have some supply left, we will see what we can do about making them available for sale.

We've also developed a Libraries Transform Communities

tip sheet with ideas that libraries of every size and budget can implement. Copies are available in the back of this room, or again on my website.

One of the initiatives that I'm most excited about is the creation of a new ilovelibraries.org website designed for members of the general public who love libraries. [Ilovelibraries.org](http://ilovelibraries.org), which launched at this conference, offers viewers a chance to learn about today's libraries and provides them with opportunities to get involved in promoting and preserving the vitality and health of what we do in our libraries.

Users are invited to share their stories, experiences, join chatrooms and sign up to become online advocates so that they can communicate our message to members of Congress and their local legislators.

Carrying forward the presidential focus on library education developed by Past President Michael Gorman, and looking ahead to President-Elect Loriene Roy's initiative on supporting LIS education through practice, I've appointed a blue ribbon presidential taskforce on library education that will develop recommendations related to a core curriculum and faculty in ALA-accredited programs and exposure to other related disciplines needed to insure that

library school graduates are well prepared for the workplace. I'm looking forward to seeing the taskforce's final report at our next Annual Conference.

I couldn't have accomplished any of my admittedly ambitious agenda without the support of the hardworking members of my presidential advisory committees and taskforces and the members who participated in the planning and execution of my programs and initiatives. If any of you are in the audience, would you please stand so you can be recognized. There we are.

[Applause.]

And there are many more of them. They are probably still busy out there planning away. Thank you so much for your contributions over the past year.

Now, before we move into the substance of the program, I'd like to remind you that this program is being captioned for the hearing impaired. So if you need the service, please move to a seat where you can see the screen.

The captioned text will be posted on my President's page on the ALA website after this conference. It takes several weeks to prepare the presentations for posting, so if you don't find the text posted when you go to the website, please check again at a later date.

If you attended yesterday's General Opening Session, you were reminded that ALA is fortunate to have a group of dedicated and generous sponsors and related organizations without whose support we could not accomplish our goals. I'm delighted to recognize Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

[Applause.]

The ALA has a long-standing relationship with NEA, which over the years has supported cultural programs in American Libraries through ALA initiatives such as "Live at your Library" and library networks for literature. The NEA has recognized the value of library-pioneered program models such as the community-wide reads -- you know them as "One City, One Book," "If all Seattle Read the Same Book" -- by creating initiatives like "The Big Read" currently in 72 communities.

Chairman Dana Gioia, an acclaimed poet and literary anthologist, is the ninth chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. He was first nominated by President George W. Bush in 2003. His renomination to a second term in November 2006 was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

Please join me in welcoming Dana Gioia.

[Applause.]

>> DANA GIOIA: Thank you, Leslie. It is a great pleasure to be here this afternoon to tell you about what will be the largest federal literary program since the WPA era. But first, I wanted to introduce myself to you because libraries were the thing that molded me more than any other institution that I ever went through.

I'm from a town called Hawthorn, California. Does anybody here know Hawthorn? Good, good. The rest of you know it because Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* and *Jackie Brown* were filmed there. Those two films captured the unique charm of my town.

[Laughter.]

Hawthorn is a town of 50,000 people. My mom was Mexican; dad, Italian. I was raised by people who didn't speak English as their first language. There is nothing else except for the public library. But we have a terrific public library. It is a depository public library.

Every day after school, at least five times a week, I went to the Hawthorn library. I looked around and I took books out. Now, I have to say that no librarian ever recommended a book to me, but more important, no librarian there ever kept me from checking out a book I wanted. So I

went there several thousand times.

[Applause.]

The reason that I became the first person in my family to go to college, the reason I got into Stanford, the reason I went to Harvard, I think the reason that I'm the chairman of the NEA, were America's public libraries and the fact that they are open and accessible for everyone in our society.

[Applause.]

About four years ago, we did this huge study where we looked at American art participation. What we saw in regards to reading was terrifying. We saw that reading is declining among every group of Americans. Every age group. Every income group. Every educational level. Every race. Every region in both genders. And we felt that we needed to do something to address this decline, to reengage Americans with advanced adult literacy.

We looked at a number of programs, including a lot of ideas that we were generating ourselves. As we looked across the country, it was clear to us that the best idea in the country was the one that had been tried in about 200 cities, in so far as we can tell, first developed by Nancy Pearl at the Seattle Public Library where a community picks

a book and encourages a town across an area to read that book.

People like that idea. People understand the idea. Librarians understand and endorse the idea. The problem is, most libraries, most librarians have neither the funds nor the resources to be able to do this program as well as they would like to.

What we decided to do was to partner with America's libraries and provide them the funding and the materials that are hard to generate, especially in a smaller community, a rural community, a less privileged community, but give the library in the community the complete freedom to tailor the program in the way that best suited the needs of their people. We called this program, "The Big Read."

We have a brochure I think that should be on most chairs in this auditorium. We also have a booth downstairs where you can see the materials that we have.

We add a new book about once a month to this program. We have 20 books now available for this. We develop television material, radio shows, CDs, reader's guides, teachers' guides, organizers' guides, and we provide funding for libraries to do this in their communities.

On Wednesday, we talked to 118 communities that are

joining this. We now have over 200 cities across the United States that have taken part. Next year, we will be in at least 400 cities across the United States in all 50 states, and we hope to be in every Congressional district in this country. I would like to invite everyone in this room to apply. Our next application schedule is July 31st. We will, in a sense, help you meet the new needs of your communities.

We've talked a lot about what librarians need for the 21st Century, and usually that topic rests on technology. But I believe that what we also need is, in a sense, a kind of entrepreneurial skill to confirm, in a free society, the library's central place as the foundational, cultural institution in a city. The one cultural organization that is open and free to everyone.

Everything the NEA does we do in partnership. I look forward to being partners with all of you as you create partnerships in your communities.

We took a librarian we work with, Marie Pico in Topeka, Kansas. She created a partnership with 150 organizations in Topeka so that in the month *To Kill a Mockingbird* was featured, we had three or four events every day. They ranged from foundations to beauty parlors, from schools to

retirement communities. This is our way, in a sense, of not only getting people reading, but helping a community define itself as a place they take reading and literature and libraries seriously, where you create conversations not only across the community but across generations.

I hope all of you will apply to "The Big Read" and together we can bring this country back into a nation of readers. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

>> LESLIE BURGER: Chairman Gioia, thank you so much for your support of ALA and our nation's libraries.

One of the things that often happens to ALA presidents despite our best plans to control everything that we're going to do during our presidential year is there's usually a topic or an issue that comes up where we're enlisted to speak out in defense of -- it's usually in defense of something that someone's trying to do to us. And that actually happened this year, as many of you know, when it came to the Environmental Protection Agency libraries, which we found out were in danger and indeed many of them were closed in an attempt to try and reduce budget expenditures and, I think, try to curtail access to information about the environment.

I think it's particularly appropriate that we have with us today a most distinguished keynote speaker, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., whose track record in speaking out about issues pertaining to the environment and the importance of protecting our environment are so critical and germane to what we as a profession have been talking about this year.

Robert Kennedy, Jr.'s reputation as a resolute defender of the environment stands from a litany of successful legal actions. Mr. Kennedy was named one of Time Magazine's heroes for the planet for the success in helping Riverkeeper lead the fight to restore the health of the Hudson River. The group's achievement helped spawn more than 150 Waterkeeper organizations across the globe.

Mr. Kennedy served as a senior attorney for the National Resources Defense Council, Chief Prosecuting Attorney for the Hudson Riverkeeper, and President of the Waterkeeper Alliance. He is also a Clinical Professor and Supervising Attorney at Pace University School of Law's Environmental Litigation Clinic and is co-host of "Ring of Fire" on Air America Radio.

Earlier in his career, he served as an Assistant District Attorney in New York City. He has worked on several political campaigns, including the Presidential

campaigns of Edward M. Kennedy in 1980, Al Gore in 2000 and John Kerry in 2004.

Among Mr. Kennedy's published books are the New York Times bestseller *Crimes Against Nature, The Riverkeepers*, published in 1977, and *Judge Frank Anthony Johnson, Jr, a Biography*, published in 1977. His articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Newsweek*, *Rolling Stone*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Esquire*, *The Nation*, *Outside Magazine*, the *Village Voice* and many other publications.

His award-winning articles have been included in anthologies in best crime writing, best political writing and best science writing. Mr. Kennedy is a master falconer; and as long as possible, he has a lifelong enthusiasm for white water paddling. I'm pleased to announce that Mr. Kennedy will be signing copies of two books *Crimes Against Nature* and *St. Francis of Assisi: A Life of Joy* immediately outside the foyer of this ballroom. Now, please join me in welcoming our keynote speaker, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

[Applause.]

>> ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.: Thank you. I'm really happy to be here today. I'm really, really happy to be

here today. Before I start, I want to introduce a couple of friends of mine. One is Fred Tutman. I see him. He's at the Patuxent Riverkeeper. Are there any other Riverkeepers here? I know some of them were going to come. We have 11 Riverkeepers now, including the Potomac Riverkeeper here in Washington DC.

But I'm really happy to be here to talk to this crowd. I grew up in a family that loved libraries, revered libraries and loved reading. My grandmother constantly grilled us on our dental hygiene and on the idea that reading was the most important thing that we could do with our lives. She always said that my uncle, Uncle Jack, that John Kennedy had become President because he was so enamored with reading from an early age. We were forced to read whether we liked it or not. Forced to do book reports. Usually every Sunday we had to do book reports for her and read them at our Sunday dinner.

But it's something that I think has left every member, all my 10 brothers and sisters, with a real love for reading and a dedication to reading. So I don't think there's any more important institution than the things that you're doing. I applaud you for it.

You know, it's really about fostering a sense of

community and fostering a sense of shared values. This idea of picking out a book for the whole community to read, we're constantly -- particularly in this country, because we're not bound together by any common culture, or religion or history or language or color or race. Our country is founded on an idea. It's a continual challenge for ourselves to try to figure out ways to unite our community and to form bonds in our community and to give us that feeling of community.

One of the reasons, one of the ways that we do that is by reading the classics. That's why it's important for everybody to read the classics because it gives them a shared experience and shared values, and for communities to take up this challenge of reading a single book and then having that as part of the community legacy.

For me, what I do with the environment is the same thing. It's about building communities. We're not protecting the environment for the sake of the fishes and the birds. We're protecting it because we recognize that nature is the infrastructure of our communities. And that if we want to meet our obligation as a generation, a nation, a civilization, which is to create communities for our children, to provide them with the same opportunities

for dignity and enrichment and good health and prosperity as the communities that our parents gave us, we've got to start by protecting our environmental infrastructure, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the wildlife, the fisheries the public lands that enrich us, that provide us with history, that provide context with our communities and are the source ultimately of our values and our virtues and our character as a people.

I want to say this at the outset. I had been disciplined over 20 years as an environmental advocate, 23 years, about being nonpartisan and bipartisan in my approach to these issues. I don't think that there's any such thing as Republican children or Democratic children.

I think the worst thing that could happen to the environment -- and this has happened, unfortunately, over recent years -- but that it becomes the province of a single political party. I work on every election cycle for both Republican candidates and Democratic candidates who have strong track records on this issue.

You can't talk honestly about the environment in any context today without speaking critically of the current Administration. This is the worst.

[Applause.]

This is the worst environmental White House, bar none, that we've had in American history. If you look at NRDC's website, the National Research Defense Council, which is one of the groups for which I work, you'll see listed there over 400 major environmental rollbacks that have been promoted or implemented by this White House over the past seven years as part of a deliberate, concerted effort to eviscerate 30 years of environmental law. It's a stealth attack.

The White House has used all kinds of ingenious machinations to conceal this from the American public. Including Orwellian rhetoric. When they want to destroy the forest, they call it the healthy forest act. When they want to destroy the air, they call it the clear skies bill.

But most seriously, they put polluters in charge of all the agencies that are supposed to be protecting the American people from pollution. The head of the forest service is the timber industry lobbyist Mark Ray, probably the most rapacious in our industry. Steven Griles believes that public lands are unconstitutional. The head of the air division of EPA utility lobby is Jeffrey Homestead who's represented nothing but the worst utility air

polluters during his entire career. The head of Superfund is a woman whose last job was teaching corporate polluters how to evade Superfund. The second in command of EPA is a Monsanto lobbyist. You look at the President's chief environmental adviser is this character, until recently, this fellow Philip Clooney whose office is in the White House and his job reportedly is to advise the President on the environmental impacts of every decision he makes.

Philip Clooney's last job was as chief lobbyist for the American Petroleum Institute. And as it turns out, his principal preoccupation over the past seven years has been combing through every federal scientific document from all the different agencies of government and removing inculpatory or damaging statements about the oil industry and the coal industry. He suppressed half a dozen major studies that you and I paid for on global warming. I mean, his job essentially was to lie to the American people to protect corporate profit taking of the President's contributors.

And you see the same thing. I just did an article for *Vanity Fair* magazine that shows the top 100 environmental officials in this government, the heads of virtually all the agencies in the Department of Commerce, which regulates

fisheries, Department of Agriculture, Energy, Interior, the EPA, the FDA, even the relevant divisions of the Justice Department that are -- virtually all of them are lobbyists, not just for polluting industries but for the worst of the worst of the worst actors within each of those industries.

And you know there's nothing wrong with having business people in government. It's a good thing if your objective is to recruit competence and expertise. But in all of these situations, these individuals have entered government service, as I show in my book in *Crimes Against Nature*, not to serve the public interest but, rather, to subvert the very laws that they're now charged with enforcing in order to enrich the president's corporate pay masters. They have imposed tremendous diminution on the quality of life of Americans in this country. Most Americans don't know about it because we have a negligent and indolent press in this country that has simply let that American democracy --

[Applause.]

You know what? Let me say a few words. A few more words about that. Because you must hear this. I was out in the Midwest this week and I heard in Nebraska a couple weeks ago, they were talking about "the liberal media," right, which you hear all the time. Well, there is no

such -- that's what Joseph Goebbels used to call the big lie. If you keep talking about it, that people all of a sudden believe it. There's no such thing as a liberal media in this country. There's *The Nation* magazine. *Rolling Stone*, *Mother Jones*. And then Air America Radio, maybe, and Pacifica Radio and that's pretty much it.

But there's a right wing media. And if you look at where Americans are disproportionately getting their news, that's where it's coming from. The Foundation recently did a study showing 30% of Americans say their primary news source is talk radio, which is 91% controlled by the right. 22 percent say cable news, mainly Fox News; and then MSNBC, CSNBC, all right wing; and 10% say Sinclair Network, which is the largest network in America and the most right wing of all of them. Sinclair is run by a former pornographer who requires all 75 of his local affiliates to take a pledge that they will not report critically about this President or about the war in Iraq or a number of other issues.

And then the rest of us get our news from the traditional corporate-owned media: ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, which has no ideology except for their own pocketbook, which is virtually always coterminous with the ideology of

the government in power, and particularly with the Republican party, which is always encouraging, all these foundations they're so fond of.

When you look at the networks, there is no liberal equivalent of Glen Beck or John Stossel or Robert Novak or Pat Buchanan or Bill O'Reilly or Sean Hannity; but that's like the Harlem Globetrotters to ask the Washington Generals -- his whole purpose is to lose every argument and kind of look bad while he's doing it.

The decline, the devolution of the American media began in 1988 when Ronald Reagan abolished the Fairness Doctrine.

[Applause.]

We had a law in this country that was passed in 1928 at the dawn of commercial radio. That law was the Fairness Doctrine that said that the air waves belong to the public, that the broadcasters could be licensed to use them, but only with the proviso that they use them to promote the public interest and to advance American democracy.

There were three requirements under the Fairness Doctrine.

Number one, they had to air news of public import. This does not mean Anna Nicole Smith for three weeks in a row. Or Paris Hilton.

[Applause.]

Okay? It means news that is critical for us making rational choices in a democracy. That's what it means.

And that's why -- okay. That was the first requirement. That's why there's a 6:00 news hour on all the networks. Not because they wanted it -- they didn't want it because the news departments were chronic -- traditionally chronic money losers; but that was the cost, they recognized, of getting the broadcast license, that they had to do that.

Number two, if they were going to give opinion, they had to tell both sides. You couldn't have had a Fox News under the Fairness Doctrine. You couldn't have had a Rush Limbaugh. You could have Rush for four hours, but then you would have had a counter veiling voice for four hours. You couldn't have had Rush and his ditto heads for 24 hours a day on the same station that Rush Limbaugh got started in 1988, the year that Reagan abolished the Fairness Doctrine, nationally.

Number three, there had to be -- to avoid corporate consolidation, it had to be local control and diversity of control.

That provision was strengthened after World War II.

Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, saw that Hitler, when he took over Europe, and Mussolini as well, had used consolidations in the news media and licensing agreements and had direct control and indirect control to stifle any kind of criticism of his administration. So they said no, we can't afford to do that in the democracy. We have to keep diversity of control. Congress wanted to make sure that people in Kansas could get crop reports, people in North Dakota could get tornado warnings, and people in the south could get country music. You wouldn't have broadcasting and programming and content dictated by a couple of corporate epicenters who were basically controlling our thought.

Well, Ronald Reagan abolished the Fairness Doctrine in 1988 as a favor to the Christian Right which was already plotting the take-over of talk and of ham radio and as a favor to the big studio heads who helped him get elected and were plotting the takeover of all media.

As a result of that, today you have five giant international multinational corporations that control all 14,000 radio stations in America, all 5,000 television stations in America, 80% of our newspapers, all of our billboards and most of the large Internet content

providers.

So there are five guys who are deciding what Americans hear as news, what information we get. And the news departments have become corporate profit centers. It is now insistent that they make a profit. So they've gotten rid of their investigative reporters, the guys who could connect the dots between the asthmatic children and the changes in the law and the money that was taken from the White House from the big polluters. They've gotten rid of their foreign news bureaus.

When I was a kid, ABC had 47 foreign news bureaus in Europe. Today they have none. They buy their news from the can from the producers over there. You can't get foreign news in the United States of America unless you go to BBC.

That's why the American people bought this neo-con fantasy that we were going to be welcomed with flowers in the streets of Iraq when we marched into that country.

[Applause.]

And that's after 2,000 years of sectarian strife. We're the leaders of the free world, but we don't know what's going on in the world.

Then because they have no obligation to serve the

public interest, their only obligation is to their shareholders. They serve that obligation, not by telling us the difficult issues that we need to understand to make rational decisions in a democracy, like global warming or about what the pharmaceutical agreement is going to do to Medicaid and what happens when you privatize Social Security, so every American really knows these issues and understands them. We don't hear about that stuff.

Rather, they entertain us. They appeal to the lowest common denominator by appealing to the prurient interests that all of us have and the reptilian core of our brains for sex and celebrity gossip. They give us Laci Peterson and Kobe Bryant and Michael Jackson and Paris Hilton and Brad and Angelina. We know more about Tom Cruise and Kate than we do about global warming.

[Applause.]

Americans today, we're the best entertained and the least informed people on the face of the earth. And that's a real problem in a democracy because you cannot have a democracy very long without an informed public.

[Applause.]

I tell you, I do about 30 to 40 speeches a year in red states to Republican audiences and I get the same reaction,

the same indignation and anger from Republican audiences when I tell them these stories about what the Administration is doing that I do from a liberal college kids. The only difference is that the Republicans come up to me afterwards and say, "How come I never heard this before?" I say, "Because you're getting your news from Rush Limbaugh and from Sean Hannity from Fox News." I came to the conclusion many years ago that, which I kind of kept to myself, but that 80% of Republicans are just Democrats who don't know what's going on.

[Laughter.]

[Applause.]

Because, you know, the values are the same. The values are the same. They always say well the red states, you listen to these pundits on TV on Sunday morning. We call them the Sunday morning gas bags in my house.

[Laughter.]

And they talk about, well the red states have morality, they have the monopoly on morality and the blue states are dissolute and disparate and degenerate.

I did a piece for *Vanity Fair* about two years ago where I had a researcher and I looked at this. I didn't really believe it. I had this researcher go out and just look at

the statistical indicia of morality in all of the different states. And what he found was interesting. He found the lowest divorce rate state in this country is Massachusetts; the highest is Texas. The lowest teen pregnancy rate is Massachusetts; the highest is Texas. The 10 lowest divorce rate states were all blue states. The 10 highest all red. The 10 highest low pregnancy, all blue. The 10 highest all red.

A red state resident is more likely to murder you, to impregnate your teenage daughter, to commit a nonviolent crime or a violent crime against you, to buy pornography, to watch "Desperate Housewives" on TV, to gamble away the family fortune, et cetera, et cetera. The highest abortion rate state is Mississippi, which is the reddest state in the country. We didn't have this difference that they claim of values, you know, between the two, at least if you look at the way the people behave.

The real difference was information -- an information deficit among those, among the people who are voting that way.

There was a poll that was taken, a survey that was done by the Public Policy Institute at the University of Maryland, called the PIPA report. It's online. I urge you

to look at it. Right after the 2004 election, it was very interesting because it basically supported this anecdotal observation that I made many years ago, which is that this is an informational issue and that the values are the same.

They surveyed Americans based upon their party affiliation and their knowledge of current event, and what they found was that there was a huge information deficit among people who said that they voted Republican.

For example, 70% of the people who said they were going to vote for George Bush -- or voted for George Bush -- said that they believe that Saddam Hussein had bombed the World Trade Center. 70 percent believed that weapons of mass destruction had been found in Iraq. 65 percent said they believed the American invasion of Iraq was strongly supported on the Muslim street and their neighbors, which of course is wrong. 64 percent said that they believe that President Bush strongly supported the Kyoto protocol and strong labor and environmental standards in our international treaties.

You may say this is nonsense. It has to be a bad survey or something. But Zogby, which is the biggest polling group in the United States today, did a poll four months ago in Iraq of military personnel and found that

over 80% of military personnel currently stationed in Iraq believe that we are in Iraq to punish Saddam Hussein for bombing the World Trade Center. They don't listen to Air America. The military radio won't let it on. They let on Fox News and they let on talk radio, and that's where they're getting their information.

Then they went -- PIPA went back twice to the same people. The second time they went back to ask the people who had this misinformation where their news source was. Invariably they said Fox News and talk radio.

They went back a third time to find out what people's basic values were. They did that by posing a series of hypotheticals. They said, for example, what if there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq? What if Saddam Hussein had nothing to do with bombing the World Trade Center? What if the American invasion was largely opposed on the Muslim street and among our traditional allies in Europe, should we still have gone in? 84 percent of Democrats and 84% of Republicans said the same thing: We should not. So the values were identical. It was only the information that made the difference. That's why it's so critical for us to have good information in a democracy.

[Applause.]

I went out and did a piece on this -- I did an article on the Fairness Doctrine and a couple of chapters on it from my book. I looked at the original debates in 1928 and they kept recalling -- the initial debates -- the beginning of our country where Thomas Jefferson, who wanted universal franchise, he wanted everybody to vote, opposed Madison, Adams and Hamilton who wanted the landed gentry to vote. It wasn't because they were snobs or undemocratic. They believed that the uneducated masses were unreliable; that they would quickly give away their democratic rights. Only people who were educated and landed would have the forthright convictions to hold onto those rights even if they had to fight and die for them.

Jefferson agreed with them. Jefferson said that an uneducated public, the uninformed public will trade 100 years of hard fought Civil Rights for a half hour of welfare to the first demagogue or tyrant or religious fanatic that comes along and promises them a \$300 tax break. He didn't say the second part but he said the first part, but that's what he was talking about.

[Laughter]

And he said the remedy for that is not to deprive the public of its rights, but rather to forcibly inform them,

whether they want to be informed or not.

So the 13 colonies did something nobody in history had done before, which was to mandate mandatory public education. You could be arrested if you weren't educated because you were considered a danger to all of us if you were not educated.

[Applause.]

And, you know, in Virginia, Jefferson started all these educational institutions. You should see how much energy went into education at the beginning of our country. It was extraordinary. It was the biggest investment we were making. He started the University of Virginia and all these local universities and grade schools and everything else because it was so critical. They understood. You must have an educated public in a democracy or you quickly lose the democracy with an uninformed public.

And let me give you just a couple of examples from the kind of arena that I work in about this disconnect -- because we have a broken press now in our country -- about this disconnect between public perception and reality. I'll talk just about one industry, which is coal burning power plants which impacts this part of the country dramatically.

I talk in my book about all these different industries

that have a choke hold on this Administration. Corporate hog farms, which we're dealing -- and chicken farms, which are dealing with Purdue and Tyson,'s down in the Chesapeake. The chemical industry and the nuke industry and et cetera. I'll talk about one industry today, which is coal burning power plants.

I have three sons who have asthma. One out of every four black children in America's cities now has asthma. We know that asthma attacks are triggered by bad air, by ozone and particulates. A principal source of those materials in our atmosphere is 400 coal burning power plants that are burning coal illegally. It's been illegal for 18 years. The Clean Air Act required them to clean up 18 years ago.

Incidentally in many of the blue states, they did clean up. In Massachusetts, all of the plants removed those emissions, but in the red states where corporations can easily dominate the state political landscapes, they weren't required to comply with the law.

The Clinton Administration was prosecuting the worst 52 of those plants criminally and civilly and investigating over 200 other ones. But this is an industry that donated \$48 million to President Bush during the 2000 cycle and they've given \$58 million since.

One of the first things that President Bush did when he achieved office was to order the Justice Department and EPA to drop all those lawsuits. The top three enforcers at EPA, Bruce Buckheit, Sylvia Lawrence and Eric Schaefer all resigned their jobs in protest. These weren't Democrats. These were people who had worked through the Reagan Administration and the Bush Administration.

The top Justice Department attorney said that this had never happened before in American history, where a presidential candidate accepts money from criminals under indictment or investigation and then orders those cases dropped when he achieves office.

Immediately after doing that, the President abolished the New Source Rule, which was the heart and soul of the Clean Air Act, the most important provision in that statute. That's the rule that required those companies to clean up 18 years ago. So now, there's no requirement that they ever have to clean up the ozone and particulates.

All of those plants in Massachusetts and elsewhere that invested in the new technologies are now at a huge competitive disadvantage in the marketplace. I'm going to be able to watch my children gasping for air on bad air days because somebody gave money to a politician.

If you go to EPA's website when you go home tonight, not NRDC's website, but federal EPA, you'll see that that single decision alone by President Bush to abolish the New Source Rule kills 18,000 Americans every year, six times the number of people who were killed in the World Trade Center attacks. But not just once. Year after year after year after year. This should be the front page headline of every newspaper in this country every day.

[Applause.]

But you won't read about it in the American press.

About 20 months ago, the EPA announced that in 19 states, it's now unsafe to eat any fresh water fish caught in the state because of mercury contamination. The mercury is coming from those same coal burning power plants. In 49 states, as of last week, it's unsafe to eat at least some of the fish. Like my home state of New York, almost all the fish, but not all of them, are unsafe to eat. There are still a few rivers where they're edible. But that's one of the 49 states where some of the fish are unsafe to eat. In fact, the only state where all the fish are still safe to eat is Wyoming, which is Dick Cheney's home state, which is where the Republican-controlled legislature has refused to appropriate the money to test the fish. But in

all the other states --

[Laughter]

-- at least some, most or all the fish are unsafe to eat. Because of mercury. We know a lot about mercury we didn't know a few years ago. We know that according to CDC and EPA, one out of every six American women now has so much mercury in her womb that her children are at risk for a grim inventory of diseases: autism, blindness, mental retardation, heart, liver and kidney disease.

I have so much mercury in my body. I got my levels tested recently. Every woman of child-bearing years should get her levels tested. Every woman should. It also does brain damage. It's associated with Alzheimer's, memory loss, dementia and everything else. You can get your levels tested by Waterkeeper Alliance and send us a little lock of your hair and we'll send you back your mercury levels.

But my levels were more than two times what EPA considers safe. I was told by Dr. David Carpenter, who is a national authority on mercury contamination, that a woman with my level of mercury in her blood would have children with cognitive impairments, permanent brain damage. I said to him, "She *might* have." He said, "No,

the science is very straight. Her children would have some level of permanent neurological injury." With my level of mercury, probably a loss of about 5 to 7 points.

Well, today, according to the CDC, there are 640,000 children born in this country every year who have been exposed to dangerous levels of mercury in their mother's wombs. The Clinton Administration, recognizing the gravity of this national health epidemic, reclassified mercury as hazardous under the Clean Air Act. That triggered a requirement that all of those companies remove 90% of the mercury within one year. It would have cost less than 1% of plant revenues. We know now as soon as they remove the mercury from their stacks, within three years it disappears from the fish in the lakes and streams downwind. So it works. It was a great deal for the American people, but still billions of dollars for that industry. That's the industry that donated \$100 million to this President.

About three or four months ago, the White House announced that it was scrapping the Clinton era rules and substituting, instead, rules that were written by utility industry lobbyists that will require the industry to never have to clean up the mercury. The new rules were written by a law firm, incidentally, called Latham & Watkins, which

does a lot of good things, but they also represent the worst of the worst of the worst of these utilities, companies like the Southern Company, which is just a criminal enterprise. The chief lobbyist for that law firm was a man named Jeffrey Homestead, who today is the head of the Air Division at EPA.

He just took rules, language that was written by his partners, his old partners for his old clients and made it American law and enriched them by billions of dollars by imposing tens of billions of dollars of costs on the rest of us.

Two days after he finally promulgated those regulations, his two top deputies, Homestead's two top deputies, who were also former lobbyists for the Southern Company, left the Federal Government to go back to work with the Southern Company, their public service being done.

Jeffrey Homestead a month ago left EPA and went to work for Bracewell & Giuliani, which is Guiliani's new lobbying firm in Texas, which today is the primary lobbying firm for the Southern Company.

So this is the revolving door of plunder that we are now seeing when corporations take over our government.

We're living in a science fiction nightmare today where

my children and the children of most Americans can no longer engage in the seminal primal activity of American youth, which is to go fishing with their father and mother in the local fishing hole and then come home and safely eat the fish because somebody gave money to a politician.

I live 2-1/2 hours south of the Adirondack Mountains and I take my kids fishing and swimming and hiking and camping up there. This is the oldest protected wilderness on the face of the earth. It has been protected as forever wild since 1888. We had a right, the American people, to believe that generations of our citizens would be able to enjoy these pristine landscapes and pure lakes unspoiled.

But today one fifth of the lakes in the Adirondacks are sterilized from acid rain which is coming from those same coal burning power plants and which has, incidentally, destroyed the forest cover on the high peaks of the Appalachians from Georgia all the way into northern Quebec.

This President, having accepted \$100 million from that industry, has put the brakes on the statutory requirements that they clean up the acid rain. EPA recently reported that this year, for the first year in the 30-year history of the Clean Air Act, the levels of sulfur dioxide in our atmosphere have actually gone up an astronomical 4% in a

single year directly because of those rollbacks.

Two years ago in May, I flew over the coal fields of the Appalachian Mountains and I saw something that if the American people could see it, there would be a revolution in this country. We are cutting down the Appalachian Mountains with these giant machines called drag lines that are 22 stories high. I flew under one of them in a Piper. They cost half a billion dollars and they practically dispense with the need for human labor, which indeed is the point.

When my father was fighting strip mining in Appalachia back in the '60s, I remember a conversation that I had with him when I was 14 years old where he said to me, "They're not just destroying the environment, they are permanently impoverishing these communities because there's no way they'll ever be able to regenerate an economy from these barren moonscapes that are left behind. They're doing it so they can break the unions."

That's exactly what he did. When he told me that, there were 140,000 unionized mine workers taking coal out of the ground. Today there are only 11,000 miners left in the state. Almost none of them are unionized because the strip industry isn't. They're taking the same amount of

coal out of West Virginia that they were in 1968.

The only difference is back then some of the profit was being left for salaries and pensions for those workers, reinvested for those communities. Today virtually all of them are going straight out to Wall Street to the corporate offices of Massie Coal and Peabody Coal and to the banking houses like Morgan Stanley, which own these operations.

Using these giant machines and 2500 tons of dynamite that they explode in West Virginia every day, they are -- they are blowing the tops off the mountains to get at the coal seams beneath. Then they take -- it's 17 Hiroshima bombs every year in West Virginia. That is the power of those explosives. They use these giant machines to scrape the rock and green rubble into the adjacent river valleys and flatten the landscapes, flatten the hollows, the valleys, et cetera. They have already buried 1200 miles of America's rivers and streams.

By the time this president leaves office, they will have flattened an area of the Appalachians the size of Delaware. It's all illegal. They cannot, in the United States -- they're burying these historic landscapes where Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett roamed that is a part of our American heritage. It's all illegal. You cannot in

the United States of America take rock and debris and rubble and dump it into a river bed without a permit and you could never get a permit.

We sued them in front of a conservative Republican federal judge, Judge Charles Haden in West Virginia. Judge Haden said the same thing I said. It's all illegal. It's been illegal since day one and he enjoined all mountain top mining. Two days from when we got that decision, lobbyists for Peabody Coal and Massie Coal met in the back door of the Interior Department with their former lobbyist, Steven Griles, who is now number two in charge of Interior under Gale Norton. They rewrote one word of the Clean Water Act, the interpretation of the word "fill," to change 30 years of statutory interpretation -- to overrule, effectively, Judge Haden's decision and to make it legal today, not just in West Virginia but in every state in this country to dump rock, debris, rubble, garbage, any solid material into any waterway of the United States without a Clean Water Act permit. All you need today is a rubber stamp permit from the Corps of Engineers, which in some districts you can get through the telephone or mail.

This is what we're dealing with today. It's not just the destruction of our environment, but it is the

subversion of American democracy. And, you know, the big polluters and their indentured servants in the political process and their slick PR firms and their phony think tanks in Washington and their phony scientists, their tobacco scientists, we call them biostitutes --

[Laughter]

-- they have been very adept over the past 15 years about marginalizing environmentalists as tree huggers or radicals or as I heard the other day pagans who worship trees and sacrifice people.

[Laughter]

There's nothing radical about the idea of clean air and clean water for our children. We are not protecting the environment for the sake of the fishes and the birds. We're protecting it for our own sake because we recognize, as I said before, that nature is the infrastructure of our communities.

If you talk to these people on Capitol Hill who are promoting these kind of rollbacks and ask them why are you doing this? What they invariably say is well the time has come in our nation's history where we have to choose between economic prosperity on the one hand and environmental protection on the other. And that is a false

choice. In 100% of the situations, good environmental policy is identical to good economic policy.

[Applause.]

If we want to measure our economy, this is how we ought to be measuring it -- based upon how it produces jobs and the dignity of jobs over the long-term, over the generations, and how it preserves the value of the assets of our community.

If on the other hand we want to do what they've been urging us to do on Capitol Hill -- which is to treat the planet as if it were a business in liquidation, convert our natural resources to cash as quickly as possible, have a few years of pollution-based prosperity -- we can generate an instantaneous cash flow and the illusion of a prosperous economy; but our children are going to pay for our joy ride. They're going to pay for it with denuded landscapes and poor health and huge cleanup costs that are going to amplify over time and that they will never be able to pay.

Environmental injury is deficit spending. It's a way of loading the cost of our generation's prosperity onto the backs of our children. One of the things that I've been doing over the past 20 years is constantly going around and confronting this argument that an investment in our

environment is a diminishment of our nation's wealth. It doesn't diminish our wealth. It's an investment in infrastructure, the same as investing in telecommunications and road construction. It's an investment we have to make if we're going to ensure the economic vitality of our generation and the next generation.

I want to say this: There's no stronger advocate for free market capitalism than myself. I believe that the free market is the most efficient and democratic way to distribute the goods of the land and that the best thing that could happen to the environment is if we had true free market capitalism in this country, because the free market promotes efficiency. Efficiency means the elimination of waste, and pollution is waste. The free market would encourage us to properly value our natural resources, and it is the undervaluation of those resources that causes us to use them wastefully.

But in a true free market economy, you can make yourself rich without making your neighbors rich and without enriching your community. What polluters do is they make themselves rich by making everybody else poor. They raise standards of living for themselves by lowering quality of life for everybody else. They do that --

[Applause.]

-- they do that by escaping the discipline of the free market. You show me a polluter, I'll show you a subsidy. I'll show you a fat cat using political clout to escape the discipline of the free market and force the public to pay his production costs. That's what all pollution is. It's somebody cheating the free market and getting a free ride, a subsidy.

Corporations are externalizing machines. They're constantly looking for somebody else to pay their costs of production. If you're a polluting industry, the easiest way for you to do that is to shift your cleanup costs to the public and save a few bucks by poisoning the rest of us. That's what pollution is.

You know when the Southern Company puts mercury in the air in the Ohio Valley and it lands on New York state and Washington, DC and makes it so we can't eat the fish anymore -- I buy a fishing license for 30 bucks every year in New York. The constitution of New York state says that the people of the state own the fish; they're not owned by the governor, the legislature or the fisheries department -- they're owned by the people. Everybody, whether you're black or white, humble or noble, young or old has a right

to go in to catch a fish in their local fishing hole, bring it home and feed it to their family with the security that they're not going to poison anybody. This is ancient law. It goes back to Roman times. It's in the code of Justinian. It's called the Public Trust Doctrine. It's in the Magna Carta. It says that those things that are not susceptible to private ownership but by their nature belong to the whole community, the shared resources, the air, the water, the wildlife, the fisheries, the wandering animals, the dune lands, the wetlands, the public lands, those belong to all the people.

The emperor himself in ancient Rome could not stop you from crossing the beach throwing in a net and taking out your share of the fish. And this is ancient law.

The first mark of a tyranny, whether it was during the Dark Ages or the fascist times in Europe, were efforts by private entities within a society to privatize the public trust resources, to steal them from the public. And that's what happened.

Now the law says that we own the fish in New York state. I buy a fishing license, but I can't use it anymore, because the Southern Company has privatized the fish and they've privatized the air in my children's lungs

because it's too poisonous for them to breathe and they've privatized the publicly owned and privately owned lakes and forests of the Appalachians and the Adirondack Mountains. There are 28 laws, all those were meant to do was to restore our free market capitalism in our country by forcing actors in the marketplace to pay the true costs of bringing their product to market.

What we do as Riverkeepers and Waterkeepers is we go out and we catch the cheaters. We don't even consider ourselves environmentalists anymore. We're free marketeers. We go out into the marketplace. We catch the cheaters and we say to them, "We're going to force you to internalize your costs the same way that you internalize your profits." Because as long as somebody is cheating the free market, it distorts the whole marketplace and none of us gets the advantages of the efficiency of the democracy and the prosperity that the free market otherwise promises our country.

What we have to understand in America is that there's a huge difference between free market capitalism, which makes a country more democratic, more efficient and more prosperous, and the kind of corporate crony capitalism, which has been embraced by this Administration, which is as

antithetical to prosperity in America as it is in Nigeria.

There's nothing wrong with corporations. Corporations are a good thing. They drive prosperity in this country. They encourage people to assemble wealth and to risk. I own a corporation, but we should not be letting them run our government.

[Applause.]

The reason for that -- the reason for that is corporations want a different thing for America than Americans want. Corporations don't want democracy. They don't want free markets. They want profits. The best way for them to get profits too often is to use our campaign finance system, which is just a system of legalized bribery, to get their hooks into a public official and then use that public official to dismantle the marketplace, to give them a competitive edge and monopoly control and ultimately to allow them to steal the commons, our treasury, our air, our water, our fisheries, our public lands, et cetera, our children's health.

That's why from the beginning of our national history, our greatest political leaders have warned the American public against the corrosive impact of excessive corporate power. Teddy Roosevelt, who was a Republican, said that

America would never be destroyed by a foreign enemy, but he warned that our democratic institutions would be subverted by malefactors of great wealth who would steal them from within.

Dwight Eisenhower, another Republican, said in his most famous speech ever, he warned Americans against the domination by the military industrial complex.

Abraham Lincoln, the greatest Republican in our history, said during the height of the Civil War in 1863 "I have the South in front of me and I have the bankers behind me. And for my country, I fear the bankers more."

Franklin Roosevelt said during World War II that "the domination of the government by corporate power is 'the essence of Fascism.'"

Benito Mussolini, who had an insider's view of that process, said essentially the same thing. He complained that "Fascism should not even be called Fascism. It should be called corporatism because it was the merger of corporate state and corporate power."

What we have to understand in our country is that the domination of business by government is called Communism. The domination of government by business is called Fascism. What our job is is to walk that narrow trail in between,

which is free market capitalism and democracy, and hold big government at bay with our right hand and big business at bay with our left. In order to do that, we need an informed public that can recognize all the milestones of tyranny. We need an independent and aggressive press that is willing to stand up and speak truth to power.

[Applause.]

We no longer have either of those things in the United States and our democracy is broken.

I want to make one more point, and it's the point that I tried to start off with before I got distracted. This whole speech turned into a digression.

[Laughter]

Which is this: That we're not protecting the environment for the sake of the fishes and the birds. We're protecting it for our own sake. Because we recognize that nature enriches us. It enriches us economically, yes. We ignore that at our peril. But it also enriches us -- and the economy is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the environment -- but it also enriches us aesthetically and recreationally and culturally and spiritually and human beings have other appetites besides money. If we don't feed them, we won't become the beings that our Creator

intended us to become.

When we destroy nature, we diminish ourselves, we impoverish our children. We're not protecting the ancient forest in the Pacific Northwest, as Rush Limbaugh used to say, for the sake of a spotted owl. We believe the trees have more value to humanity standing than they would have if we cut them down.

I'm not fighting for the Hudson River for the sake of the shad or the sturgeon or the striped bass, but because I believe my life will be richer, and my children and my community will be richer if we live in a world where there are shad and sturgeon and stripers in the Hudson and where my kids will be able to look out on that river and see the small commercial fisherman that I've spent 24 years of my life protecting their livelihoods, their property rights, their capacity to earn a living. We have on the Hudson the oldest commercial fishery in North America -- 350 years old and they use the same fishing methods that were taught by the Algonquin Indians to the original Dutch settlers of New Amsterdam and then passed down to the generations, and many of the fishermen I represent have been fishing it continuously since Dutch colonial times.

I want my children to be able to stand on the banks of

the river and look at these men and women in their tiny open boats and touch them when they come to shore to wait out the tides to repair their nets and doing what connect themselves to 350 years of New York state history and understand that they're part of something larger than themselves. They're part of a continuum. They're part of a community.

I don't want my kids to grow up in a world where there are no commercial fishermen on the Hudson. I don't want my kids to grow where it's all Unilever and Gorton Seafood and 400-ton factories strip mining the ocean with no interface with humanity. I don't want my kids to grow up where there are no family farmers in America, where it's all Smithfield and Cargill --

[Applause.]

-- and premium standard farms raising animals in factories and warehouses and treating their stock and their workers and their neighbors with unspeakable cruelty and destroying the landscapes and emptying them of traditional family farmers and pounding the final nail into the coffin of Thomas Jefferson's vision of an American democracy rooted in tens of thousands of independent freeholds owned by family farmers.

I don't want my children to grow up in a world where we've paved the landscapes and we've lost touch with the seasons and the tides and the things that connect us to the 10,000 generations of human beings that were here before there were laptops and that connect us ultimately to God.

And I don't believe that nature is God or that we ought to be worshipping it as God, but I do believe that it's the way that God communicates to us most forcefully. God talks to us through many vectors, through each other, through organized religion, through the great books of the religions, through wise people and through art and literature and poetry and music and architecture. But nowhere with such force and detail and clarity and texture and grace and joy as through creation.

We don't know Michelangelo by reading his biography. We know him by looking at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. We know ourselves best by immersing ourselves in creation.

[Applause.]

And particularly wilderness, which is the undiluted work of the Creator. If you look at every religious tradition in the history of mankind, the central epiphany always occurs in the wilderness. Buddha had to go to the

wilderness to experience nirvana and self-realization. Mohamed had to go to the wilderness of Mount Hira in 609 and climb to the summit in the middle of the day and wrestle an angel there to have the Koran squeezed from him. Moses had to go to the wilderness of Mount Sinai to get the Commandments. The Jews had to spend 40 years wandering the wilderness to purge themselves to the 400 years of slavery in Egypt. Christ had to go to the wilderness for 40 days to discover his Divinity for the first time. His mentor was John the Baptist, who lived in a cave in the Jordan Valley and dressed in the skins of wild beasts and ate honey and locusts. All of Christ's parables were taken from nature: "I am the vine, you are the branches." The mustard seeds; the scattering of the seed in the fallow ground; the lilies of the field. He called himself a fisherman, a farmer, a vineyard keeper, a shepherd. The reason he did that -- and it's the same reason all the Old Testament prophets did it, the Talmudic prophets, the Koran prophets, all the way back to the pagan prophets who used allegories, all of them, and fables, drawn from nature's morality plays to teach us the difference between right and wrong and what the face of God looks like, all of them without exception came out of the wilderness. The reason

they did, the reason Christ did that was because that's how he stayed in touch with the people. He was saying things that were revolutionary. All of the prophets were revolutionaries. He was challenging the power structure of his day, which was religious fundamentalism. He was constantly rebuking the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the scribes who were the Jerry Falwells, the Pat Robertsons and Dobsons of his day --

[Applause.]

-- for binding up heavy burdens for other men to carry, and he said, for impoverishing widows and orphans. He talked about religious fundamentalism and he said religion at its best is a search for existential truths. It's a search for the truth. But what fundamentalism is, it's an end of that search. It's somebody who says all the truth is in this one book, and I'm going to tell you what it means. I'm going to intercede myself between you and God. It really is just an exercise in power.

Christ was saying: You don't have to pay attention to that. He said you can ignore all these laws, these rules and regulations. He said the law was made for man; man was not made for the law. And he said you can ignore the Sabbath; you can ignore these prescriptions about what you

can't eat and what you can eat. It's not what you eat that makes you unclean; it's the way you behave, whether you live your life with tolerance and patience and kindness and mercy and justice and whether you embrace the impoverished and embrace the poor and embrace poverty and live your life with integrity. Those are the things that bring you closer to God. It's not the rules and regulations and the power structure. He said the power structure is all wrong. None of us are higher than the other ones. That's what he told his followers when they tried to elevate themselves. He said you can't do that. We all have equal access to God.

Ultimately it was the fundamentalists who murdered him. That's something that's worth remembering today. It was said in my introduction that I wrote this book about St. Francis of Assisi, this children's book. I have another children's book coming out this fall that is just as relevant, but it's about a civil war hero called Joshua Chamberlain.

I wrote them both for the same reasons -- so that we can start reminding our children, teaching our children what America means and what true values are. St. Francis was a quiet revolutionary who is credited by historians with breaking the Dark Ages. The Dark Ages started in 375

A. D. when Christian fundamentalists burned the library of Alexandria in an effort to destroy all human knowledge. They burned the knowledge of math and science and culture and architecture so that they would be the only repository of knowledge. It plunged the earth into 800 years of feudalism and tyranny and pestilence and ignorance.

Where the doctrines of the church were written in Latin, which the current people couldn't -- the common people couldn't understand -- they had to go through the church to get access to God.

St. Francis broke that by saying, by quietly saying, no, you all have access to God by going into creation and experiencing it and by embracing the lepers and by embracing the poor and living in the perfect imitation of Christ.

He broke the hold of the Crusades by giving exonerations to anybody who didn't want to serve in the Army that could make pilgrimages to his church. That broke the hold of feudalism on Europe as well as a number of other things he did. But historians credit him with breaking the Dark Ages.

You know, this is where our values come from. Our values come from these places. Our American values, too.

Our most basic spiritual values, but America, too. We are rooted in nature in this country. And, you know, from the beginning of our national history, our greatest political leaders and social leaders, our writers and poets were all telling the American people: You don't have to be ashamed because you don't have the 1500 years of culture they have in Europe, because you have this relationship to the land, and particularly to wilderness.

Frederick Jackson Turner, our greatest American historian, said that in America, democracy came out of the forest. Without these vast tracks of wilderness and woodland, we wouldn't have evolved the democratic institution that defines us as a people.

If you look at every valid piece of classic American literature and poetry and art, the unifying theme is that nature is the critical defining theme. This is where our culture comes from, and our values -- our national values, but also the broader spiritual values that unite the whole human community.

You know, it's ironic to me at some point that this Administration has been able to convince a gullible press and to some extent the American people that it's an administration of values because all the values that they

claim to represent seem to me to be hollow facades that mask the one value that they're willing to fight for, which is corporate profit taking.

[Applause.]

They say they're conservatives but they tore the conserve out of conservatism. They say they like free markets but they despise it. What they like is corporate welfare. A ruthless capitalism for the poor and Socialism for the rich. They say they like law and order, but they are the first ones to let the corporate law breakers off the hook. They say that they love Christianity, but they have violated every one of the manifold mandates of the Christian faith.

[Applause.]

They are ruthless to the environment.

I'll tell you one story about what happened to me when I was a kid. When I was a little boy, my father took me to Europe to Poland and to Czechoslovakia and to France and to England and Germany. Everywhere we went, we were met by vast crowds of people. Hundreds of thousands of people who wanted to come out just to be near an American politician because they loved our country and they would starve for our leadership. They looked to us for moral authority.

This isn't just my father. The same thing happened to Eisenhower when he visited Kabul and Afghanistan and Iran. He was met by millions of people waving tiny American flags. We represented, as Jefferson said, the last great hope for humanity. people believed this about us. They proudly named their streets after our politicians, Washington and Jefferson and Jackson and Madison and Lincoln and Roosevelt and Kennedy.

I remember the day after 9/11 when the headline on the biggest newspaper in France, *Le Monde*, was "We're All Americans Now." For three weeks after 9/11 there were spontaneous candlelight vigils in Tehran involving tens of thousands of people that came out to express their sympathy and solidarity with the United States of America. We were the most beloved nation on the face of the planet in the history of the globe. It took 230 years of disciplined visionary leadership by Democrat and Republican presidents to build up those vast reservoirs of public love and respect for the United States of America. And in six short years, through monumental arrogance and incompetence --

[Cheers and applause.]

-- these people in this White House have drained those reservoirs dry. And to me, that was the bitterest pill to

swallow, because I saw in the faces of those crowds of hundreds of thousands of people when I was a little boy, the hope for leadership to do good things -- for leadership from the United States of America, not just to do good things for our country, but to do great things for all of humanity.

And, you know, this may seem unfair, but sometimes I look at this White House and I say to myself, "How did they get so many draft dodgers in one place?"

[Laughter]

The President, the Vice President -- six deferments. John Ashcroft, 7 deferments. Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Pearl, Dennis Hastert, Tom Delay, Rush Limbaugh. There are lots of people who evaded the Vietnam War during that era, but most of those people were people that had moral qualms about the war. They thought it was a bad war. This was their way of protesting. Not these guys. They all loved the war. They were all without exception war hogs. They just didn't want to fight it. They wanted somebody else to fight it.

[Applause.]

I think the reason for that is that they don't understand what it is. They missed the whole point of

America.

I said at the beginning, America was based, the first country in history that was based upon an idea. They don't understand the idea. They don't understand. They think it's okay to torture people. They think it's okay to wire tap people. To suspend habeas corpus. They say "Well we're in great danger today."

But do you know what? We're not in great danger today. We were in great danger when I was a boy and there were 25,000 nuclear tipped warheads pointing at this country, each one capable of obliterating an entire city. We were in great danger and we didn't torture people. We didn't wire tap people. We didn't suspend habeas corpus. We didn't do these extraordinary renditions.

During the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln steadfastly refused to torture Confederate prisoners and he ordered a commission to create rules of engagement for treating prisoners, and that became the Geneva Convention.

During the Revolutionary War, when the British were torturing our soldiers and killing them by the dozens every day in coffin ships in New York Harbor, George Washington said "I would rather not have a nation that engaged in that kind of behavior. This is a nation built on principle; and

if we cannot stand on those principles through thick and thin, no matter what the danger, we're not worth fighting for."

[Cheers and applause.]

He treated the British soldiers that they captured at Trenton with such extraordinary magnanimity that they were -- the Hessians were so shocked about their treatment, that after three days in prison, they agreed to walk unguarded all the way from New Jersey to western Pennsylvania to their POW camps and all of them made it there. They were so delighted about the treatment they had received at their hands.

During World War II, Germans, when Eisenhower forbade the mistreatment of prisoners, Germans gave up, surrendered to American soldiers by the score because they had been told by their fathers, who had fought in World War I, that Americans treat prisoners well and with dignity and never torture people. This is one of the strongest, strongest traditions that we have, the strongest American values.

And, you know, these people don't understand what it is that makes America worth fighting for. We are -- this country is worth fighting for and it's worth dying for; but only because of the values that we have represented,

that we were founded upon and that we have fortified and stewarded and represented to the world for 230 years and we cannot let this gang of thugs take these things away from us and our children.

[Applause.]

Thank you very much.

(Standing ovation.)

[Cheers and applause.]

[Cheering continues.]

>> LESLIE BURGER: I'd like to thank Mr. Kennedy for spending some time with us this afternoon. We do have time allocated in the program for questions and answers. Would you like to? A lot of you are leaving. Questions? Answers? If anyone has a question -- I think what we'll do is we'll allow him to move to the foyer and begin the book signing because I suspect that's what you really want to do at this point, right? Okay. Thank you.

[Applause.]

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