



GREENBERG MILLENNIAL PROJECT

FOCUS GROUP #10
WHITE, NON-COLLEGE, MIXED GENDER
LOS ANGELES, CA
DECEMBER 6, 2007

MODERATOR: INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTIONS.

I'm Oriole, born and raised in LA. I work with jewelry. Luckily, no kids I know of yet and no wife.

I'm Kyle, 24-years-old, live in Long Beach, from Chicago originally. Just started my own trucking company about five months ago. That's about it.

I'm Lindsey and I live in San Pedro. I just moved from Long Beach to San Pedro actually. I'm twenty-seven, in college, hoping to finish someday. I'm studying geology and I'm also going to school to be a massage therapist. Geology rocks, but it is not exactly a career unless I want to work with an oil company and I don't want to do that.

I'm Brandon and I'm twenty-eight. I live in the Valley and I'm married. I am an actor and director for the theater. Good to be here.

I'm Ashley and I'm twenty-five and I'm a hair stylist.

I'm Nicole and I'm twenty-six and I'm a massage therapist and I'm also an artist. No kids, no husband.

I'm Demetri, twenty-six, from New York. I bartender part-time and go to school for business. I snowboard and hang out. I've been out here a year now.

I'm Steve and I'm also from New York. I've lived out here for about two years. I'm single and I own a couple of income tax preparation businesses.

MODERATOR—I WANT TO TALK ABOUT THINGS AND GET YOUR OPINIONS. OBVIOUSLY, EVERYBODY AROUND THE TABLE IS UNDER THIRTY-YEARS-OLD. A LOT OF TIMES WE TALK ABOUT AMERICAN HISTORY IN TERMS OF GENERATIONS, BABY BOOMERS, GENERATION X, THE IDEA OF BEING WITH PEOPLE OF THE SAME AGE WHO HAVE SIMILAR EXPERIENCES, SIMILAR ATTITUDES AND SIMILAR WAYS OF DEALING WITH THE WORLD AROUND THEM. WHEN YOU LOOK AT AMERICANS UNDER THIRTY, DO YOU THINK THAT YOU ARE A GENERATION. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE THINGS IN COMMON THAT KIND

OF UNITE YOU AND MAKE YOU UNIQUE FROM GENERATIONS THAT HAVE GONE BEFORE YOU?

Sure.

Uh-hum.

MODERATOR—WHAT KINDS OF THINGS?

The internet. Our lives revolve around it. That's the biggest thing I can think of.

I'd say that we are more technologically sophisticated, but less spiritually advanced. I think we have a lot less understanding of our inner worlds than our parents and our grandparents did, especially our grandparents.

Just the whole thing of technology, having cell phones attached to us at all times. Faxes, the whole technology boom has made a real difference of how we live our lives on a daily basis.

Fast.

Yeah.

You can do business with somebody and never meet them face to face. It's over the computer and telephone and you have no idea what they look like. Back then it was old fashioned. You kind of meet somebody and you have a conversation face to face. And you don't do that anymore.

It seems like it's really, really gotten individualistic as a culture. It used to be like community and collective as a culture. There was such a community feeling, everybody knew each other and knew each other's name. There was more of like a barter system. It seems like with people's businesses, it was I can't pay you but let me give you some of this corn or what not. And now you never see people. It's very strange. I have my checks direct deposited, so the numbers in my bank account like fluctuate and then I just pay those. It's numbers going up and down, but I never even see the money. It's kind of bizarre.

To be honest, I agree with all of the technical stuff. Even with how we do business now, I never even meet any of my customers. I sit at home and I work from home and I'm twenty-five-years-old and twenty-four. It's kind of weird you know. Back then I'm sure they used to like meet and greet and everything.

It's just not personal anymore.

It's such a trap too. Speaking as an artist, a lot of my art is focused aroundwe've got these leashes, these cell phones, nobody is connecting with anybody anymore. And that's what art is supposed to be about, connecting with people. I've got a cell phone with me right now. And

when somebody tells me to turn it off, I get annoyed. I might get a phone call. So it's hard because on the inside you know it's wrong, there is something wrong with it. But that's the world we live in.

You can obtain information a lot easier too. If I need to figure something out I can go pull up the internet and just look it up right away. But back then, they'd have to go home or to the library, it was just harder for them to figure it out. Read about, ask somebody, where literally for us it's just going to phone right here and looking it up.

And what's positive also is as the years go by with medical, all the research they've done and with our parents and grandparents generation, they didn't have certain cures for things like our generation does now. And people are living longer because of it. That's a positive thing.

MODERATOR—WHAT ELSE IS UNIQUE ABOUT YOUR GENERATION?

Transportation, hybrid cars.

We are not as insulated as our parents and our grandparents are. The world is smaller. It's more of a multi-cultural vibe to our generation. We don't worry so much about things like race or even sexuality nowadays. But as a result, we've become more homogenized too. The differences aren't appreciated.

I agree with what everybody says as far as technology goes. I can definitely say I think we are a lot more money driven, a lot more career oriented than past generations have been. A lot more revolves around finance, at least from what I can see.

MODERATOR—DO THE REST OF YOU GUYS THINK THAT YOUR GENERATION IS DRIVEN BY MONEY?

Oh yeah.

If you don't have money...

Money, money, money.

Yeah.

A consumer-driven society. And mostly for meaningless products. Like right now with the holidays, I appreciate the holidays too, but people are insane and they are buying just all kinds of stuff for people they don't even like.

People from our generation tend to live beyond their means.

That's very true.

Exactly.

No value of savings or investing or anything like that.

MODERATOR—WHY IS THAT?

TV tells them to. You've got to have this.

Credit cards are great.

I just think it's a really fast-paced environment. It's not like it used to be. You can do so much more in an hour today than you could have thirty years ago. It's not like hey, let's go get corn from the fields. Let's just call it in and get it delivered straight to my house. Everything is faster. The money goes faster, comes faster, just life is so fast-paced right now.

You can even trade in the stock market now online and they couldn't do that back then. I'm sure they had brokers and what not to, but I can just sit there and watch charts all day and watch my money go up and down, up and down. And probably back in the 60's, they couldn't do that.

But are people happier? I don't think so. I think they are more stressed out.

Yeah, they do it to themselves too.

I think it's the environment of the people.

There are people that aren't like that.

MODERATOR—IS THAT A FUNCTION OF LIVING IN LA? IS IT THE SAME WAY IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY?

You can get sucked into it.

LA is definitely different than a lot of other cities.

I think any big city you go into.

Yeah.

Yeah.

I've never lived in a small city or small town, so I really could not compare, but living in two large cities, I'd say yeah with those cities I've lived in, most definitely.

I've traveled to a lot of random armpits of America and when I was there, people are fast-paced. The kids are trying to do as much as they can. You've got eighteen-year-old kids starting a

company online. I just see so much...people just doing things. It's all kind of artificial because it's all online. You don't meet any body, no conversation, it's telephone or computer.

MODERATOR—DOES IT PRESENT YOU GUYS WITH MORE OPPORTUNITY THAN PREVIOUS GENERATIONS?

Absolutely.

Oh yeah.

I think it just takes away from the social contact and interaction with people. It's a downfall.

MODERATOR—ON THE ONE HAND YOU'VE GOT YOUR CELL PHONES, ALL THIS DIFFERENT TECHNOLOGY THAT ALLOWS YOU TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE ANY WAY YOU WANT TO. ON THE OTHER HAND YOU GUYS ARE TELLING ME THAT YOU ARE MORE DISCONNECTED.

Personally with each other.

There's a lot more opportunity to make money, do business and communicate about things that are maybe materially very important, but in a larger sense not that important. It's like Warhol or somebody said, you've got seven hundred channels and nothing is on TV. Maybe it was Springsteen. There is all this communication, but nobody is saying anything of value.

Nobody touches each other anymore. There's like a bubble of personal space around anyone. Even in the grocery store at line, if people get too close you are like....it's very strange. When you go somewhere else, people just come right up to you and hug you, like in other countries. People are really touchy and it's not a problem, but here everybody is just hands off. It's really bizarre.

And everyone is like sue happy. Everyone wants to sue everybody. And I'm sure like back in the 50's and 60's, people weren't suing everybody for like spilling some soda on them or something.

Spill your hot coffee, well you expect it to be hot.

People actually valued something. Nowadays people just throw the values out the window.

More or less, people are trying to get rich very quick now, very, very quick. Everyone has always wanted to get rich quick, but now it's just like how can I scam somebody or

We are like the short-cut generation.

Yeah.

MODERATOR—DO THE REST OF YOU AGREE WITH THAT? YOU THINK IT'S SHORT-CUTS AND INSTANT....?

Yeah, instant gratification.

Yeah.

Yeah.

MODERATOR—WHY IS THAT?

I'd say a lot of it is because of the internet. You can get anything right now. Wikipedia, you go on Wikipedia and you find it and you've got thirty seconds. You are done.

You just get used to that.

Or it's like someone who has a slower computer than someone else and you are like, my God your computer is so slow. It's like, what you can't wait thirty more seconds? They want it now.

MODERATOR—WHAT ARE YOUR VALUES, WHAT IS IT THAT MOTIVATES YOU AND DICTATES THE WAY THAT YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE?

Money. Everything I do from sun up to sundown ...I run my own business from home. I wake up, preparing faxes all day. I have money now invested in the stocks and stuff. I'm watching charts go up and down. I'm just money motivated from sun up to sundown.

Work hard and be a good person.

MODERATOR—WHAT DOES THAT MEAN TO BE A GOOD PERSON?

Take care of people and just to be a positive person and hope that everything around me is positive. Take care of me and God will take care of me.

Obviously if I'm doing well at work, but friends and family are like pretty important. If you've got a good group of friends and you can actually talk to your family, it's a pretty big deal. And just being a good person. I don't know if it's as much of like a religious thing, but being a good person is the main goal of everything. I guess that's it.

My priority is just to take care of my family, to live ethically as a person, as an artist, and to make a statement, leave a footprint. Something positive.

Just waking up and being happy with what you are doing in life. There are those times in my life when I wake up and I think, I don't want to be in LA anymore. I've been here for twenty-six years and then I'm like, I love it here. But that motivates me to stay here and figure out what

else I can do and be happy. And appreciate my new house I just bought. And put time and effort into it.

It's doing the best you can do, but at the same time some sort of fulfillment at the end of the day. Trying to assess the situation and come up with the best decision, and hopefully accomplish something in life. And do something that you love to do on a daily basis so you don't completely hate the time that you are here.

For me it's just success. Success drives me, to accomplish the goals that I set for myself. Treat people well like I want to be treated.

MODERATOR—YOU USED THE PHRASE LEAVING A FOOTPRINT, WHAT DOES THAT MEAN TO YOU?

Okay, like I said, I act and direct in plays. And if I can make a statement, let somebody know what my world view is, that's my medium and that's how I do it. And if I can make someone see something a different way, an issue, or a facet of life in a way that they hadn't seen it before, then I feel like that is leaving a footprint. Whether that's a political statement, a social statement or a statement about how you get by just walking down the street everyday. That's what I mean by leaving a footprint.

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK BY AND LARGE THAT YOUR GENERATION IS DRIVEN BY A DESIRE TO HELP OTHERS, TO DO SOMETHING FOR THE GREATER GOOD, NOT JUST FOR THEMSELVES? OR DO YOU THINK IT'S MOSTLY...

No, I think it's very self motivated.

Self motivated.

Very self centered.

I think we are learning to be selfish, but also not be that negative selfishness. I think you have to look at yourself, but you also have to look at others. And to be selfish or to not be selfish is a kind of medium where we are all learning how to do...especially now I'm learning how to learn about myself, to dedicate time to myself, but also to others. It's a balance in life. I think we are all learning how to do it.

It all depends on who you associate yourself with. We are all self centered, but there are organizations like Green Peace, there are plenty of Christians, everyone has their certain drive. You really can't just say the generation in whole is self motivated and self centered and stuff.

I think maybe selfish is kind of a strong word. Some people definitely are. There is a good percentage of the people that are just money motivated and selfish, but I think most of us are pretty self interested. Everything we do is better our own situation or the situation around us. A lot of people are trying to better the situation of their family. It's not necessarily selfish to

want a better, bigger home or a better school for your child or whatever, but it's in our definite self interest. We are always going to try to get to the next level, whether some people trample on others to do it or they climb the ladder the right way. It just kind of depends on who you talk to, who you catch.

MODERATOR—YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE 80'S AND 90'S WERE CALLED THE ME GENERATION. DO YOU THINK THE SAME THING APPLIES NOW TO YOUR GENERATION OR IS THERE A BETTER LABEL THAN THE ME GENERATION?

About the same.

I can't speak on everybody as a whole, but I'd say the majority.

There is a lot of good out there too, a lot of foundations out there that people try toand fundraising and just city activities that hopefully we all try to do.

MODERATOR—WHAT DO YOU GUYS DO IN YOUR OWN LIVES TO TRY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

(inaudible)

Volunteer for political candidates.

I take home all the stray animals. They are all living at my house.

I work at the shelter and I try to help people that are dying of terminal illness because it's really hard when you have to go to the grocery store and you can't breathe and...I've been through that and people run screaming from you when you are sick or hurt or need help or someone in your family dies. People kind of throw a casserole at you or write you a check. That really doesn't help a whole lot when you need help. Through the hospital I know a lot of people and a doctor will tell me, so and so needs help grocery shopping or help with Christmas or something. Just go to the store for people or take people out to the store or the aquarium or the museum. When you are stuck in a bed or in a wheelchair, it is just not that fun. It's real easy to get down and let it go. I know a lot of young people who are sick and who are fighting for a chance. I try to take people out and show them a good thing. Anything, like take them to the library, anything they want to do.

For the past few years I've worked at a lot of corporate companies doing a lot of corporate events. I try to tie in a lot of non-profits with the corporate companies, where 50% of the sales of what they are doing anyway or it's just kind of putting them in a spotlight, possibly get more money to try to put them in the right position. There are a lot of non-profits who are looking to get that extra money. It's worked out a little bit.

I've donated money to American Idol. Give bums money here and there.

MODERATOR—HOW WOULD YOU LABEL THE VALUES OF YOUR GENERATION?

Lacking of.

Yeah.

Vacuum.

I honestly don't think that most people in our generation think about their values. I think that's part of the problem.

Money gets in the way.

It's like marriage. What happened to that? That used to have value.

Now they've fixed it with divorce.

Yeah, exactly. How can they call anything...they are calling gay marriage a joke, what about Vegas? Shouldn't that be sacrilegious where you can just go get wasted and get married?

You mentioned before the 80's and the me generation and all that stuff. I think that the problem here is beyond the me generation because at least they had the shame to deny it maybe, to fight it. With us it's like, yeah, that's who we are. So what?

MODERATOR—IS THAT HONESTY OR...

There is something a little bit noble about it, but there is also something a little disturbing about it. There is no shame.

MODERATOR—I WANT TO LOOK AT SOME TRADITIONAL LABELS. PEOPLE HAVE TALKED ABOUT POLITICAL VALUES, LIBERALS ON ONE END AND CONSERVATIVES ON THE OTHER END AND EVERYBODY FITS SOMEWHERE ON THIS LINE. DO YOU BUY THAT, DO YOU THINK THAT YOUR VALUES ARE CAPTURED SOMEWHERE ON THIS LINE OR DO THEY NOT REALLY FIT?

I tend to think this stuff is a Madison Avenue creation. I tend to think that liberal and conservative, that's how you get voters and that's it. You get them to label themselves.

I think we all have our views. We all are conservative one way and very liberal in another way. But there are definitely things that I feel are conservative and definitely things that are very liberal, but...

I agree.

It depends on what you are talking about.

I don't want to be labeled like, oh, I'm very liberal and then have that label as me and be like, well you said this, you are contradicting your liberalism. That's the way I feel. I don't want to be labeled as that.

MODERATOR—WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU WHEN SOMEONE SAYS THAT THEY ARE CONSERVATIVE?

Republicans.

My step dad.

Uptight.

Close minded.

Exactly.

Just old school.

You kind of label yourself. It's like a stamp.

Everything is cut and dry.

MODERATOR—WHAT DOES LIBERAL MEAN TO YOU?

Irresponsible, that's what we are told to believe.

MODERATOR—BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

Open minded to all aspects in life, even if you don't believe in it, respect it.

Looking at two sides of it, not just what everyone else is thinking or what you are supposed to think. You are actually thinking for yourself.

Progressive. That means interested in the progression of the American character, change it, advance it. Evolving.

MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT THE REST OF YOU? WHAT DOES PROGRESSIVE MEAN TO YOU AS A LABEL?

Car insurance.

Moving forward with different views and stuff, that's what comes to my mind.

I was at a party last week and it was a liberal republican party and there was nothing but like gay people over the age of 50. It was weird. I have never seen nothing like that. It was a fundraiser for Giuliani or something like that. I felt very out of place there. It's definitely an experience. But they were liberals and they were republicans and I don't know if those go in the same category, but they were gay and over the age of fifty.

MODERATOR-ANY OTHER LABELS THAT YOU THINK BETTER FIT? WHAT I HEAR FROM YOU GUYS IS THAT YOU DON'T WANT ANY LABELS. YOU DON'T WANT TO HAVE ANYTHING ATTACHED TO YOUR VALUES.

Who wants to be labeled?

I think nowadays everyone is so much different now. People are so different than like forty years ago, it's hard to put a label on just a certain generation because I'm sure everyone here is completely different. I'm sure his values are different than mine, hers are different, everyone is different. There is no reason to put a label on the generation because someone else may want to argue it.

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK PEOPLE IN YOUR GENERATION ARE MORE INDIVIDUALISTIC, MORE CUSTOMIZING THEIR LIVES AND NOT FOLLOWING CATEGORIES AND GUIDELINES?

No.

I live in Silver Lake and it's hipsterville 101. Everyone there dresses the same, listens to the same music, drives the same car. You very rarely you find anyone that's out of the norm. And if you are out of the norm, you stick out like a sore thumb.

Or you are starting a new thumb.

But you think you are being a very individual person, but then like the girl next to you is wearing the same outfit as you and you are like, okay....

Yeah. Individualism is the new conformity. Everybody is different, it's just they are all different in the same way.

Living in Long View has made me realize that everyone is different. Everyone looks different out there. You see guys walking by with pink hats on and stuff and you see some pretty wild stuff every once in awhile. But I think just in general, the big picture of America, the style out here is obviously a lot different than the style in Delaware, New York, Miami or Vegas and everything. So really you can't just put a label on the whole generation because every style in every city in every part of America is different. Some people on the farms, they were born and raised like I'm supposed to buck hay and all that stuff, whereas people out here think they need a Mercedes Benz and do whatever. In New York, people are like on Wall Street and stuff.

I think there is a huge group of people, too, that liberals and conservatives fall under. They choose it because their parents chose it. And that's just how they were raised. It's a big deciding factor on what you decide. My dad was a conservative and I'd probably be wearing a suit right now at some board meeting somewhere and agree with everything he agreed with. Or you can go the other way and rebel against him and it's like, I don't want that. I think there is a big group of people who are raised with those because of what their parents instilled in them.

I think our parents, they were getting married, having kids young and more and more people our age are getting married later, having kids later. My mom had be and my brother before she was twenty-one. I'm twenty-six, I'm married and have kids. I'm the first one of the four women in our generation who is doing that. I think it's a huge difference.

You can postpone having kids.

Right.

And people back then, the only reason why or a huge reason why they got married is so they can have sex. You did not have sex unless you were married.

Right.

And there was no birth control or anything. It's a lot different too.

There are a lot more options than the earlier generations in a lot of things.

Plus there are so many unhappy grandparents out there who didn't want to be ...they did it for money, if they did it so their kids could be happy or whatever. So their parents would be happy with the person they chose. That has a lot to do with it. I personally had grandparents who hated each other until the die that my grandpa died. And they stayed together because it was instilled in them that family is first. Raise your kids, treat your wife well or not....

But would they really have been happier by themselves? So were they really ...

That's the thing. Were they just unhappy together or would they have been unhappy by themselves? But I'm convinced it was a time...they got married when they were like twelve and fourteen-years-old. That's also a really hard thing. Grandma had her first kid at like fourteen.

MODERATOR—DO THE REST OF YOU GUYS AGREE THAT YOU GUYS JUST HAVE A LOT MORE OPTIONS?

Yes.

Oh yeah.

Yes.

Maybe too many.

Especially women.

We only could be like secretaries and school teachers and now we can be anything.

(many talking at once)

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK THAT THAT’S PART OF THE REASON WHY PEOPLE ARE WAITING LONGER TO GET MARRIED OR TO HAVE KIDS?

Careers.

They are busier and to be honest with you, I think it’s more financially sound.

You have time to work towards your goals and you get the money saved up and you are able to take care of a family.

That’s just what we are told though.

But, I’d wait till my later 30’s to do that. What everybody is saying with technology, the way medicine is these days, women can wait that long and still be able to have children.

I think sometimes just from my own experience, like growing up in the suburbs of Chicago, all my friends were like having kids, getting married, everyone seems to want to get a job and get through life, live an average life. You come out here and all of a sudden everything is all fast paced. Even like meeting a girl and having a girlfriend is completely out of the question. Like in Chicago, you were dating this person, having a kid, getting married, weddings and all that stuff.

That’s why they do online dating now. People don’t know how to meet people anymore in person.

Once again, it’s all where you are from. In the suburbs of Chicago, online dating is not like a popular thing. Out here in LA, people are meeting people on My Space, Craig’s List, Face Book. You are meeting strangers all over the place.

I lived in Indianapolis before I moved out here and that was the way it was, high school, go to college, had a girlfriend throughout college, get married, have kids, that’s it.

Then you get a good job, live an average life and that’s it. Out here it’s just like, bam, bam, bam, spend money on BMW’s, buy \$5,000 watches and stuff, just buying all this garbage. It’s a crazy lifestyle.

MODERATOR—YOU MENTIONED MY SPACE, FACE BOOK, ALL THESE DIFFERENT TECHNOLOGIES, HOW DO YOU THINK THEY AFFECT YOUR ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE WITH ONE ANOTHER?

That's the way to communicate now. That's how I talk to my little sister, my brother. We don't call each other, we e-mail each other, leave little stupid comments on My Space. It's like an everyday thing.

Life is definitely put out there.

But we do it to ourselves. I'm old fashioned. I send birthday cards. I don't know how many of you guys do that, but...

MODERATOR—YOU SEND LIKE ACTUAL...

Yeah, of course. I love getting cards, do you guys?

I don't remember the last time I got a birthday card.

Credit card companies send birthday cards.

The company you work for.

We don't know people's names, we know their e-mail address, their e-mail name.

And at the same time while you are on My Space and let me ask you a question, how many of you guys have more than a hundred friends on My Space? More than fifty?

I don't have a My Space.

I don't do My Space.

You may have more people that you meet on there, but the relationships are more shallow. You don't really know them.

That's not necessarily true. I've lived in LA, grew up in LA, I've got like four hundred friends and I know about three hundred and fifty of them. I have acquaintances going to school, working with them, friends of friends or hanging out with them.

(many talking at once)

There is an element of ...it's not the same kind of friendships or relationships that you would necessarily have before. You had to put more effort into them.

It's a way to keep track of my college buddies. I went on a lot of study abroad trips and a lot of the people came from different parts of the country and it's just been like really hard to stay in touch. I've changed my phone number and moved several times. I know a lot of people have gotten married and changed their names, so that's why I use it, to keep in touch.

I don't condemn it. I do the same thing. I'm saying ...

(many talking at once)

MODERATOR—THAT'S WHAT I'M TRYING TO GET AT, WHAT DO YOU USE IT FOR? IN WHAT WAYS DOES IT HELP YOU?

I'd say that's the only positive thing is connecting with people that you haven't in years, since high school or whenever that you would always love to talk to them but you just have no idea how to get a hold of them.

Right.

And people I have lost their information...I have friends who are like, I saw so and so on My Space and kicked it to me. I mean I have like thirty friends on there.

In the back of my head I'm just thinking I met a girl in Hermosa Beach and I didn't even like remember her or nothing and she called me the next day and she's like it's Regina. Some of your My Space friend requests, she sent me a friend request, and I'm like oh my gosh, the Asian chic. I was just like, what would I do without My Space?

(many talking at once)

Seriously she called me at like 11:30 in the morning. Honestly I would have had no idea in the world. When she called me I had not a clue who she was. Oh my gosh, that one chic from last night, they sent me your friend request and stuff, I'm like damn.

(many talking at once)

That's how I share my pictures with my friends. We upload our images and build little profile notebooks or albums and share pictures. That's how we do our pictures now.

Do you let other people get on your page?

No, it's private.

MODERATOR-I WANT TO SHIFT GEARS A LITTLE BIT AND TALK ABOUT THE LEADERSHIP IN OUR COUNTRY. I'M TALKING ABOUT POLITICAL, CORPORATE, ALL THE LEADERSHIP ACROSS THE COUNTRY. HOW DO YOU RATE THE LEADERSHIP IN OUR COUNTRY?

Horrible.

Terrible.

It goes back to the me aspect.

Exactly.

Every one of those politicians.

I want to think of me and my income in the next fifteen years.

Politicians have big dollar signs on their heads.

Every one of them.

All of them.

Someone is backed by somebody and that's a shame.

To what would benefit them and not what will benefit our country and our society.

There is no sense of altruism, there's no sense of patriotism. No matter what they give...they give their humble platitudes or whatever, they don't believe any of it. They are trying to get a vote so they can get that next check so they can buy the fourth house. There is no real leadership.

That has a big problem to do with us.

Absolutely.

And our generation. We don't do anything. We don't have any sort of community. Something is bad, we don't come together and try to stand up. That's a problem.

That's how a lot of things happened in the 60's that changed the whole USA. People just don't do that anymore.

We are all involved with our immediate success stuff.

Yeah.

If we do try to rally or are against it, we are put in jail.

It really doesn't matter because I don't think anything gets accomplished anyway.

Exactly.

Unless you've got money to pay one of them off.

Like the march for immigration and all that stuff...

That's been four or five years and they've done nothing about that. Bush will be out of office and it still won't be taken care of.

Yeah.

And everybody will be preaching about what they are going to do about it and giving all that or whatever...none of them step up to the plate. Nothing is going to get taken care of. It's going to keep going on and on.

Is the next topic going to be religion? I want to leave the room before this gets nasty.

MODERATOR—NO, WE ARE NOT GOING TO RELIGION.

I just think right now it's not at its best obviously. I just don't understand how the president got re-elected.

Or how he got elected in the first place.

Yeah.

How did he get re-elected, that's what I don't understand. Whoever is up there is going to be just another puppet for corporate...

We hope not.

That's what we are all praying for, right?

Something revolutionary needs to happen in order to get change. That's the way the American custom is, it's the mighty dollar.

It's not so mighty anymore.

MODERATOR—CAN YOU POINT TO ANY EXAMPLES OF THE KIND OF LEADERSHIP THAT YOU WOULD WANT TO SEE?

I would say an example is Katrina. Something bad happens, so we all come together. Why does something bad have to happen for us to all come together? It seems like that community needed

help a long time ago. It's the same thing when someone dies, we all come close together. Why weren't we close together before? Why does a funeral have to bring us close?

It's the shock to us.

Yeah, why do tragedies have to bring us close together when we should be close together and helping the community before?

I used to think that Barack Obama was the real deal, but the problem is that in order to get where he has to get to effect any change, he has to play the game. And the minute you start to play the game, that's when the game is over. I don't think it's possible to have ...the way this country is now, it's not possible to be an effective leader who actually does something positive. In order to get to where you can actually change something to where you can get into the halls of power or whatever...in order to get there you have to play the corporate game. And you have to play the media's game.

MODERATOR—DO THE REST OF YOU AGREE WITH THAT?

Yes.

Or somewhere down the line.

Exactly.

I would love to see (inaudible) because of America. I think that would be the only way this country could get back on the right track. That's not dealing with BS issues, we are concentrating on world peace and just to work together with other countries around the world to make this a better place to live for everyone, not just for a certain country and certain people.

People like that, they will never get elected because...

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK THAT PEOPLE IN POSITIONS OF POWER ARE DOING WHAT DEMETRI SAID, JUST LOOKING OUT FOR JUST VERY SMALLER GROUPS?

Absolutely.

That's why we represent different parties. They support their party and everything their party represents. I don't know too much about it. Just like that republican party I was just at in Laguna Hills, after seeing a ten million dollar home and stuff, these guys have so much crap shoved up their butt and stuff. Just weird seeing that type of environment and stuff, you could totally tell that they are all about themselves and about their party, not about helping other people.

Yeah.

I also think power is a big thing. In human nature, power amongst your peers might be a very different thing. You would do anything just to hold it and have it. I think certain groups have been in power and always try to be in power for generations, for centuries. And I don't think that has changed. I believe in the Free Masons and all the secret societies. I think that exists out there because it would make sense. Like the people who are Savants, for instance, they are on a different level. They walk among us, but they are not on the same playing field. There is this guy who learned the Swedish language in three days. When you have such power, your brain has such power, you are playing a completely different game. If all those guys get together, they can basically do whatever they want. And that's what I think goes on.

MODERATOR-OTHER THOUGHTS ON LEADERSHIP THESE DAYS?

I thought Bill Clinton was a good leader. That's my own personal opinion.

I thought he was alright.

It's hard to say good when you are dealing out all the crap.

Yeah, that's the issue.

Yeah, he's the best of the worst, but that's the problem.

Exactly.

Who are you going to vote for then?

(many talking at once)

Of course we are going to compare him to...

Even Clinton, he did some good things, but...

He was still something of a corporate tool. In order to get where he got to, you have to be.

Yep, you've got to play that game.

Yeah.

I think it would be really cool if we had elections with no sponsorship.

Special interest groups need to go.

Yeah.

They are just buying everything.

You can't have a single dollar for your campaign and try to become president. If you spend a single dollar, you are out.

That would be nice, but it would never happen.

No.

That would be interesting though.

MODERATOR—IS THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN OUR COUNTRY, IS IT FOCUSED ON THE ISSUES THAT MATTER?

They talk like they are going to focus on them and then they never really do anything about them.

Immigration is an example right there.

I think the economy is huge. They always talk about like interest rates and everything. Nothing is getting better lately.

Or we have issues, like why are we even discussing illegal aliens having driver's licenses? Why are we even talking about that? No.

It should be an obvious answer.

Yeah.

The problem is if you listen to these guys, if you actually listen to what they say on the various issues individually, they are not actually saying anything.

Right.

They are using a lot of rhetorical language and a lot of very vague terminology in order to make people feel like...this guy makes me feel safe...it sounds like he has an idea of what to do. I don't know what to do, so here, you handle it.

It's not only having an idea, but exercising that idea.

Right.

And it's real easy to get up and say, oh I've got this great plan that's going to fix everything. I can't go into the details right now, but you've got to trust me on this and look at my nice hair and my nice speaking voice and just pull the lever.

MODERATOR—SPEAKING OF THE THINGS THAT THEY TALK ABOUT, ONE OF THE THINGS WE’VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT ARE SOCIAL ISSUES, GAY MARRIAGE, ABORTION, STEM CELL RESEARCH. DO YOU THINK THAT THESE ARE THE ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE PLAYING SUCH A BIG ROLE IN OUR CAMPAIGNS AND STUFF?

It depends upon the type of leadership they hold. As far as the president, he shouldn’t be too concerned about it. He’s got bigger things going on. But maybe Arnold Schwarzenegger, as a state or whatever, maybe he should be worried about stuff like that. Like medical marijuana and stuff, I don’t think the federal government should be so worried about it, maybe just the state.

I think that stuff has a place, social issues are important, don’t get me wrong. We are living in such a complex, difficult situation right now in terms of global dynamics. A lot of the time on both sides of the political spectrum, democrats and republicans both use these things as wedges to piss the other side off. That’s really their usefulness for them.

I think it’s important that they talk about it. The whole gay marriage situation, some states are allowing it, some aren’t. You are the president of the United States, you run the country. A large group of people are against it or for it. I think it is your duty to bring it together and make a decision for the country. And of course, there is always going to be groups of people that agree and disagree with you.

I like when it gets close to the political election, it is kind of geared towards, how do I make this guy look bad instead of like telling people what I really want to change and do, that I’m really not going to change and do, I’m just going to tell you I’m doing it. That’s sad. And it’s sad that the news is corrupted. They are very one-sided too. It’s really hard.

I think when the politicians concentrate on the social aspects, just like right here. They are trying to target one group or the other. On those aspects it’s either a yes or a no, I don’t think there’s any in between on that. Either you feel for it or you don’t. I think it goes a lot with the liberals and the conservatives. That’s what they try to talk about. They are important aspects to look at, but not as important as concentrating on the economy and the different things that are going on in our country.

MODERATOR—HOW DO YOU GET BETTER LEADERSHIP IN THIS COUNTRY?

Starts with values. When you throw the values out the door....

MODERATOR—WHAT KIND OF VALUES?

Not the kind of values that I think the majority of people carry these days.

MODERATOR—WHAT DO THE REST OF YOU THINK?

I think it's a very thin line between leadership and just the whole idea of change. People don't like to change. It's tough for people to change. And they don't want to give up things to change. We all want to do good and be kind and get ahead, but at the same time help others, but at the end of the day people don't want to change. It's very hard for them to give up their habits. And that is the issue that leadership has to go along with what we are used to and that's tough.

I think it's tough for a good leader to emerge with all the crap that they have to go through. There is so much like junk, just the whole like building themselves up. There is so much bad crap going on right now, you have to pass that leader and that leader and that leader to build yourself above everybody. It's hard. If someone had good values, then you have all these people with bad values above you, how do you emerge above those people when they are basically controlling everything?

Like even just say like Bill Clinton for example. He might have been a good person with great values, but he had to go through all those people with bad values to become president. I'm sure it kind of corrupted his brain or just any type of leader in general now.

I think we have to rebuild our foundation as a country in order to make some sort of a headway.

I think when Martin Luther King...he was probably like the last small leader that actually just built himself through the common America. Everyone else had to go through the whole system.

And JFK.

And did it purely for the people.

Then they get assassinated. Just like how it says in the movie, JFK, they try to change the country for the better and then they get assassinated. And then his brother...

There's the reason why they got assassinated.

I think they were trying to do something good for the whole world, as opposed to just for the country.

And then they got assassinated by special interest groups. And that's just...the people that don't value your life as much as they value their own, they are always going to be there and they are always going to be right on your back ready to take you out.

MODERATOR—WHAT ROLE CAN YOUR GENERATION PLAY IN TRYING TO EFFECT THIS LEADERSHIP?

Get some self motivating people that really want change. Going back to the very beginning where so many people are so money motivated that they are just all about themselves and they are really not too concerned about the actual leadership in the country. They are more concerned about getting to where they need to be. And not about changing everyone else's lives.

United. People have to unite. If you get enough people to try to make change, something is going to have to happen.

I think the most important thing is to set examples for our kids. I think it's too late for our generation probably. We've reached a point, in terms of the mass technology and the sense of instant gratification, we are kind of addicted to that. I think that if we start with our kids in trying to teach them, do as I say, not as I do, then maybe that will get us on the road. But the system is broken and it's going to take a hundred years to fix it. It's not an easy fix.

You keep breeding that into your kid's head and then you are going to create something that's even worse than it is right now.

Yeah, exactly.

I agree with you 100% on that. You've got to instill good values in your kids to carry that on.

We have to start with our generation now teaching us to teach our children. If we don't teach ourselves, how are we going to teach our children? We are going to stay the same, we are going to teach our kids the same...

We are not going to have time to teach our kids.

The kids are growing up on the computers and on the TV.

That's the thing. There needs to be a real effort made by a lot of people. It's not something that is going to be able to work on an individual level. I mean everybody has to really try. And that's why I don't have a whole lot of...I'm a little pessimistic about it. I don't know that it can be fixed.

Like if I'm not mistaken, in the Jewish religion, there is a time where you can't watch any television, you can't use a car, you can't use any technology whatsoever and they have to spend time with family. And just hang out for like five or six hours, the whole day and just talk or do whatever. Just nothing that...and in a way I think that should be done for everybody. I think there should be a time where cable gets completely turned off, the internet gets completely turned off and you have no other choice than to go out there and maybe play basketball. And just maybe go out there with your kids and just bond in a way that doesn't include all the other crap. I think all that stuff takes us away. It just gets us hypnotized on stuff that doesn't really matter. Who wants to watch Sheila Tequila do whatever she is doing? Who needs that stuff in their life? It's pointless time that's being spent on nothing.

It's a waste of time.

MODERATOR—TRYING TO UNITE PEOPLE, TRYING TO GET PEOPLE IN THE SAME DIRECTION, WHAT IS IT THAT BRINGS PEOPLE OF YOUR GENERATION TOGETHER THAT GETS THEM MOVING IN THE SAME DIRECTION?

If you offer them money.

That's the first thing that came to my mind.

Yeah.

Like coming here for two hours.

Anything free, money.

If it's a gimmick. Help me, I'll help you.

Win a prize.

That's a shame.

Good time, alcohol.

(many talking at once)

A change in the government.

I think you should make it mandatory and fine people...you've got to play basketball one hour a day or you get a thousand dollar fine.

Give them an opportunity to feel morally superior without having to do any....I think people like that.

MODERATOR—(HANDOUTS PASSED OUT) THIS IS A LIST OF TEN OF THE BIG CHALLENGES FACING OUR COUNTRY THESE DAYS. READ THROUGH THIS LIST AND RANK ORDER THEM. NUMBER ONE IS THE ONE THAT YOU THINK IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE, THE MOST URGENT ONE FOR OUR COUNTRY TO ADDRESS. NUMBER TEN IS THE LEAST IMPORTANT, THE LEAST URGENT. LET ME HEAR THE LETTERS OF YOUR TOP THREE.

A, G, and H.

I, B, G.

C, B, A.

B, E, C.

I, D, C.

C, E, I.

I, A, G.

A, B, C.

MODERATOR—MORE THAN HALF OF YOU WENT WITH “C”, THE RISING COST OF HEALTHCARE AND THE GROWING NUMBER OF UNINSURED. WHY DOES THAT ONE RISE SO HIGH FOR YOU GUYS?

Health insurance is so important, but it’s so expensive. I’m uninsured because I can’t afford it.

Either I have to be a full-time student and be under my parent’s insurance, and if we are not, then we are shit out of luck and we have to pay for it ourselves. And living in LA with car accidents and everything, you need health insurance.

The insurance companies, it’s a big scam.

Yeah.

It’s a damn scam. They’ll deny just about anybody for anything. You see the list of things that they deny you for and you’ve got to kick out all that money for medicine too. I don’t know. I could get into the depth of it and go into it for like twenty minutes on why I think it is what it is.

It’s a scam. You go to Canada, everyone is covered. You go to Europe and everything is covered.

I would rather pay more taxes and be 100% covered. It would be worth it for me.

There are just so many issues, like even taxes. The income tax, there is no law that says your income should be taxed. And then it goes to the pharmaceutical companies. They are making money off how much you are paying for your medicine.

They make way too much. They’ll never pass a general healthcare system.

No.

There are people who can be bought by the pharmaceutical companies and the insurance companies. It will never happen.

They are making more money, kicking it back to the government, and charging us for an arm and a leg than they would if they were to give us the normal costs.

That's why I think "T" should be moved to number one. I think everything stems from "I."

I agree.

MODERATOR—ALRIGHT, LET'S TALK ABOUT THAT. LET'S TALK ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF LOBBYISTS AND SPECIAL INTERESTS. THAT GOT MORE OF YOUR NUMBER ONE VOTES THAN ANYTHING ELSE.

That's one of the roots of the problem.

And it's been that way forever, since the industrial age and the railroads. They control politics, they control media, they control everything in this country. Before Rupert Murdoch there was William Randolph Hearst, that's just the way this country is run.

Complete agreement.

I feel the same.

MODERATOR—THEY TAKE THE MONEY FROM THE LOBBYISTS AND SPECIAL INTERESTS TO GET RE-ELECTED. AND SO, THEN THEY SPEND ALL THAT MONEY TRYING TO CONVINCING US AS VOTERS TO RE-ELECT THEM. WHY COULDN'T WE HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE AND SAY YOU TAKE THE MONEY AND YOU DO WHAT THEY DO AND THEN WE ARE NOT GOING TO RE-ELECT YOU. WHY IS IT THAT THESE GUYS ARE REWARDED BY TAKING ALL THIS MONEY BY GETTING RE-ELECTED?

It's the entire government that's behind it.

And the reason it's the entire government is that it is tied into the media. The guys who get the money from the special interests are the guys who can afford to reach us because we watch television and we are on the internet and all this stuff. The guys who get the money from the special interests are the guys who can afford to reach us. We don't know about the guys who don't get money from special interests. If we took more of an interest, if we cared about something besides what was on that screen, then maybe things would be different.

Have you guys seen (inaudible)? You should check that out. It's amazing.

What is it called?

It's called Psych Guys. It's an amazing film about special interests controlling America. It's very frightening.

MODERATOR—IS THERE SOMETHING THAT COULD BE DONE ABOUT IT? WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

Marry a Canadian.

We have to care. Americans have to care.

Yeah.

We really need to give a shit. We don't. That's something about our generation, we don't care. We sit here and we bitch about it, but we've got...we need to go buy stuff and make money.

Take the kids to soccer practice and buy a new HD. I'll let somebody else worry about that.

We don't really ban together and try doing too much about it. And at least I feel like, what the hell can you do besides gripe and moan about it?

MODERATOR—LET'S TALK ABOUT A COUPLE OTHER ONES. "A", AMERICA'S DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OILS....WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT THIS ISSUE?

Half of my paycheck goes to that department. Gas is so expensive and it's polluting our world. It's controlling us.

(end of side)

Half of the reason we are at war is because of oil. And if we didn't need oil, we'd be on something else. We don't know what it would be on. It's terrible.

Take over the Middle East just so we can have their oil. There are other options out there.

Yeah, but does it get more fun than that?

Like Brazil, for instance, is completely ...it's self reliant. Like if Brazil can accomplish something like that, why can't America? Not that America is better than Brazil, but I'm just saying that we should have the same resources as Brazil has to accomplish the same thing where they are self sustaining as far as their oil and fossil fuels.

I think it's important from an environmental perspective obviously. Everyone is concerned about global warming, whether you believe it or not, it seems to be happening.

Yeah.

And so there...the other thing is, it ties into "G," which was in my top three anyway. And in order to solve "G" we need to fix "A" and the sooner the better and I don't think it's going to get fixed until we do that.

Half of these things wouldn't be an issue if "A" was kind of controlled. Terrorism, that's a big one. We are in the middle of a place that we don't belong. I'm personally Israeli and that's a big reason why America is in the Middle East right now, but it's really not. It's really just a for show thing. A lot of these things, the money that they get kickbacks and the money that they make can go towards so many other things. Basically none of this would even be an issue if we didn't have the world that we are living in right now. That should be one of the first things we try to fix on there.

The past couple of years, I think the oil industries have had their most profitable years.

Because we are paying \$3.50 a gallon.

And that's coming at a cost of killing thousands of people around the world. Especially in certain places.

I just don't understand how you can have the most profitable year and the gas prices are up and you are in a war in a country and then you are having the most profitable year.

It's just baffling, isn't it? It is just mind boggling.

You know who is getting rich off of this.

And the Iranians.

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK THE OIL COMPANIES ARE BASICALLY WAR PROFITEERS?

They certainly play a large role in it. There are a lot of pieces to the puzzle, but I'm sure they are a pretty large one.

Yes.

It comes with power.

Cheney worked with oil before he worked with Bush. He's still working with oil. So if you are a big name you are in oil.

And what governor became president of what state and what state has the largest oil refineries?

Absolutely. It's just not a coincidence obviously.

MODERATOR—LET'S TALK ABOUT "B," THE DECLINING QUALITY AND RISING INEQUALITY IN AMERICA'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM.

What frightens me is that I read a poll recently where 27% and it doesn't sound like a big number actually, 27% of Americans could not name our vice president. There was another poll recently done where I can't remember the exact numbers, but some astounding number could not tell you what year 9/11 happened in. This is all about education. The people that were being asked are nineteen and twenty-year-olds and they were fifteen when 9/11 happened. And they were being educated when Dick Cheney was elected vice president. They don't know. Public education is a mess, especially in LA.

I think it's the cost of education too. It costs thousands and thousands of dollars to get a good education. But half of my friends who have diplomas from universities aren't using their diploma. What's the purpose of going to school when we are not going to use it when we can make lots of money and not have a diploma?

People are almost required to have college degrees now to get jobs. They bury themselves in debt. They get hired knowing that they have buried themselves in debt and they need to be able to get out of that debt and they need to be able to have insurance. That's a huge factor. It all ties into each other.

I don't understand why, for me personally, it's not about the diploma. It's about the knowledge that I gain from the education in school. That's the most important thing.

Great, you want to make more money, go to Harvard or Stamford or wherever you want, but the point is that you go to school to gain knowledge. And it's knowledge that I think is priceless, not the piece of paper that says you graduated with the diploma. I know a lot of people that have cheated their way through college. They didn't even learn anything. They have a diploma from UCLA. That's great, but you haven't learned anything.

Have you seen like Jay Leon's street walking? You know how he asks people questions, and these are very basic questions, like capitals of states or different countries and people don't know anything. They'll be like, on what continent is Egypt located and nobody knew. And it's like, oh my God, that's like a second grade question. And the LA Times itself is written at a sixth grade level. It doesn't say a lot about our public that we are falling so far behind all the other countries. And no money is put into education, kind of like the public health system.

MODERATOR—HOW DID WE GET TO THIS POINT?

I think schools have just kind of let people slide on by though too. You just go through the system. Even myself, I never graduated high school, I never did anything. I just kind of slid right through and I don't even know how I made it through the eighth grade. I've not a clue in the world. One thing I just learned from my own personal experience, I've learned self educational, not a formal education, self education and making a fortune.

It comes down to people not caring and money. Teachers, they just want to get their paycheck and can't wait for 3:30 when the bell rings.

I think there is something to what Demetri said too. I think there's a lot of value placed on the piece of paper and not enough value placed on the knowledge itself.

You get a degree and you go into something like sales and you go for a two-month course and you get taught to do what the job specifies.

Yeah.

That's the truth.

MODERATOR—THIS STATEMENT TALKED ABOUT INEQUALITY IN AMERICA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM. THE WAY THE SCHOOLS ARE FUNDED...

People in poor neighborhoods are going to get a poor education and people in more affluent ones are going to get a better education.

MODERATOR—RIGHT, THE WAY EDUCATION IS FUNDED AREAS THAT HAVE A HIGH TAX BASE AND PEOPLE MAKE A LOT OF MONEY, THE SCHOOLS HAVE MORE MONEY. AREAS OF LOWER INCOME, LESS MONEY TO THE SCHOOLS. DO YOU THINK THAT THAT STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY IS A PROBLEM? DO YOU THINK THAT PEOPLE FROM WEALTHIER AREAS SHOULD ACTUALLY BE SUBSIDIZING?

Yes.

Absolutely.

I want to know why the Beverly Hills Police Department was like a \$110 million dollar project and then you look at LA County and they probably haven't rebuilt any of their police departments in forty years. And why are these guys driving Suburbans and every like two years they are new ones. And they can't get enough squad cars or police officers in LA County to handle what they need. It's a big problem.

I live in North Hollywood which is bordered by Van Nuys on one side and Studio City on the other side. And the vast difference is blatant and marked and undeniable. You look at Van Nuys and you see the schools in these neighborhoods that are falling apart. And then you look at Studio City where these wealthy people live and you've got a lot of people who work in the industry and television and movies and these big houses and these really nice magnet schools, and yes there is definitely an inequality there and it definitely needs to be addressed. Call me a socialist or whatever, I think there is nothing wrong with some of the people from Studio City taking a little more out of their pocket to help out the poor people in Van Nuys.

But it's not helping them directly, so that's why they are not doing that.

Yeah, so they don't want to spend that money.

It's not directly affecting them and their children.

It is, I think.

But they don't see it.

You want to make the world around you a better place. Just like you can't isolate yourself and just be like I'm going to stay in Studio City. As soon as you cross over into Van Nuys you are going to be dealing with idiots. That's what I'm saying. You don't want that to happen so therefore you should always contribute.

Yeah, but how many times have you donated money and you really have no idea where that went. That's been a fact that it goes in someone else's pocket.

And you want to actually hand your money and put it in that account.

Yeah, but have you ever seen what the presidents of these non-profits make a year?

They are allowed to only claim 10% of what they collect. You donate \$100, \$10 of your \$100 is going to that charity. The other \$90 is going to them. I think that's ridiculous.

MODERATOR—LOOK AT THIS LIST, DO YOU SEE PROGRESS BEING MADE?

“A.” I think it's good we are at least talking about that.

Yeah, “A.”

That's at least making a move. You see a lot of these car companies going with not just hybrids now, but they are...

It's the bio-diesel fuel.

God bless Al Gore for that.

One of my best friends is the president of the LA based bio-diesel fuel and it's huge now. He started five years ago with three people and now it's a community of like seventy-five and they travel everywhere. And I think it's amazing what they are doing. There is that bio-diesel in Westwood. There is one gas station in LA that offers bio-diesel. It's like \$4.50 a gallon, but still....

MODERATOR—OTHER PLACES YOU'VE SEEN ANY PROGRESS?

A lot of this stuff isn't sexy. It's not television. For instance, the trade imbalance, which I think is kind of important. Try talking about that on the six o'clock news.

I was just thinking about the threat of terrorism. It has definitely progressed a little bit. It's not like where it is supposed to be, but I'm sure it's a lot better than it was back on 9/11. I think it's gotten better.

I don't know about that one. I'm just hoping....I used to do a lot of counter terrorism work and I got to meet with a lot of heads of consulates and I just think the battle for terror is in the wrong places. I don't think they are targeting as much of what is counter terrorism as it is pro US money and territory. It's the threat of terrorists. They are not really going after the real deal.

MODERATOR—WHERE DOES THE LEADERSHIP COME FROM? HOW DO YOU TURN THE CORNER AND START MAKING PROGRESS?

(many talking at once)

It's going to take a long time. You need to start with education with your kids.

We have no choice right now but to choose the leaders that want to run for president and what not. How do we go about changing that within ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years time? We are not going to wake up and be like, get out of here, Al Gore get out of here, whoever is even running right now because we really have no choice. These guys are already there and they've built themselves up. And there are guys who are going to follow them already too. What we have to worry about is who is going to follow them twenty or thirty or forty years from now, what their values are. Realistically, we are not going to get rid of Barack Obama or we are not going to...

MODERATOR—DO THE REST OF YOU THINK THAT IT'S GOING TO TAKE THAT LONG TO TURN THINGS AROUND AND START MAKING PROGRESS ON THESE THINGS?

Like I said before, I think people need to ban together in groups and really tackle these issues. Then again, look at illegal immigration. That was a huge thing in Los Angeles where millions of people got together and protested. Look what's that done? What did that accomplish? Nothing. So it comes back to the point of, at least from where I stand, what the hell does it really matter? What can any of us do?

MODERATOR—THE REASON I KEEP TALKING ABOUT YOUR GENERATION BECAUSE YOUR GENERATION OF PEOPLE UNDER THIRTY IS BY FAR THE LARGEST GENERATION IN AMERICAN HISTORY. YOU ARE CHILDREN OF THE BABY BOOMERS WHO WERE THE LARGEST AND IT'S GOING TO BE JUST A MASSIVE GENERATION. IN A FEW YEARS YOU GUYS WILL REPRESENT ONE OUT OF EVERY THREE VOTERS IN THE COUNTRY. BY SHEER NUMBERS, IF YOU WANTED TO GET UNITED, YOU COULD OBVIOUSLY INFLUENCE A LOT OF ELECTIONS. YOU'VE GOT THE NUMBERS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. SO HOW DO

YOU GET PEOPLE TO MOVE IN THE SAME DIRECTION? HOW DO YOU GET THEM CARING ABOUT THIS KIND OF STUFF AND MOVING ON IT?

I think you need to combine it with things that we are interested in now like entertainment. MTV does that Rock the Vote. Every time there's an election, they bring like music groups together and they bring things that we like, but also talk about the issues and to give you an opinion, to give you what is out there, are you for it or against it? I think that's a great...when I heard about the Rock the Vote, I think that's a great way for people our age to get together and talk about serious things that are going on in the world besides what music band is playing.

MODERATOR—DO THOSE PEOPLE SHOWING UP AT THE CONCERT TRANSLATE INTO ACTION OR ARE THEY JUST GOING TO THE CONCERT?

It depends upon how serious they are. Once again, it boils down to that one single individual. It's all different. You think back in the 60's, I'm sure it's different back in the hippie days, but I'm sure some hippies were just hippies to go out and party and some were like, hey we really want peace.

I think we get every one of our age group to donate \$10 and create a lobby of our own to push the government in the right direction, maybe back our own president.

In our country, the government is not afraid of the people. You look at other countries and when people are protesting, the government is actually afraid of the people. Some people have a say in that. I don't think people really have a say in this country.

I think there should be a mandatory draft and that will get discipline in most of the young Americans. That will in turn make sure that all the issues are going to affect everyone, from the richest to the poorest.

Yeah, but what if we don't agree?

It doesn't matter. You are an American so you have to all be on the same boat. As an American, if you choose to live in America and be an American you need to be on the same boat. If you believe in the rights of Americans, if you believe in the Constitution, then you have to do the same thing. You have to go by it. It's your decision. If you don't want to, then you have to move. Move to another country where you agree with their policies. But if you want to live in America, you have to live by their policies and you have to defend their policies. And you have to change the policies in order to adapt to the times which we are in. If you are...

MODERATOR—YOU ARE SAYING THAT IF EVERYBODY'S BUTTS ARE ON THE LINE, THEN THEY WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO CHANGE THINGS. YOU ARE NOT GOING TO GO TO WAR FOR BS REASONS, FOR MINISCULE REASONS. YOU ARE GOING TO GO TO WAR WHEN IT REALLY MATTERS, WHEN IT'S REALLY LIKE...

That's right.

And everything else is going to in turn follow.

Lower the voting age to sixteen. I think that's a pretty radical extreme thing to do, but I think we'd get a lot of media coverage. And I think that as a result of the media coverage, those kids would actually vote and maybe it would actually be a step in the right direction of getting people to care.

I remember when I turned eighteen I was like, yes, I can vote now. It was like one of those cool things to do and if you could do it at sixteen, I think I'd be more interested.

Who believes in voting? It's all computerized. I don't trust the voting ballots. Look at what happened with George W. Bush in Florida. I don't trust it for a second.

That's a fair point.

Yes it is.

Realistically, basically it's already in the system where these politicians are already raising kids with their values and they have the money and the campaigns and everything. Look how George Bush and then his son comes in. It's just all in the family. They are already like a part of that whole environment. Just like if you grew up with a family that has clubs and you promote for clubs, your parents promote for clubs, but realistically that's the environment you grew up in, those are the values that you have. I think that's how it is with politics too. It's really hard to emerge yourself as a single individual into that environment because it's already just like a cult.

MODERATOR—FLIP TO HANDOUT #2. FIRST THING I WANT TO TALK ABOUT IS HEALTHCARE. WE'VE GOT A STATEMENT HERE, I'LL READ IT OUT LOUD, UNDERLINE ANYTHING THAT JUMPS OUT AT YOU.

EACH NEW GENERATION IS SUFFERING AN EPIDEMIC OF CHRONIC PREVENTABLE DISEASES DUE TO A POLLUTED ENVIRONMENT, A LACK OF BASIC HEALTHCARE AND THE POISONS WE FEED THEM EVERYDAY. EVERY CHILD IN AMERICA, REGARDLESS OF RACE, CLASS OR INCOME SHOULD HAVE FULL HEALTH COVERAGE AND PROPER NUTRITION. PARENTS MUST BE TAUGHT THE IMPACT OF PREVENTIVE CARE AND PROPER NOURISHMENT WILL HAVE ON A CHILD. IF WE CONTINUE TO SPEND MORE AND MORE MONEY ON HEALTHCARE, WITHOUT ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES OF THIS CRISIS, WE WILL ONLY WEAKEN OUR ECONOMY AND CONDEMN MILLIONS MORE CHILDREN TO SUFFERING AND DISEASES.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT STATEMENT?

I agree.

I underlined every child in America, that's pretty strong. Not just some child, not the rich ones, not the poor ones, but every child.

I thought poison was a good word.

MODERATOR—DO YOU AGREE WITH THAT FIRST STATEMENT THAT WE'VE GOT AN EPIDEMIC OF PREVENTABLE DISEASES?

Yeah.

Reading between the lines, the poisons that we feed them every day, it's like the chemicals that you get in the candy and the chips, all the stuff that we feed our kids because it's easy and it's quick. And that's what I heard in the statement, condemning the obesity epidemic. Yeah, I think it's to be dealt with. It's a problem.

It's the chemicals that are in everything we drink.

The preservatives.

You look at the stuff on the back and you can't even pronounce it and you look it up and you are like, oh my God.

Coca-Cola it's like....and the McDonald's double cheeseburger, they'll market that as being the greatest thing in the world, but the nutritional facts are absolutely disgusting.

Right.

Even like Big Mac's have 56 grams of protein. If you are going to the gym and working on and want to get bigger, you are not going to eat a Big Mac for a source of protein.

The hell of it is, and I can't speak for the rest of you, I know that all of that is true, but if I'm in a rush to get someplace I'll stop at Taco Bell or whatever. You know what I'm saying? It's fast. It's easy. I've got to go. I've got someplace to be. And I know that. I know it's not healthy, I know it's not right.

Quick and cheap.

Exactly. Who can argue with that?

It's funny too because you go outside the US and everyone has got like crazy lunch breaks. You go in the middle of the day on the main streets and everyone is just hanging out, a cup of coffee, this and that. People aren't in as much of a rush as the US is.

When you go to Germany, they have three-hour lunch breaks. You go home, take a nap. I worked there for a year and it was amazing. I was like, I want to live here.

There's another country like Norway or Sweden or something where they only work like 32 hours a week. It's just different. No, they only work six hour days, not eight hour days.

MODERATOR—ALRIGHT, WHAT ABOUT EVERY CHILD IN AMERICA REGARDLESS OF RACE, CLASS OR INCOME SHOULD HAVE FULL HEALTHCARE.....DO YOU AGREE WITH THAT?

Yes.

Yes.

Absolutely, yeah.

If they are citizens.

Yes.

MODERATOR—WHAT DO THE REST OF YOU THINK ABOUT THAT?

That's where it's iffy. I'm totally against people who are not born and raised....I don't know. I'm a white Caucasian girl who was born in LA. I grew up in Whittier. I was the only white girl in my class. That's fine, but then I moved to Agora, a total Jewish community and I was not around interracial differences. If I go to McDonald's and the lady doesn't know how to say cheeseburger correctly or how to say dollar, I get pissed off. If you don't know English, I get pissed off. This is America, I feel like you should know English.

MODERATOR—BUT TO THE POINT OF WHETHER ALL KIDS SHOULD HAVE COVERAGE OR NOT?

Back to that, okay, well those people come here and have kids. Okay, technically that kid is an American citizen. So, I don't know.

That's the anchor baby thing. I'm always in the minority on this issue. Everybody is much more stringent on illegal immigration than I am. I think this country is built on immigration. I think those kids, even if they are illegal, how are you going to look a child in the face and say I can't fix you. I'm not allowed.

Yeah, that's the thing, if they are cut and bleeding in the street you can't just leave them, oh sorry...but on the flip side, it's a tough issue.

Yeah, illegal immigration is hard.

If you were in their country, how would they treat you?

A lot of countries you can just cruise in and be like, help me, I'm sick or hurt.

Yeah, but would you tell a twenty-year-old person who is this illegal immigrant that they can't get coverage?

This is something else a lot of people are going to take me to task on, but in America aren't we supposed to be better? Isn't that what we are built on, the idea that we handle those things better than other countries?

Yeah, if they pay taxes. If they put into it, absolutely. But the problem is...

It's pointless. I think the economy in general is suffering.

You've got to pay your dues.

MODERATOR—LET'S LOOK AT ANOTHER ISSUE, FLIP TO HANDOUT #3. THIS ONE IS GOING TO DEAL WITH ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL AND FOSSIL FUELS IS THE GREATEST THREAT TO OUR NATIONAL SECURITY AND OUR QUALITY OF LIFE AND OUR ECONOMIC FUTURE. THAT'S WHY WE MUST LAUNCH A MASSIVE CONCERTED NATIONAL EFFORT, SIMILAR TO THE APOLLO PROGRAM THAT PUT A MAN ON THE MOON, WITH THE GOAL OF MOVING AMERICA BEYOND FOSSIL FUELS AND INVENTING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENERGY BASED ON NEW TECHNOLOGIES SUCH AS HYDROGEN OR FUSION. THIS PLAN WOULD REQUIRE A HUGE NATIONAL INVESTMENT, BUT WOULD PRODUCE MILLIONS OF NEW JOBS, DRAMATICALLY REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE AND FREE US FROM OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL THAT SUBSIDIZES REGIMES WHO SUPPORT THE TERRORISTS WHO ARE TARGETING US.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT STATEMENT?

Absolutely. Dead on.

That's essentially the whole thing.

MODERATOR—THE GREATEST THREAT TO OUR SECURITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE....

Absolutely.

Yeah. Every part of this is pretty on.

I especially like the part about a massive concerted national effort. If you have somebody like Kennedy who said we are going to go to the moon and we are going to do it by the end of this

decade. And if you have a politician with that kind of charisma and media savvy who can go on television and has the guts to say that and stand up to the oil companies and say, we are going to make you guys obsolete, I think that people would really respond. But nobody is going to do that.

MODERATOR—HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN? IS IT ALL GOVERNMENT, IS IT JUST

The government will not make any of this happen.

Private investment. People have to invest.

Yeah.

MODERATOR—INVEST IN WHO? INVEST IN WHAT?

Invest in new energy, companies that are...instead of...here's a small step, instead of going and buying your gas at Chevron, I buy it at BP because BP is all domestic oil. Ideally it would be good if we got off oil altogether, but that's not going to happen right now, so you start with that small step. Instead of buying your gas at ARCO, you buy it at BP. And maybe you buy stock in a company that's...not a lot of stock, but some stock in a company that is working on hydrogen or fusion.

I do see a lot of corporate companies going green in the past like two years. I personally worked with Toyota and everything went green with them. All their paper is all recycled paper. Everything they put out has like something green about it. And I know the cars, they were working on the hydrogen thing. There was definitely a big push in that company for a greener environment.

MODERATOR—THIS THING SAYS THAT WE'VE GOT TO JUMP AHEAD, THAT WE'VE GOT TO GET BEYOND FOSSIL FUELS. THERE'S A LOT OF FOCUS ON ETHANOL AND BIO-DIESELS AND STUFF LIKE THAT. THIS THING IS SAYING YOU'VE GOT TO GO ALL THE WAY, YOU'VE GOT TO MAKE A BIG JUMP TO THE NEXT GENERATION. DO YOU AGREE WITH THAT?

Yeah. You spend as much fossil fuels making ethanol viable as you do driving your car with regular fossil fuels so you might as well skip that stuff and go to the more advanced technologies.

MODERATOR—ALRIGHT, HOW DO YOU MAKE IT HAPPEN AND WHAT ROLE CAN YOUR GENERATION PLAY IN MAKING THIS HAPPEN?

Again, I think investment. I think getting the word out.

MODERATOR—WOULD YOU GUYS BE WILLING TO LET YOUR WALLETS DO THE TALKING FOR YOU TO INVEST IN COMPANIES LIKE THAT OR SUPPORT

COMPANIES THAT WERE MAKING THAT EFFORT OR TO ELECT POLITICIANS WHO SAID THAT THEY WOULD DO THIS?

If a politician said this, he or she would have my vote immediately.

I would love to invest in a company if it was starting out like at \$2 a share and it was going to do great things for the world.

Something like that, I would invest without trying to get a profit out of it. And we may last another hundred years on this planet. It's worth it.

I think if we knew we were going to get results, then we would.

But are we going from depending on one thing to depending on another thing? Isn't it going to lead eventually to the same thing?

I think so.

MODERATOR—HOW MUCH OF A DIFFERENCE CAN AN INDIVIDUAL ACTION REALLY MAKE?

It depends how far they push. I mean an individual like Martin Luther King, look what he did on his own. Realistically, you always have to have your supporters and stuff, but you can do anything in the world.

A video comes up on You Tube and it's funny as shit, ten people might send it to you and you might send it out to another ten people. It's as easy as that. A video can get 100,000 hits in like a week.

I think that all has to do with how much someone really wants it. Realistically, you can have anything in life if you have a vision for it, but you have to have a vision. And sure enough, a lot of people give up on that vision after they get knocked down so many times.

If you are telling us that we are one third of the population, then yeah, that's one third of us doing it.

MODERATOR-THAT'S ASSUMING THAT YOU WOULD GET ALL ONE THIRD MOVING IN THE SAME DIRECTION. HOW DOES THAT HAPPEN?

Individual action is the most important thing and the only option you have. I don't know who said it, but a great journey starts with the first step. It's all about the individual action.

Yeah, you can't start anything without individual action.

And you can't really think of it that way. You can't really think of it as is what I'm doing going to help, you just kind of have to do it.

MODERATOR—THAT'S FAIR. WITH THAT IN MIND, SKIP HANDOUT #4 AND GO STRAIGHT TO HANDOUT #5. HERE'S A LIST OF INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS THAT PEOPLE CAN TAKE TO TRY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THEIR COMMUNITY, IN THE WORLD. PUT ALL THESE IN ONE OF THESE THREE CATEGORIES. THE FIRST COLUMN, MARK ALL THE THINGS THAT YOU HAVE DONE OR ARE DOING NOW. IN THE SECOND COLUMN MARK THE THINGS THAT YOU MAY NOT BE DOING RIGHT NOW, BUT YOU MAY BE LIKELY TO DO. IN THE THIRD COLUMN, MARK THE THINGS THAT YOU ARE NOT REAL LIKELY TO DO. WHAT ARE THE THINGS THAT YOU ARE DOING NOW OR HAVE DONE?

Voting.

Voting.

Voting.

Signing petitions.

Participating in public protests and volunteering.

I've done everything except the last three.

MODERATOR—ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU HAVE DONE? DO YOU THINK THAT PUBLIC PROTESTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

I think so because if you show a mass group of people defending for something. I'm part of PETA and I've done my part with that. And it makes an impact. People write about it, people talk about it. It makes an impact. There are definitely things I don't do, but there are a few things that I would stand up and I feel strongly about.

Based on personal purchases and all that stuff, I used to be a union worker and it was kind of drilled into your head buy American, work American, all that stuff. I thought about it before I bought my truck out in Chicago. Hey, I've got to get an American made truck. That was something that was drilled into my head and it stayed in the back of my head when I bought stuff. Buy American.

MODERATOR—HOW MANY OF YOU SAID THAT YOU BASE YOUR BUYING DECISIONS ON A COMPANY'S POLITICAL OR SOCIAL...OKAY...HOW MANY PEOPLE WOULD DO THAT?

I would, depending on what the product is.

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK THAT THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE?

It can.

Yeah.

MODERATOR—HOW?

If enough people join you in making that decision, absolutely.

I do that now. It depends on what company and what they are doing. Like for instance, Proctor and Gamble, they are notorious for the hideouswhat's the point of spraying hairspray around its eyeball. If you are dumb, you are going to get your eye. You shouldn't get that stuff in your eye anyway. It's like torturing animals and that's not okay with me for cosmetic purposes. There's no point to it. I don't like to buy products that sponsor that type of thing. Things like that....there are issues that I feel strongly about and I don't want to support them inadvertently by purchasing products. I know a lot of people that...and like he said with the Rock the Vote, you go to a lot of concerts, a lot of the bands also support causes like PETA and they'll hand you brochures and they'll talk to you about what it means to them and what the causes are and what the issues are. That's a good way to reach out to young Americans and let them know about ...not only like handing out gross looking pamphlets, but it's like what is the issue, why it's important and why you should care. That's what has gotten me involved. I didn't know. I used to buy whatever. I'd be like I saw it on TV and I kind of want it, and now it's like I kind of think about it. What does this represent? What is this company doing? What is this really about and is there another way?

MODERATOR—OTHER THINGS YOU GUYS WOULD BE LIKELY TO DO?

I said attending public meetings and writing to newspapers or our governor, things like that.

I've thought about running for office before, but the reason I decided not to is because I feel like it would be too easy to become part of the problem rather than part of the solution, at least at this point. The paradigm of social and governmental interactions, so I decided not to do that.

And your past.

Nobody is clean, especially not me.

Yeah.

I don't want my background splashed all over the five o'clock news.

Right.

I would love to and I stand for things I believe in, but again, people wouldn't vote for me.

You've got to pick a party then or you are not going to win. You know what I mean? I've got to be either a democrat or a republican. I mean I'm a registered democrat, but I don't want to be either.

MODERATOR—WHERE DOES THE LINE FALL BETWEEN THINGS YOU WOULD BE LIKELY TO DO AND THINGS YOU WOULDN'T BE LIKELY TO DO?

Running for office, that's a huge step. That's just like really putting yourself out there.

MODERATOR—AND THAT ONE IS OBVIOUS. THIS LIST KIND OF GOES FROM THE SMALLEST COMMITMENT TO THE BIGGEST COMMITMENT. WHAT IS THAT DIVIDING LINE?

Some of these are an actual job in a sense.

MODERATOR—ARE THOSE THE ONLY ONES YOU'D BE UNLIKELY TO DO?

Yeah.

For me, yeah.

Like attending public meetings, they happen all the time. You always see like, city council meeting this Friday. I've thought about going just to hear about what people are talking about and what's going on in our community. I lived in Atwater and they had to take five different times to vote for city council because no one was going.

That's incredible.

And it was a huge thing in the local newspaper. I was like, I think I want to go, but I didn't go.

I actually went to the city council meeting in Long Beach a few weeks ago because my neighbor wants to blow up the break line or something. Or the break wall or whatever so waves come into Long Beach and Belmont Shore. I thought it was pretty interesting. He's a part of this group with fifteen other people and they want to blow up the break wall and they go every week. I went and supported them and it was pretty boring. I never went again.

MODERATOR—LAST THING I'M GOING TO ASK YOU GUYS TO DO, FLIP TO HANDOUT #6 THERE. WE ARE NOT GOING TO TALK ABOUT THIS...

(end of session)