

**“Fractures, Alliances, and Mobilizations:
Emerging Analyses of the Tea Party Movement”**

A Conference Sponsored by the
Center for the Comparative Study of Right-Wing Movements
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Conference Proceedings
Prepared by Rebecca Alexander

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Lawrence Rosenthal opens the conference by describing the history of the Center for the Comparative Study of Right Wing Movements (CCSRWM) and the impetus behind a conference to study the Tea Party movement. The CCSRWM opened its doors in March of 2009. When work on the center first began, Rosenthal says, many people scoffed at the idea because, with Obama moving in and Bush and the Republicans moving out, they thought concerns about right-wing movements were over. When the Center opened, a couple of months into the Obama presidency, however, nobody was scoffing anymore. The right was louder than ever, becoming the political phenomenon of the year, coalescing into something we struggle today to understand.

Rosenthal explains that The Tea Party movement is an extraordinary expression of an American Right that not only did not go away after Obama’s resounding electoral victory, but regrouped and moved further to the right, embracing ideas that American conservatives had rejected years ago and mobilizing a Perot-sized chunk of the electorate. Rosenthal says he is struck by similarities between 1993 and 2008, because in both cases the presidency of an elected Democrat was deemed illegitimate by much of the right. In the first case, right-wing objection to Bill Clinton resulted in impeachment; a phenomenon that Rosenthal suggests may repeat itself in the age of “Birthers” if Republicans win majorities in the House and Senate.

Rosenthal then introduces key questions related to the conference’s core themes: identity and social movements and the Tea Party movement, the Tea Party’s relationship to news media, and Tea Party subjectivity.

Despite the similarities between today and 1993, Rosenthal explains, there is something novel about the Tea Party and today’s context. With a nod to Toni Morrison, he points out that we no longer hear Clinton referred to as our “first black president.” Despite this, he continues, as Michelle Alexander has pointed out in relation to the prison system, color blindness now masks novel iterations of race. How, he asks, are these iterations at play in the Tea Party? Are racist depictions of Obama ephemera that distract us?

We also, Rosenthal says, face the problem of sorting out the Tea Party’s nature as a social movement or a political party. Is the Tea Party a social movement? Do our understandings of social movements help us make sense of this phenomenon? Is the Tea Party’s eventual destiny to

be rolled into the Republican Party? Or will it, in a revanchist fashion, move the Republican Party to the right?

In the past, Rosenthal reflects, we have known political parties that grew from churches, civil society, the labor movement, or private militias. The Tea Party is unique, however, as it has grown in collaboration with a television network. To point out the role of Fox News in the formation and development of the Tea Party, he reminds the audience, does not invalidate the views and passions of the movement's supporters, but points toward the mechanisms that crystallized those views into a national phenomenon. He then compares the Tea Party movement to Italy where Berlusconi took much of his news organization with him in forming his party and a new politics of videocracy. Some have made the argument that Fox News is an offspring of the Republican Party, but if so then now we are witnessing the opposite with the Tea Party, he argues, a case in which a news station gave rise to a party. He quotes David Frum's statement, "Republicans originally thought Fox worked for us, and now we are discovering that we work for Fox" as testament to this point.

Lastly, Rosenthal reflects on Tea Party subjectivity. How do they make sense of the world and themselves? Are they best understood as manifesting resistance to the other, the secular elite? Those who think they know better and want to tell the Tea Partiers or Americans, how to live? We might, he argues, think about the Tea Party movement through Rick Perlstein's trope "the orthogonians" from his book *Nixonland*, but they also represent something older, something that goes back to the civil war. They derive their energy from a sense of dispossession—that something that belonged to them, call it America, is being taken away. However much we may say this is imaginary or utterly sentimental, Rosenthal reminds us, the subjective experience of it, for those who feel it, is quite real.

Rosenthal then introduces the keynote speaker, Rick Perlstein. Perlstein, Rosenthal says, teaches us that if there was a yin of the sixties, represented by the civil rights movement etc., there was also a yang, laying the foundation for a backlash. Nixon's breathtaking discovery that much of America shared his opinions—that they were all "orthogonians"—is at the core of Perlstein's book *Nixonland*, which describes how Nixon would translate this insight into political strategy. Perlstein also authored *Before the Storm*, which won a Los Angeles Times Book Award for history, appeared in many newspapers, and achieved status and glowing reviews in both left and right publications. He has also covered campaigns as the chief national correspondent for the Village Voice. He received his BA from the University of Chicago in 1992, then spent two years in a PhD program in American Culture at the University of Michigan. His pieces have appeared in *In These Times*, *Slate*, *Newsday*, *Dissent*, *The Post*, *The Chronicle*, *The New York Observer*, *The Village Voice*, and *The New Republic* and he has lectured at many prominent universities. Rosenthal concludes by announcing that Perlstein's books are for sale and he will be signing books after his talk. His book is also now available on I-Tunes as an enhanced book/multimedia experience.

**Keynote Address:
Rick Perlstein “The Tea Parties Now”**

Perlstein begins by expressing his excitement at speaking at an event that passes the task of explicating the Tea Party movement from journalists to scholars. Journalists have not done a very good job, he complains, and are not incidental, or in his words, “orthogonal,” to how the Tea Party has evolved, but a main line of causality in that evolution. He jokes that he is nervous and that he is, after all, mortal, despite having an enhanced e-book. He says he is excited to be in a place where the defining gesture is not making an argument but generating questions and expresses his hope that his keynote serves as an introduction to an important set of questions.

Perlstein begins by introducing ideas he developed in his op-ed for the Washington Post, “Birthers, Health Care Hecklers, and the Rise Of Right Wing Rage,” published August 16, 2009. He explains that he wrote this article when health care town halls were happening and recounts that the piece was very widely read, with over 1,400 comments. “In the middle of the century,” he quotes himself, “before the ‘black helicopters’ of the 1990s, there were right wingers claiming access to secret documents proving that the entire concept of a ‘civil rights movement’ had been hatched in the Soviet Union. When the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act was introduced, one frequently read in the south that it would ‘enslave whites.’ Back before there were Bolsheviks to blame, paranoids didn’t lack for subversives—anti-Catholic conspiracy theorists even had their own powerful political party in the late 1840s and ‘50s.”

He continues, “the instigation is always the familiar litany: expansion of the commonweal to empower new communities, accommodation to internationalism, the heightened influence of cosmopolitans and the persecution complex of conservatives who can’t stand losing an argument.” Yet another example, Perlstein’s personal favorite, “the federal government expanded mental health services in the Kennedy era, and one bill provided for a new facility in Alaska. One of the most widely listened-to right-wing radio programs in the country, hosted by a former FBI agent, had millions of Americans believing it was being built to intern political dissidents, just like in the Soviet Union.” A critical difference between then and now, however, is that “back then, a more confident media unequivocally labeled the civic outrage represented by such discourse as “extremist”—out of bounds—whereas today they call it “conservative.” We didn’t, he says, hear Cronkite taking time to debunk these claims, nor were they treated as “conservative” claims to be weighted against “liberal” ones. They were simply out of bounds.

“The tree of crazy” he continues “is an ever-present aspect of America’s flora.” Only now, it’s being watered by misguided he-said-she-said reporting and taking over the forest. The latest word is that the enlightened and mild provision in the draft legislation to help elderly people who want living wills—the one hysterics turned into the “death panel” canard—is losing favor, according to the Wall Street Journal, because of ‘complaints over the provision.’ Good thing our leaders weren’t so cowardly in 1964, or we would never have passed a civil rights bill “because of complaints over the provisions in it that would enslave whites.”

On the right, Perlstein says, we see both continuity and change over time. Perlstein encourages the audience to read history widely if they want to understand the present right—to read about

Huey Long (*Huey Long, Father Coughlan, and the Great Depression*), to read Chip Berlet, to read Alan Brinkley's book *Voices of Protest* and, if reading his own works, to read his discussion of right-wing populism in *Before the Storm*. He also recommends David Oshinsky's *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy*. When he wrote *Before the Storm*, Perlstein explains, he thought it would be great if a graduate student did a project on the John Birch Society or on its founder, Robert Welch, but back then, he laughs, it sounded too froo froo and narrow. He expresses his wish that he had paid more attention to the early 1960s right-wing pamphlets archived at the Hoover institute; to Randy Schilts' book, *The Mayor of Castro Street*; to the "we want our country back" movement of Anita Bryant and the Briggs Amendment; and to the sense of white working class dispossession that informed Dan White. He recommends reading *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise*.

It is remarkable, he reflects, how far back you can go and find texts on the right. He finds it shocking how prevalent it is to hear people declaring the death knell of the Right. People do not understand, he argues, how deeply the right wing is embedded in the US DNA since at least the time of the Civil War. Since that time we have seen what some have called the southernization of America and Americanization of the south. At the turn of the century, he explains, Little Orphan Annie was a key vector, for anti-elite right-wing populism inspired a strong critique of "pointy headed bureaucrats who couldn't park bicycles straight." It defined a common road of laissez-faire as the road to prosperity and justice. Later, in 1941, McCormick, the publisher of the Chicago Tribune, wrote that FDR's government was a centralized despotic government undifferentiated from Hitler's. Hitler, Perlstein points out, has been common in right-wing grassroots expressions since WWII.

The record of right-wing populism continues, Perlstein says, with letters sent to Sen. Paul Douglas in 1966, while Martin Luther King was marching in Chicago and LBJ was pushing civil rights and housing rights. These letters stated the author's "firm belief that King should be taken into custody" as he, according to the author, was a "dark skinned Hitler." Now that we are in an era of the santaclausification of King, Perlstein says, it is hard to remember that he was a figure of terror to many people on the right, including Ronald Reagan who said that King had brought his assassination upon himself when he decided to choose for himself which laws to follow. Others suggested that King's ultimate aim was to make the USA the same as the USSR, where all property was collectivized.

These expressions of right-wing populism, Perlstein argues, have always accompanied the rise of liberals to power—the election of JFK brought the John Birch Society into view, for example. At that time there was a movement called the "National Indignation Convention" that was similar to the Tea Party now but if you look at the New York Times from then, he says, two things stand out: First, how sparse the coverage was compared to today, and second, the tropes within which activists express themselves. Activists then, like those in the Tea Party today, claimed that they were neither Democrat nor Republican and that this was the first time they had ever been in politics. This, he argues, illustrates an important component of right-wing reaction movements—they are anti-political and about purification.

With this point about anti-political purification in mind, Perlstein speculates that it will be interesting to see what happens when Tea Party members come across the realities of

government and disillusionment. This, he says, is why right-wing activism tends to come in waves and is easily exploited by a more permanent infrastructure. He compares the position of today's Tea Party to that of the National Indignation Convention. In the 1970s, he begins, Time Magazine called the National Indignation Convention the "ultras," noting that it is interesting to compare this coverage to the magazine's effusive treatment of Glenn Beck in a recent cover story. When Frank McGehee of the National Indignation Convention took to the stage at a 1972 rally, he said of the two conservatives he could not reach by phone, Senator John Tower and Congressman Bruce Alger, "They have signed their death notes." It was all quickly smoothed over, however, when they revealed an aide had simply dialed the wrong number.

Another example Perlstein provides is that of Max Rafferty, who was elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction against mainstream Tom Braden, calling progressive educators "unwashed leather jacketed slobs whose favorite sport is ravaging little girls and stomping polio victims to death." In 1966, Rafferty launched a crusade against the *Land of the Free* history textbook, saying the part about minorities would give people a "guilt complex." (Perlstein noted that this dispute occurred in Texas where we have seen textbook politics taking place since the early 1950s.) Rafferty, Perlstein notes, has called Berkeley a "four year course in sex, drugs and treason."

Perlstein then introduces three core concepts that he finds useful in thinking about the Tea Party movement: the chain of equivalencies, sluicing, and epistemological DNA that links grass-roots and grass-tops.

He describes how the chain of equivalencies—a set of linked concepts conservatives hold up as unbreakable—gives strength to conservatives. For example, Pelosi, Reid and Obama are linked into what Gingrich has called a secularist takeover. The secularity of liberal elites is then juxtaposed to tax grubbing, gun grabbing and defiance, which are yoked to "Americanness" as a certain self-evident set of qualities. Perlstein cites Gary Gerstle's concepts of civic nationalism and racial nationalism, in which one is a set of traits and the other a commitment to a set of ideas and procedures, as a useful means of understanding this. Evangelicals, he explains, call it a worldview and when you break one link of the chain, to mix metaphors, you open a Pandora's box in their view. Adlai Stevenson's reaction to being hit on the head after speaking in Dallas is common amongst liberals, Perlstein jokes, who seem to always be baffled by the Right's world view. When Stevenson asked "What's the matter?" the woman who hit him replied, "Well if you don't know I can't help you." The chain of equivalencies is a gestalt, Perlstein concludes.

Sluicing, Perlstein explains, describes how a concept such as communism or Islamofascism becomes the framework through which all grievances and anxieties are viewed. For example, when Dodgers Stadium was being built, the idea of eminent domain and urban renewal were subject to right-wing objections, which traced them to Soviet coup texts. The city manager form of government as it developed, he explains, was discussed in the same way.

Perlstein goes on to describe how we need a better account of what has occurred across time on the Right and how the Right has functioned with striking continuity over those years. He argues that we need a poetics, a genealogy, a symbology, an iconography, a rhetorical analysis and an epistemology of the Right. Jill Lepore, he mentions, has approached the project of epistemology

with her work, *The Whites of Their Eyes*, in which she describes lots of right-wing intellectual gymnastics with the Constitution.

An epistemology, Perlstein continues, could account for many different aspects of how knowledge production functions on the right. For example, the Sharia law scare, which proposes that the 2 percent of the population who are Muslim will become the new creators of our law, is one epistemological moment we should examine. The people who propagate this scare, he points out, use a real text—a paper from the Muslim Brotherhood. Similarly, the American Communist Party did say ‘here is a map of a Black nation that we can separate from the rest’ which became a foundational text for those who argued that the Civil Rights Movement was a communist conspiracy to take over the U.S.

There is a resonance here, Perlstein says, to the 1970s fear of secular humanism as a unified ideology that was part of a conspiracy to re-educate America. Those who believed this always cited *Torcaso v. Watkins*—a decision in which the court voted 9-0 that religious expressions that were not strictly theistic were owed First Amendment protection. A group who called their religion “humanism” was among those seeking protection. “Secular Humanism” was written into the final decision as a protected religion and thus reified because of Justice Hugo Black’s fanciful slip of the pen. Some on the Right now argue that secular humanism is a religion and is being taught in schools, thus defying the Constitution, and that this should stop being taught or other religions should also be taught.

Perlstein argues that we also need a Sociological Network Analysis of grass-roots and grass-tops interaction. Perlstein cites Thomas Evans’ book *The Education of Ronald Reagan*, which he reviewed for Columbia, as a good example of this. Evans thought to dig into the archives of the time when Reagan worked for General Electric and found a compelling story of his political formation, Perlstein explains. Lemuel Boulware, he continues, who hired Reagan, was a pioneer in the movement to turn business executives into self-conscious right-wing activists.

How, Perlstein asks reflexively, would this network analysis work? For example, he says, there is an increasingly sophisticated DC-based conservative movement, which is increasingly good at sluicing right-wing rage into concrete action. The movement to suspend the Jones Act, which stipulates that boats in U.S. waters must be made in America and worked by American crews, is an example of their work. Conservatives at the Heritage Foundation, he observes, were able turn Obama’s refusal to lift the act during the Gulf oil spill into a political movement.

This right-wing populism has served the American business community in ways unimaginable to a chamber of commerce in, say, 1926, says Perlstein. In 1974 for example, Kanawha County West Virginia engaged in a series of textbook wars (see documentary on NPR)—localized crusades against cosmopolitan interference. These became completely routine in the 1970s, Perlstein explains, and organizers from the Heritage Foundation dramatized and linked these local outrages. Peter Montgomery and People for the American Way have collected a lot of these texts (which are now part of the Center’s archive and housed at the Bancroft Library). The money raised by Richard Viguerie, the direct mail pioneer and advocate of “anti-big-business conservatism,” Perlstein says, has been channeled into the same agenda.

Perlstein then points toward other examples of network analysis from the Tea Party era. For example, one of the individuals arrested for tampering with the phones in Senator Mary Landrieu's office (because they claimed she was "systematically ignoring a deluge of calls") developed a conservative college magazine that received seed money from the Leadership Institute. Joseph Basel, Perlstein recounts, was a student at the University of Minnesota in Morris when he was approached to work on the school paper because they wanted a conservative columnist. Basel was then provided with seed money to start a conservative magazine, *The Counterweight*, by the Leadership Institute, a group led by Morton Blackwell who was the youngest Barry Goldwater delegate at the 1964 Republican convention. Soon, Perlstein explains, Basel was flying to Arizona to lead trainings in right-wing political theater. Basel then hooked up with Andrew Breitbart, the conservative web-master.

These folks, Perlstein argues, are experts at rejuvenating and rebranding and sluicing themselves against whatever grassroots rage they can exploit. Perlstein recalls how he was reading *Playboy* (for the articles) and found a K-street consultant writing about how he created the "Ensuring Liberty Corporation" and quietly got members SEIU T-shirts to wear at Tea Party rallies so as to get news coverage indicating that the SEIU was at the protests. Perlstein recounts that he spoke of this at a recent conference where he borrowed his speech title from one of the conservative presenters who said, "I didn't like Nixon until Watergate."

This type of rebranding was at work in California in 2003 says Perlstein. The elements that were driving the right wing crazy at that point were the car tax and the decision to allow undocumented immigrants to get drivers licenses. We need to come up with a better understanding of how this organic rage and sophisticated top down organizing worked together to generate a recall campaign against Governor Gray Davis, Perlstein says. He then reads the conclusion to an article he published about the recall titled "Orange County Anguish." In it, he describes visiting Phil Paule, the president of the Rescue California and Recall Gray Davis organization in his sparse office where Paule explained how all elections are like poker games. Paule, Perlstein recounts, told him how, in the 2003 case "we found an opponent with a weak hand and we just kept raising and raising the stakes." Another example, he says, is Sal Russo who uses his sparse talk radio station, basically, as precinct headquarters, but then maintains a sumptuous private office replete with wood panels and posters of Reagan.

Perlstein offers as another example of how the Tea Party constituency, which is essentially a slice of the Republican Party, re-brands itself. He cites Matt Taibbi in *Rolling Stone* who says he can "count on one hand the key elements" he expects to hear from every interview with a Tea Party member: "One, every single one of them was that exceptional Republican who *did* protest the spending in the Bush years, and not one of them is the hypocrite who only took to the streets when a black Democratic president launched an emergency stimulus program...two, each and every one of them is the only person in America who has ever read the Constitution."

We need, Perlstein argues, to understand the extent to which the Tea Party movement is or is not a populist movement. Michael Paul Rogin, who Perlstein says is better than anyone at grasping the subjectivity of the political unconscious, provides us with an analysis of McCarthyism that could be an example for this kind of work. He argues in his book, *The Intellectuals and McCarthy* that those who supported McCarthy are not the same as those who supported the

1890s populists. Perlstein says he's not sure how to check Rogin's regression analysis, but we will need good statisticians to do this work on the Tea Party as more data becomes available.

Perlstein begins his conclusions by stressing that out of all of this, he wants the audience to retain two points. These two points represent the most important discontinuities, changes and differences, besides the obvious political maturation, between past movements and the Tea Party movement today.

First, the role of the Media. Perlstein says he is not just talking about the rise of Fox News and the rise of the meretricious 24-hour news cycle. More important has been the evolution of journalistic judgment denuded by the anxiety media organizations developed about appearing liberal and not understanding the heartland, which is seen as pure and organic and thus uncontestable. This, he argues, is impossible to understand without going back to things Agnew and Nixon did in 1969 and 1970.

This media devolution marks an important shift in the context of American media and politics. Historically, Perlstein continues, American political and media practice was always accompanied by a bedrock understanding held by the WWII generation that right-wing extremism is different from other kinds of extremism. That understanding, he says, has been fundamentally lost. That generation, Perlstein says, understood that right-wing demagogues lead to chaos, violence and authoritarianism. Examples of this theme are rife in popular media pieces such as *Twelve Angry Men*, *Seven Days in May*, *A Face in the Crowd*, and *All the Kings Men*. These pieces expressed the broader sentiment, informed by fascism, that reactionary energies in the people were just waiting to come loose.

One example of this in politics, Perlstein explains, comes from the Lyndon B. Johnson tapes in which he considers whether to fish or cut bait in Vietnam. Johnson says he feels they would impeach a president who runs out on Vietnam. Particularly, Perlstein says, since the Democrats lost China in 1949, Johnson had the sense that the Right was waiting to rise up against a quisling. This was widely understood to be operative and true and especially true when the Left was most extreme, violent, and chaotic (for example, the Symbianese Liberation Army). Left-wing extremism was always considered "child's play" compared to what would happen if right-wing extremism were unleashed.

It was widely understood in politics, Perlstein says, that the most serious danger of the Left's extremism was right-wing extremism's possible reactionary response. Kissinger argued that we must leave Vietnam without defeat to avert a dangerous right-wing backlash. He said, Perlstein recounts, that the Right would become unmanageable and they would lose control of the country should this happen. He also quotes Kissinger worrying about Caesarism—that were politics to be decided in the streets it would not be the upper-middle class college kids who would carry the day but the "real tough guys" of the Right.

This understanding, Perlstein argues, also informed conservatives' response to race riots. They felt that they had to be oppressive or the real oppressive people would come around. He quotes Nixon worrying about a slip from mob rule into lynch law. Black power, said David Lawrence, was dangerous because it would provoke more race consciousness and cries for retaliation from

white power. Lorne Green, who supported Humphrey, likewise feared overreaction from the right in response to disruptions from the left. Once this fear of right-wing extremism is gone, Perlstein argues, you get a completely different media ecology in which the media can say there is a lot of “craziness” in politics and point to four examples from the left and four from the right.

Perlstein checks on his time and, hearing that he has only two minutes, announces that he will skip a section, which he summarizes as “the only thing that can defeat right wing populism is left wing populism.” He says that in this section he had planned to talk about the unilateral disarmament of the Democrats since Carter, with their attitude of ‘we will take care of you economically.’ Obama, he says, has become the apotheosis of this with his response to the mortgage frauds being to focus on the future and not punish what happened in the past. He then cites statistics from Mike Elk of the Campaign for America’s Future, who found that 74 percent of Tea Party supporters favor a national strategy that included a tax, labor and trade strategy to support manufacturing. They don’t, Perlstein says, hate taxes. He also says that 64 percent of supporters favor a tariff on goods from countries that can produce cheaper goods due to lack of climate change regulations. But this, Perlstein says, would take more than two minutes to explain.

Why, Perlstein asks, is America like this? Why is the American middle class so susceptible to rage, scapegoating, demagoguery and the idea that they are being dispossessed? This results, he says, from the psychoanalytic trauma that comes from being dependent on government when being dependent on government is shameful. It is the learned helplessness that comes from not being helped. Jefferson Cowie argues in his book *Staying Alive*, that country music is a form of quelling rebellion through patriotic nationalism. The song God Bless the USA goes “if tomorrow all the things were gone, I’d worked for all my life, and I had to start again, with just my children and my wife, I’d thank my lucky stars, to be living here today, ‘cause the flag still stands for freedom, and they can’t take that away.” The basic storyline, Perlstein recounts, is that in America you, the white male patriarch, can be dispossessed of your land at any time. The psychic wage of patriotism (which is similar to what DuBois calls the psychic wage of whiteness), means that you can stay “free” even after you’re fired without cause and so on, because there’s nothing that can hold you back from freedom.

There followed a question and answer period:

Question 1: What do you think accounts for Glenn Beck’s attempt to assume Martin Luther King Jr.’s mantle instead of critiquing King as previous generations of conservatives would have?

Answer 1: There is a deeper logic behind this, linked to the nature of reaction, which we need a better understanding of. I have become a lot more whiggish, believing the arc of the universe is long but bends toward justice. I see the history of modernity as the extension of soulful citizenship to ever more groups of people. The fact of the matter is that one way of defining conservatism is as a reaction to the latest extension of social citizenship at any given moment. A conservative isn’t someone who hates black people who marry blonde women (for example Clarence Thomas), or someone who doesn’t believe it’s okay to be in a committed lifetime partnership with someone of the same sex (look at Ann Coulter). The frontiers of justice are

always being pushed forward by liberals and progressives and can be reified in a way that was easily done by Glenn Beck. It's absurd, however, because Martin Luther King was for a guaranteed minimum wage and universal basic income. The disarmament of economic populism is so important. I don't know how the Democrats can become anything except a party of clerks invisibly improving the efficiency of FEMA unless they return to the unco-optable politics of what they are embarrassed to call redistribution.

Question 2: Can you comment on the connections between the border enforcement movement and racism on the border and the Tea Party movement?

Answer 2: As Californians know from Pete Wilson's tenure, it's a risky business to anger the largest growing voting bloc in America and that is a problem for conservatives. A more forward thinking Democratic Party would be thinking of ways to wedge this issue more effectively. That's why something like the Sharia law scare becomes important. There will always be candidates like [Sharron] Angle making arguments that immigration is dangerous, but this is tricky because Dick Armey is a cheap-labor, open-borders conservative. I think you should look for a lot more scapegoating of Arabs and a lot less of Mexicans over time to the extent they can manage it.

Question 3: Why is it that it's like the right wing has read [Saul] Alinsky and progressives haven't?

Answer 3: Saul Alinsky is very interesting. I live in Hyde Park and so I know lots of people involved with Alinsky. Alinsky was not interested in working in electoral politics and the fact that he's held up as the Svengali behind Obama shows that a different poetics is at work. There is a piece by Corey Robin in the Raritan that provides a particularly good explanation of this. Alinsky would be a horrible example for the Democrats to follow. The people who were really put out and offended by community organizers were corporations who had their prerogatives cut off at the knees. Most of Alinsky's tactics don't fit with electoral politics. For example, one of Alinsky's most famous actions was the shit-in where, in protest of the airlines not hiring African Americans, they waited until big planes came in at O'Hare airport and then monopolized the toilets. You couldn't imagine the Democratic Party doing this kind of thing.

Follow-up Question: But why don't Democrats do what Republicans are doing?

Follow-up Answer: This is a deep question but a lot of it is because a lot of people running the Democratic Party are not particularly interested in the working class. The tactics they used when they passed the New Deal are amazing. Jim Farley, who was the postmaster general, had a poster up in each post office with a picture of an extended hand that read "a weekly check to you for the rest of your life" to get people to sign up for social security. Why this doesn't happen anymore is a question I'm afraid we'll have to leave for another time.

Question 4: Can you address the historical view of the movement and whether they have any interest in Eisenhower and the creation of the interstate highways? Were there conspiracy theories about that? Can you also comment on Karl Rove and the 200 million dollars he just raised? Will this provide the means for the Tea Party to get out the vote?

Answer 4: With regard to the interstate stuff, one of the things with the far-right cold warriors was the sense that the enemy was within, and so maybe they saw the interstate as defending the homeland or maybe as something that government shouldn't be involved in. I'm not sure. On the question of Rove, he is one of those permanent operatives I talked about earlier. It is fascinating that he can be rehabilitated to show his face in public after the Bush administration. This demonstrates the success of the re-branding tactics.

Question 5: I attended a number of Tea Party rallies in my area and I'm wondering if you know of anyone who is really trying to bring people together. For example, there is a man named Joseph McCormick who started the Transpartisan Alliance, where people are trying to bring a coalition together across parties and other lines. What do you think of this?

Answer 5: By the logic of right-wing reactionism these people are liberals. It is the liberal faith in enlightenment that says we can bring people together through reason. In my view, we can't get where we need to go by just meeting everyone's concerns. Social democratic partisanship is what's needed. Those of us who are partisan Democrats know that there's a lot of work to do to beat the corporate consensus but we definitely can because the Nixonians did the opposite.

Question 6 (from Ruth Rosen): Women are significant in the New Right and the Tea Party; remember that no movement has only men in it and that women often do the menial work. There are lots of reasons why right-wing movements attract women, some of which I will address in my talk. But I think we should work, throughout this conference, to mainstream gender and remember that there are a lot of, maybe even more, women involved in the Tea Party than men.

Answer 6: It's no accident that the face of the anti-busing movement was Louise Day Hicks or that Phyllis Schlafly appeared in pearls and plunging décolletage on the cover of her book. I'll let you address more of the details in your talk, but here here!

Question 7: There wasn't a strong conservative reaction to FDR in the first four years after his election. To what extent is the Tea Party movement given power because of Obama's inability to really address the current economic recession?

Answer 7: Perlstein jokes, "You just gave Chip Berlet an aneurysm with the part about FDR," but all good politicians effectively characterize their opposition as extremist. FDR was very good at this. I mentioned Alan Brinkley's book *Voices of Protest*, but I'll plug it again here. This stigmatization is very different from how Obama talks about his opposition as "misguided people." Obama has engaged in a sort of unilateral disarmament in his timidity about stigmatizing other Americans. FDR was a much more convincing projector of middle class interests. William Kristol warned that health care reform would restore the Democrat's position as the defender for middle class interests and that's why they had to fight it. So, "yeah stigma!!"

Question 8: People tend to be anecdotal when they talk about the Tea Party, but you've recognized that there is something about the US DNA that produces this rage and raises the lynch mob mentality to the level of political field. Doesn't this suggest that there is nothing there, conceptually? On the other hand, there is this US DNA that goes all the way back and provides

conceptual fodder for this lynch-mob mentality, which is white supremacy. Shouldn't we be talking about white supremacy and looking at the Tea Party through that lens instead of looking at white supremacy through the Tea Party?

Answer 8: This will be talked about a lot later so I'll leave space for that, but Bourdieu talks about the left and right hands of the state—the left hand is coded as stuff that helps Black people. You can stay up at night asking why this happens here in America instead of England or Germany (I'm speaking in ideal types, because of course it does happen there). What makes America different? We have a lot of democracy, there's a lot of dispossession and voicelessness, but at least everyone in America thinks they have the right to be heard on the TV. This is the Jacksonian strain, which we can set apart from, say, the Administrative strain in French politics. It is the glory and tragedy of American democracy that everyone feels they have the right to be heard. I'll end on this note with a quote from Bill Clinton: "There's nothing wrong with America that what's right with America can't fix."

Panel 1: New Forms of Activism on the Right

Jack Citrin introduces the speakers for the first panel and reads their biographies. The speakers are Christopher Parker, Ruth Rosen, Clarence Lo, Debra Saunders, and David Weigel.

Citrin follows with a brief introduction to the theme of the panel. Essentially, he says, this panel will be addressing the question asked often about the bandit heroes of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid—who are those guys? Who are those guys and why do they keep following us?

Citrin shares some thoughts on Perlstein's talk. Looking to historical precursors in this way, he says, is not unfamiliar. He says he would like to have seen some challenges to Perlstein's listing of what he calls, 'the usual suspects.' Are the Tea Party the usual suspects? he asks. The John Birch Society didn't believe in fluoridation and the Tea Party doesn't believe in climate change, but is this a meaningful difference? A slightly more sophisticated version of this theory, he argues, is Hofstadter's analysis of the culturally dispossessed. The culturally dispossessed are said to understand the world as passing "us" by while "our" values and way of life are being eroded by liberals. Hofstadter, Citrin claims, understands this as yet another instance of the paranoid style of American politics. Citrin says, however, that he also wonders if the paranoid style of American politics isn't also in the people writing about the movement as well as the movement itself. Somehow, he says, he thinks that if Harry Reid is no longer the senator from Nevada, he will still be able to get in his car, drive to work and get \$40 out of the ATM that day.

The Tea Party, he goes on to say, has garnered intense coverage and academic and journalistic attention, but we may have missed a more straightforward look at these people and their sympathizers. Maybe they mean what they say, he posits, and the psychoanalytical tact is hyperbolic given what we know and don't know. He then cites a poll from the Wall Street Journal published two weeks ago which found that: 1) 30 percent of the people polled nationally say they approve of the tea party and 40 percent disapprove—indicating there are more negative than positive views of the Tea Party; and 2) More concretely, when people were asked which of the Tea Party positions people would support if their candidates were elected, the majority did

not support most of their proposals. There was, however, a 50-30 split, with strong support for the notion that the Tea Party's ideas of fiscal control should take hold; and 3) When they asked Tea Party sympathizers what makes you mad, what are you angry about? the first thing is politics as usual; they are primarily (50%) anti-establishment. Lower down on the poll 18 percent say that they don't like the way congress and the Democrats are running things and 12 percent say they don't like Obama.

The Tea Party, Citrin goes on, is beyond just being anti-Democrat but also rooted in a general sense that the country is not being run the way it should be. Other antagonisms are clearly also there, he says; and while Citrin says he doesn't dispute labeling the Tea Party as a right-wing movement, obviously it is, one important and overlooked aspect of it, he asserts, is that it taps into a more generalized mistrust and cynicism about elites, and not just political elites. This is often shared on the left and the right and can be combustible. Citrin then explains that he took the prerogative that Christine gave him since she was a PhD student of his to run off at the mouth. He then announces Christopher Parker.

Christopher Parker

Prof. Parker thanks Jack and the distinguished panelists and introduces his paper titled "Exploring the Causes and Consequences of Support for the Tea Party." He emphasizes that the stress is on *exploring*, saying he has a theory but it's "not ready for prime time." He then introduces the guiding questions his data speak to: What is the Tea Party movement about? Is it about small government (free markets not free loaders)? Racism? Taking us back in time? Xenophobia? Or is it simply about conservatives? Early on, he says, he talked to some reporters and they asked if the Tea Party wasn't simply more conservative. He says he will present data that addresses this question.

So what, Parker then asks, is the big deal about the Tea Party? They have contributed, he answers, to the successful nomination of several U.S. Senate and House candidates, they have substantial electorate support, and there is a strong possibility they will push the Republicans further to the right.

He explains that his paper is divided into two parts. The first addresses the nature of Tea Party support and the second, the consequences of that support. He explains that he will look at two general areas: first, questions of ideology, partisanship and small government/fiscal responsibility, and second, those of out-group antipathy. He will then explore competing theories for the consequences of that support, which possibly include intolerant positions, and the suppression of civil liberties or, alternately, if the Tea Party movement is simply about conservative ideology, with minimal consequences as other potential factors are cancelled out by their conservatism and support for the Republican Party.

He describes the data he and his partner, Matt Baretto, have collected as part of a multi-state survey on race and politics. He explains that they administered the survey between February and March 2010 and collected 1,006 responses with the following demographics: Black (312), white (505), Latino (99), Other (90). They surveyed residents of seven states—California, Georgia, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, Nevada, and Ohio. They selected these states because six

of them were battleground states; five of these states voted for a GOP presidential candidate in at least six of the last 10 cycles. They selected California, a consistently Democratic state, to balance their sample. We are not claiming, he explains, that these data are representative of the United States as a whole, but that they are representative of the states they are drawn from. They will include more states later, he says, but this is a pilot study. The cooperation rate he reports was 51 percent and the surveys were conducted via a long, 44 minute, phone interview.

He then reports their findings. First, support for the Tea Party by group (for those with opinions, about 44 percent had no opinion or had never heard of the Tea Party. Among those with an opinion, they divided their responses into: “True Skeptics” (those who strongly disagree with the Tea Party Platform), “Middle of the Road,” and “True Believers.” Their responses are broken down by race. Amongst whites 33 percent were true believers, 49 percent were middle of the road and 18 percent were true skeptics. He explains that he is just talking about whites through the balance of the analysis because only 6 percent of Blacks and 11 percent of Latinos approve of the Tea Party.

Next he addresses the age, economic status, education, party identification and ideology of Tea Party supporters (true believers) and non-supporters (skeptics). As suggested by The New York Times and other sources, supporters of the Tea Party were more likely to be over 55 (46%) than non-supporters.

Income and education, he reports, showed small variations between supporters and non-supporters. Those who made \$80,000 a year or more comprised 47 percent of those who supported the Tea Party and 49 percent of those who did not. This is not a large difference, he acknowledges, but there are slightly more high-income supporters than detractors. Supporters of the Tea Party were slightly more likely than skeptics to have a college education (28% v. 25%).

Political party, as expected, Parker says, played a much more substantial role in Tea Party support. Very few of Tea Party supporters (5%) were Democrats while 50 percent of detractors were. Independents split about evenly with 34 percent of non-supporters and 42 percent of supporters responding that they were independents. Lastly, Republicans had a large gap with only 16 percent of non-supporters claiming they were Republican as opposed to 53 percent of supporters. Political ideology, Parker continues, was an even stronger predictor of support. On a seven-point liberal/conservative scale only 6 percent of Tea Party supporters were Liberals while 78 percent were conservatives. This gap is predicted, he explains, but large nonetheless.

Parker then elaborates on their model for predicting support for the Tea Party. They are looking at economic anxiety, political party, ideology, partisanship and out-group anxiety and asking about the role of each of these in predicting support. He explains that out-group anxiety is understood here as an expression of dislike for another group.

Parker then shares statistically significant factors that emerged from their analysis. Blacks, he says, were 16 percent less likely than whites to support the Tea Party while women were 12 percent more likely than men to support it. Evangelicals (Parker explains that he has not yet made sense out of this finding) are 32 percent less likely than non-evangelicals, but people who attend church are 23 percent more likely to support the Tea Party than those who do not. Those

who are economically anxious are 12 percent more likely to offer their support than those who are not. Independents are 20 percent less likely than Republicans to support the Tea Party, while Democrats are 31 percent less likely. Conservatives, Parker continues, are 40 percent more likely to express support than liberals, and believers in small government are also 43 percent more likely to express support. He reiterates that these results stand after controlling for multiple factors within their model.

Next he moves to addressing the political consequences of the Tea Party movement and explains that he will just touch on a few—racism, immigration, and civil liberties. The first two of these, he explains, are somewhat related while the third is more removed.

He situates these potential consequences within three competing theories about why people support the Tea Party: ideology, conformity, and Eurocentrism. We already talked about conservatism, he reminds us. Conformity is essentially about the desire for order or authoritarianism. Lastly, building on the work of Donald Kinder ethnocentrism is essentially “us vs. them.” So what we did, he says, is basically say, “Okay, we’ll spot you ideology and partisanship, all right, but we’re also going to include these other things. We want to make this hard.” That’s our job as social scientists.

He begins with racism. When asked if Blacks should work their way up without any special favors or benefits, 92 percent of true believers answered yes as opposed to 65 percent of all whites and 49 percent of true skeptics. When asked if Blacks have gotten less than they deserve, 80 percent of true believers disagree as opposed to 64 percent of all whites and 45 percent of true skeptics. And, when presented with the statement “If Blacks would just try harder, they would be as well off as whites,” 72 percent of true believers agreed while only 48 percent of all whites and 32 percent of true skeptics do. Lastly, when presented with the statement “generations of slavery and discrimination have made it difficult for Blacks to work their way up, only 32 percent of true believers agreed as opposed to 72 percent of true skeptics and 40 percent of all whites. Even when controlling for everything else, Parker surmises, the Tea Party is right there in predicting anti-black attitudes. Parker then explains that ethnocentrism shows a strong correlation with Tea Party membership even when other factors, such as ideology and authoritarianism are controlled.

Next, Parker presents data on immigration. He explains that they asked respondents “Do you think immigrants take away jobs from those who are already here?” Again, in this measure, he indicates, Tea Party support is right there as a predictor. Eighty four percent of true believers respond yes to this question as opposed to 73 percent of all whites.

As one of many measures of authoritarianism, Parker explains, they asked people to respond to the statement “Government should be allowed to detain people without trial.” Forty percent of true believers, he reports, said they agreed with this statement as opposed to only 25 percent of all whites. That’s low, he says, but it’s still much higher than when authoritarianism is put into their model. Ethnocentrism flatlines but everything else retains a strong correlation and Tea Party support is right there.

Parker then moves on to his conclusions. It appears, he recounts, that small government ideology, partisanship and economic anxiety drive support for the Tea Party movement. Yet

accounting for conservatism, among other things, support for the Tea Party promotes racism, xenophobia, and big government; it is about law and order. These findings hold across a range of issues including gay rights and women's rights. There are, he warns, a few caveats. Surveys were only conducted in seven states with nothing on the East Coast. Still, he assures, they achieved a good variation of Tea Party support and adding in the East Coast would only increase this variation.

Parker suggests Tea Partiers are also driven by anger, fear and anxiety—emotions that are triggered by rapid social change. They perceive these changes, he says, as threats to their way of life and to how they see America and their place in it. This is also captured in the qualitative data. Moving forward, Parker indicates that he plans to collect more data from more states and to deploy a panel design. This project, he explains, is part of a longer-term study of right wing politics.

Ruth Rosen

Rosen opens by recounting how she was asked by a dumbfounded British reporter to explain why it appears women are so drawn to this social movement. This presentation, she explains, draws upon historical and journalistic evidence to try to answer that question. In her investigation she found many answers that make sense. She began, she says, by reading the secondary literature of books written about women in right-wing movements—there are at least a dozen that are really important. She also undercovered that young women journalists go Tea Party events pretending that they are a part of it in order to ask people what drew them to it. Lastly, she searched women's Tea Party websites.

Rosen then presents competing hypotheses as to why women are drawn to the Tea Party movement. Are they attracted to the conservative Christian feminism publicized by Sarah Palin? Or are they grassroots female supporters that view the Tea Party as legitimate because they are frightened by economic insecurity, moral ambiguity and the disappearance of national white culture?

Many liberals and leftists, she explains, dismissed the Tea Party early on as a sort of knee jerk response to a variety of economic conditions and Obama's policies; but what was it, she asks, that drew people to it? Rosen explains that the polls are very contradictory and thus she has decided that members come from across the class spectrum. Race is clearly important, she says, as you don't see many dark skinned people at Tea Party rallies. Women and men, she goes on, appear to be drawn to the movement for overlapping but somewhat distinct reasons. In general, she says, Tea Party members appear to have an incoherent ideology—they want lower taxes and seek to restore America (“take America back”) to a whiter and safer time.

Many men, Rosen says, are drawn to the Tea Party from a wide range of fringe groups—militia, white supremacy, pro-gun, futurist, and oath keepers—some of which advocate violence and vow to overthrow the government. They have used Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to spread hatred. She cites Hannah Rosen's article in Slate, which reports that women comprise about 50 percent of Tea Party members and six of eight national Tea Party Patriot board members. According to the article, fifteen out of 25 state coordinators are also women. These

women are not all licking stamps and envelopes, Rosen reminds the audience; many of them are central to the leadership.

Why, asks Rosen, is this movement appealing to so many women? Some women come to the movement because they are in love with men who ascribe to the things I just listed, explains Rosen. She cites professor Kathleen Blee, who has suggested that there are probably more Religious Right women in the movement because they tend to be in the churches more. Women, she says, have also been very important to the Christian identity movement, which has very fundamentalist views on abortion and homosexuality.

Rosen notes that women also appear to be coming to the movement through new and surprising venues including PTAs and what's called kitchen klatch, organizing that happens in small groups around kitchen tables. Smart Girl Politics—a website that started as a mommy blog and has turned into an organizing campaign—is another site of organizing and integration, she explains. This group, Rosen continues, is still operated like a feminist co-op where three stay at home moms rotate taking care of the babies.

Some women in the party, Rosen says, also have political aspiration and ambition and some would have been denied chances to run by a mainstream party but can do a “great end run” around the Republicans and join the Tea Party and be part of local militia. For example, Concerned Women for America—which is deeply religious and against the modern women's movement—supports women who seek leadership positions within the Tea Party. Rosen points to the Women's Independent Forum, which supports free markets, limited government, women's equality and advances women for political office, as another example.

Some of these women, Rosen explains, are part of what has been called, “new religious conservative feminism.” A Newsweek story recently anointed Palin as the providence of the movement. They like the fact, Rosen says, that she has five kids and that her husband takes care of them. They like that she's for traditional values, limited government, free markets, women's equality, and their ability to run for office. Many of these women, Rosen continues, have been mobilized by Palin. They like that she wears make up and looks like a beautiful queen. They like how she talks about Title IX and how great it is, she says, and quotes Palin describing herself in a Ms. article as a product of Title IX.

Palin, Rosen argues, is creating a redefinition of feminism. She is a member of Feminists For Life who claim to support the “right to refuse to choose”—which implies that even if you are 13 years old and raped by incest you should have the “right” not to choose to have an abortion. Rosen recounts that when she asked Serrin Foster, the leader of this organization, after her talk in Danville what should happen with unwanted babies, she said society should take care of them. Those on the right, Rosen says, claim this is the “new feminism,” while those on left claim Palin is diluting feminism.

Rosen says she sees an interesting irony in the new feminism. Since 1980 when a big backlash against feminism took place, many young secular women avoided being associated with feminism because they didn't want to have an image of themselves as hairy, man-hating lesbians who want to kill babies. I didn't blame them, Rosen jokes. Palin's success and her assertion that

she is a feminist, Rosen continues, is forcing a debate about what feminism means. On Christian women's websites, Rosen says, she sees an echo of the late 19th century women's temperance movement, which sought to protect women from worldly dangers. Women were encouraged to move out of their homes and into the public sphere to protect their families.

We dismiss the Tea Party, warns Rosen, at our own peril—they are hardly a lonely minority. At Tea Party rallies you see signs that say “take America back” but what does that mean? It is a statement, she answers, that panders to fear and resentment—America has seen many changes but one is obviously its changing racial complexion. The Tea Party is not only a grassroots movement, she reminds us—behind the women at the kitchen table there is money and plenty of it. Rosen points to an article in yesterday's New Yorker by Sean Wilentz about oil companies backing the Tea Party.

Michael Tomsky, she says, also wrote a piece in the New York Review of Books about funding for the Tea Party. Christian women have moved mountains in the past, Rosen reminds us. They were central to the abolition of slavery and the prohibition of liquor. They may affect our American political culture in unpredictable ways now. Will they develop more confidence and stray from the Republicans? Will they become a historical footnote as they disappear into churches and houses? Rosen says it is hard to tell for now, but she will be watching.

Clarence Lo

Lo begins by explaining that the major question he sees, and what's interesting to him about the Tea Party, is that, yet again in American history, we see a program of economic conservatism that primarily benefits the wealthy, supported by a relatively broad section of the population. How, he asks, is broad-spectrum support generated for an economic program that will redistribute wealth upward? The Tea Party movement, he continues, appears to want to give this movement an extra kick. This is a question of class, which he says he will throw in along with that of gender and race, which have already been addressed. We need to put all these on the table, he says, and deal with the interconnections between them.

Lo explains that he is looking at the Tea party through two theoretical lenses: social conservatism and social movement theory. The idea of social conservatism—represented prominently by white citizen's councils and opposition to civil rights, has often been fused with economic conservatism. This is sometimes called “fusionism,” and involves linking social conservatism's base of support (represented by Falwell, etc.) with supply side economics (represented by Reagan). Social conservatism is one part of the explanation for how we get this support.

Social movement theory, he continues, describes two different explanatory pathways—social movement organizations (SMO's) and conservative counter-movements. Social movement organization theorists such as McCarthy and Zald, he explains, have described these right wing organizations as “public relations organizations” which use the latest advertising techniques—such as direct mail in the 1970s—and essentially function as economic organizations selling memberships and soliciting donations. For them, doing anything about the underlying content is just epiphenomenal, Lo explains. Conservative counter-movements theories, in contrast, explain

how movements that oppose social change are supported by elite interests—like the Koch brothers—and feed into social conservatism writ large.

Lo presents two competing hypotheses about the ways in which the Tea Party fits into this architecture. The first suggests that the Tea Party is Astroturf—an artificial grassroots movement directly controlled, funded, etc. by elite, national groups from the beginning. The second suggests that the Tea Party is a genuine social movement that is broadly based and reflects people’s genuine concerns and is largely composed of newcomers to politics.

Lo explains that he approached this project as a social science researcher, not by looking at likely voters but at a small group of people who are doing the organizing of the movement. It is important, he says, to think about the development of the Tea Party as an historical process—even if it happens on a very short timeline. It begins with protests around February 2008 and then continues with Rick Santelli’s rant, followed by protests on tax day 2009.

Lo then describes the Astroturf and grassroots hypotheses. The Astroturf hypothesis predicts that organizers were active years before the movement became public, that protest leaders easily steered this activism into large-scale organizations, and that the elite were in the lead of the movement. In contrast, the grassroots hypothesis predicts that organizers will be from all income levels, resources will not be derived from high-powered sources, the movement will be constituted out of an indigenous community response and will use commonly available tools such as the internet. Lo says you have to look empirically at the movement at different points in time to see which dynamic predominates and measure the time at which one part morphs into another.

Lo explains that Keli Carender—organizer of the “porkulus protests” in Seattle—is his first case study. Ms. Carender is a teacher who does comedy improv theater based on right-wing ideas. She is originally from El Paso and likes David Horowitz’s book. Lo shows her website as a means of illuminating her worldview before the protest against pork. He then shows photos demonstrating her evolution as an activist. At the pork protest, Lo shows a picture of her eating pork and explains that the pork to feed the activists was donated by conservative blogger Michelle Malkin. He then shows a picture, which he describes as “incredible,” of Carender holding up a \$20 bill to a congressman during the health care debates. Lo explains that she stood up in the middle of a Seattle health care town hall and said to the congressman, “If you think you can take this \$20 and give it to whoever’s needy, you come here and you take it!” She is a dramatist, he says, who captured the drama of the elite coming down and taking people’s money. This incident, he explains, earned her some fame. Lastly, Lo shows a picture of the Smart Girl Politics web-site explaining that this is an umbrella site, linked to from Carender’s page and others, that connects people who are interested in Carender’s bio to a wider network of activists.

The major variable Lo says he is interested in making sense of in this case is: what kind of resources were mobilized and at what stage of its development? Carender was a young Republican for maybe a year before the protest, he explains. Talk radio helped publicize the protest as did Michelle Malkin, the blogger. But Carender also has her own blog—the Liberty Belle blog—which she developed on her own, and the first Seattle protest was organized through her own personal e-mail. It isn’t until later on in the movement, Lo asserts, that we get large

organizations, like the Tea Party Express, etc. This happens later but fairly rapidly. In the initial stages the organizing largely seems, he says, to take place through basic, homegrown computer-based activism, like Facebook meet-ups. There is a wonderful historical record, he says, of these early connections and if you're interested you should download it now because it will get erased. Bigger websites, like Smart Girl Politics, he continues, are backed by people like the Koch brothers, but again, that comes later.

The findings presented here, Lo reiterates, are a rough estimate, but there is a lot of local activity, and it is prominent in seven of the cases. It appears, Lo says, that the national leadership really does reach down and give local movements a tap on shoulder and support sometimes, but there has to be something out there before it can be co-opted.

Looking at social movement processes, Lo points out, is very different than studying public opinion. The ideas that voters pick up on are not necessarily those that motivate the activists. Empowerment is a huge motivation for the activists (in a very in-egalitarian political system) but the movement makes decisions about platform and about routes to power that then turn it back to this upward redistribution of power. With the top down political organization, it is a set-up for them to be organized with Koch and other powerful elites. Citing Lenin, Lo concludes that you have to talk about the forms of organizations and the relationship between the organizations and their programs because the form of a movement is always closely related to its goals. Social movement scholars, he says, need to explain why the movement is how it is.

Debra Saunders

Saunders begins by asking the audience: "How many people here are Tea Party members or supporters? How many have friends who are?" One or maybe two people raised their hands. Saunders goes on to say that she is not particularly enraptured with the Tea Party movement but she also feels they are talked about in a condescending way. She explains that she has a foot in both worlds, being a conservative columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle, and is similarly in two worlds as a reporter here in this academic setting.

Saunders then gives her short answers to the framing questions about the Tea Party that were provided to the panelist. Are they a new social movement? she asks. Maybe they are or maybe they're not, she answers. Are they a new political party? She asks. No, she answers herself. Are they a media construction? Definitely, she concludes. Every year in the media, Saunders says, we come up with a new paradigm that we talk about. She qualifies her own remarks, however, explaining that only eight of her columns in the past two years were about the Tea Party and she does not consider herself an expert on them.

Saunders then explains that she is often frustrated by the Tea Party. She recounts her experience being in a town hall meeting where a woman explained she had never voted before but that recent events had awakened a sleeping giant. Saunders explains that her attitude was: "Well why should I listen to you if you've never voted? You've just come along and now want everyone to listen to your points of view."

California is also not a Tea Party state, Saunders explains, elaborating on why she has not written much about the Tea Party. The Public Policy Institute of California, she says, just did a poll that showed that 60 percent of likely California voters have an unfavorable evaluation of the GOP, whereas 44 percent view the Tea Party unfavorably, and 43 percent view the Democrats unfavorably.

Karl Rove, Saunders points out, has said that the Tea Party supporters are unsophisticated. In many ways, Saunders says, she agrees. Broadly generalizing about the people she has dealt with within the movement, Saunders says she feels like they have some serious limitations. She feels like a lot don't read the newspapers ("that puts them on my list," she jokes) and are proud that they don't. They don't vote strategically. They don't respect the math. They seem to think they can be in a minority and not cut deals, she complains.

They, Saunders says, sometimes look at purity as something that you can expect out of politics when politics is the opposite of purity. California representative Tom McClintock, who Saunders says she adores and has known for years, votes against everything with spending in it, but "you can't just send him to Washington," she says, "you have to cut deals." There are, she asserts, Republicans who do this. The late Steve Richmond assembled a group of leaders who would meet in secret because Democrats and Republicans were getting together. Tom Coburn, who worked with Obama on a bill on transparency, she says, is another example of someone who has actually been able to work across the aisle.

Saunders goes on to explain that there are also things she likes and relates to about the Tea Party. She likes their attention to the core values of Republicans that she says have been betrayed for years. Candidates talk about less government spending, she says, but then they go to Washington and vote for pork. People want to cut government, she continues, and it's not because they're stupid, but because voters reject higher taxes—they voted 2 to 1 to revoke a sales tax increase last year—and California has a 19 billion dollar budget shortfall this year.

We wanted, she says, to have European government and American taxes but it's not working. In California, we currently have 12.4 percent unemployment. Under Obama we have \$3.7 trillion in deficit spending. Bush also overspent, she acknowledges, saying many Republicans were furious when Bush signed the Farm Bill. The Tea Partiers are, she argues, making changes within the Republican Party. There is a new House pledge to have no earmarks and to keep spending at 2008 levels. That, she says, is a good beginning.

The Tea Party also, she argues, brings a certain kind of energy that is a good thing. There is, she says, a tension between credentialed and uncredentialed people in the whole debate. When she started, Saunders explains, she worked for the LA Daily News and the Chronicle before being syndicated in 1995. "When I was a kid," she recalls, "there weren't a lot of nationally syndicated columnists." Even so, she says, "I don't know [Supreme Court Justice Sonia] Sotomayor. I don't sit down to dinner with senators." Now, however, she explains, her syndicate has 29 conservative columnists and Chuck Norris and Rush Limbaugh's brother are two of them, while it has 60 liberal columnists. So, she says, there are more people doing this work, for less money, and without the credentials. She explains that when she hears people talking about status anxiety and out-group antipathy, she sometimes thinks that the people in her world—the credentialed

world—have it out for the Tea Party people because their monopoly on the business is being broken.

In San Francisco, she continues, Public Defender Jeff Adachi, who is very liberal, supported Measure D, which required service workers to cover 9 percent of their own pensions because, he said, they can't give the services the Left wants if they continue to pay these salaries and pensions to the state and city employees. I think, Saunders says, that this is an area where the Left and the Right can come together.

Saunders then recalls her recent lunch with a Tea Party member. She says she asked him what he wanted his candidates to do when they got elected. Because, she says, I wouldn't just want to go in there and say no, no, no. I would also want to create things. She says she asked what he would want them to do and how much it would be okay to compromise in order to make those things happen. "He just stared blankly at me," she concludes.

Saunders then talks about David Harmer, a Tea Party candidate in the 11th congressional district—a Republican. She explains that he is campaigning on the idea that he will vote no on anything that increases spending. In contrast, she says, Congressman Jeff Flake has a good model because he knows what he wants to challenge and he picked earmarks as a gateway drug to go after. Hopefully, she argues, they can succeed in achieving some fiscal responsibility before we turn into the U.K. or France.

David Weigel

Weigel explains that other speakers will cover the actors within the party, so he wants to focus on the things he knows as a reporter who has been covering conservative politics since Ron Paul started running for president and nobody took him seriously. He wants to talk about who the organizations are and what they actually do, because that's rarely talked about. He also wants to talk about media failure and the role media failure had in the creation of the Tea Party. He explains he will talk about media failure from above and also the failure of people to get accurate information because the media is so atomized now.

The first thing Weigel acknowledges is that while it's boring to say this is both an Astroturf and a grassroots movement, it is true. Since the 1970s, he says, conservatives, who felt trapped by their perception that the Left controlled major institutions, such as the media and universities, sought to create an infrastructure to counter that. A lot of the institutions they created existed throughout much of the 1980s and 1990s without doing much. Citizens Against Waste was the organization founded by the Koch brothers and in 2004 they split into FreedomWorks, run by Dick Arney, and Americans for Prosperity, run by a number of people, but David Koch is one of the billionaires who is behind that. These organizations, Weigel says, including the Heartland Institute and CATO existed in D.C. and nationally. While they were funded and had a lot of impact on policy, he explains, they didn't really have any grassroots support. They basically built a stadium that was empty. Then, he says, in January and February of 2009, people filled the stadium and they did so, in part, because Fox News was telling them to.

That last point is really important, he says. We can talk about this as a movement but, warns Weigel, it was not *sui generis* and it did not start overnight. There was, he says, anger over the economy, but these organizations were there to direct it. FreedomWorks is a good example, he says. It has no Koch funding, and it was started because of a feud between Dick Arme and the Koch family. I've been covering them since 2007, he remembers, and they didn't do much. We refer to Rick Santelli's rant on CNBC but no one seems to remember, he points out, that he was ranting not about the bailout or the stimulus, but about a 75 billion dollar plan to help people whose mortgages went underwater. FreedomWorks capitalized on this by creating a website called angryrenter.com. They funneled the anger that people were feeling toward something conservatives were angered about already. They captured people who had anger and didn't know what to do with it. Part of what Perlstein tries to capture in his book, Weigel says, is that there is a voter who voted for LBJ because it was the only thing that made sense and then 8 years later voted for Nixon because that was the only thing that made sense. There is a voter who switches back and forth and in 2008, the Right had the infrastructure to capture them right away.

Weigel then moves on to a discussion of the groups themselves. If you go to Tea Party events, he says, Americans for Prosperity is always there. They run bus tours, they ran against cap and trade, they ran against health care, they brand well and they will fund an event to the extent that their name is on everything from the nametag lanyards to the placards on the seats. They are also active in the election, with their PAC putting two to three hundred thousand dollars per race into different races. This, he says, is the Koch foundation money. FreedomWorks, he contrasts, operates with less money. Their PAC is basically a structure for getting the people who have been active focused on which candidates to support. But, he says, that's important. If this were randomized anger, he explains, people wouldn't know whom to support. Brendan Steinhauser, State Coordinator of FreedomWorks, tells people which districts are tossups and where to focus their work. Without that, Weigel says, there would be more fumbles such as those of the Tea Party Express.

The Tea Party Express, Weigel continues, is based in Sacramento and capitalized on the Tea Party, but their activity is kind of random. They're not as good at choosing races. They supported candidates in Alaska and Delaware who might end up being the only candidates who will mess things up for Republicans there. There's less strategy there, Weigel says, but again, they're focusing the Tea Party members. Tea Party Patriots, lastly, were always the most grassroots of these groups. They have mostly female leadership. One of their leaders, he reports, Jenny Beth Martin, was one of Time Magazine's top 100. Tea Party Patriots, he says, was just a hub linking people who were angry to events. But last month they announced that someone had given them a million dollars in grants to hand out to other Tea Party groups so they could work on the elections. They, he explains, have been able to get a lot done without a lot of money.

Part of why small amounts of money can get things done, Weigel argues, is because of the ways the media has changed. Social networks are important, he says, because people are online more than they used to be—especially the older people who make up the bulk of the Tea Party movement. He cites figures from PEW who reported that in 2003, 57 percent of Americans were on dialup and now 91 percent of people living in households that make over \$75,000 have broadband—that, he says, is the bulk of who is doing the work in the Tea Party. If you go to a rally, he recounts, they all have smart phones and are well connected.

There was, Weigel explains, a lot of conservative activism in the Tea Party and a lot of conservative media and that's where people went for their information. He says he thinks what you end up seeing with the Tea Party is a set of competing realities. In the Tea Party world, he explains, you had a closed-loop silo of information about why things are the way they are. The stimulus was a failure in their world, because Obama promised he would keep employment under 8 percent. That's not, he corrects, what Obama intended, but the administration did make a mistake and say that. The stimulus, Weigel says, was really about bailing out states and keeping them from having to fire people as much as they could. There was also a tax cut that went out and was fairly effective. It's just, he says, that things kept collapsing. But in this closed loop, he argues, it seems obvious that the stimulus was a failure and that big government was the reason the economy collapsed.

Weigel explains that he is going over this in a stream of consciousness way because that is how it comes out for people, like birdshot. A lot of it, he says, is just inchoate anger, the same anger that helped elect Obama. Weigel says he doesn't buy the argument that many Tea Party members participated in politics before or that many are Democrats. Many, he says, expected immediate change and didn't get it and they haven't quite figured out how government works, but they're for whatever side is loudest. Conservatives, he argues, were able to move all these people around because they have invested heavily in giving them the information that is favorable to conservatives.

This is possible, Weigel says, because trust in the media, in general, is low. Conservatives are pretty blunt about this, he recounts. When trust in the media goes down, they succeed. When people believe that government can't work effectively, they succeed. Those are two things that have been low since Watergate but that are especially heavy to carry, he argues, when you enter a recession and there is a feedback loop telling people that they can't trust in their government. A lot of Palin's general appeal to conservatives, Weigel says, is the fact that the media covers her as a flawed candidate who quit the governorship for no good reason and who has a messy family life. That is not interpreted by this information loop as reality, but as a liberal media working to discredit her. How do you crack that? He asks. I don't know, he answers. I don't think liberals know. It's especially hard, he goes on, because the media outlets that people used to trust (big networks, non-Fox cable news, newspapers) are dying. They're being replaced with some good media, he says, hopefully, and a lot of newspapers exist online, but there's not the level of trust that there used to be that the information coming from these people is accurate.

The media responds to this, Weigel complains, by getting worse in the way it covers things like the Tea Party. He explains that he thinks of the news coverage in a given day as a jar that you can fill with water and at some point it gets full—there are only so many hours of media people will consume in a day. It matters, he says, if people are consuming news about people yelling at protests versus explanatory journalism. We have had examples of policies that have passed and basically done what they're supposed to do, he says, (i.e. the GM bailout or TARP) but there's less coverage of whether or not those worked than of why people are angry with them. When I talk to people at Tea Parties, he recalls, the information they've captured is all the negative opinion information and you see this shift very quickly. For example, when Glenn Beck started attacking Van Jones, everybody knew who Van Jones was all of a sudden. Or, when Fox started

attacking the new Black Panther Party, the stories about them became very well known. People in this movement are already inclined to believe government is fairer to Black than White people and for them, these stories are proof. They've seen lots of people in the media talk about them—if they turn on CNN they see people talking about how everyone's talking about them. People, he argues, are going to seek out sensationalism.

I don't have an answer, Weigel says, but I've noticed that if you're covering anger and can identify that they're wrong about something, theoretically you should be able to cover that they're wrong. For 18 months the Tea Party was basically covered as a phenomenon and the questions asked of them were things like "Why are you so angry?" "What do you think about Barack Obama?" And so on, but as we've gotten close to the elections, Tea Party activists and the candidates they support get asked things like "What do you want to cut?" and those are hard questions. If you watch candidates like Sharron Angle and others, they're saying that they want to keep Social Security and they oppose the Democrats because the Democrats cut 500 billion dollars from Medicare. There is, he says, nothing small-government about those positions and some of their candidates will get into office because they pledged to restore funding to Medicare! What makes this tricky, he says, is that there's not a lot of analysis of whether this makes sense or whether what's happening in government makes sense. There was, for example, a lot of reporting about whether people were misreporting where they spent stimulus money, he complains, instead of the fact that they were actually spending stimulus money somewhere.

Instead of paying attention to people who are working—in coalmines and electrical facilities—or people out of work, Weigel says, the media is focused on the Tea Party. The biggest victory of the Tea Party movement so far, he continues, has been to get people to focus on them instead of on the people who are actually suffering in this economy. That's my argument, he concludes. It's more of an argument, he says, than he expected to make.

There followed a question and answer period:

Question 1 (from Lisa Disch): Sometimes I feel like I'm in opposite-land and I'm wondering how things get so turned around. Reagan and Bush increased the deficit the most of any presidents in recent history. If you're worried about deficits why wouldn't you vote Democrat? It was Clinton who cut welfare. I feel like this anger is getting misdirected and one title that I wish everyone would read is William Greider, *The Education of David Stockman*, it's a brilliant piece.

Answer 1: Weigel answers that the only thing he would add is that another reason for the quick rise of the Republicans has been they've wedged themselves against the idea of giving taxpayer money to banks to make sure the banks don't collapse. This was George Bush's policy and John McCain's, Glenn Beck's and Sarah Palin's. They've managed to pretend that one, it didn't work and two, it was a socialist plot. It matters when the conservative party is against Wall Street. That says something about Americans—that they're more populist than we give them credit for and that it's whoever can capture the populism and for now the conservatives have.

Question 2: Following up on Perlstein's idea that people have a learned helplessness from not being helped, I want to better understand why they don't ask for help. I feel like this woman with her \$20 bill really represents that. I also want to ask about the white supremacy of the Tea

Party minions. They don't seem to mind taxes, which they think of as their taxes, being spent on white people but they don't want their money being spent on people of color, except to imprison them. I assert they would rather go without because white supremacy means only white people should benefit, period. This has nothing to do with whether or not they abuse them. This is what I want to ask about, if that woman with her money in the air feels like her taxes are not supposed to be spent on non-white people?

Jack Citrin points towards Chris Parker for an answer at which point the questioner follows-up by asking whether Parker was surprised to see Black support for the Tea Party in his survey.

Answer 2: Chris Parker responds that his data were collected mostly in the South and the Midwest, which should help mitigate the differences between white and black support for the Tea Party because there are certainly conservative Blacks in the South, but that he was somewhat surprised that there wasn't more of a difference. As to the question of whether people who support the Tea Party want to keep taxes going to white people, he says, the way that people of color have been stereotyped as undeserving for the past 40 years speaks to this question and it comes as no surprise.

Question 3: Directed at Ruth Rosen. Have you given much consideration to the idea that the success of Sarah Palin's brand of feminism has something to do with her ability to perform a working class disposition as opposed to a professional disposition and that this is a big part of why the Right has been better at capturing populist support?

Answer 3: Rosen responds that we need to pay attention to Professor Lo's points about historical transformations. There has been a transformation in Palin. She started out working the image of the ordinary woman and ended up looking like a glamorous celebrity. She has changed over time and is not particularly addressing the needs and issues of most working women. But the points you've made about what the modern women's movement represents are also inaccurate. The modern women's movement has to do with issues of equal pay, childcare, promotion and retention, and equality in the workplace and at home. These issues confront women of all classes. The portrayal of the movement as a white middle-class movement is a media-generated idea.

Weigel adds that the most effective thing the Tea Party has done for Republicans is replace their face (McConnell, Boehner, Bush) with this face of the lumpen proletariat man who is angry about how the economy is bad. It took Democrats, he says, a year of campaigning to drive down the Tea Party's favorable ratings. Some Democrats are ticking up in the polls now as the elections approach and I'm convinced that's because the unions are connecting with their members and getting them to vote Democratic.

Panel 2: The Tea Party and the Right

Eric Schickler introduces the panel. The panelists are Marty Cohen, Alan Abramowitz and Peter Montgomery.

Schickler announces that Bill Whalen, a scheduled panelist, couldn't make it due to a family emergency and says he will try to channel someone who would work for Pete Wilson in his remarks.

Schickler then gives an introduction to the panel theme. The common link between these papers, he explains, is grappling with the extent to which the Tea Partiers are part of the Republican Party and with whether they are related directly to the party or are something different from it. How does the Tea Party relate to the Republican Party as an establishment? What is the relationship between the Tea Party and the Religious Right? What about their relationship with evangelical conservatives, who are a key component of the Religious Right? In what ways do these movements/parties complement one another? In what ways do they relate to each other? All three papers speak to the extent to which there are symbioses and tensions that can lead to the Tea Party having a fundamental impact or meeting with failure and limitations.

Schickler then introduces Marty Cohen, the first speaker on this panel.

Marty Cohen

Prof. Cohen thanks Eric and Christine and thanks everyone for coming. His paper, he announces, is titled "The Future of the Tea Party: Scoring An Invitation to the Republican Party."

There are, he begins by saying, about as many angles on the Tea Party as there are signs at their rallies. His focus, he explains, will be on the Tea Partiers as political outsiders looking to advance their policy goals and personal aspirations. They will, he says, need to work with other groups in the Republican Party. He quotes Schattschneider who said that democracy is unthinkable except in terms of parties, and Jefferson, who said that if the only way into office was through parties then he wouldn't go, then formed his own party two years later, as examples of the importance of political parties. Cohen says he sees the Tea Party as a GOP coalition member and argues that to be successful they will need to work with both their own members and members of the Republican Party establishment. This, he points out, is a two way street, and the establishment has some say over whether or not they are invited in.

Cohen then steps back in time to look at the last great influx of conservatives into the Republican Party, which happened through the Religious Right. The influx of Christian conservatives, he says, came in two waves. The 1970s and early 1980s were dominated by Falwell, Viguierie and the Moral Majority while the late 1980s and early 1990s were led by Ralph Reed, Pat Robertson, and the Christian Coalition. These two waves looked very different from one another, he asserts, with the second being much more politically successful.

In its infancy, Cohen argues, the Tea Party looks a lot more like the first wave of the Religious Right and they may need to look back and see what the first wave did to move forward if they want to become like the second wave of evangelical politics.

There are marked similarities between the Tea Party and the Religious Right influx. Both have big money behind them—the Religious Right had beer money and the Tea Party has oil money. Both movements, he says, also arise out of status anxiety. The Christian Right emerges out of the cultural, moral anxiety coming out of 1960s and the Warren Court decisions. They emerge, he says, from the sense that the country is going in the wrong direction morally. The Tea Party arises out of a reaction to threats to various forms of status. These include threats to racial status posed by an African American president, ethnic status posed by a majority-minority future, and economic status fueled by the current crisis. Lastly, they both have a mix of elite and grassroots participation.

What, Cohen asks, is bringing Tea Party activists into politics for the first time? Or is this actually a return to politics? The Tea Party, he argues, is a mix of elite involvement and grass roots organizing. Where the Christian Right had the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition which both provided big money from well-established operatives, the Tea Party movement has FreedomWorks and the Tea Party Express.

There are three criteria we can use, Cohen explains, to assess whether the Tea Party will be successful in their aim to work within the Republican Party to gain success when comparing them to the Religious Right: What are the issues they are pushing and how popular are they? What kind of electoral gain can Republicans get from bringing this movement in? And what are their tactics?

Cohen then addresses the first question: What are the issues they are pushing and how popular are they? Are they too extreme? They can't, he explains, be too far from the popular majority on major issues if they expect to achieve influence. He then compares figures that address how Tea Party supporters feel about their main issues, how the country feels and how Republicans feel.

Cohen begins by comparing the first and second waves of the Religious Right, arguing that the political aims of the second wave aligned much more closely with those of the nation than the first wave's did. Using National Election Study data on religious conservatives from 1980 and 1992, Cohen explains that in 1980 62 percent of religious conservatives subscribed to an extreme anti-abortion position, as opposed to 45 percent of all respondents and 43 percent of all Republicans. Abortion and school prayer issues seemed to be extreme and not a part of mainstream politics. Reagan, for example, did not take up abortion and school prayer. The second wave, however, decided to take compromise positions on these issues. For example, Cohen explains, they sought areas where they could reach greater consensus, such as restrictions on parental consent and spousal consent. Approval on parental consent is much broader with 86 percent of conservative, 76 percent of all respondents and 82 percent of all Republicans supporting it. Gay adoption similarly leverages 85 percent support among conservatives, 72 percent among all voters and 82 percent among Republicans. Prayer in schools evidences a 94, 88, 92 percent split along these same lines.

Currently, Cohen explains, the New York Times data on the Tea Party show them in a similar position as the first wave Christian Right—their ideas do not have wide popular support. The idea of smaller government and fewer services is supported by 92 percent of Tea Party supporters but only 50 percent of all respondents. Similarly, the notion that we shouldn't raise taxes on the rich to pay for health insurance is supported by 80 percent of Tea Party members but a much smaller percent of all respondents.

Next, Cohen addresses the question of electoral gain? What kind of electoral gain might Republicans get from bringing the Tea Party movement in? Most of the respondents who identified as religious conservatives in the NES surveys of the 1980s were not already in the Republican Party. The Tea Party members, in contrast, are almost all already registered to vote and mostly vote Republican anyway. Therefore, he argues, the Republicans will not necessarily see the same kind of gains from incorporating the Tea Party into their fold as they did from the Religious Right.

Lastly, Cohen addresses the rhetoric and tactics of these two movements. The first wave of the Christian Right had fiery rhetoric about taking over the GOP, but the second wave recognized that their rhetoric was too harsh and a willingness to compromise was central to their success. The Tea Party rhetoric, Cohen says, is largely fiery—even violent. Candidates like Sharron Angle talk about the purpose of Second Amendment rights being to protect us from tyranny while Sarah Palin calls to “re-load” and places crosshairs on her political enemies. If only 30 percent support this rhetoric it won't necessarily be successful, Cohen argues.

Tactically, Cohen goes on, the first wave of Christian Right organizing supported extreme candidates and sat out the general when they lost. During the second influx, they ran stealth campaigns and supported the party nominee no matter what. The Tea Party movement has been placing controversial candidates with very little experience in eminently winnable races. They may want to look at moderating themselves so they can work within the establishment.

Alan Abramowitz

Alan Abramowitz began with a joke about a constituency that is upset, angry and anxious about the future—Giants Fans. He then launched into his research question: Does the Tea Party movement represent a new force in American Politics or is it merely the latest manifestation of a long-term right-ward shift within the Republican Party which is part of a larger trend toward the polarization of American politics? Abramowitz says he will argue that the Tea Party is part of this larger trend of growing conservatism within the Republican Party and its activist base. He will agree with everyone else in saying that it is both a top down and bottom up phenomenon and, while right-wing organizations and Fox News have played a major role in funding and promoting the Tea Party, it is also true that they would not have had much success without the existence of a receptive audience. Abramowitz says he will look at sources of support for the Tea Party within the American public and ask why it emerged when it did—immediately after the election of a Democrat to the Presidency and Democratic seizure of control of Congress. He will also look at the Tea Party's potential to last beyond 2010. It is no accident, Abramowitz argues, that the rise of the Tea Party followed these elections. Republican activists are always most energized and active when they have a Democratic administration pushing a policy agenda.

Abramowitz then begins a discussion of what he calls, “Brewing the Tea: Historical Perspective.”

Drawing on data from American National Election Studies, Abramowitz looks at Republican activism and conservatism over time. He examines campaign activism by decade among Republican identifiers, broken down by decade back to the 1950s, looking at how many Republicans were involved in electoral activities during the various decades. A 0 indicates no involvement, 1 indicates they did something, 2 means that they tried to get somebody else involved and were active, 3+ indicates that they worked at the organizing level.

The general trend, Abramowitz demonstrates, shows a substantial rise in levels of involvement between 1950 to the present. The percentage of Republicans engaged at a very high level is at an all time high over the study period, with many already mobilized beyond voting and thus ready to be mobilized by the Tea Party. The political base of the Republican Party has also (on a 7 point scale) become steadily more conservative over that same period. The greatest increase occurs among the most active Republicans (just under 20 percent of all Republican identifiers in the past decade). That group is getting larger in size and more conservative. Conservatism amongst that group is currently at 5.6 out of 7. Since the endpoints on this scale are “extremely liberal” and “extremely conservatism” and almost no one wants to call his/herself extreme, Abramowitz points out, six is almost the top of the scale in a sense and, in this respect, this group is about as conservative as you can get.

This, Abramowitz says, prepares the way for the Tea Party movement and you just need that spark. That spark comes in the election of Barack Obama. Republicans’ rating of Democratic candidates on the feeling thermometer scale is becoming more and more negative—Republicans like Democratic candidates less and less and dislike them more and more. In the most recent period the average rating of Democratic candidates was about 27 degrees, which, Abramowitz points out, is very chilly. Republican Party activists, coming out of the 2008 election, are fired up and ready to go. What then happens after 2008?

Abramowitz calls the next piece of his talk, which describes the formation of the Tea Party movement, “Drinking the Tea.”

An NBC/Wall Street Journal Poll from June 2010, Abramowitz explains, describes the characteristics of the Tea Party vs. the overall electorate. The Tea Party is different, he says. They are overwhelmingly conservative and more religious than the Republican base, but they are not that different. They are overwhelmingly Republican, 54 percent express strong Republican support as opposed to 18 percent of the overall electorate. Ninety-three percent of their members voted in the 2008 presidential election and of those who voted, 96% percent voted for John McCain. They were and are Republicans.

Abramowitz goes on to explain that Tea Partiers dislike Obama strongly and like Palin a lot and are different from the electorate in that regard. When asked if they prefer more regulation or less regulation, they are opposed to more regulation of corporations, the insurance industry and the oil industry and are very different from most of the electorate on that issue. Among the overall

public on these issues, the public is tilted somewhat to the left. The general public is moderate and moderate liberal (Tea Party supporters are 18 percent of this public and they are strongly conservative compared to the overall public—in which they are included). The only social issue the poll asked about was immigration and they were very conservative on that issue.

Based on this analysis, Abramowitz explains, the strongest predictors of support for the Tea Party appear to be: 1) Conservatism and 2) Dislike of Barack Obama. The demographic variables, he argues, don't have that much impact once you control for these attitudes.

The Tea Party, Abramowitz concludes, did appear within a background of growing conservatism among Republicans. There was a large cache of active Republicans available for them to draw upon. They are, generally, extremely conservative, Republicans who don't like Obama. He suggests the Tea Partiers will not fade as long as Obama is in the White House. They are likely to remain highly motivated to oppose his agenda. They could play an important role in 2012 and Abramowitz says he believes any serious Republican presidential contender will have to find a way to appeal to Tea Party supporters. The danger is that they will make it more difficult for the eventual nominee to appeal to moderate swing voters.

Peter Montgomery

Peter Montgomery begins his talk by expressing his happiness that People for the American Way's collection of right-wing political ephemera is now housed at UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library. He says that he spends a lot of time at Christian Right conferences and there is a mixed attitude about the Tea Party among the Christian Right. They are somewhat in awe of the chaos Tea Party supporters produced in the lead up to health care reform, but they are also feeling that they really needed some good Christians involved in the Tea Party. This year, at the Values Voter Summit, the Religious Right welcomed the Tea Party with a huge embrace but also moved to co-opt it.

Montgomery explains that his talk will focus on connections and disconnections between the Christian Right and the Tea Party. These include spats between Dick Armey, who is more libertarian, and others on the Religious Right, and gripes from the Religious Right that Tea Partiers are not taking abortion or the Religious Right seriously. These divisions are real, but focusing on them understates the deep connections between the movements, Montgomery asserts.

Montgomery then discusses the shared goals of both movements. They want to defeat Democrats, weaken Obama both by knocking off incumbents and intimidating those who are left, and move the GOP to the right. Both also see themselves engaged in a long term ideological campaign to win over hearts and minds to the position that it is not good to rely on the government and you need to be self-reliant (recently Tea Party members presented a 40-year plan to the Pro-Life Religious Council to get Americans to move ideologically toward more limited government). It is important to also remember, Montgomery asserts, that Tea Party candidates are not libertarians in any sense. They are hard to the right, way to the right of the public and Republicans on abortion, gay rights, etc. On the other hand, they get respect for what they've done and are telling the Religious Right to stop complaining because, as the

FreedomWorks campaign director said, “People didn’t come out into the streets to protest gay marriage or abortion,” basically indicating ‘you had your chance’ and now ‘we have the juice,’ Montgomery paraphrases. The Religious Right is also embracing Tea Party rhetoric, talking about a socialist tyranny and other common Tea Party themes.

The backlash to Obama’s election, Montgomery says, began before Santelli’s rant. The Religious Right viewed the election of Obama in apocalyptic terms and reacted accordingly. The God TV election special, says Montgomery, was pretty much, ‘The world is going to end if Barack Obama gets elected.’ The day after the election, Wendy Wright from Concerned Women for America, said that she knew she was now a part of the resistance movement. Just a few weeks later Richard Viguerie was talking to the Council for National Policy encouraging them to go after non-conservative Republicans in local elections. In a sense, Montgomery says, the Religious Right was present at the birth of the Tea Party. Only a couple of days after Santelli’s rant, Jim DeMint, the Religious Right’s ‘guy’ in the Senate, was speaking at CPAC talking about taking to the streets to stop socialism. Likewise, there was the American Family Association, one of the oldest Religious Right organizations, reaching out and working to build the Tea Party from the beginning.

Not only do the goals of the Christian Right and the Tea Party movement overlap, Montgomery suggests, there is also substantial overlap between the movements’ leadership. DeMint, for example, has ten senate candidates who he is backing through his Senate Conservatives Fund and when he gets behind people they get support. Palin was put on the Republican ticket to energize the Religious Right, but now mostly is more firmly affiliated with the Tea Party. Gingrich, once famous for his Contract with America, is now writing about reviving God in America. Jim Garlow, the Religious Right activist who mobilized churches on behalf of the anti-gay marriage Proposition 8 in California is now mobilizing churches in support of the Tea Party. Another example comes from Ralph Reed’s Faith and Freedom Coalition, which moves to tie together the two movements—they have a database of religious and fiscal conservatives actively working to get out the vote for Tea Party candidates. Michele Bachmann, who has largely been associated with the Tea Party movement, in fact arose out of the Religious Right. Mike Pence, congressman from Indiana—the dark horse winner of the 2010 Value Voters presidential straw poll—got lots of support at the Value Voters Summit, saying, “we will have to demand that the Republicans are with us.”

Montgomery continues, arguing that Glenn Beck and David Barton constitute another important point of leadership overlap. David Barton is a Religious Right pseudo historian who takes a Christian nation view of history. Glenn Beck anointed David Barton and has him on his show regularly to talk about the founding fathers and “teach people” about American history and the role of religion in history. This plays into Beck’s own transformation. Beck himself came out on Fox News around the same time Santelli did his rant, and developed a narrative that God had called him to mobilize Americans. This was the focus of his rallies in Washington and he also now constitutes a strong connector.

There are also, Montgomery adds, activist connections between the movements. There is substantial overlap in the movement constituencies: 47 percent of the people who say they are

part of the Tea Party movement and 57 percent of all Tea Partiers call themselves Christian and also say they are part of the Christian Coalition or Religious Right movement.

Turf battles that happen nationally don't seem to happen locally as Religious Right figures are regularly invited to speak at political rallies. Many local candidates are also speaking to social issues. When one Tea Party candidate at the Value Voters Summit said she wasn't speaking to social issues because people were more riled up about taxes, she was quickly met with a response from another speaker who said, "God did not wake me up to talk about tax issues, he woke me up...because the country doesn't love me like it used to love me." One might argue, says Montgomery, that the size and scope of government has become the new culture war. Responding to Citrin's comments, Montgomery remarks, candidates like Angle in Nevada say that if they don't win you may still be able to go to an ATM and get money out but our country will be poorer.

Everyone, Montgomery continues, has been talking about American exceptionalism as defined by Glenn Beck and David Barton. As Beck and Barton define it, it is the divinely inspired Constitution made using the colonial preachers' ideas of individual salvation, which were cribbed by the founding fathers. The beauty of this is that if you say Obama has this liberation theology inspired view of big government and collectivism, they will say big government is not only un-American, it is un-Christian. Entitlement, in their understanding, makes government our god and thus violates the first commandment.

Montgomery then plays a clip from Jim DeMint. It is no surprise, says DeMint, that socialist Europe is post-Christian. Your church, Montgomery paraphrases, is either for socialist government or for the living of the gospel—it is either about God or government.

Montgomery then speculates on the possibilities for a long-term relationship between the Christian and fiscal right movements. Working in favor of this connection, he argues, are their shared political goals and the long-term cultural goal of shrinking support for government. Working against them are problems of priorities, personalities and turf. Electoral success, he says, will bring pluses and minuses. The Religious Right, he says, is really trying to push the social liberals aside and say that you can't be a true fiscal conservative if you don't support the family values stuff. They say, for example, that you can't build enough jails to house everybody if you don't have the family structure. He then shares a clip of Pat Robertson talking about how nothing will stand in the way of Obama and socialism taking over—"The people," Robertson predicts, "will welcome Socialism in order to relieve their pain. "Even God," Montgomery concludes, "didn't see the Tea Party coming."

There followed a question and answer period:

Question 1 (Chair): Implicit in the discussion of the Tea Party/Republican relationship is the potential for conflict and cooperation, but if Republican leaders decide it isn't good for them is there anything that the Tea Party could do about it? Would you have to say that you don't want to be on the wrong side of these folks?

Abramowitz: There's not that much they can do. They tried to intervene very forcefully in Delaware against Christine O'Donnell and obviously that failed. The problem is that the Tea Party voters will be able to dominate in the primaries where they make up a large share of the voters, particularly in the presidential races in the caucus states. I don't think they care what the Republicans want. Republicans will have to find people to oppose them, but who? Olympia Snow, if she were here right now, would be very nervous. Polls show she would lose in Maine right now against a conservative Republican.

Cohen: The Republican establishment, even more than the Democrats, was blindsided by the Tea Party and it may be true that in the short run there's not much they can do, but parties evolve very fast and respond well to change. I think they will be able to get ahead of the anger in the long term. It didn't take a lot of money from the outside to get Christine O'Donnell nominated and we might imagine that a similar effort could have nipped it in the bud if it had been taken seriously. The new establishment will learn from this and potentially be able to get control again.

Montgomery: Some of the establishment will have to move aside to make room. It is not clear how many of DeMint's candidates will be elected, but if they are able to get a like-minded half dozen in the Senate, they won't be able to ignore them. DeMint and Dobson teamed up to help elect Rand Paul over everything that Mitch McConnell and the establishment was doing to prevent that from happening.

Abramowitz: It is important to also remember that the distance between the Tea Party and the Republican establishment is not that great. There are almost no moderate Republicans left.

Question 2: Can you talk about the regional bases or regional distribution of the Tea Party Movement? Is it stronger in the South? Mountain West? Why and how?

Montgomery: A Public Religion Research Institute (publicreligion.org) poll I cited earlier looked at this and found it is similar to the conservative Christian movement. It is very heavily weighted to the South.

Abramowitz: I'm sure it's stronger in the South, but we have seen Tea Party candidates capture Republican nominations in almost all regions. Tea Party candidates have had strong support in New York and other Northern states—although they won't necessarily get elected. Within the party they can have success almost everywhere but in the general election they will likely have more success in regions where Republicans are strongest.

Cohen: The Tea Party will do best where the Republican party is strongest and not where it is incredibly weak. The cry against the Republican Party after 2008 is that it is regional. We will see if they can get strong support in Northeastern and Western states.

Question 3: Where does "The Family"—a secret Christian fellowship of politicians in DC—fit into this mix?

Montgomery: “The Family” does not focus on electing people but on working with powerful people once they’re powerful people. They focus on how to organize within the elected leadership.

Question 4: To what extent, if there is so much overlap between the Christian Right and Tea Party, is there a difference between the Tea Party and the Moral Majority? (The questioner notes that he came in late and therefore missed Cohen’s talk).

Cohen: That was what my talk was about. I noticed you walked in after my talk. While I’d love to take the time to cover things I missed, I’ll let it go to another question.

Question 5: How is the Tea Party getting people to vote against their apparent class interests—for example in favor of corporations and deregulation?

Abramowitz: I guess the question is, why are lots of people who are not very well off supporting lower taxes on the wealthy? I’m not sure that I understand the answer to that, but I think that social issues like abortion, gay rights, prayer, race, and immigration have shown power to influence voters even more than their own sense of their own economic interests. Even now when the economy is in very bad shape, low to moderate-income white voters are having a hard time seeing how the Democratic Party is serving their economic interest. They’re not necessarily strongly motivated to stick with the Democrats.

Montgomery: On the one hand there’s a lack of real left populism, which is significant. But it’s also important to understand that for people who are into Beck, he is portraying it as if it’s un-American to rely on the government. Barton and Beck’s message is all about individual salvation and individual freedom and there’s an aspect of it that draws on theology that says if you have money it’s because you have God’s favor, so it’s morally wrong for the government to target you for higher taxes and punish you for having God’s favor. Those two ideas work together powerfully.

Abramowitz: I want to qualify this discussion a little bit by pointing out that a lot of the Tea Party positions are quite unpopular. Advocating against the minimum wage and federal regulation of big business and the health care industry, for example, are very unpopular positions. If the Republicans embrace the Tea Party, they risk losing part of their support as well.

Question 6: How appropriate is the use of the historical metaphor—is there substantive appropriateness with the Tea Party metaphor and how does the tension about constitutional interpretation play into the general American identity?

Abramowitz: Tea Party activists are clearly taking a very narrow and very extreme view of the Constitution, but it has been hard for those on the left to counter that and to come up with a counter narrative for the founding of the country. A lot of Americans like to see the founding and the Constitution as an important part of who we are and it has been effective and largely not countered.

Montgomery: The new senator from Utah (probably) thinks of himself as a constitutional expert who thinks that the Supreme Court was wrong in 1930s when it started using interstate commerce to regulate things like child labor. He has vowed to voters that he will not vote for anything he feels is against the Constitution.

Abramowitz: With their Pledge for America they are saying that they will need to look to the particular constitutional referent that supports whatever they do. For example, they might take something like the minimum wage and ask where in the Constitution it explicitly says congress has the power to regulate wages and hours. The risk is that, while in general terms that sounds nice, for example, when it comes to repealing wages and hours legislation, repealing the power of the government to regulate drugs and food or cutting Medicare or Social Security would be much more problematic. This is very popular legislation.

Question 7: You get this sort of cartoonish, conspiratorial notion of the Democrats from the Tea Party and yet during the New Deal lots of regular people supported these ideas. It seems like there has been a lot of projects developed to undercut the New Deal with wedge issues. Has there been a conscious effort to do this?

Berlet (from the Audience): Yes, they did it; it is power politics and the Democrats lost.

Abramowitz: They sort of lost but a lot of those programs are still there, they haven't been able to undo Social Security and Medicare.

Question 8: I'm struck by how, when people talk about the relationship between Blacks and the Republican Party the terminology and concepts they use tend to revolve around race, whereas with Latinos it has to do with nativism, xenophobia etc., which makes it seem like these are different phenomena. It seems to me, however, like the common element of both is white ethnicity. Doesn't it seem like, given the importance of white ethnicity, we should be talking about this through the lens of white supremacy instead?

Abramowitz: There is a growing divergence in the electoral base between the two parties. The Republicans are increasingly a white party while the electorate is increasingly non-white. Obama got 40 percent of his votes from non-whites in the most recent election, and while the Republicans are still getting 10 percent of their votes from non-whites, they constitute 26 percent of the electorate. Increasingly, a White Republican party is opposing a non-White Democratic Party and there is a growing racial divide between the parties. If you project ahead this is a real problem for the Republican Party. The non-white share of electorate is going to increase substantially in the near future. Forty-six percent of those under age 5 are non-white, that's two times what it was in the 2008 electorate. That is the future and if you look at the younger generation, youth voted disproportionately for Obama in part because they include a larger percentage of non-whites. By pandering to the Tea Party and white conservatives, the Republicans run a long-run risk of becoming irrelevant.

Montgomery: There is a potential rift between the Tea Party and the Religious Right here. The Religious Right is looking at the same numbers we are and reaching out with Sam Rodriguez to Latinos and to Blacks with the abortion-as-Black-genocide message. Rodriguez has warned the

Tea Party that if it stays a white movement, it will cost them. This is especially true if the Tea Party puts a big stress on immigration and comes across as xenophobic.

Cohen: The Christian Right has tried this type of outreach before and without very much success.

Abramowitz: This is a fundamental problem if we look at voter attitudes. Latinos and African Americans are conservative on some of the social issues but overwhelmingly on the left in terms of social spending and social issues so it will be difficult for Democrats to increase their support among those groups.

Question 9: Cohen talked about oil companies putting lots of money into the Tea Party. I'm interested in this because I was in a College of Environmental Design. I'm pretty sure my school was shut down by oil interests in Denver. I'm an activist in what used to be called the center-left—just being a voting rights activist and making sure all votes are counted instead of being thrown away by Diebold and corporate control of the voting system. It seems more and more difficult to capture the attention of a sizeable group of people. When our political system is so dependent upon big money, what hope does somebody like me have? I'm sorry to summarize so bluntly, but if you were a leftist who wanted everybody's vote to count and Beck not to seem moderate but far right, what suggestions would you give us to actually galvanize people for a sustained period of time?

Cohen: For something to work, at least one party has to support it. Religious conservatives went to the local level and tried to change the Republican Party and they kicked out the pro-choicers and brought in pro-lifers. We need to get candidates in who look to something other than corporate money. If getting candidates in office who don't support big corporations is your goal then start at the bottom with the local elections.

Panel 3: Tapping into Fear, Anger and Resentment: The Tea Party and the Climate of Threat

Paola Bacchetta introduces the speakers and shares their biographies. The panelists are Charles Postel, Lisa Disch, Chip Berlet, and Devin Burghart.

Charles Postel

Postel opens by saying the Tea Party has attempted to portray itself as a populist movement without history or leaders and the media have largely portrayed it as such. A recent Newsweek piece called "The Thinking Man's Guide to Populist Rage" borrowed a picture from *Frankenstein* [the movie] of an angry mob with torches to represent the Tea Party. This is an idea, he asserts, that goes back to Hofstadter—the idea of a populist wing that has gone sour and turned to paranoid extremism. [Michael] Rogin tested Hofstadter's theory finding that there were followers of both McCarthy and populism in Wisconsin, but that there was no more connection between them than the state itself. Others have drawn similar conclusions yet Hofstadter's thesis continues to cast a shadow. It may be a losing proposition to protest the indiscriminate use of populism, Postel worries, but it seems, he says, to do more to obscure than illuminate the

movement. The spectrum of political phenomena described as populist these days runs the gamut from social democratic to white nationalist. The Tea Party truly tests the limits of the term. The Tea Party seeks to return to the gold standard, repeal the progressive income tax, and lift regulations on banks and oil. They seek to repeal everything that original populists of the 1890s stood for!

LBJ, Postel continues, inherited his vision of the great society from his grandpa, Sam Johnson, a bona fide Texas populist. We may also argue that George Wallace was influenced by the populism that brought rural socialism to Kansas and Oklahoma. Populism is harder to detect in the Tea Partiers. They call themselves conservative and, Postel argues, we need to look there to understand them. They are descended from a collection of business leaders who saw the New Deal as a threat and organized the American Liberty League, a bipartisan coalition. Roosevelt effectively attacked the Liberty League as economic royalists. It was Robert Welch and the formation of the John Birch Society in 1958 that really popularized these ideas with their demands for liberty from trade unions and social security and warnings about socialist tyranny and one world government. You cannot, Postel argues, underestimate the role of the John Birch Society as a mass movement. Conservatives such as William Buckley deemed Welch a liability and pushed the JBS out of the mainstream Republican Party, but today ties between the JBS and the Tea Party are out in public for those who care to look. On September 16th Sharron Angle addressed a United for Freedom rally in Salt Lake City sponsored by the JBS and the Center for Constitutional Studies as well as 9/12 groups inspired by Glenn Beck. The Center for Constitutional Studies was founded by Cleon Skousen, a political ally of Welch. Beck promotes Skousen's books on TV and the local Tea Parties make him required reading. Calling an elected president a socialist and a fascist, equating the estate tax with communism, and alarms about one world government are all staples of the far right politics of the cold war. These are all staples of John Birch Society platforms that now appear on Fox News and in Tea Party platforms.

Elites have been at the helm of this movement at least since the Jeffersonian revolution and the extension of the franchise to all white males. People seeking to overturn the (mis)rule of whoever is on top used to have to claim to be born in a log cabin, Postel remarks; now they have to know how to dress a moose. It also, Postel argues, depends a lot on if you like the particular elites who are in power. The idea that the United States is a republic, not a democracy where the unfit mob holds sway—this is the idea many Tea Partiers have used to demand the repeal of the 17th Amendment and the direct election of senators. Many Tea Partiers fear the voting mob and view the election of 2008 as illegitimate, stolen by ignorant and/or illegal black and immigrant voters and racialists. They have launched a flurry of legislation to constrain voting rights through the expansion of felony disqualification and the elimination of motor voter laws.

The Tea Party activists are also part of a tradition that understands federal power as trampling on state's rights. In the Sagebrush Rebellion, ranchers, miners, and others protested the BLM (Bureau of Land Management), the EPA and other federal agencies and threatened secession—think of Todd Palin and the Alaska independence movement. That movement, however, was driven by the *dependency* of ranchers, loggers and miners on federal subsidies and services, Postel claims. Those actors relied on the federal government, but were angry because new actors were shaping and impinging upon federal largess.

The racial resentment of the 1950s and 60s helped forge a pact of alliance between Goldwater, Welch and the southern segregationists. This is in the conservative tradition of right rage against blankets provided to Blacks in the Civil War by the Freedmen's bureaucrats. It was argued that these blankets would 'keep the negro in idleness.' This thread is reiterated in the mortgage crisis where African Americans, Latinos and the urban poor have been hit especially hard. Santelli's scream that government might aid the "losers" of the mortgage crisis helps define the shifting sands that shape this as a conservative movement.

Lisa Disch

Disch begins by asserting that there is no question that fear, anger and resentment are important components of the Tea Party movement but what, she asks, provided the groundwork for these? It has been suggested by some, she says, that we should see this as a backlash against 1960s, but she wants to go back further to look at the New Deal and to think about this as an inheritance of, not a reaction to, the New Deal. She says she wants to think of the Tea Party in relation to the precariat in Europe. The precariat, she explains, is a movement that has arisen in response to rollbacks of social legislation in Europe (e.g., raising the retirement age to 62). Members of the precariat interpret precariousness as a political condition. Precariousness affects immigrants, workers without stable or full time employment, and those who are otherwise unstable. The concept is used by activists in Europe to protest neoliberalization and the rollback of social democratic programs.

Why, Disch asks, should we compare the Tea Party to the precariat? Clearly the Tea Partiers do not see themselves as Democrats. Both however, she argues, have been sparked by the threat members perceive to their share of a social democratic inheritance. The material commitments of the Tea Party activists, she argues, place them in a liberal genealogy—mobilizing in defense of an inheritance gained through the New Deal. They do so, she argues, as historically radicalized people, mobilizing in defense of white interests. If we think of whiteness as property, they are mobilizing to defend their share of what Lipsitz calls racialized social democracy. Racially and symbolically white, social security did not apply to farm workers and domestics. It was aligned with independence and work characteristically applied to white racial identities as opposed to stereotyped black identities. You can see this, Disch argues, in Keli Carender's gesture when she waved her \$20 bill in the air – "we whites," Keli's protest implies, "are tired of being the forgotten man that elites call on to pay for the poor."

Social democratic programs, Disch argues, became racialized in the wake of the New Deal and a persistent campaign to present poverty as a black problem and welfare as a black program. She recommends people read Marty Gilens on this subject. The problem with liberal democratic reform in the U.S. is that it has worked within instead of against these understandings. It draws upon the "virtuous working man" and "vice of dependency" ideals almost as much as the Right. It is problematic, Disch says, for us to reduce the Tea Party movement to "simple racism," but through social democracy, liberal America invested in whiteness and thus created an object Republicans now seek to protect.

Disch explains that she makes this argument not because she thinks we can convert the Tea Partiers to Democrats, but because she thinks that instead of using the Tea Party as an excuse to

wage a negative campaign, we need to wage a positive campaign for stronger social democratic liberalism instead. We can, she says, use the precariat to hold liberals accountable for the Tea Party. This also, she says, helps us explain the contradiction that Tea Party members overwhelmingly favor small government, but 62 percent of them rate Medicare and Social Security as worth taxpayer money and only 50 percent want to phase these programs out according to the Wall Street Journal. These numbers are markedly under general public support (76%), but still striking because they deviate from a typical pattern in survey research. Typically you would find a correspondence between anti-government and anti-Social Security attitudes. You would also typically find low education corresponding with low support for Social Security but this is not the case in the Tea Party. These contradictions only make sense if we turn back to whiteness.

Racial resentment, Disch continues, could also be thought of as identification with whiteness as the forgotten man scenario. Not surprisingly, people who have high levels of racial resentment oppose food stamps and similar programs but people with high levels of racial resentment generally support Social Security. They regard the latter as a right they have earned. They are not motivated by free market principles but by the idea that government injures hard working whites who are made to fund programs that help poor blacks. Roosevelt presented Social Security as old-age insurance and differentiated Social Security from welfare programs by describing it as paying and saving—but within Social Security what counted as “work” was defined by whiteness. Whiteness then presumed that you were not a slave. During segregation being white meant qualifying for jobs only white people could hold. Now whiteness is not a legal requirement for entry into power, but exists in forms of security that the government distributed not as forms of citizenship but as race-based privileges such as job security, worker rights, health insurance, and retirement security. The New Deal was not extended as a right of citizenship but as a race-based privilege.

There cannot be an American precariat, Dish concludes, because of the lack of universal extension of social democracy in the United States. Instead, we have a group that sees its own status as threatened but objects to a government extending middle class privileges to what they see as undeserving people. What makes them different is that they do not recognize that they did not earn their own middle class status, but were lifted into the middle class, like my family, by these programs. Tea Partiers are defending social democratic policies that they think are theirs. Politically, it is more fruitful to recognize their fear and anger as a creation of liberalism than as something antithetical to it. You can't, she concludes, do much to correct people's mindset but you can demand a stronger and more social democratic liberalism.

Chip Berlet

Berlet opens by dedicating his talk to Sarah Diamond, who was Berlet's mentor and a student of Michael Rogin. He explains that he will be using a model developed by Margaret Canovan to describe the relationship between the Tea Party and populism. Before agrarian populism, he begins, there were other strands of populism. One can find these in Bacon's rebellion and in the KKK, he says, noting the controversy over the definition of populism. How, he asks, do you organize a populist movement in 2010 when Glenn Beck claims he is Martin Luther King? If, he says, you define the chosen community as under attack then you can mobilize people to do

almost anything. The trope of subversion and betrayal is as old as the Calvinist colonists, and it works by defining an idealized community under attack and only salvageable through aggressive, apocalyptic action.

Historically, Berlet explains, the right wing has been organized against Freemasons, Catholics, Italians, and Bolsheviks during the Palmer raids, Communists during the Red Scare, and who, he asks, can forget MLK? He shows a picture of MLK at the Highlander School, labeled a communist training camp. We forget, he says, that the Civil Rights Movement was portrayed by the Right as otherwise happy black people being mobilized by Communists and Jews. Go back and look, he says, at the Roosevelt v. Hoover campaign in which Hoover says we will be no better than the Europeans if we abide by the collectivists. Social movements, Berlet says, pull people in their direction and not the other way around—something the conservatives learned from the Labor and Civil Rights Movements and the Democrats seem to have forgotten. The Democrats, he says, are happy in power so perhaps they don't want a people's movement.

Berlet argues that Hofstadter, Lipset, and Bell are all wrong about agrarian populism in the 1890s but that their theories of how people are mobilized are still useful. When Democrats claim that Tea Party members are stupid and ignorant people—either ignorant themselves or liars—they are counting on you being those things. The Tea Party is drawing on a long tradition in the United States, popularized by the John Birch Society. They have been organized by narrow scapegoating around mythical enemies that displace rejected and sublimated anger around race and gender. On the populist right, he argues, you displace rage and gender onto a chimera that demands a mythical response and justifies aggression. The elements of right-wing populism, Berlet continues, are dualism, demonization, scapegoating, conspiracism, and apocalyptic aggression. One of the ways this is developed is a storyline called producerism.

Producerism, Berlet explains, entails a narrative of the noble hardworking middle class being betrayed by those above and below them. Those on the top take the money, the story goes, of those in the middle and give it to lazy, sinful and subversive parasites on the bottom. They see themselves as caught in a vice with the Rothschilds above and the hippies and common cause below. Glenn Beck's chalk talk, Berlet continues, plagiarized the producerist John Birch Society narrative.

Race, class, and gender analysis, he goes on, add all sorts of dynamics to this—and it is easy to elide the race and gender elements by writing about the apocalypse. If you look at the anti-Roosevelt coalition, Berlet explains, they were drawn from both the corporate and Christian Right and rooted their economic arguments in the idea that too much government is less God. After World War II William F. Buckley re-established this coalition but did not include the far right. He sought to eliminate overt anti-Semitism and began to take on issues of race. Then Goldwater campaigners succeeded on a political level but forgot to build up a mass base. They responded to their failure by aligning themselves with the televangelists. At this same moment, in 1977, Anita Baker began to organize an anti-gay campaign in Dade County. Around the same time Francis Schaeffer and C. Everett Koop began to proselytize about abortion and call on Protestants to become involved in the issue. This coalition formed the Moral Majority in 1979 led by Jerry Falwell. Randall Balmer discovered, however, that while abortion became an issue that got voters excited and became the central focus of the Moral Majority, it was Carter's

attempts to revoke the tax-exempt status of segregated white Christian universities that really got them angry. What you have here is a gender issue standing in for a race issue.

It is important, Berlet says, to understand that the apocalyptic belief in America is not unusual. Fourteen percent of the people in New Jersey think that Obama is the anti-Christ and 15 percent think it is possible. Older pamphlets suggest the anti-Christ will come out of Russia. A huge percentage of Christians believe that the endtimes and the struggle against Satan are real. The culture war involved all sorts of racialized issues. Communism was linked to hypnotism and the Beatles, in which Communism was understood to be enabled by brainwashing and the 4/4 time of rock music and primitive “jungle” rhythms. This drew on explicitly racist rhetoric. We might laugh at the idea that Obama is Hitler or Stalin, but that was the theory of Hayek. We can laugh, but these ideas are deeply rooted in a right wing tradition of populism that is deeply rooted in the American body politic. I use the word populism, Berlet explains, to describe a style and attempt of groups such as the RSS in India and others to mobilize people around ideas of threat. The right-wing tradition of populism is deeply rooted in America.

Devin Burghart

Burghart begins by joking, in relation to recent revelations that Sharron Angle practiced witchcraft, “I am not a witch.” I am, he declares, resident data geek for the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights. This paper, “Tea Party Nationalism,” he explains, explores important aspects of findings from a report the Institute put together on the Tea Party movement. Most of the data are, he says, going to focus around questions of race and nationalism. The broader dataset is available at teapartynationalism.com and he encourages people to access and use it. He qualifies this data by saying, you can’t step in the same pool twice—a snapshot of the Tea Party would look different in different times. What they have on the Tea Party at this point, however, contravenes many common Tea Party myths including the purported sole focus on government size and taxation.

Firstly, he says, the Tea Party ranks are increasingly permeated with people focused on race and nationalism. The notion that the first Black American president is not a real American is prominent throughout the movement. Movement followers have also been active in challenging birthright citizenship. The Tea Party has, he argues, torn down many of the walls of the issue silos that have divided the conservative movement for decades. Arizona’s SB1070, also known as the “papers please bill,” the “Ground Zero Mosque,” and the “DREAM Act” are all outside the official mission statement of the Tea Party movement and nonetheless central to their politics. The relationship between the Tea Party movement and hard-core white nationalists has become a two way street. White nationalists are hoping to push overwhelmingly white protestors toward self-conscious and ideological white supremacy.

The Tea Party is not, he argues, composed of those who have suffered disproportionately from the economic crisis. The data and regression analyses tell us there is no observable statistical link between Tea Party membership and unemployment levels. Tea Party antagonism is directed at federal assistance to those deemed the “undeserving poor” by middle class and overwhelmingly white people who believe that their nation has been taken from them and they want it back. “Take your country back” is an explicitly nationalist refrain, often accompanied by

the claim that there are “real Americans” and those driving the country into a socialist ditch. This is less an expression of populism than of an ultra-nationalist super-patriotism.

The Tea Party movement, Burghart explains, is a multi-million dollar a year complex made up of corporations, non-profits and PACs. Tea Party support, Burghart explains, exists at three different levels of commitment. Sixteen to 20 percent of the population expresses some level of support for the Tea Party movement and these people (who number in the millions) constitute the outermost ring of support. There follows a larger and less defined group of one to two million who listen to Glenn Beck and go to some protests. Then is the core ring, which consists of more than 280,000 and is constituted by those who have signed up on the movement’s websites. Our work, he says, focuses on the core. It seeks to map the location of the core membership, look at gender breakdowns and explore relationships within the movement.

Burghart goes on to explain that there are six factions of the Tea Party movement: the 1776 Tea Party, Tea Party Nation, FreedomWorks, ResistNet, Tea Party Patriots, and the Tea Party Express. The leading factions in the 1776 Tea Party have largely been imported directly from the Minutemen. Tea Party Nation is generally a gathering place for birthers, Christian leaders and nativists. ResistNet and Tea Party Patriots harbor long-time nativists and seek to repeal the 17th Amendment and the direct election of U.S. senators. The other organizations have distanced themselves from the Tea Party Express, whose leaders’ overt racist expressions caused substantial unfavorable press. Together, these organizations, Burghart explains, showing a map of affiliations, have roughly 3,000 affiliated local chapters and their organizations are continuing to grow. He then shows a chart of growth within the different factions showing that Tea Party Patriots and ResistNet have the most growth. They also, he says, have the most diffuse, locally based organizational structures. This would tend to indicate that the larger movement is more antithetical to central control.

The Tea Party movement, Burghart says, is not going away after the fall [2010] elections and we can expect it to have a continuing impact on the public policy debate. It will not necessarily, however, have the same organizing bases; some sorting is likely to occur after the elections. It would be a mistake to claim all Tea Party members are racists or nativists, Burghart claims, but the fact that the first family has ancestors who were once the property of white people has an effect. Consider the argument that Obama is not an American—that he is a lying African, an African witch doctor, etc. If he were not properly American, then he becomes not us. Five of six Tea Party organizations (all but FreedomWorks) have “birthers” in their leadership. The movement’s supporters are overwhelmingly white and they hold different views than white people generally.

Questions of racial and cultural difference point toward the question that permeates the movement—who is American? The defense of American exceptionalism, the revolutionary war costumes, the yellow ‘don’t tread on me’ Gadsden flags from the same era are all signs of an overwhelming nationalism that does not include all Americans and that disregards those it considers insufficiently American. “Real Americans,” Burghart paraphrases, do not sue Arizona over its immigration laws; this is summed up in the words of one man who said “I am an arrogant American, unlike our president, I am proud.” The notion that Obama is not a real, natural born American but some other kind of person has become widespread and corresponds to

the notion that Obama is not a Christian but a Muslim. Pew measured and found that at the start of Obama's presidency 11 percent of the population believed this but that number rose to 18 percent during the intense Tea Party opposition to Obama and his supposedly Muslim roots.

Islamophobia emerges as the new, cutting edge, wedge issue. It is not, Burghart reiterates, his intention to claim that all in the Tea Party are racist. But the vitriol on behalf of the leaders has white nationalists searching for recruits in the Tea Party ranks. Roan Garcia-Quintana, who is a national board member of the Council of Conservative Citizens, which is basically a reincarnation of white citizens' councils (what Thurgood Marshall called the uptown Klan) is a Tea Party leader. Nativist activity and sentiment showed a 600 percent increase in 2007 at the height of anti-immigrant organizing. By 2010 many of those organizations had virtually disappeared. In reality, however, they had moved right into the tea parties. The Tea Party has given new life into HR1668, which would end birthright citizenship for children born of parents without papers. This stems largely from a fear of a new majority. The unstated racism in this movement is vocal and unmistakable.

There follows a question and answer period.

Question 1: Earlier this year there was someone caught drunk driving on his way to attempt to shoot up people at the Tides Foundation and others. Have they drawn connections between that person and certain commentators? Is there a chance of a Tim McVeigh type situation? It seems like we're being very polite. Are there any legal mechanisms, for example, criminal anti-syndicalism provisions such as those that were used to crush Wobblies that can be used to stop this?

Burghart: I understand that people are scared but I think it is a dangerous thing to do that. Bill O'Reilly is not legally responsible, but is morally culpable, and I feel he would be given a shopping cart and place to scream on a corner in a responsible society. We can't predict when violence will occur, but this kind of rhetoric increases the chance of this kind of violence especially as it moves from rhetoric toward mass resistance.

Question 2: I was giving a lecture yesterday on the rise of Jim Crow and the Black Codes and suggested that the development of Jim Crow was related to the relaxation of support for Black people and of opposition to the mistreatment of black people. Right now we don't see a movement against the Tea Party and others leading to a confrontation, but I want to know, for people who are concerned and who would be the victims of that confrontation, when do we start getting ready?

Burghart: Since a year ago when the Tea Party started, the tide is beginning to turn and those who are concerned about the Tea Party's movement on race and national identity are starting to mobilize against them and these issues are coming to a head. La Raza, NAACP and others are beginning to take on discussions about hitting back on this. Please go to Tea Party Nationalism and we will keep you informed on what you can do to speak out against it.

Question 3: The only thing that will defeat this movement is left wing populism. I am with "U.S. For All of Us"—a national organization of anti-racist whites committed to a politics of liberation

to contest a politics of domination. We recently mobilized hundreds of activists to go to Arizona to fight SB1070 and to defeat the “Secure Communities” legislation. Now that we have elaborated on the climate of threat and the clear threats that the Tea Party movement poses, can we think about this moment dialectically since the Right certainly is with Glenn Beck thinking he is the new MLK? What sort of opportunities do you all think the rise of the Tea Party movement offers the left and where are the possibilities for libratory social change?

Disch: I think the Tea Party has ruined Obama’s presidency and I don’t think it is an opportunity, I think it is a disaster.

Burghart: It is a teachable moment because they have torn down the issue silos—a clearly definable opposition is now in one camp. The attacks against all are in one package and in one issue right now (gay, black, workers, the environment, etc.) and that gives us an opportunity to tear down those barriers as well and to promote an inclusive definition of who and what we are as a nation at the end of the 20th century. This will take place for years, as we continue to go through these demographic changes. The question will remain: how do we build innovative and creative alliances?

Postel: In the depression of 1893 there was a very fast response among farmers and laborers. They marched on Washington and demanded a huge stimulus bill and put their mark on that agenda. They insisted the federal government should play a large role in the recovery. Interestingly, that did not happen in 1929 at all. It took years and year and years for it to happen then. The first New Deal was basically a means to raise prices for the corporations so they could regain profitability and throw poor farmers off the land through price support systems. The real weakness of the Tea Party movement is that they actually do nothing to address real economic insecurities of Americans. Their agenda is all about inflation someday in the future or the deficits of our grandchildren. The American people’s agenda is all about keeping a roof over their heads. Disaster is hitting our cities—in African American communities it is at depression levels already today—and upset with that kind of crisis moving into the streets is not unprecedented. These things work in mysterious ways.

Question 4: Do you think the Tea Party movement supporters really understand that racism and white supremacy is inherent to the movement?

Burghart: The data show that they generally have negative attitudes toward Black people and more divisive issues. I don’t think that the whole 16-27 percent are all conscious of their racism, no. And the concern is that this will turn into a crystallized white nationalism. We’ll keep looking at the data and looking at it.

Berlet: It’s not just about race, it’s about “the other.”

Question 5: I welcome the comments about whiteness and its role in this but though liberalism might pull us out of this it might also be a problem. We can use the language of collectivism, but that doesn’t get us back to dismantling individualism and meritocracy. Do you see a way out of this?

Disch: Thank you for the question, but if we are liberals (depending on how you identify—generally I identify as progressive), it shouldn't be the case that we can win an election with a huge majority and then suffer the repeated embarrassment of a president who can barely squeak through watered down policies. We need to not have Democratic leaders kowtowing to the language of the market; but I don't believe that Obama is kowtowing but that he believes in it. I feel mad because this is our turn and we won. Bush didn't win and yet he governed as if he had a mandate. What the hell!

Question 6: Then why did you say the Tea Party movement ruined Obama's presidency?

Disch: Because the Tea Party movement gave their obstructionism the illusion of being populist. You're not allowed to just say no.

Question 7: There's a consensus about how the economy works and that business owners are the motors of the economy. But if we look at your articulation of producerism, is it possible to challenge laissez faire capitalism by saying the motor of the economy is workers and re-defining it that way? The forgotten men are those at the bottom of the pyramid. Why has the left accepted business owners as producers? Do you think it is a worthy task to take on or is producerism inevitably connected to white nationalism? In the US, when you shake your fists at elites, you can't touch them but can step on blacks and others. I come out of a radical Christian tradition and I can't see how Glenn Beck gets away with his religiosity. Actual populist movements didn't use producerism, they talked about creating equitable social relations. It is about who has power and who has wealth and how it should be divided up. If you are scared of letting go of male privilege, white privilege, heterosexual privilege then you come up with this narrative of why you deserve it. But I'm wondering, could you see a way in which producerism is about the labor theory of value and the Left could use it if they could re-define who the producers are?

Berlet: As a Marxist I don't buy it—producerism is Bonapartism, not Marxism.

Question 8: The Senate is built so that nothing can pass and Bush's biggest accomplishments are No Child Left Behind and the tax cuts that passed via reconciliation. It is interesting that we are going to see Democrats get frustrated that their party can't do things and punish it by handing it over to Republicans who are going to do even less. The Tea Party will note that the filibuster is not in the Constitution and will tear it apart.

Postel: Progressive populists felt that the Constitution had outgrown its time and talked about a Democratic system and the 17th Amendment and the direct election of senators as a part of that. They had their problems with representative democracy and felt that representative democracy was too elitist. They would be rolling in their graves right now as everything that they posed has turned into its opposite. They believed the Constitution should reflect the needs of the moment and even considered the abolition of the Senate. This is a type of creative politics that was real in late 19th and early 20th century and is now dead. There is a reason that Glenn Beck is talking about his epoch as the nightmare of America.

Question 9: I wanted to ask about foreign politics and what we're doing abroad—particularly with relation to the Tea Party movement and the giant military budget and multiple wars that we're pursuing. What is their relationship to taxation and expenditure of budgets in a country that has devoted itself to support for the military and its war machine?

Burghart: One thing distinguishes the Tea Party from previous American conservative movements. Historically conservative movements have been isolationist but support for military intervention is higher among the Tea Party than it has been in previous movements. Move America Forward is a pro-war organization created to harass anti-war demonstrators and they have created "I love Gitmo" bumper stickers. The split is not 100 percent, but there is a deafening silence amongst them about the conditions that have been created.

Question 10: Whiteness as property goes back to the beginning of liberalism and individualism and was developed in the 19th century, and white nationalism goes back to the independence movement, but slave patrols were founded in the 18th century as an intermediate control stratum necessary for the evolution of colonialism and Jim Crow. It is often said that they were the roots of the modern police department, the prison industry and the urban police rule that constitutes a control stratus. What is the relationship between the Tea Party and the prison industry and the way the police function with respect to it, which has made it the largest industry in the world with 70 percent of the inmates being people of color?

Berlet: There is continual speculation about the relationship between the number of people disenfranchised and the outcome of elections. Things can be more complicated than we know and I'm not sure there is an easy answer, but race is central, as is gender, and there is a sense that if things get out of control it is a good thing, and as a civil libertarian I don't think it is a good thing. I say stop whining and get organizing. We, as people who are concerned about this, have to understand that democracy is not a spectator sport and we have to be close enough to kick Obama's butt.

Closing Remarks

Christine Trost provides brief closing remarks. She says that when she and other conference organizers began planning this conference in the spring of 2010 the Tea Party was receiving a lot of media attention and there was a great deal of speculation about the impact that this movement and Tea Party candidates would have on American politics, but there was very little scholarship on it. Some commentators even dismissed the Tea Party as an elite-driven, media construction that would fade away as swiftly as it appeared. Today's conference established that the Tea Party is not to be dismissed. The papers presented today have begun to shed new light on the Tea Party, its origins, constituencies and the likely impacts on American politics now and in the future. In this way the conference and the scholarship presented here have begun to fill an important gap. Trost hopes this conference has demonstrated the importance of approaching scholarship on the Right in an interdisciplinary way. To understand new ruptures and new movements we require not only the expertise of political scientists who study political parties, elections and public opinion, but also the historical contextualizations and the theoretical and substantive insights of political theorists, historians, race and gender scholars and journalists.

Hopefully, by initiating this interdisciplinary dialog and by including the questions and insights of our audience in this conversation, our understanding of the political phenomenon known as the Tea Party has been deepened, enriched, and we have moved the conversation forward, in addition to pointing to new areas of research and raising new questions to work on in the coming months.

In addition to scholarly lessons, Trost continues, the speakers today have pointed to some intersecting political lessons—both for those on the right and for those on the left. First, the research presented today suggests that Tea Party supporters are part of a very active, very conservative wing of the Republican Party, and, to the extent that they are able to frame their message in ways that appeal to a larger and more moderate segment of the American public, they are likely to wield significant influence within the Republican Party and move it further to the right. Second, to the extent that they succeed in mobilizing a significant segment of the American public and start winning elections, those on the left will need to take seriously the challenge that Tea Party activists pose to progressive politics and figure out how best to respond.

After the November election, Trost says, scholars will revise their papers in light of new data that is gathered and we will publish these papers in an edited volume [*Steep: The Vertiginous Rise of the Tea Party*]. In one week we will post a link on the Center's website to the video taken of these talks, which we encourage you to share with anyone who was not able to come today.

Trost concludes by announcing that this conference has been the result of an extensive collaboration and thanks co-sponsors, volunteers and staff for their participation in the planning and hosting of the conference.