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**Shaping
America's
Values Debate**



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**The W.H. Brady Series
on
Defining Conservatism**

**SHAPING AMERICA'S
VALUES DEBATE**

- Panel I:** Midge Decter, Karl Zinsmeister
William J. Bennett, moderator
- Panel II:** Michael Schwartz, Vin Weber
Kate O'Beirne, moderator
- Panel III:** Dinesh D'Souza, David Horowitz
Elizabeth Wright, Michael Joyce
Stuart Butler, moderator

**The Lehrman Auditorium
The Heritage Foundation
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Shaping America's Values Debate

Edwin J. Feulner, Jr.: Welcome to The Heritage Foundation. I am Ed Feulner, President of The Heritage Foundation and it is a great pleasure to welcome you to the initial program in our W.H. Brady Lecture Series on Defining Conservatism. This series, made possible by a grant from the W.H. Brady Foundation of Maggie Valley, North Carolina, will continue through next April. All of the lectures in the series will work toward defining conservative ideas on a broad range of cultural public policy issues. They also will explore conservative strategies to move beyond the narrowly defined Washington policy agenda and to recapture our culture and society from the dominant liberal establishment.

Some of the media have called the 1990s the Values Decade. There seems to be a real surge in the discussion of the moral fiber of the country and the causes of our current social breakdown. We as conservatives have pointed to the moral dimension of social welfare problems and other public policy issues for many years. We should be pleased that this election year has made the values crisis a part of the political debate. Traditional values—hard work, personal responsibility, the importance of family, respect for proper authority, a general need to reinforce right from wrong in the young—are being recognized as crucial to the future strength of our country. If these are properly communicated and properly understood, I think there is a tremendous opportunity to gain converts to our side of the cultural battles. I think one of the crucial conservative achievements has been identifying the link between moral relativism and our social breakdown.

We have on our panel several of America's leading experts, who have done excellent work in this area. They will be discussing the link of culture to public policy, and of course, to higher education. Family values is an area where economic and social conservatives should find much common ground, since the free market works best in a society of good citizens; and from the other perspective, economic freedom advances some values. Our panelists today will discuss the values that have made America strong, what government should or should not do to reinforce them, and what we can do to restore these values to our culture.

I will now turn the program over to my distinguished colleague, the Honorable William J. Bennett.

Secretary Bennett holds a Ph.D. in political philosophy from the University of Texas; he also holds a law degree from Harvard. He has been in Washington now for more than ten years. He was appointed Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities by President Reagan, where he brought his academic background to public service.

In 1985 he was appointed Secretary of Education, where he used the post as a bully pulpit to press for sweeping reform, such as parental choice in education. He realized that malaise in public education was not the result of too little money being spent, but rather the problem was the content of what the public schools were teaching and the lack of choices available to parents.

Under President Bush he served as Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, where he emphasized prevention, personal responsibility, and tougher penalties for drug dealers. Bill Bennett, in his federal posts, has shown that so many of our public policy dilemmas are fundamentally cultural problems, moral problems, and that the solutions to these problems require a deeper examination of the human nature.

We are very proud, indeed, that he is the Distinguished Fellow in Cultural Policy Studies here at The Heritage Foundation. He is, as you know, a political commentator for ABC television and radio. He recently wrote a book, which has been selling quite well, entitled, *The Devaluing of*

America: The Fight for Our Culture and Our Children. So, ladies and gentlemen, without any further ado, it is my pleasure to introduce my good friend, Bill Bennett.



William Bennett: Midge Decter is an author and editor whose essays and reviews, mostly in the field of social conservatism, over the past two decades have appeared in a number of periodicals, including *Harper's*, *The Atlantic*, *Esquire*, and *Saturday Review*. She has been a regular and frequent contributor to *Commentary*. She has written three books: *The Liberated Woman and Other Americans*, *The New Chastity*, and *Liberal Parents: Radical Children*.

She was one of the founders of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, of which she is past National Chairman, and Co-Chairman of the Advisory Committee on European Democracy and Security, a member of the board of the Committee on the Present Danger, of the Council on Foreign Relations, the National News Council, and the Ethics and Public Policy Center. She also serves on the board of The Heritage Foundation.

Midge Decter appears frequently on radio and television, and lectures frequently on a wide range of subjects, from the family to American foreign policy. She is a Distinguished Fellow at the Institute of Religion and Public Life in New York City.

Karl Zinsmeister specializes in social and demographic issues and is an Adjunct Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research here in Washington. His articles have appeared in many publications, *The Atlantic*, *Wilson Quarterly*, *Reader's Digest*, *Commentary*, and so on. Zinsmeister is a contributing editor of *Reason*, and he authors the *Demographic Report*.

Let me begin my presentation by saying that I hope Ed Feulner is right, that we will begin to have a serious discussion about values—what is often referred to as family values, traditional values, or more appropriately, republican virtue—in the campaign in which we are now engaged. I am not convinced we will have that discussion. So far I don't see much evidence of a serious and substantive discussion of these matters.

I read recently in the *Washington Post* that advisors to the President have decided to veer away from these issues because they are tricky and because they are politically dangerous and because they make some people uneasy and uncomfortable. All of these things are true. They are tricky and they are politically dangerous, and they do make some people uncomfortable.

But they are also of utmost importance, as political philosophers from Aristotle on have understood. There are, obviously, other issues to be taken up in the course of a campaign, matters of the economy and the budget, health care, and education—very serious and consequential issues. But, the issues raised by the phrase “family values” are very consequential and very important, and I hope the advisors to the President do not veer too far from a serious discussion of them. It would be good to engage in that conversation.

To be very specific, I heard the President's speech to the Christian Coalition a few days ago, and the whole issue of family values got about two minutes. I couldn't understand what the President's speech writer meant when he wrote, “We cannot go back to Ozzie and Harriet. It might be wrong to do so.” We are all not going back to Ozzie and Harriet, that is for sure, but is there something *wrong* with the notion of Ozzie and Harriet? This needs to be straightened out. I think that line in the speech was an attempt to reassure people who had been un-reassured by earlier comments. But, as earlier comments have perhaps gone too far in one direction, these

comments went too far in the other direction. So, we are not clear on what the view of the campaign is.

Many Republicans don't talk about these issues in a serious and substantial way. I don't think many Democrats will. So we will probably not have a discussion of these critical issues, and that will be too bad.

One of the charges that is made about these issues is that they are not as real as the "real" questions facing us, such as the deficit and the economy. The truth is, they are very real. They are all too real. Because of the absence of republican virtue there is the absence of what we call "values" in the lives of many people. We have lots of problems and daily catastrophes in American society precisely because of the absence of these things.

What am I talking about when I talk about these values? Charles Krauthammer wrote a column last week that will serve as a good introduction. He said that these values—he also referred to them as republican virtues—include, but are not limited to: discipline, meaning self-discipline; a certain measure of civic-mindedness—that is, a concern or regard for others and a recognition that others exist in the universe, and that some attention is to be paid to them, their rights, their property and their freedoms; the capacity for deferral of gratification; and respect for legitimate authority. These are four of the values that I think most Americans believe are important and have been believed to be important by most of civilization. It is only in the last 20 or 25 years that supposedly sophisticated people have raised serious doubts about the ascendancy of these virtues.

Why do I say they are real? Let's be very straightforward and even simple about it. Because millions of children in America are not taught civic-mindedness, because they are not taught deferral of gratification, because they are not taught respect for legitimate authority, there is catastrophe every day. Because of the failure to teach these things to children, we have tremendous problems.

Consider the well-publicized carjacking case in the Washington area where two men grabbed the car and took off with it, paying no regard to the woman tangled in the seat belt, perhaps still holding on to the car in order to stay with her baby. These two men drove a mile or so, and then crashed into walls and fences, threw the baby out, and so on. One does not need a social worker to do an in-depth profile to be able to show that these young men were not raised in families that stress the values that we just talked about: civic-mindedness, respect for legitimate authority, deferral of gratification, and the like.

There is a serious values deficit in this story, and it has very real consequences. The mother is dead.

This is not the only example. I came across a lot of examples in the jobs I had in government. I will never forget a story I was told by my Deputy at the Office of National Drug Control Policy, Reggie Walton, who was a judge of the Superior Court here in Washington before he came to work for me.

He told me about police officers who went to an apartment and found a four-year-old child and a one-year-old child who had been left in there alone for several days. The mother was not there to care for the children. No father was present, in sight or in memory. It turned out that the mother was out on the street hustling for crack and had left the one-year-old in the care of the four-year-old. When the police came upon the children the four-year-old little boy was manfully trying to do his best to comfort his one-year-old sister, but he was not doing a very good job—four-year-olds aren't any good at that. This is, at its core, a problem of values; it is a problem of responsibility.

Lest anybody think I am talking just about the poor or the underclass, I am not. An illustration of our problem, I think, can be seen many places and many situations and among all social classes. I was watching the Oprah show not long ago, and the topic was about single moms who date. During the course of the discussion, a woman was talking about how she went out two or three times a week and stayed out late and got baby-sitters and so on, and she was scolded by someone in the audience who said, "Well, isn't that a little too much? After all, your child needs you." And the woman answered with a very contemporary response, saying, "Well, the child has needs, but I have needs too, and my needs are as important as my child's needs."

Half of the audience applauded this comment that her needs were as important as her child's needs. The other half did not. The half that did not applaud represented 2,000 years of civilization, which would say simply that when you have a child the issue of whose needs are more important is settled—the child's needs are more important. Of course, it wasn't her "needs" that she was talking about, it was her desires that she was talking about. They are very different things.

A parenthetical comment. When I went to the National Endowment for the Humanities, my first job in Washington, and read the description of the budget proposal that is to go to Congress, it was all about the humanities community—the research community, the teaching community, the television community. All the comments were about the "needs" of the humanities community. And a rigorous examination of the argument disclosed that these weren't about needs, these were about desires. It is an important distinction, I think.

For almost all of the history of our civilization, I think it has been conceded that when one has children, one looks first to the needs of children and sacrifices one's own interest from time to time, and quite often for the sake of those children. It is fact that in our tradition and our history we can find, I think, no examples of any successful society that decides to raise its children without families and decides to raise its children, at least in the early years, without attention to the priority of needs of the child.

Just to indicate the general nature of these problems, I remember visiting a very wealthy suburban school district in the Midwest when I was Secretary of Education. This was a school district that was spending around \$7,000 per year, per child to educate kids. It was a fine campus, with every facility you can imagine, every piece of technology available. I commented to the principal that this was a great place and I assumed they had everything money could buy. He said, "Yes, well we do have everything money can buy. It is a very wealthy community. The parents are willing to pay the taxes, they are willing to contribute more money, and we do great." I asked, "How is the drug problem?" He said, "It is thriving, too. We have everything money can buy."

So it is clear that this problem of family values, if you will, is not limited to inner cities. It is a real problem and a very serious problem that needs to be discussed.

Now, having heard that, people say, "Fine, it is serious, but what does government have to do with it?" We are going to leave it to our later panel to talk about exactly what the federal government can be doing about these things. But, apart from serious concern about loss of a sense of responsibility about our children and fraying of the social fabric, is there really anything here for people who are interested in public policy? I believe there is a lot here.

First of all, as you can tell from my presentation, I think this whole issue of the values debate and the family values debate centers on children and the well-being of children, and I suggest that is where we put the focus.

Second, there is the issue of education. Many of us believe that one of the arguments for parental choice in education is to give kids a chance to go into an environment where they will be taught virtue. Consider the case of a child who is growing up without a father and whose mom cares a whole lot about these things but is not terribly knowledgeable. This child goes to a public school which has decided that it cannot say anything in regard to values or character, that it cannot teach anything about these particular things. And the neighborhood, moreover, is dominated by street gangs like the Bloods and the Crips. Where will the instruction occur? Is it any wonder that a lot of kids have not internalized these values? Where would they have been taught these values if these institutions aren't working? Parents should be able to send their children to a school that affirms their most deeply held values. So, I think this is a very serious matter.

Related to this in a fundamental way, I think the breakdown of the family and other matters raises the possibility of the resurrection of two kinds of institutions which I suppose we thought we had seen the last of. One is the reform school, which I think we probably need to have. Does it make more sense for New York City to spend \$30 million for metal detectors, or should it have a couple of very good, tough schools for very tough kids? The other kids are given a chance to learn in the absence of those people who don't want to learn in school, and the very tough kids are given a chance to be saved from themselves by a very tough course of instruction and discipline.

The orphanage is another institution that we might have to bring back. The classic Hollywood scenario for custody cases is where husband and wife are probably fighting over custody. The problem with a lot of our custody cases in America is that nobody shows up, nobody wants the child. What can we do in that case? I believe we need to look seriously at the question of orphanages; and with Professor James Q. Wilson, I agree that somewhere between orphanages and school choice, we probably need to be thinking about giving parents a choice of sending their children to residential schools where they will be free from the kinds of problems that they face daily.

I think crime is central to these debates. Crime is in some ways fundamental to the present problems of America and indicative of the breakdown of values in our society and in our country. Peggy Noonan has an excellent essay in the September 14 issue of *Forbe's* magazine in which she says, "It is a cliché to say it, but it can't be said enough: We didn't lock the doors at night in the old America. We slept with the windows open!" Fear is a large part of the American scene right now. It is not just fear in the inner city or the cities, it is fear in lots of places. I do not know the average number of locks per house in my suburban Washington, D.C, neighborhood of Chevy Chase, but it is pretty substantial.

Other public policy questions related to the values question bring us to the whole issue of multiculturalism. I have been in discussions where I have talked about such things as civic-mindedness, the deferral of gratification, and the capacity for hard work, and I have been accused of a Western bias. "Maybe that is not the way to live," people tell me. "Maybe you are just seeing that through your lens, in the same way that you were biased toward mothers and fathers being at home with children."

I was at a seminar this summer at the Aspen Institute—not a conservative think tank at all—and there were about five of us conservatives and about a dozen liberals. After four days most everybody was prepared to concede that the major cause of the difficulties of children in America had to do with the dissolution of the family. I think that is progress that that fact was acknowledged. I am not sure it would have been acknowledged fifteen years ago.

But then, as soon as it was acknowledged, the group had to add, “Well, that is just from this perspective of this society and this culture. Maybe there is a cultural bias there.” We need to take up that question, and we need to take up the related issue of how we react to the whole question of race. Race, I think, is still something that a lot of people want to step around, quite timidly dance around. Some people will say, “Well, these are values that maybe are appropriate for white people, but maybe not for black people or Hispanic people.” I think we need to say what we know—that these values are the values that will help all children, and these are the kinds of things we should teach to all children.

And the final question is the place and role of religion in public life. To my mind, it is a fact that for most Americans their values—that is, their morality—are anchored by religion. When they look at their moral beliefs and the values they pass on to their children, they take much instruction and inspiration, literally and figuratively, from their religious commitment and belief. The status of religion in American life and the status of the public square—Father Neuhaus has written well about this—is a critical question of public policy. I guess it was illustrated most dramatically in the Supreme Court’s *Lee v. Weisman* decision on that graduation exercise in Providence, Rhode Island. It turns up in other contexts as well. We are trying to extinguish religion from modern American life, and it is having devastating consequences. This, too, is a serious question of public policy.

Let me close by saying that I think as we carry on the values debate it is important not only that we recognize its complexity, but that we not be afraid of it. Second, we must know that we are talking about children primarily. Third, we must indicate these are not just matters of opinion, or not just matters of how one feels as opposed to how another feels. We must try to illustrate that these issues have important institutional and public policy implications. And finally, we must carry on the discussion in a certain way and in a certain tone.

Recently I spoke at a meeting of the Christian Coalition. I was very pleased with the audience. I thought we talked well, in a serious way about serious things—things which I have discussed this morning. But I said to them what I will end with this morning. It is from the Epistle to the Ephesians, and about how we should converse. “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

My point here is to suggest that we should be reminded in talking about such serious things that we don’t want to get in the way of important and substantial issues by being hateful or by being a clamorer. These things are far too important to simply stand and posture. These are fundamental matters of public policy upon which a great deal of our future, and the future of this Republic, rests.



Midge Decter: Coming on a program after Bill Bennett does incline one somewhat to being a clamorer, because there is not a whole lot left to do when he gets through. So, I am going to begin by expressing one disagreement with him—which shocks me, because I *never* disagree with him. He said that these difficulties took root 25 years ago. I wish it were true; that would make them a lot easier to deal with. But I am afraid they go a lot farther back. Certainly their seeds go a lot farther back, and they are going to be a lot more difficult to extirpate.

The very fact that we have come together today to talk about values is not the least evidence that we feel ourselves to be, and indeed are, a society in a lot of trouble, as was so brilliantly outlined just before.

What are values anyway? To the extent that we don't mean something trivial or dangerous by the use of the term—as in, my values are what I happen to like and your values are what you happen to like—values are what result from an effort to articulate something that precisely should not have to be articulated.

Take the example put to use by the Republican Presidential campaign, namely, family values. Here, once more, I have a slight disagreement with Bill Bennett. He regrets that they have disappeared from the campaign. I am not sure that that is to be regretted, given the level on which the issue of family was being discussed in the first place. At least one's teeth are not going to be set on edge for the remainder of the campaign.

Imagine talking about the value of families as if it were something open to discussion, like taking an aspirin a day, or establishing the balance between good cholesterol and bad cholesterol. Families can't be assigned a worth. They *are*, the way rocks are and clouds and rainfall are—sometimes welcomed and even beautiful, and sometimes, truth be told, a major inconvenience. For instance, no matter how old you are, or rich in experience, or even distinguished, your family are the people who always knew you “when.” If you are full of dreams and aspirations, they can just as easily be the people trying to smother you and hold you back as the ones offering help and encouragement. They are the people who can just as easily leave you with a lifetime's worth of fears and anxieties as with the courage to meet life's challenges and difficulties.

The story is told of Jimmy Carter's mother—and just from looking at pictures of her, I believe it: When her son came to her and told her he was running for President, she said, “President of what?” That, too, is a story about families.

Because like many phenomena of nature, the acceptance of which has been corrupted in our time—take gender, or for that matter, take death itself—the family is simply not a voluntary matter. It is the term on which human existence is founded. Just as no amount of feminist demagoguery will ever make it possible for women to be anything other than what they ineluctably are, with the result that the recent effort to help them “re-define” themselves has left them little more than a bellyful of bitterness, so the fantasy that we can arrange the nature of family connection to suit our preferences has pushed the real flesh and blood families to the edge of a very steep precipice. And at this place there is to be found not only bitterness, but, as Bill was discussing before in great and grisly detail, danger unto death.

A family may in the end come to include a lot of people—siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins—but at its core is the fact that each human being who arrives in this world is the product of two people—one male, one female; one mother, one father—and needs both the male and the female kind of protection and nurture. Does this guarantee that each new life will be a happy and healthy one? By no means. But it is the necessary ground on which someone becomes a fully human person. This is what people are fooling around with when they try to bring all the institutions of this society, including our schools, under the sway of the idea that any kind of arrangement is a family if its participants say it is. An alteration of the meaning of human existence is what such people are up to. And bear it in mind, if you are intrigued by the idea of the end of history, that what we have here aspires to be no less than the end of nature.

All of us have come to live at a dangerous and alienating distance from nature. An ordinary American kid—let's not discuss the underclass for a change—living an ordinary, American life, nowadays grows up almost unconscious of the bedrock of living and dying. Births and deaths take place out of kids' view in places called hospitals. Pain, far from being taken for granted, is considered an offense to be preemptively obliterated. Sex has become something literally inconsequential. Even many of the inevitabilities of old age are cosmetically or medically disguised. We are people who live in unproblematic intimacy with such advanced forms of technology as

the automobile, or all those products of the micro-chip, and on the other hand take courses of instruction in how to give birth to a baby.

Technology, that great treasure of wonders yielded up to human intelligence from out of nature, has paradoxically served to sever us from that nature. This is not intended to be a complaint against technology. I am no Luddite, nor, as you can plainly see, am I some 1960s flower child inveighing against the modern world. Technology is a God-given blessing to mankind. I say this fully mindful of the fact that had I, a grandmother of ten, been speaking to you from this platform a hundred years ago, or even fifty years ago, I would have been an old crone, bent over and toothless—that is, if I had survived even to speak at all. Thus those of us who live under the sway of technology are blessed people. And we in this room are doubly blessed, for we not only live with all the ease and comforts heaped upon us by human ingenuity, we also live under a system of government created out of the belief in our inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Still, they have proven to be a combination, this technology and this freedom, that seduces us into certain bad spiritual habits. It has tempted us to dream that we can break out of, surpass, the human condition itself. We are forever talking about revolution in this society—I do not mean political revolution—but something in its way as dangerous. There was, of course, the sexual revolution. There was the end-of-nationalism revolution, an idea that might nowadays amuse the Serbs. There was the civil-rights revolution, followed by the counterculture revolution. I have forgotten some of the others, but if I had time, I could probably figure out a few more. We had a “revolution” every five years—and a new generation to go with it.

The point is, in a whole variety of ways, people were taking it upon themselves to refuse the limits of existence. And they still are. And *we* still are—I don’t know why I said “they.” The idea that we can define things—the natural relations between men and women or parents and children or teachers and students or intellectual achievement—in short, that we can define existence and its reality any way we choose, is the idea that bedevils our age.

You know, if you watch late night television (as I do), and you watch it regularly over time, you could come to believe that with the expenditure of enough money we wouldn’t have to die at all. There are commercials about every five minutes advising us that four out of 1,000 Americans die of this, and one out of a million Americans die of that, and please give money. And behind that is the unholy notion that we are somehow going to be able to overcome the human condition, which is totally conditioned by our mortality.

It is true that we are luckier than our ancestors in many, many ways, and we should remind ourselves of that fact and be grateful for it every day. But at the same time, we have everything to learn from them. Those guys back there, they were very smart, they were easily as smart as we, and everything they came to know about human existence they had the kindness to write down in libraries-ful of books, particularly in a book called the Bible. Every single day they learned and left what they learned to us. They learned out of the absolute bedrock of human experience. Since the world in which we live protects us from the very miseries and struggles and strivings that they had to go through, the most important thing we can have—and the most important thing we can give our kids—is our connection to them. The best thing we have to offer the children at this moment is the understanding that everything they are and everything they know comes as the result of somebody else’s struggle, that we are all standing on the shoulders of others.

This was, I think, once upon a time considered to be the function of education. It certainly no longer is. But if we don't return to that understanding that we are the beneficiaries of what our forebears went through, and that therefore what is contained in all those books is something meant to keep us tied to our own existence, we are going to be in the soup.



Karl Zinsmeister: I want to begin by commending The Heritage Foundation for taking up this “values” issue in a systematic way. Whenever regular Americans gather around a dinner table today, values questions loom large. The public is worried about the ways our values are changing. They want to talk about how we can get on a better track. But around board room tables and in committee rooms and at news desks, values are not considered a very reputable topic for public debate. Talking about moral authority, character, accountability, and so forth can get you into trouble. The middle of American society and the top have different ideas about the importance of values. This is reflected in folk parlance. Take this joke I heard recently: “What’s the difference between John Gotti and the current political candidates? Gotti has convictions.”

If value questions gain more national attention in the future, I’ll be encouraged—because personal attitudes and behaviors are extremely important. Healthy values have made most of our society’s current successes possible; harmful values are behind most of our central failures. Let me quickly run through a series of propositions outlining some of the specific reasons why values matter, and why they are worth careful guarding.

Proposition One is that upholding time-tested values is humane. The favorite media chatter today is that values are a “wedge issue”—that the values debate is being pushed by disingenuous operators whose real agenda is to score political points by bashing and dividing their fellow Americans. Values are just a cudgel for attacking cultural opponents, in this interpretation.

I want to argue that that is inaccurate and unfair. Because the truest reason for defending traditional cultural values is that they are the choices likeliest to make people happy and secure in the long run. Let me illustrate this with a story I heard recently. It seems two individuals were driving down a highway in a large truck when they came to a bridge underpass with a big, stern sign in front of it reading “Absolutely no vehicles over 11’ 3” allowed.” They pulled over to the shoulder and got out their measuring tape, and it turned out their truck was 12’4” tall. At this point, the second guy looked to the driver and asked, “So whadya think we should do?” The driver glanced both ways, then answered: “Not a cop in sight....Let’s chance it.”

There are some rules, obviously, that it is futile to flaunt. All we do in ignoring them is endanger ourselves and those traveling with us. This is especially true when it is *cultural*, as opposed to legalistic rules that we are breaking. Most often, those guidelines are there for our own good. The informal laws that traditionally governed family structure are an excellent example of this. The big, yellow “Not Allowed” signs that existed in this area were there not to punish or harass, but to try and save as many people as possible from finding out what can happen when you drive unprepared into the hard rocks or steel girders of reality.

How many of the people claiming that traditional values serve no purpose, or are needlessly constricting, or mean-spirited realize that a child’s chances of being abused are forty times higher in a non-traditional family than in a traditional one? That children growing up in non-traditional families are three times likelier to end up with emotional or behavioral problems? How many are aware that adults living in natural, intact families experience significantly lower rates of problem drinking, mental disorder, stress, violence, criminality, incarceration, and suicide? That the poverty rate of married, two-parent families is only one-sixth that of non-intact counter-

parts? Traditional values are humane, and their primary beneficiaries are their practitioners. That's my first proposition.

Proposition Two is that traditional values are practical. The anti-values crowd often asserts that the values debate is a hollow one, full of empty symbols, raised mostly out of nostalgia. Values renovation, it is often claimed, offers no solution to today's real social problems.

This is badly mistaken. People who believe an emphasis on values is ineffectual should look closely at some careful econometric studies published a few years ago by the National Bureau of Economic Research. They show that attitudinal factors—like acceptance of the idea of committing an illegal act, for instance—are significant influences on whether an individual will be successful in school and in the labor market.

Perhaps most interestingly, these studies show that, all other factors being equal, inner city residents who go to church are far less likely to commit a crime or use drugs or drop out of school, and that they are *more* likely to hold a job. Religious attendance is a more accurate predictor of these things than whether an individual lived in public housing, or grew up in a single-parent household, or had parents who received welfare. "Churchgoing is associated with substantial differences in the behavior of youths...[it] affects allocation of time, school attendance, work activity, and the frequency of socially deviant activity," concludes principal researcher Richard Freeman. Churchgoing, he says, is the background factor that most affects who escapes from inner-city poverty.

Likewise, a major 1990 study done for the Girl Scouts of America by Louis Harris and Associates, Robert Coles, and James Davidson Hunter found that religious youngsters are much likelier than the non-religious to avoid anti-social acts and to engage in altruistic activities. Rich kids who are religious and poor kids who are religious "have far more in common with each other in terms of their moral decision-making and their priorities than [religious and non-religious kids] of the same socioeconomic group," summarize the authors.

Influencing values is actually a very effective way of heading off and solving social problems—better by far than simply applying Band-Aids and trying to control damage after the fact. I've said in the past that if you're standing on a riverbank and notice a string of folks floating by half-drowned, you of course had better try to fish out as many as possible. But you also had better send someone upstream to see what's pushing them in. Emphasizing values can help you accomplish both tasks.

Take *heading off* problems: It's a fact that blacks and whites alike have a nine out of ten chance of staying out of poverty if they simply finish high school and avoid having a baby out of wedlock (two fairly elemental disciplines). Or take *solving* problems: It isn't adequately appreciated that far more low-income persons get themselves out of poverty and off welfare by marrying or re-marrying than by any other method.

In other words. Marriage and family solidarity work. Self-control, self-improvement, and personal responsibility work. Changing values is a very practical way of changing the world, and public policy ought to acknowledge this. That's Proposition Two.

Proposition Three is that strong, healthy values are critical to national prosperity. They are not a frill. The present day is characterized by a declining significance of things material and a great upswing in the importance of capacities of mind and soul. Things like reserves of ore and inches of topsoil have relatively little bearing on international success and influence anymore. National riches are now measured in human attitudes and aptitudes, in personal behaviors and productive habits.

And the hard truth is, some of our competitors—particularly the highly-disciplined, kin-based societies of Asia—are doing better on the attitudes and aptitudes front today than we are. In present-day Japan, only one percent of all births are illegitimate, versus well over a quarter in this country. The divorce rate is one-fourth U.S. levels. Some 95 percent of all Japanese children live in a married, two-parent household.

The good news is that these family-oriented, strong-values cultures are out there as exemplars and prods to keep us honest, to keep us from collapsing into the conclusion that we can't, or needn't, do any better.

The bad news is, should we fail to halt the decay of American values, these people may inherit our mantle. Almost exactly one month ago, the director of Japan's Economic Planning Agency was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* as saying he believes Japan's GNP will overtake that of the U.S. within the next twenty years, and that this will put officials in Tokyo in a position to "impose fiscal and monetary discipline on the United States." When I read this my first response, as a patriot, was, "See you on the playing field, pal." But then I had a second reaction. I thought to myself, "Well, you know it's true we liberal, modern Americans haven't done such a great job on the discipline front—whether fiscal and monetary or otherwise." And part of me decided that an international values competition might not be such a bad thing. May the best values win.

This is, in many ways, the ultimate competitiveness issue. For that reason, I don't think we can even consider accepting our current standards as a given. There is no guarantee we will succeed in reversing our values collapse, but we have no choice other than to try.

Proposition Four is a warning about tactics, namely: more money won't do the job. One of the favorite tricks of modern liberalism is to remake ethical and social issues into economic issues. Thus, crime becomes a product of insufficient welfare budgets. Weak parenting and inadequate early nurturing of children are blamed on a lack of daycare subsidies. Soaring illegitimacy is attributed to an insufficient number of factory jobs in inner cities. The modern crisis in fatherhood and male responsibility is reduced to a question of collecting child support payments a little more efficiently. And we get the incongruity of the nation's major response to a horrible, murderous riot being an aid package for real estate building.

Modern liberals hate to discuss values and ethics, cultural and character problems. They want to talk mostly about dollars—which are cool, neutral, and impersonal. They don't want to take on the sticky, uncomfortable task of changing individual life courses, so they pretend that the process of making physical and moral progress can be simplified into a matter of distributing missing funds. That way, no tough personal choices have to be made, and no one's guilt gets tweaked. The problem is, it won't work. Money won't solve today's major social problems.

This leads to my fifth proposition, which is that the crucial public work of our era is moral transformation, centered around new public emphasis on family integrity and personal responsibility. Society can't stop an unconcerned father from deserting his dependents. We can't stop a pregnant woman from lighting her crack pipe. Straightforward financial and regulatory remedies can't address these pressing problems, because they are, at root, moral disorders. Our best hope is, instead, to persuade men and women to stop doing such things to themselves and each other. As the old evangelical promise relates, if we can take the slums out of people, people will take themselves out of the slums. We must work from the inside out.

The problem for policy makers, of course, is that the government is not at all equipped to accomplish these kinds of transformations. What's really wanted today is more public diplomacy outside government channels—more media debate and conversation, more literary shouts from the rooftops, more moral suasion and advocacy. Elected officials can help by prodding and encouraging, but the real action must come on the cultural, not political, front.

For maximum effect, these efforts should focus at the level of the family. The family is the only institution that can reliably cultivate the mental capacities and disciplines crucial to personal success. Whether we're talking about education or battling drugs or just reversing social alienation, the family has to be the main staging ground.

One of the clearest, bitterest lessons of current social science research is that society's capacity to remedy damage done early on in deficient families is extremely limited. You can set up Head-Start centers and WIC outlets and reform schools and mentoring programs on every city block, but so long as families are unhealthy you will still face crippling social problems. The erosion of family loyalties has to be reversed.

The other bit of moral transformation that is desperately needed today is a personal responsibility revolution. Beginning in the 1960s, we experienced a rights crusade in this country. The upshot is that "rights" have now become, in George Will's words, "sharp elbows to throw against one another." They have become licenses for self-indulgence, for anti-social behavior, for the flaunting of all cultural norms.

The lack of accountability we see so often in today's radically rights-based society is not some inexplicable accident. I'd say we've gotten about what we asked for. We shouldn't be shocked that we're experiencing so much irresponsible divorce, for instance. After all, it's fun to run off with your secretary—and we've made divorce incredibly easy and cost-free. We consciously got rid of all the things that once discouraged it. We've allowed a system to grow up under which anti-social behaviors are profitable, rather than punishing. Unless we launch a responsibility revolution to reverse those incentives, we're going to continue to get lots of destructive behavior.

This brings me to my last proposition, which is that, contrary to widespread claims, resisting values decay is not a hopeless cause. Personal attitudes and behaviors are mutable, and there are lots of precedents for significant values turnabouts. Ideas about masculinity and femininity, for instance, have been firmly revised in recent years—with the androgynists, who were the anti-traditionalists in this case, getting their clocks cleaned. We've had a sharp and lasting drop in drug use since the late 1970s. There have been dramatic changes in behavior in areas like diet and smoking. Attitudes toward race have shifted enormously. There is a cycle of religious ebbs and revivals in this country going back many decades. Values change is possible.

And remember that, as egregious as the values meltdown has been among our chattering class, within the massive middle of American society there remains an enormous reservoir of good sense and traditional habit. I don't believe defenders of traditional American values need to gain 50 percent of the airtime to win the debate, they just need a good minority chunk—because on topics like the family, gender, crime, religion, and morals, popular instincts and experience are basically on their side. A whole lot fewer Americans believe in Madonna than believe in God.

What people who care about values really need in order to connect with their natural allies among the infantry is a popular campaign—replete with pamphlets and magazine articles, and videos, and loud music that subverts the smug certainties of reigning elites, and Allan Bloom books and Tom Wolfe novels, and religious activists, and TV commercials showing eggs frying with a voiceover that warns, "This is your soul listening to an Ice-T album," and tee-shirts saying, "I do" on the front and on the back, "Till death do us part." To quote George Gerbner, "If you can write a nation's stories, you needn't worry about who makes its laws."

Of course, laws and officeholders are themselves an important influence on private attitudes and morals, so it would be useful to have government leaders play a part in this campaign of cultural change. The truth is, we wouldn't have to go very far back in public policy to find better ways of running government programs. I was struck by a little anecdote in Nick Lemann's recent book on the great migration of blacks to Northern cities. One of the families he follows wanted

to get an apartment in a brand new public housing project in Chicago. However, a rule in effect at that time—and this was only about 25 years ago or so—disqualified unmarried couples from being given public apartments. Guess how these protagonists solved that problem? They got married the next day.

I'm convinced a good deal of this kind of thing would still happen today, given the right circumstances and the right help and encouragement. Of course we can't overturn human nature. But we can do a much better job of connecting actions with consequences. And when the activists start shouting that we lack compassion, we need to shout back that the most humane path is not necessarily the one of least resistance.

My friend Ben Wattenberg recently argued that following the "Nixon-to-China" model, a theoretical President Clinton could do the country a huge favor by bringing liberals to heel on the values question. Ben said that if President Clinton would have an opportunity "to use government to reform the liberalism that has eroded the American responsibility standard." I say, "Good idea, but I'm not holding my breath." After all, the reaction of the values-free crowd to any values campaign is always a denunciatory hurricane. Ben himself describes the forces against any values restoration as "titanic: feminists, gay rights and civil rights groups, the civil liberty lobby, some unions—each with huge constituencies, each looking for responsibility-free goodies." He point out that "the last time we had a moderate Southern Democratic President—President Jimmy Carter—he got rolled by special-interest, no-fault, free-lunch Democratic liberals."

So, anyone hoping to defend traditional cultural standards today needs to be prepared for a huge fight. If, however, a set of principled, generous-spirited proponents of what could be called natural, time-tested values can connect with their public, this is a very winnable war.

PANEL II

Kate O'Beirne: I am Kate O'Beirne, Vice President for Government Relations at The Heritage Foundation. This panel and our two guests have been asked to talk about what government should or shouldn't do to promote those values we have just heard talked about so compellingly by our previous panel. We posed a few questions to our two guests this morning: Should the government be pursuing certain policies in the area of welfare, education, health care, crime, or tax policy in support of those values we have talked about? Alternatively, are there areas with respect to promoting values where one would rather not see the government involved. And how important is it to recognize the inherent limitations of government in promoting values—a point Karl Zinsmeister made just a few minutes ago.

To address these important issues we couldn't have two more able panelists.

Our first speaker is Michael Schwartz, who is Director of the Free Congress Center for Social Policy right here in Washington and a leading pro-family scholar and activist. Michael is the author of three books and co-author of three more as well as hundreds of articles which have appeared in scores of secular and religious publications. He was editor of the quarterly *Journal of Family and Culture* from 1986 to 1988, and he is a popular lecturer and frequent guest on both radio and television. Active in the pro-life movement for twenty years, Michael is one of the founding Directors of March of Life.

During 1987 and 1988 Michael served as a social policy advisor to the presidential campaigns of Jack Kemp, Pete du Pont, and George Bush and he is still frequently consulted by members of Congress and the executive branch on social policy issues. I am one of many who have counted on Michael's wise counsel over the years.

Our second guest is Representative Vin Weber. At the age of 28 he was the second-youngest congressman ever sent to Washington, and currently represents Minnesota's Second Congressional District. In 1978, Vin managed the successful Senate campaign of Rudy Boschwitz and in 1979-1980, he served as Senator Boschwitz's senior Minnesota aide, specializing, back in Minnesota, in areas dealing with the economy, the family, and agricultural issues. Since his election to Congress in 1980, he has continued to focus on these issues. Before the start of the 101st Congress, Vin Weber was elected by his Republican colleagues to serve as Secretary to the House Republican Conference, one of eight elected Republican leadership positions, and as a member of the leadership, he helps set legislative strategy and regularly counsels the President. The *Wall Street Journal* has said of Vin Weber, "If politicians were stock, Vin Weber would be a long-term blue chip." Vin Weber's unique talents will be sorely missed in January when the House reconvenes without him present. But we know that the new challenges Vin has chosen to pursue will provide a different opportunity for him to continue in making the very important contribution we have all come to expect of him. Please join me in welcoming both of our speakers this morning.



Michael Schwartz: In medicine there is an old proverb; in the Latin, *primum non nocere*—first do no harm. It would be a wise adage for government policy makers to follow when they address family policy. Charles Murray, Alan Carlson, Karl Zinsmeister, and many other conservative and neo-conservative scholars have chronicled the ways in which government policies have had the unintended consequence of destroying the family. Nowhere has this happened more than among the urban underclass, who have been most subject to the beneficent ministrations of the welfare state, and who are suffering a poverty that is greater than any poverty ever known in

American history. This is not a material poverty: cash income, calorie intake, and other related measures of material well-being are certainly better than the conditions of most of the world, and better than the material conditions in which most Americans lived through most of our nation's history.

This poverty is far deeper and leaves far more grievous scars than mere material deprivation, for it is the poverty of a destroyed culture, and above all, a poverty characterized by a lack of family formation. When millions of children are growing up in our society, not having a father themselves, not even knowing anyone who has a father, not knowing what a father is for, how can they achieve the responsibility for family formation when they reach adulthood? They don't know how to do it. Is it any wonder, then, that we increasingly see a situation in which the payoff of this condition is simply a black hole in our inner-city communities—or non-communities, I should say? The ethic of community has been taken away from them and replaced by well-meaning, but curiously misguided government policies.

We know what went wrong. We know that when the welfare state steps in and takes the role of the father; when jobs for men disappear and are replaced by jobs for women; when men become redundant in a society, they really have nothing else to do except engage in violence and crime, go to jail, and fall into various forms of self-destructive conduct that creates a vicious cycle.

That is the worst problem we face, but let's move up a step. Our middle-class families are falling apart, too. Why? Because of a culture of selfishness. Because somewhere after World War II the ground shifted from thinking of the first person in the plural to thinking of the first person simply as a singular—from we to me—looking at life as the apple that is going to give me satisfaction. Some people attribute this to the feminist movement, but I think the feminist movement is more a symptom of a general trend of selfishness rather than the cause of it. Women can be just as selfish as men, but men are just as selfish as women.

Let's look at the feminist movement simply as a case history of how this happened. Betty Friedan diagnosed the situation: affluent, suburban housewives were bored. Well, no wonder! They didn't have to milk cows any more, as their grandmothers had. Now there were plenty of good things affluent suburban women could do, and many of them did good things: they got involved in volunteer activities, went to school, or developed various talents. But they found that some of the men in their lives were not particularly respectful of women. In other words, the cultural standard that had dominated the relations between men and women had broken down. Why? Because of selfishness.

Too many men ceased to be good men. The reaction to that is that many women stopped being good women. This mutual abandonment of a sense of responsibility produced a cultural attitude of selfishness which resulted in the widespread feeling that, "If I am not getting maximum satisfaction out of my life, I have a right to trade it in for a new life." That was the motive force that led to the explosion of divorce. Every year more than a million children in the United States are orphaned by the divorce of their parents. That is a devastating thing psychologically. Once again, the numbers are in, the research is done, and the damaging effects of divorce are conclusively demonstrated.

Making it worse is that the law has done harm to the institution of marriage, which is the foundation of families, and therefore the foundation of society. We had a situation, inherited from the whole tradition of Western civilization, in which it was assumed that a marriage was a contract, in a spiritual sense, between a man, a woman, and God; and in a civil sense, a contract between a man, a woman, and society. Marriage has a social purpose—regardless of the individual satisfaction people derive from it, regardless of the religious dimension—it has a social function. And the state, therefore, was the guarantor of the marital bond. To eliminate that marriage bond, the

burden of proof was on the person who wanted the marriage dissolved. The state was there to say, "This marriage will stand because it is necessary for the good functioning of society for marriages to be stable." Otherwise, everybody's marriage is unstable if the marital bond is not secure.

That standard could not survive a generation of selfishness. Beginning in 1970 we saw the introduction of "no fault" divorce laws. "No fault" divorce, in principle, says that the state will take no position regarding the just man's claim and the unjust man's claim. Now, if there is anything that violates the first principle of justice, that is it: to draw no distinction, no discrimination, between a person who has kept faith and someone who has broken faith. And yet, that is the condition in which we find the fundamental institution of society. So, all of us, regardless of our religious commitments, regardless of how deeply in love we may be, all of us, if we are married,—are civilly in a perfectly tentative arrangement that could end at any minute. The state is no longer the guarantor of the marital bond; it is, in fact, a dissolvent force. So, at the same time that the state is retarding family formation by subsidizing family fragments in which a father is never present, it is also attacking the marriages that do exist. These are fundamental issues. We see the state doing harm to marriage.

We move on to the next dimension, the functions of families. There is no more solemn obligation for parents than to educate their children. The previous panel dealt with the disaster we have in education, but the essential problem here is that the state, once again, has taken over the functions that formerly were fulfilled by families and that ought to be fulfilled by families. Namely, it has removed from parents the control over the education of their children, and above all, removed from parents the primary responsibility for the moral formation of children.

Government is a moral enterprise in the sense that government can affect the way individuals behave by rewarding virtue and restraining vice. What we see over and over again is government rewarding vice and punishing virtue. We see it in our tax policy: the tax burden has risen most heavily on families supporting children. Right after World War II, when the income tax had to be expanded to pay off the war debt, Congress deliberately designed a pro-family tax policy in such a fashion that the average worker with the average number of children had no federal income tax liability. What has happened since then is that as incomes have grown and inflation has increased, and as social status has changed, the tax burden on single people and on married people without children has remained relatively stable, but the tax burden on families with children has gone up astronomically—especially the Social Security tax, which is regressive and brutally burdensome for working class families.

That has made it more difficult for families to survive on a single income—which ought to be taken as a measure of economic justice in society. When I was a child, most working men could support their families and own a home without the necessity of having a second income in the household. That is not the case today. It was barely the case when I was a young man. Most young people, unless they happen to be exceptionally fortunate either in where they live or in the income they are able to make, do not believe they will ever be able to afford their own house and do not believe that they can survive on one income. Therefore, they are discouraged from having children.

Ben Wattenberg has chronicled the birth dearth. One thing he failed to note in his book of that title—he may have noted it elsewhere—is that the birth dearth is a class-directed phenomenon. There is no birth dearth in the lowest one-fifth of the income scale, because government subsidizes out-of-wedlock childbearing among the poor. There is not a particular birth dearth at the top end of the income scale, because people who are well off feel less insecure about their future, and therefore more confident in having children. Where children are disappearing is among the working class and the middle class.

Why? Not because working class and middle-class couples don't like children. It is because they are afraid they cannot afford them. We have seen the median age of marriage rise to an all-time high. We have seen people defer childbearing until their late thirties. Having two children is a large family these days. One of the contributing factors, in addition to selfishness and other moral issues, is a tax structure that discourages family building. Now, why attack those institutions that are most valuable to the health of society, namely, middle-class families?

Let me mention just one other area of policy, and that is crime. One of the basic things that children need to be taught—if you are a parent, you know they need to be taught this because they don't know it by instinct—is that there is such a thing as right and wrong, that good conduct gets rewarded and bad conduct gets punished. We struggle against this knowledge; it does not come naturally.

Among the things that enable us to internalize the notion that there is good and evil, and that our actions have consequences, is the social affirmation of standards of good and bad conduct. We are living in a society now which does not punish crime; we are living in a society which punishes the victims of crime.

Children see that the application of justice is a capricious thing—especially children who grow up in a city like Washington. They see that the police are able to capture maybe 4 percent or 5 percent of the people who commit crimes, and that the courts eventually convict maybe half of those. We have known criminals to walk out of court on technicalities, when everyone knows that they committed the crime they are accused of. And then, once they are convicted, many criminals live better in prison than they did out on the street. Is it any wonder that young people who are growing up in a disorganized society perceive that the rewards go to the drug dealers and the gang members, and that there is no future in a school which is there simply to keep you off the streets? With so few positive role models, is it any wonder that they rationally make the decision (and from their perspective it is not an irrational decision) to enter a life of crime?

Crime, in other words, is fostered by the capriciousness of a criminal justice system that has handed over control of our nation's city streets to the thugs. And it is ratified when we see things like the Los Angeles riot rewarded by political pay-offs—pay-offs for bad behavior. That is the mixed message that young people get about crime. And about sex: now schools distribute condoms. We have a multi-million dollar program to make sure that no child will be without contraceptives. These are insane things!

One of the reasons why we have them is because of liberals—and I use that term in the current sense, which really means somebody who has taken leave of his senses. The old liberalism—the liberalism of Hubert Humphrey, of John Kennedy, of Franklin Roosevelt—had a vision of society that was coherent and consistent with the American tradition. The new liberalism of these people who abandon moral principles is inconsistent with any tradition.

They insist that there is no consensus on morality, that, in fact, morality has no place in the public debate. That is wrong. Of course, there are debated issues in our society. But on most issues, the overwhelming majority of the American people do agree about right and wrong. I have yet to meet someone in debate who is willing to stand up and say that he thinks it is a good thing for fourteen-year-old kids to fornicate. And yet my taxes go to subsidize that fornication. I have yet to meet in debate anyone who stands up and says it is a good thing for young people to be enticed into homosexual behavior. And yet we have government programs to do that. I have yet to meet anyone who claims that looting should be encouraged, but it is the neighborhoods where the looters live that get the rewards, while the law-abiding pay for it. Why? Because the people who know better are unwilling or intimidated against standing up and saying that behavior is

wrong and we cannot condone it. And that is one of the things I think the conservative movement needs to find ways of saying, and saying convincingly.



Vin Weber: I would like to back up a little bit. I think the first question for conservatives is, “How expansive a role do we want to see government play in affirming values?” There is a debate across the spectrum of conservative thinking about that subject. I take a fairly expansive view. The government injects itself into the moral debate all the time, as Mike made very clear. The left says that the government should be neutral on values questions—only when it is our side’s values questions. There is no suggestion, for instance, that the government should be neutral on the question of civil rights, which ultimately is a moral issue, either in its traditional sense or in the expansion of the definition of civil rights that we see today to include gays and lesbians and to give animals rights. There is no argument there on the left about utilizing the government as an instrument of moral change. I think we have to decide first and foremost that we are not going to simply react to that by saying, “No, the government should not be involved in the moral debate. We really take a Libertarian view. We are conservatives after all, and we are distrustful of government.”

I think you can have a long discussion about whether or not government has ever been essentially neutral, even when there was a much smaller role for government in people’s lives. But certainly today, with government as intrusive as it is, you have to at least begin by saying, “All right, government is involved in people’s lives. The question is, what set of values is government going to promote and reinforce, or on the other hand, to erode and undermine?” By the way, I think we can do better if we confront that debate and say, “We certainly want to legislate morality. We have a set of values we want the government to promote. We want government institutions to reinforce certain policies. Now let’s get to the debate about what those values and policies are.”

Pro-family is a pretty good bumper sticker, and it is also a good organizing instrument for government policy. You can say as a policy maker, “I believe that strengthening the family by tilting government policies in favor of traditional families is good—good for everybody.” It doesn’t mean that we are against people who are not part of traditional families, whether they are single or divorced or whatever. It just means that the family is good for society; we want to tilt every policy that we conceivably can towards strengthening the family.

The most important one affecting the American family is tax policy, as Mike mentioned. The most radical change in tax policy in our lifetime has never been voted on by the Congress, and certainly never appeared on the front page of any newspaper—that is the erosion of the value of the personal exemption. Add to that the increase in the FICA tax in recent years, and you have just dramatically tilted tax policy against families and children. We ought to say explicitly that we want tax policy to strengthen and reinforce families, because we believe that traditional families should be strengthened, that everyone is better off when strong, stable, traditional families exist. This does not require us to condemn everyone else, but simply to affirm the traditional family as a building block of society.

Educational choice is in the same category. And probably the greatest victory for family policy in recent years was related to that in the debate over childcare in the 102nd Congress. There were a lot of conservatives and Republicans who said when the childcare debate opened that there should be no government role in childcare. But it became evident immediately that there was going to be a government childcare policy. The question was, were we going to enact a policy which would lead inevitably toward a system of federally subsidized childcare centers and a vol-

ume of regulations that would basically bankrupt or eliminate all private childcare providers, or were we going to empower parents to make those choices for themselves? Although the outcome wasn't perfect, we basically won. We won by affirming that we wanted a pro-parent, pro-family childcare policy, not a pro-state, pro-government childcare policy.

That, I believe, is the forerunner of what will be probably the greatest victory for our values in the 1990s—to extend that very same principle to education. It is going to become very difficult for the left to maintain the public school monopoly after a generation of parents have made their own choices about childcare providers. No one is going to be able to tell them that they were smart enough to make the choice when their children were one or two, but they are not smart enough to make that choice when the kids get to be four or five or six. People will automatically reject that. I think we will win that debate in the 1990s.

However, the issue is not just about individual freedom, which is how conservatives prefer to cast that debate. It is a conscious policy on our part to say that a family is stronger when they have to make those decisions for and by themselves. It might actually be a little bit more difficult than simply sending your kid off to the government childcare center and not having to think about it, not having to worry about it, not having to pay for it—except indirectly, through taxes. But you force families to make decisions about their own future, to take responsibility for their own children's future, their own children's education, and get involved in their schools.

We want that policy, not just because it enhances freedom, but because with that freedom comes a reinforcement of a social unit that we believe is the building block of society. I think the same current runs through welfare policy and health care policy. And so, I would argue that conservatives need to resolve for themselves the idea that government plays an active role in what we describe as a cultural war. We shouldn't be apologetic about that. If in the future you get to the point where the government truly withers away, then you can argue about whether or not government's role in affirming or eroding values should also wither away. But, in this society, and for our lifetime, government will be either on our side or on some other side in the values debate.

In addition, there is another critical aspect of the values debate that should not be overlooked. That is the value of entrepreneurship. I remember listening to Michael Novak several times in the mid-1980s when we were fighting to save Central America and South America from Communism. He talked about the failure of South America and Central America to develop sound economic policies as North America had done. How can this be explained when there is no real difference between our country and theirs in terms of resources and population?

One of the points he made, which has stuck with me, is that in North America, in contrast to South America and Central America, the entrepreneur has always been a heroic figure. The majority of North Americans always believed that people like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Edison and Andrew Carnegie were heroes. These men went out and made something of themselves, made themselves great successes, put a lot of people to work, and created a product or service that is available today. Those are the heroes of the North American culture to an extent they never were in Latin culture, and that has hindered the development of the Latin economies.

The idea of entrepreneurship is tied to the discussion of family values because we want to stress that individual parents should be lionized, should be made heroic in terms of having responsibility for choosing their children's childcare and educational systems, and that the tax codes should be tilted in their favor. Parents today are engaging in a heroic enterprise. Similarly, we want to promote the individuals in the economic sphere who take personal responsibility, take risks, and go out and actually do something for themselves and for their society. They, too, should be lionized. I think that entrepreneurship as a value is more than just an economic policy.

It is a value that we want government to reinforce, in most cases, by not doing anything to hinder or discourage its development.

PANEL III

Stuart Butler: Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Stuart Butler and I am Director of Domestic Policy Studies here at The Heritage Foundation. Welcome to our final panel, where we are to explore the issues of what we can do to restore values to the culture. Earlier Karl Zinsmeister suggested that maybe government wasn't particularly good at changing attitudes, changing the basic culture of a society. Don Eberly, in one of the questions to the previous panel, asked us to think about how to influence culture and the politics of influencing culture.

Our first speaker is an old colleague of mine from The Heritage Foundation, Dinesh D'Souza, who is well-known in the public culture for his book *Illiberal Education*, which addressed the whole issue of political correctness in our universities. He is a Resident Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and was Managing Editor of *Policy Review* here at the Foundation.

Next to him is David Horowitz, who is President of the Center for the Study of Popular Culture in Los Angeles. He was previously editor of *Ramparts* magazine. He is a graduate of Berkeley (if I stopped at this point, you might all be walking out). But he is more recently co-author of a book, *Destructive Generations*, and several other books, including *Deconstructing the Left*, and many articles.

Elizabeth Wright is well-known at Heritage as a contributor to our publications. She is editor of the quarterly newsletter *Issues and Views*, based in New York City. This is a publication which looks very much at arguing for the kind of values—self help, strong families—in the black community that we talked about more generally earlier.

The final speaker will be Dr. Michael Joyce, who is President and CEO of the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Previously, he was Director of the Institute for Educational Affairs in New York, and has held many other positions, including as a teacher of the History of Political Science at the secondary level.

So without further ado, I ask Dinesh to kick things off.



Dinesh D'Souza: The topic is quite a difficult one. I think the crisis of values is, to some degree, endemic to a democratic society. In fact, in Plato's *Republic* you read that the crisis of democracy is, in part, generational. There is an inherent tension between young people and old people, and part of the problem comes from the failure of parents, who obstinately refuse to obey their children.

In our society, I think, we are facing a breakdown of cultural consensus, which has given rise to the debate about values. And the great subjectivity of the term "values" implies that there is no agreement on what constitutes the first principles of our society. It is significant that issues, topics, themes that could once taken for granted now have to be argued about; for example, the term "families." It was hardly a matter of argument a generation ago—perhaps even a few years ago—as to what constituted the desirable state or anatomy or structure of an American family. Now that subject is very much up for grabs.

In politics, an argument is won when your issue ceases to be controversial. The question of the desirability of intact families is now something that is highly controversial. I think the cultural debate comes down to fundamentally a moral debate, which is a debate over what constitutes the moving principle or the animating force of our society.

One side of this debate—our side, if you will—invokes traditional morality, what we call traditional values. And the other side, if you will, does not invoke a new morality. It does not make a good argument for an alternate state of being. It invokes the right to select among a wide menu of values. This deification of choice itself is largely indifferent to the content of the choice. We value the act of choosing more so than what specifically is being chosen.

The larger, intellectual framework, I think, for the debate about value is the philosophical system that goes by the name of relativism, which in contemporary manifestation reveals itself as either cultural relativism or moral relativism. Who is to say that Western Civilization is in any degree superior and more advanced than that of other cultures? Who is to say, for example, that the lifestyle of heterosexuality is in any way more desirable than that of homosexuality? There is the kind of studied and sophisticated indifference to the choices that are made.

And yet the issue of relativism, although it seems to propose a strong, philosophical challenge to conservatives, is to some degree, I think, a misleading issue. The reason for this is that we can comb our society and we can certainly comb the ranks of the political left, and you would be very hard-pressed just to find a relativist.

I have been wandering somewhat nomadically to campuses of this country, and I have, in all honesty, yet to meet a true relativist. I have met deconstructionists, and many of them it turns out on close examination have a certain political agenda which is revealed in the selection of the ideas that they choose. They are interested in deconstructing the idea of truth. They are interested in deconstructing the idea of God. They are interested in deconstructing, for example, Edmund Burke or the Federalist Papers. They are not interested in deconstructing Martin Luther King. They are not interested in deconstructing Marx. Those deconstructions had to await the publication of the *Illiberal Education*.

So relativism, we began to suspect, is not necessarily a philosophy, but rather a tactical choice on the part of activists who are using it to advance a new agenda. The activists that I am speaking about are not relativists, they are absolutists, they are Manichean. They believe that they are in possession of absolute truth and that their enemies are not simply wrong, but immoral. Their enemies are reactionaries; they are bigots. They want to turn back the clock. They want to revive the hated regimes of patriarchy and segregation, if not the Inquisition.

And so, the relativist strategy, I think, goes in three parts. The first, the general project is aimed at centralizing previously marginal or suspect forms of behavior or attitude. And the first strategy is to gain tolerance—to say, for example, that the new lifestyles could be accepted, that one's natural concerns about it could be suppressed.

The second stage is what I call neutrality, that one should be essentially indifferent between the new model and the old. One should state no preference for one over the other.

And the third, of course, is subsidy. And so, by the time the gathering storm—the agenda of the left, the political and moral agenda—enshrines itself in three stages, at each stage it applies a certain level of force, just enough to topple its reactionary opposition.

The new battleground, I think, is the very important domains of race and gender, if you will. And in the area of race, I think to a large degree what we are witnessing is the new enthusiasm of a generation of disillusioned leftists—many of whom have seen their utopian hope in a socialist regime collapse. It has always been the project of Marxism in America to try to foment a class division in American society. But with the exception of a brief period during and after the Depression, it has been quite difficult in this country to set the Proletariat against the Bourgeoisie in any systematic sense. Technically, I suppose, a plumber would qualify as a member of the proletariat, and a clerk would be a member of the Bourgeoisie, but there is really no antagonism

between plumbers and clerks in American society. If anything, the clerk envies the plumber the amount of money he makes.

So, given this frustrating absence of fear of class conflicts, I think a lot of the old activists have discovered that it is much more fertile, it is much more promising, particularly with the collapse of the Marxist ideal, for reinvesting these energies into new categories based on divisions of race. And this, in fact, is more fertile territory, because there is genuine racial division, there is genuine racial anxiety in this country. I think that a lot of the activists have discovered that it is very profitable from the point of view of revising all of the discredited Marxist categories to think of blacks as constituting a kind of new, American proletariat. This certainly governs a great deal of the theoretical scholarship that is now emerging in the American academy.

The challenge for conservatives is a difficult one, I think, because when values break down, it is hard to put them back together again. It is certainly not enough to invoke the old-time religion. And the reason for that is that not everybody accepts the authoritative edict of that religion. And one of the reasons for the paralysis in the moral debate is that it seems to be divided between two camps. On the one hand, there is a kind of fundamentalist camp, which tends to identify its value with authoritative text—Scripture, the Bible. On the other hand, you have a group that rejects the authority of the Bible to speak authoritatively on these questions. There really seems to be no mediating structure between the authoritative fundamentalists and a group that we can, with convenience and accuracy, describe as the secular humanists.

So, I think our intellectual challenge is to try to rediscover a rational ground for some of the moral dilemmas that are faced in American society. That, perhaps in policy terms, will help us to come up with a better framework for racial justice, and a new understanding of the way in which men and women can relate better to each other. I do think that the fact that the radical agenda is controversial, and the fact that family values, however attenuated, have become an emotional part of this debate, does mean that there is no *de facto* triumph on the part of the left. At the very least, we are still in the ball game. I think that perhaps one may even say that the trend is going our way. Let us hope that with some inheritance and some conviction some of these issues can be re-engaged and better solutions developed.



David Horowitz: While we were winning the Cold War abroad, we seem to have lost it here at home. I disagree with Mike Schwartz that modern liberals have no tradition. Their tradition is the radical tradition that goes back to Rousseau, whose views stand behind all the totalitarian atrocities of this century. That doesn't mean that everyone who calls himself a liberal is a totalitarian. As James Burnham used to say, the difference between Communists and liberals is that the Communists know what they are doing. There are a lot of liberals who have been confused and seduced by the radical arguments, and in the last two decades radicals have overwhelmed the liberal culture. The good news, however, is that radicalism is destined to lose, because radicalism is a war against nature. However, the bad news is that they can do wreak enormous damage in the process of losing.

How bad off we are was just brought home to me in my own city of Los Angeles. We are engaged there in a war with 100,000 armed gangsters in the South Central district, who terrorize, first of all, the South Central neighborhoods. Last April, they led a race riot against the Korean community, which has not been reported at all accurately in the press, since it was a black race riot against Koreans which destroyed more than 800 Korean businesses simply because they were Korean-owned.

In this war, the LAPD is incredibly understaffed. It is half the per capita size of the police force of Philadelphia, although geographically L.A. is much larger than Philadelphia. We have two police per square mile. Nevertheless, last month the L.A. city council voted seven to one that within eight years 44 percent of the police force must be female. This was a complete capitulation to feminist idiocy. Nobody would propose making the front line of the L.A. Raiders 44 percent women.

But there is other good news: Although we are outnumbered in the culture, we can win battles. We can even win them when the Democrats are in the majority, and we should be preparing ourselves for just that prospect.

About a year and half ago I began a project, as I often do, by calling my dear friend, Midge Decter for advice. I wanted to find out how the Public Broadcasting System operated. We had had eleven years of Republican presidents and the Reagan Revolution, and here was PBS, acting as a propaganda machine for the Sandinistas and all of our totalitarian adversaries.

Midge suggested I call Bob Kotlowitz, who has been the head of programming at WNET for twenty years, whom she had known at *Harper's* when he was a magazine editor. I asked him how he attempted to balance the programming on the system. My problem with public TV was that there was no conservative presence; it was a video arm of the Democratic Party and the Democratic Left. I believe that in any fair debate in our culture, we will win hands down. The idea then was to get balance in public television. I am not for removing liberal viewpoints from PBS. I have supported those who want to see a liberal Buckley show.

"How do you balance?" I asked Bob Kotlowitz. "Oh," he said, "That is a good question. When I was an editor, I could open my magazine and see the articles, or I could lay out the magazines for a year and see what had been written. But with television you have to be watching 24 hours a day to get an idea of what is being aired, which no one can do." So, it occurred to me immediately that I needed to obtain a list of programs that had been publicly funded and that had been aired. I went to PBS and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to request the lists, but my request fell into a black hole. So, I solicited the help of Senator Exon, a Democrat, and immediately the system responded and I got a list. The whole process took seven months. After that experience I realized that the only way to get the system to respond was to go to Congress.

Along with Larry Jarvik of Heritage, I put together the case on balance and accountability in respect to public television. We took our case to the Oversight Committee. Of course, Republicans have known for years that in the Public Television System they are dealing with a government-funded lobby against much of what they stand for, that weighs in every two or four or six years against their candidacies in every state, district, and town in this country. And so they were inclined to be sympathetic to our case.

Once the case had been prepared, once they had before them the information that showed the extent of the bias, the lack of fiscal and corporate accountability, seven of them held up the appropriation for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting nine months this year. At the end of that period the authorization was passed, but with three new amendments. In the first one, Democratic Senator Robert Byrd, stipulated that if they were going to have indecent programming it should be shown at hours when children are asleep. The second stipulated that they would have to balance the programming as the law required and provide funds for alternative programming when they did not. The third stipulated that they would have to produce the list that I couldn't get. It had to be a list that described every program, the funders, the content, and so forth, and it had to be published in every office in every station across this country. It was a major victory. Of course the liberal press reported it as a defeat for conservatives.

But now the issue that confronts us is: Where are the conservative producers? Where on this panel considering the culture today, for example, is an artist, a writer, a producer of culture? We are talking about culture, and yet we lack the presence of those who are culture workers. It is time for us to rethink and retool for the battles ahead. We have to get into a new mental frame. We have to get out of our think tanks and engage in the culture.

The only way that we are going to win the battle for the culture is if we stand for tolerance and for democratic values. We can be confident knowing that our values, because they don't run against the natural order, are the ones that, in the long run, will triumph. Finally, we have to be prepared to take back the culture page by page, book by book, program by program, value by value until the last bastion falls.



Michael Joyce: Let me give a little report from the heartland, more specifically about two events that took place within the past three weeks. Three weeks ago the children of Wisconsin returned to public school, and we have had two interesting incidents in these three weeks that I think go to the heart of some of the things we have been talking about.

The first event occurred in a very affluent, suburban public school system. An elementary school teacher complained to the union that she felt oppressed in her classroom by the presence of the United States flag. The union appealed immediately to the school board, which voted that from now on this teacher was to be relieved from her oppression. The rule would be that any teacher who wished to remove the American flag would be free to do so with the sanction of the school board. This is heartland, not South Central L.A. No mention was made of the Pledge of Allegiance; we are just talking about the presence of the flag itself as a symbol.

The second event occurred also in a very affluent public school—this one was a high school—where on returning to school, students were given a student responsibility handbook. At first glance, one would have thought that the school's administration had taken seriously the task of holding children responsible for their behavior. And in this handbook, even they reflected Mike Schwartz's view that bad conduct should be punished.

But let me tell you what conduct was being proscribed in this student responsibility handbook. First is the prohibition of certain words, which are absolutely proscribed: girl, honey, doll, babe, and hunk. And I would add, nothing was said about slut, screwed, or wimp, but let's leave that aside.

Second, behavior of a certain kind is proscribed. One of my favorites was staring or inappropriate looking at another person. The offense in so doing is classified as "sexual harassment," a policy adopted by the local school board in this predominantly white, affluent suburb.

And finally, what might be called "nerd discrimination" crops up. Subject to punishment under the "sexual harassment" rubric is asking a person more than once for a date after being refused. So much for nerds at the prom; they are out of luck.

I raise this because it was not so very long ago that public school was a principal—maybe even the principal—agent for promoting a sense of shared values, which at one time not so long ago seemed to hold Americans together. Educators and citizens alike believed that a society whose members lack common experience and a common body of knowledge is a society without a fundamental culture, and that such a society would tend to disintegrate into a mere aggregation of individuals.

Thus it was that requiring students to be exposed to a core body of knowledge and to be familiar, at the very least, with their common cultural heritage was the organizing principle and even the reason for the existence of the public school. It was a real submerging in tradition and heritage that made for a common bond. As we know, certainly in the case of higher learning, this pedagogy has been largely destroyed by that constellation of attitudes, “political correctness,” about which we have already heard.

This reality is now making significant inroads, quite obviously, into pre-collegiate schools. State-owned schools cannot, or will not, teach and insist on ethical standards that parents want for their children. We hear over and over again from the Bill Moyers of the world of the need for higher ethical conduct, and we know that children adopt many of their basic norms early in life. Yet increasingly we are forcing children into schools which cannot instruct children in the virtues and values of their common tradition.

The reason for this is simple enough. Moral instruction reflects particular moral stances, not simply things in general, not mere fashion and fads. Today’s chic seems to be political correctness and all of its parts, which embraces the view that value judgments have no cognitive content—a militant toleration that suggests that we remain ethically agnostic with respect to personal behavior, but highly judgmental about certain kinds of public content. It advocates laissez-faire personal morality, enforced tolerance of different life styles, but a puritanical political code regulating speech or pertinent governmental behavior.

The public schools, precisely because they are supposed to represent all, and since politically correct thinking insists on the toleration of all—except those who champion traditional values—end up representing nobody except the prevailing and desecrated secular assumptions and motifs. Under such assumptions these schools can allow “everybody’s doing it” sexual programs, for example, but they dare not recite traditional scruples against deviant sexual activity.

Because American educational policy encourages the growth of the state-owned monopolies, the freedom to erect and sustain schools which reflect profound values is being lost to all but the most affluent.

James Coleman has pointed out that throughout American history there have been two conflicting orientations toward schools. The first one understands the school as an institution releasing the child from the blinders imposed by accident of birth in this or that family, transcending the limitations of the family and taking the child into the mainstream of American culture. The schools have been a means for stripping away ethnic identity and social origin and implanting a common, American tradition. Now this orientation has been the basis for public schools which now hold the view that the producer of education knows better than the consumer.

The second orientation has been the basis for private schools. This view sees the school as an extension of the family, reinforcing the family’s values as they are found in the family. The school is seen as a proficient means for transmitting and sustaining the culture of the family community from one generation to the next.

Now, the tension between these two differing views is at the heart of the debate in regard to school choice. So, this suggests to me some policy questions that we need to grope with, having to do with this matter of seeing to it that accountability for values is exacted from the school system. A question, I suppose, is, “Do the producers of school education still know better than the parent consumers?” Do we still trust professional educators with the power to educate children, or do we trust parents to make decisions about the kind of education they want for their children?

Now, I am happy to report a little good news, also from the heartland. Our foundation, together with some businesses, arranged to award scholarships to children who live in the city of Milwaukee who meet a needs test. To pass the needs test, families have to qualify for the school lunch program, so we are talking about kids who are demonstrably poor. This scholarship program allows parents to choose among the 92 non-public schools in that city. We had no idea when we announced this on June 10th the sort of response there would be, but I am happy to report that as of this moment, we have 3,000 youngsters benefitting, grades kindergarten through eight, and many more in the pipeline.

While I can't guarantee the quality of the schools that have been chosen, I think I can guarantee that the parents feel a new sense of accountability, and that they will demand much more from the school than the aforementioned school boards that allowed the rigid prohibition of speech and conduct, and the removal of the American flag.



Elizabeth Wright: As important as this subject of values is for every American, there could not be a more urgent one facing blacks today. Along with the ongoing crises that shout at us from our daily newspapers are the intangible forces that have destroyed the confidence and trust that we blacks once had in one another, the sense of obligation to be a credit to the group. These are all characteristics that once were possessed in abundance by a by-gone era of blacks who were proudly committed to what was commonly called the progress of the race. Such qualities were supported and nurtured by an outstanding group of people who did not run around calling themselves leaders, but through their actions and behavior proved to be indispensable teachers and guides. The spring edition of my newsletter, *Issues and Views*, celebrates some of these people, beginning with the giant of them all, Booker T. Washington.

We are here today asking whether it is possible to turn this mess around and restore standards and values that were once taken for granted. I think before a real movement for such a restoration is feasible, a great many people must not only become aware—and this is in terms of all of us—but must become indignantly aware of just how bad things are. For blacks specifically, this means not only facing up to what is going on in the larger society, but in addition, confronting the ugly truths as to just who and what is at the core of what keeps segments of our community paralyzed and unable to move forward.

Although I find it hard to be optimistic, I am gratified by the growing frequency of letters and phone calls I receive from blacks in all parts of the country, who in their first, excited stages of awakening have just learned about the newsletter and feel compelled to call and share their new enlightenment, or just touch base with someone they feel is a kindred soul. It is always interesting to hear of their particular journey from blind obedience to the teachings of the black establishment through the morass of intimidating propaganda until that light bulb goes off and they find themselves, often initially against their will, at the place where they can openly acknowledge not just the folly of social policies that have done great harm, but also the injury done to blacks by a self-interested black middle-class whose members figured out long ago how to seize the opportunity to use the troubles of the race to advance their careers and enrich themselves.

So, the question is, is there any chance of restoring the old values that once supported and sustained us during the worst of times? Is it conceivable that we might find our way back from the precipice?

I want to tell you about a man and a group of blacks who not only believe that it is possible, but are determined to play an active role in bringing it about. Their story is the lead feature of the latest edition of *Issues and Views*, the summer edition, which I hope is rolling off the press right now.

It all started when I received a note and a newspaper clipping from a Texas subscriber to *Issues and Views*. The article was about a black preacher in Mississippi who had guided his congregation as they weaned themselves off welfare and food stamps by establishing small businesses and becoming farmers.

I called the church office in Mississippi and then sent copies of the newsletter to the Reverend Luke Edwards. As it turned out, he was delighted with the message of the newsletter and photocopied a lot of the articles, which he began sending everywhere. He was delighted when I told him that I wanted to visit and learn about what he was doing.

When I got down there I found a very outspoken pastor determined to preach the message of economic independence and determined to show by example how blacks can get free and stay free of government benevolence.

It was in the late 1970s when he discovered that 95 percent of his congregation, which is about 200 members, lived on welfare, food stamps, and other forms of assistance. So he got them to agree as a group to use those resources in such a manner that they would never have to use them again. Together they incorporated REACH, Inc., which stands for Research, Education And Community Hope, and set out to do what he proposed.

Eleanor Walker, who manages the REACH office, explained to me what they did. She told me: "We went to the wholesale company and bought groceries and opened a little grocery at the church. Each week all the members bought their food there, and after a while we had a surplus of money. We decided to open a real grocery store, so we could also sell to the public. We put a down payment on a supermarket, and that is how REACH really got its beginning."

Within a year they had purchased a second supermarket and then turned a former liquor store that was next door to it into a chicken fast food restaurant. By now, all REACH members were off welfare and food stamps and were sharing in the responsibilities of running these enterprises.

Walker told me that it was at this point that they realized they could accomplish anything as long as they worked together and put the community first by re-investing their profits. She said, "These were great achievements for us. And after we saw what we had done, nothing was impossible—I mean *nothing*."

The members of REACH now own about 2,000 acres of farmland, spread out in places like Epps, Alabama, and Decatur, Mississippi, where they grow crops that are sold on the wholesale market, and which they also process for retail selling. From their farms they stock much of the produce in their stores and provide the meats and vegetables required by their restaurants. They own a spacious, comfortable restaurant that I ate in, called South Fork, in Utah, Alabama; two separate delis in Livingston and York, Alabama; a gas station in Livingston; and a meat processing plant in Meridian.

The pride and joy of the REACH community is their school, the Christ Temple Academy, which has nursery and Kindergarten through 12th grade. The school and its dormitories are located in Emelle, Alabama, where the fellowship is actually centered and where Reverend Edwards lives. This school is really the community's urgent mission, and they are constantly expanding it and building new dormitories.

Along with the children of REACH members, the community also cares for children referred by agencies or courts as problem cases or as abandoned children. They refuse to take any public funding for these children, and the community bears the entire cost for their upkeep.

The school curriculum is the Accelerated Christian Education curriculum. The instructors are all members of the community, and are trained at the campus of ACE in Lewisville, Texas. Outside teachers are also brought in to assist with special subjects, like mathematics. The school director told me, "We are committed, not only to giving our children the best education possible, but to educating them with a deep sense of religious belief and moral values."

Luke Edwards has some especially succinct reflections on those who have misled blacks away from what he believes are the values of our tradition and away from the earlier emphasis on economics. He is especially outraged that the black masses, once freed from their former servitude, now find themselves captives of another form of slavery, promoted mainly by other blacks. He says, "Welfare has made invalids out of us. After the Civil Rights Movement there was enough money given to all these counties in Alabama and Mississippi and throughout the South to release black people from poverty, if that money had been applied correctly. Instead, blacks used their own people to undermine such efforts, and they are still doing it today."

And he is severe when assessing the work of black politicians and described to me his futile attempts to have positive contacts with legislators in his region. He says, "What bothers me most about these politicians is that they use the grass roots black to get political clout for themselves. We were taken in by the black politician in the first place. They claimed that we needed black representation, and even though none of them had any track records, we voted them in. Now that they are in, they just continue to attack and don't even know what they are in office for. They are only there because they are black."

He is angry that none of these politicians have turned their efforts to eliminating particular government regulations that he feels are especially harmful and burdensome to small business owners, and which have affected a lot of the work that REACH has tried to do. He says, "In place of doing research and finding out what we really need, these politicians just keep playing the old attack game. They should be working to clear up some of those laws that hurt us, all of these regulations on our backs. They talk a good game, but they never do anything."

The local black gentry who make up the NAACP chapter, as you can surmise, are somewhat piqued by Luke Edwards's outspokenness. But it is not really his words so much that bothers them. It is more likely that they are threatened by the enormous success of the group's hard work. I saw with my own eyes that these people, indeed, work from before sun-up to sun-down, and it is paying off. So, who else would be their greatest antagonists?

Last year an Atlanta television crew spent days taping the community's activities and interviewing its members. When the program aired, the film was spliced so that questions originally asked to REACH members on their farms were now answered by local NAACP officials, who took the opportunity to disparage the organization as a commune of Moonies. The producer had obviously played the old friendly, schmoozing game—the "we are on your side"—to get the filming done, before zapping them with the cleverly edited tape.

Nuisance telephone calls are made regularly to local commissioners to alert them to supposed health or fire violations on REACH properties. Such harassment keeps inspectors busy making trips out to the farms, only to leave after finding nothing amiss and wondering why they were sent in the first place.

Edwards laughs at the charges of heading a commune and says, "This is nothing of the sort. If we're modeled after anything, it is the Israeli kibbutz. Like the kibbutz, we are a co-operative, and we are working together to achieve common goals. In fact, some Jewish reporters have been down here and they recognized it immediately."

By the way, there have been two favorable media portrayals of the organization. One was on CNN; it was a five-minute piece. The other was a 30-minute piece on Alabama Public Television.

Just like his spiritual mentor, Booker T. Washington, Edwards proclaims the liberating value of work. He says, "Our concept is that we invest our profits back, so we can help ourselves. We make short-term sacrifices for long-term benefits. We don't waste anything and we continue to build together."

He believes he understands the root of the opposition of local black leaders and says, "Groups like the NAACP have to fight, because if they don't, they are going to be shown up. By understanding black history, we know what to expect from such people, so we are not surprised. We don't like that it is this way; but they are not going to stop us." He might have added that the idea of the poor rejecting white benevolence is a fearful prospect for these notables whose careers are tied to their people's dependency status. Dissident blacks, and poor ones at that, could begin to give whites the impression that blacks are as capable as others of using the mechanisms of capitalism to uplift themselves. For the civil rights groups, it is imperative that such heretics be characterized as Uncle Toms or out-of-touch conservatives. What must be maintained at all cost is the fiction of black helplessness in the midst of rampant racism.

In my newsletter piece, Edwards demonstrates how he handles rejection by the local white farmer's association, which is an important middleman in the selling of cattle. Like innovative blacks of an earlier era, before we were taught as a matter of course to whine or throw tantrums or march on Washington or head for the courts when confronted with white rejection, Edwards wound up turning an insult into an advantage for the community.

My article also describes how they handled some dirty pool tactics of a fast food chain competitor by working to make their South Fork restaurant a popular eatery. Edwards said, "If you set out to do it right, everybody will come and buy from you. This is my idea of integration, not what the black leaders teach. And when you become a producer you are not only in demand, you are respected."

As far as he is concerned, the economic system is color blind. He says, "If we come together and pool our resources, just like the Indians and Arabs who are now coming to this country and buying up property and land all over the South, the system will work for us, as it works for them."

In referring to the white farmers who are his neighbors in the region, he says, "The playing field is level between us because we made it level. Nobody did it for us. If you don't let me into what you build, I am not going to argue with you; I will go build something of my own and operate it. These leaders are always preaching about being equal. Why limit yourself to equality when you can go as far as your talent will take you? I teach my people not to settle for just being equal."

I will just wrap up by saying that Edwards would like to see REACH become a model for similar communities of blacks. He sees no hope if blacks do not learn to trust one another again. He believes that since his fellowship of people have learned to do this, then there is plenty of hope. I hope he is right.

