



TRANSCRIPT:

November 7, 2008

BILL MOYERS: Welcome to the Journal.

Here at the end of this watershed week, one photograph keeps playing in my mind, and I want to share it with you. It's from an Obama rally in St. Louis, Missouri, a couple of weeks ago —100,000 people.

Now look more closely at the background, at that old building with a copper dome turned green with age. That used to be the courthouse where slaves were auctioned from the steps. In 1846, Dred Scott and his wife Harriett, both slaves, went there to appeal to the court for their freedom. They said they had been living in states and territories where slavery was outlawed and so should be let go.

They were, briefly, but soon were returned to slavery. When their appeal reached the United States Supreme Court, 11 years later, Chief Justice Roger Taney refused to free them. He ruled that slaves did not have the rights of citizens because Harriet and Dred Scott were, quote, "Beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations, and so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."

You know the storm that followed —civil war, Lincoln's assassination, the failure of reconstruction, Jim Crow, white supremacy, lynching. So much blood shed, so much suffering, so many martyrs.

My grandchildren have a hard time understanding the America I try to describe to them from my own childhood in East Texas. Across the Deep South whites still resolved to keep blacks in their place, often with a holy fervor.

Above all they were determined to keep blacks from voting, voting meant equality — power. When black veterans coming home from fighting for their country, tried to register, they were assaulted and arrested. In South Carolina one black soldier riding the bus home after 15 months in the South Pacific, angered the driver with some minor act that struck the white man as uppity. At the next stop the veteran was taken off the bus by the local chief of police and beaten so badly he went blind. The police chief was put on trial and acquitted, to the cheers of the courtroom.

In one Georgia county the only black to vote had also just come home from the war. As he sat on his porch the day after the primary, he was shot and killed, and a sign posted on a nearby black church boasted: "The first nigger to vote will never vote again."

Signs like that did not come down easily. It would take Montgomery, Birmingham, Selma. It would take the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, and countless individual acts of heroism. And it would take, finally, take someone like Barack Obama, who, if he had been born a generation earlier, could have been lynched for the audacity of hope, but who now saw that America was changing, is changing, has changed, and that he might be the agent for lifting from around our necks this great stone from the past, by refusing himself to be haunted or ruled by it.

He will of course disappoint; all presidents do —and the first black president will be no more exempt from reality and human nature than the 43 white men who came before him. We don't know what he will do in office. He has promised that he will take us "there" without saying what "there" entails, or what hard choices must be made. We shall see.



TALKBACK: THE BLOG

Our posts and your comments

OURPOSTS

November 26, 2008

Do Healthy Options Lead To Healthy Decisions?...

YOURCOMMENTS

"Thank you Bill. We were glued to the tube watching the Michael Pollan interview. The use of pes..." - *mike and Liz Fessler*

But that is ahead of us. For now, it is only right that we remember how long it has taken to get here, and the price paid by so many to bring us this far. The reality of it hit me late in the week as I read in the "San Francisco Chronicle" of a woman named Johnnie Marie Ross. Forty years ago, in 1968, she was 19, and the mother of two, and she was shattered by the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. To cope with her pain she wrote a poem:

"So rest in peace in the name of the father and the son, for your dream has not ended but in reality just begun."

When she read her poem aloud at a local church service, young black people from the neighborhood passed the collection plate and sent her to Dr. King's funeral in Atlanta. "He was our everything," she told the "Chronicle" reporters. "He was our hope for the future." But after his death, she said, "We were afraid... like we would be killed if we stood up."

That was 40 years ago. Johnnie Marie Ross, now 59, says she has lived in fear ever since. No more. On Tuesday she voted and walked home with a flag in her hand and a song on her lips. Hallelujah, she sang, over and over. Hallelujah.

All the way home.

Here with me now are two leading scholars, each at home with issues of race and politics, and each, coincidentally from Columbia University.

Patricia Williams teaches law there. She's worked not only in the academy but in city government—in Los Angeles—and in the courts. She writes a column for "The Nation" magazine called "Diary of a Mad Lawyer." Her books include "Seeing a Color-Blind Future: The Paradox of Race" and "Open House."

Eric Foner is the well known professor of history at Columbia, whose prolific work on the meaning of freedom has been widely acclaimed. Among his books are this one: "Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction" and this brand new one: "Our Lincoln: New Perspectives on Lincoln and His World."

It's been published just as we prepare to observe the bicentennial year of Abraham Lincoln's birth.

Welcome to the Journal.

BILL MOYERS: Has Barack Obama's election been a watershed moment for this country?

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: I think it's been a watershed movement for the world, as we've seen pictures come in from everywhere of rejoicing across the planet. And I think it has been a watershed movement also for the civil rights movement, which trajectory has been so marked by tragedy and trauma and by murders and murders. And this is one of the most significant moments for its sheer happiness, for its uncompromised ability to rejoice.

BILL MOYERS: Well, what do you think accounts for that catharsis that seemed to occur on Tuesday night?

ERIC FONER: You know there's a number of things that I think we would agree. I mean, particularly among young people, this sense that really change is in the air. And you know, the way both of us saw our students galvanized by-

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: Yeah.

ERIC FONER: -by this campaign. And I think that feeling just is so widely shared around the country that we really need a new departure, given what's happened in the last eight years.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: And not to be ungracious, I do think it was the suspense of the last eight years. I think there was so much suspense around the conduct of the last two elections, the fear of voter fraud, the sense that this was very close, as it was really very close in the popular vote if not the Electoral College that the great suspense and the sense of two elections' worth of disappointment it was like uncapping all that champagne we were holding onto the last eight years.

BILL MOYERS: But your students were just kids in 2000. What was it that so galvanized them about this particular outcome?

ERIC FONER: You know, Obama's campaign is a 20th — 21st century campaign. And I think he represents something that is maybe more powerful to young people than even, you know, to our generation. The notion of a society that in which race is still an existent fact but is not the determinant of people's lives where people, you know, my daughter has friends of all different backgrounds and ethnicities, races. And it doesn't even matter anymore to them. And I think that, you know, that's a vision of the future of America. And I think young people really, really, you know, found that very appealing.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: And I have a slightly different take on it, which is that my students have tons of loans. My students are looking at a future burdened by a great deal of debt. They saw a very distinct crossroads with this election. My students and our students also live on colleges where the culture wars have been fought with great bitterness and in the language of tremendous division.

And I spoke at a gathering of college students yesterday. And one of them stood up and said, "You know, I'm just exhausted by the language of the divisive language of the culture wars." And Obama represented an inclusive language. It was a "we." Yes, we can. And it was a pluralistic we. And students, even those students who felt that the world has changed, it wasn't just a sense of change, it was a real response I think to the way in which campuses have been so divided and the right has represented those fights on campus.

BILL MOYERS: It was very interesting to me this election — fear mongering didn't work. Willie Horton didn't work. Polarizing didn't work at least on 53 percent of the country.

ERIC FONER: Well, I think the reason is, in a sense, what Pat was just referring to. And people are very nervous about the economy. And that really trumped all of this. And, I think as historians we have to remind ourselves that despite the watershed fact of a black president for the first time, race is not always and never has been the only determinant of people's actions, you know?

You can talk about Willie Horton. But when people are worried about their jobs, about their futures, about the economy, their retirement plans that's not what's foremost in their minds. And so other considerations came to the fore in this election, which really made it impossible to play the old Karl Rove game of dividing people and appealing to these, you know, hatreds or competitions, et cetera. So, you know, it reminds us race is not the only factor in people's lives and never has been actually.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: And it wasn't just that it was impossible to do because I do think that there was a way in which, you know, Barack Obama at the beginning of this was sort of the clean, articulate, you know, post-race, above-race, not having the baggage or whatever, biracial. I mean, people used all kinds of words to sort of mix him up. But by the end, we're all acknowledging he's a black president. So, I mean, there's a way in which he did get pushed back into the box. But I thought some of his rhetoric was really, really very interesting in terms of pushing that back in the customary ways.

BILL MOYERS: What do you mean?

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: So, for example, he engaged the narrative of the migrant, of the immigrant myth. And the immigrant myth, throughout our political history, has been one of European possibility, coming and becoming Horatio Alger. Except in his case it was a black immigrant myth. And so he deployed it in a way that most African Americans could never. And it was a wonderful fusion.

He also really, you know, he kept referring to his single mother. And many people sort of had to blink and remember that this was not a black single mother, but this is a white single mother. And, again, there was a fusion that I think flummoxed the traditional tactics of boxing him one way or another.

BILL MOYERS: Is it true that he was your editor at the "Harvard Law Review"?

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: I submitted a piece that was published in "Harvard Law Review" back in the day. And he was the student editor for that. And, again, I've had many, many editors, professional and unprofessional. And I remember him so specifically. He wouldn't remember me, but I remember him very, very clearly

because he was one of the most intelligent people I had ever met and one of the deepest listeners. And even then-

BILL MOYERS: Listener?

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: Listeners. In other words, he would you know, when I would say something, I wouldn't, you know, be very sort of quiet and, you know, as people have described, sort of laidback. And then he would come back with just amazing synthesis.

He has an amazing ability to hear things at a very deep level, synthesize them and give them back. And even at that time, long before he'd written his books, he also had an ear for language that was very striking to me. And I've always remembered him and was delighted to see him reemerge in this way.

BILL MOYERS: Do you think that if a black president doesn't deliver on some radical changes in a system that is truly broken, there could be a backlash against him and could race, again, play its hand?

ERIC FONER: I don't think Obama is going to be judged as a black president, at least at the start. He's going to be judged as a president, who, one hopes, can address in a bold, dramatic way the crisis, the economic crisis we face, the foreign policy, military problems we face. You know, that's how he's going to be judged.

People are looking for solutions. And I think whether it comes from a black person or anyone else is of less concern to them than whether they get a sense that the country is beginning to turn in a new direction.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: I think one of the changes he brought is this new coalition. He really did put a coalition across all kinds of boundaries, including a fragmented notion of race and ethnicity and really new discussions of linguistic groupings. And my sense is that there will be some backlash just because we haven't seen the bottom of this economic downturn. And history tells us that people are looking for scapegoats when they don't have jobs.

And people will be looking for a scapegoat. And our favorite scapegoat in the United States has always been race. And so I think it's not just incumbent upon him but upon us as the new coalition and the sense of, you know, coming together that we as citizens resist that tendency to scapegoat because we are at a very important turning point. It-

BILL MOYERS: Is it a progressive moment?

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: I actually think that the architecture is there in place for a progressive presidency. But my greater fear about what stands in its way is, again, how we as citizens respond to this. So I think that we need to re-categorize some of the old divisive vocabulary. For example, progression — progressive movement is often associated with class or with the labor movement.

BILL MOYERS: And is often founded-

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: And right now-

BILL MOYERS: -on race, right?

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: And exactly. And our vocabulary has reflected that foundering so that "underclass" is really a racial term. It's no longer a class term. It's exclusively about black poor people.

BILL MOYERS: So when people say-

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: White people — white poor people are working poor or the working class. There is no imagination when you say "working class" of a black working class. The term "middle class" is almost exclusively white and suburban.

BILL MOYERS: Suburbs. Yeah, that's right.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: And, but the new black working class is literally any black

person who has a job all the way up through Oprah Winfrey. And then upper class is almost invisible. We don't deny that there is an upper class. And that's why I think, you know, people like John McCain and George Bush can say that they are sort of Joe Six Pack rather than the true elites, I mean, in terms of — at least in terms of income.

And so all of that has very invisible weight to it. So that's why I think that, for example, Joe the Plumber becomes an icon of somebody who wants to buy a \$250,000 business at least. But at the same time, really seems to have resented and denied the fact that he's earning \$40,000 and has a lien on his house. So he's both the product of a kind of fantasy of what he ought to be and a deep resentment of where he actually is in the economic stratum.

And that, you know, that resentment, the distinction between where he wants to be and where he actually is, you know, the emotional foundation of what I think we really have to work with to get people to come together.

ERIC FONER: I think in terms of progressive era, it's not a, I don't want to say he has the specific policy. But I think it's more an ethos of public life, a more communal one, one that looks after the common good not just individual self-interest as we've been ruled by for the last 20, 30 years that doesn't seek competitiveness as the sole, you know, the sole measure of a society.

I think a turn toward the notion of a common citizenship, of course, Obama has talked about this a great deal. And the common good and economic security for people, not just saying the market will take care of everything. If those are the governing principles and I think you then move to specific policies whether on healthcare or the economy or race relations or immigration or other things. But if you have those governing principles, the society will move in a progressive direction.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: And a reinvestment in public education, because I do think that part of the know-nothingism and the resentment of elitism is the fact that many people know how poorly our "their" — this educational system has served them, whites and African Americans. And the resentment of elitists I think is also I mean, my own personal opinion is that there's a kind of envy, there's a kind of yearning not to be disparaged because of a lack of education but not really knowing how to get it. And in the last, you know, 50 years we've really disinvested in public education. And we had a very good public education system prior to the Second World War-

ERIC FONER: Well, that's part of the privatization of everything, you know?

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: Yeah, yeah.

ERIC FONER: And that I think does need to be reversed. The public realm is a realm that needs to be strengthened in this country, whether it's the infrastructure of our transportation and buildings and bridges which have fallen apart or the public school system, as you said. Or healthcare, which really is a public concern, not just an individual concern. And I think this combination of engaged citizens and presidential leadership, that's what really can move us in that direction.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: We have had eight years of a complete failure to govern, a complete failure to regulate, a complete failure to oversee. So this isn't just that the markets went awry or people got, you know, took out more money than they could pay back. This was also a refusal by the Bush administration to oversee everything from the FCC to the FDA to the infrastructure that, you know, up and down the Mississippi.

It wasn't just levees in Mississippi and New Orleans. It was levees in Missouri and Iowa. It was bridges collapsing in and this was because there was no oversight. It was packed with industry insiders or people like "Heck-of-a-Job-Brownie" who were completely incompetent. We've seen drug scandals. We've seen, you know, failure to check the quality of imports.

It is not just about the financial collapse and lack of regulation. It's across the board. And so I think that one thing that will go a long way toward an initial movement is the reanimation of the agencies.

ERIC FONER: The people who are put in charge did not believe in what they were being asked to do. The regulators did not believe in regulation. And they just completely abdicated their responsibilities. So we need to be — we need to have and I'm sure Obama will put into place people who actually believe that the government

has a responsibility to look out for the public good in this way rather than just stepping aside and letting private interests run amok.

BILL MOYERS: Where do you place Obama in the black struggle?

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: He's both a departure and a continuation. And that's why I keep pointing to his rhetoric. I mean, he's part of a tradition of political orators who of great skill. And so he's clearly somebody who comes within the tradition of the power of persuasion that Martin Luther King brought to bear.

I think he's also a speaker who draws upon the rhetorical traditions of everyone from, you know, the Puritan Jeremiah, John Winthrop, the first Puritans who came. And he employs the kind of speech that is like a sermon. But it is something which is very classical and familiar to the political ear.

So I think he also draws upon the language of the Kennedys, of all the Kennedy brothers.

And the part of Obama's persuasive power is to break through the category of just being a black candidate by making people listen to the contradictions of race. And I think, you know, last night I was debating somebody who was a great McCain supporter and was describing Barack Obama as somebody who just simply came out of nowhere. And then the next minute described Sarah Palin as somebody who was a fresh breath of fresh air.

ERIC FONER: That's right.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: And who was a whole new phenomenon.

ERIC FONER: Right.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: And I think that Barack Obama and the tradition from which he comes from and the kinds of ambivalent figures around race like Lincoln or even you know, people at various moments in the Deep South, you know, who could break through, could hear the contradictions of this, who could hear the racism that's unconscious in our vocabulary and Barack Obama's ability to do that speaks to our better selves. He recognizes the complication of his grandmother, of a Reverend Wright but also of working-class people who say things like, you know, "I'm not really a racist but I don't want to vote for a black man." But at the same time, "I'm going to vote for him." And I think that is a product of his breaking through this divisive unconscious vocabulary and speaking to our better selves.

BILL MOYERS: Will he pay a price for not putting race on the front burner?

ERIC FONER: No. I don't think he will.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: I think he did put race on the front burner.

BILL MOYERS: I mean, everybody's — so many people say he's post-racial, you know?

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: I never heard him say that.

ERIC FONER: No.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: And that's why I think that he spoke about it in a new way that people don't recognize. That's why I think that, you know, he was very clever at, you know, saying the immigrant myth is a black story for him.

ERIC FONER: Well, he redefines-

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: He redefines.

ERIC FONER: -what race is.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: He redefines what race is-

BILL MOYERS: How so?

ERIC FONER: Well, in as Pat said, in other words, he's reminding people, something which shouldn't need reminding, that black people are part of America, you know? They're not just a separate group, that black people have shared in so many of the struggles and the gains and the aspirations of American society. His father was an immigrant. So he's part of the immigrant tradition in this country. It's not just people coming through Ellis Island who are the immigrant story. And his family, you know, of course, you know all the images that we hear-

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: Yeah.

ERIC FONER: -about the black family. His family is a pretty mainstream American family.

BILL MOYERS: And a very mixed family, too.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: And I think he's really challenged the notion of there being a one black civil rights community.

ERIC FONER: Right.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: You know, we have a new diasporic demographic in the United States. And it includes blacks from Africa. It includes — it's Latino blacks. It includes people of color who consider themselves black from South Asia. It consists of Hispanics who don't speak Spanish in New Mexico who've been there for generations but still identify with the linguistic grouping or the — and I think that he was very, you know, he represents, you know, I wrote once saying that I think, you know, we should really call him our first Hawaiian American President. Because he-

ERIC FONER: Yeah.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: -represents so much of the fragmentation of this solid block of white versus black. Is I think-

ERIC FONER: Right. But he — I think he also identifies, you read his speeches, with the you know, the movements which are not racial, the Abolitionist movement, which was not a racial movement. It was black people — it was the first integrated movement in American history. People like Frederick Douglass who himself was biracial. He was born a slave. But, you know, Frederick Douglass didn't just talk about race. He talked about American society. He talked about making this a better place for everybody.

BILL MOYERS: In fact, you once wrote, that almost every good thing that's come out of America in American politics came from the antislavery movement.

ERIC FONER: Well, they were the ones who really put the question of human rights, of individual rights, of what is justice, what is equality beyond race onto our national agenda. They really invented the dialogue of equal, you know, of equality not bounded by race. And you know, I really think the Abolitionist movement, their tradition is still alive in our society today. And Obama has talked about that. And it's not, you know, I think about the people like Douglass but also like Wendell Phillips, Thaddeus Stevens. You know, they're the ones I'd like to see alive today somehow to see this.

BILL MOYERS: All great orators, by the way. I mean, they-

ERIC FONER: Great orators.

BILL MOYERS: -command the English language-

ERIC FONER: But they-

BILL MOYERS: -marching, as you said.

ERIC FONER: They're the ones who really put into our national tradition this possibility of a nation not tyrannized by race.

BILL MOYERS: After we reached out to you, Pat to join us today. I went back to your book based upon your BBC lectures some years ago, "Seeing A Color Blind Future". Does Obama mean a color blind future?

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: No. And the subtitle of that book is "The Paradox of Race." And it the paradox of seeing yet being blind. And I am not somebody who thinks that, you know, we really don't see race. And it's very interesting how people say, "Ah, we've reached the post-racial moment because we have a black President-elect." So we've both mocked it even as we're denying it. I mean, this is quite a conundrum, isn't it? I mean, that, again, he is black and, therefore, we are no longer seeing black. I mean, it-

ERIC FONER: That's right.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: -it's, and I think that this is, you know, this constructs, one of the problems he's going to have to face, which is really dealing with the fact that we are still a very racially divided nation, that while it represents a success what has been accomplished in his election, we also have one of the highest incarceration rates in the world with — two million people in-

BILL MOYERS: Fifty-five percent of them are of color.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: Yes, yes. And even more I think when you add in Latinos.

BILL MOYERS: What can Obama do for American blacks?

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: Well, I do think that, you know, everything we've talked about, the economy, you know, education, these are American problems.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: They're American problems. I don't want to understate this — the substantive job he has. But I also think that this is a very important symbolic moment, that he represents a new kind of cosmopolitanism around the question of race.

BILL MOYERS: What do you mean?

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: He is somebody who has traveled, who connects to people around the world, who represents the hopes and aspirations of the American ideal. But that American ideal is now a very it's a prism of color. It's a prism of color in his embodiment.

ERIC FONER: It's just not the white of the American dream.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: Yeah.

ERIC FONER: I'll tell you what he can do-

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: Yeah, and that's why you had such dancing in the street in Harlem.

ERIC FONER: Right.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: Because people were dancing in Harlem. They were dancing in South Africa. And they were dancing in Indonesia.

ERIC FONER: And in Indonesia, too, yeah.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: And it was just-

BILL MOYERS: Yet just a few blocks, I mean, a few blocks downtown from Harlem, you had those great scenes at Times Square.

ERIC FONER: Right.

BILL MOYERS: I mean, it was an ecumenical catharsis.

ERIC FONER: I'll tell you one thing he should do which will address many of these

questions which will run into a lot of opposition is to really take action to make it easier to form labor unions in this country.

BILL MOYERS: Why?

ERIC FONER: Unions have been the most integrated institutions in this society. Unions are places where people of all backgrounds come together to work for common goals, regardless of race or religion. Obviously there's been racism in unions, there's been prejudice. But the whole premise of a union is that people have common interests which are not defined by their personal racial or gender or other characteristics.

And it's the experience apart from the fact that unions will help black people and others. I mean, most people are working-class people, as you said. And they need the kind of support that unions have provided in the past. But it's more than that. It's an educational function.

When people work together for common goals, their views expand. They become more cosmopolitan. They become more tolerant. And you know, I think the decline of the labor movement has been a tragedy for American democracy as well as whatever particular economic impact it has had.

BILL MOYERS: I'm told that the theme of Obama's inauguration will be "A New Birth of Freedom." Now, I didn't hear much about freedom in this campaign. What do you think he means by that?

ERIC FONER: We'll have to say. You know, neither it's a good point that neither candidate talked about freedom in this campaign. I think President Bush, in an odd sort of way, has devalued the concept of freedom by the cynical and militaristic way he has employed it.

Freedom meant invading another place and giving them freedom, whether they wanted our freedom or not. But I think Obama has a great opportunity to rekindle all other ideas of freedom which have existed in our history. Freedom as economic security, freedom as a sort of sense of dignity and empowerment for people who maybe have lacked that in the past, freedom as a collective sense of the society becoming freer, not just individuals

So, you know, I hope he does reclaim the idea of freedom. Since the Reagan revolution, freedom has been sort of dominated that idea by, you know, by the right wing. It means owning a gun, not paying taxes, demonizing government. But there are many other themes of freedom in our history, which I hope Obama can, you know, can pick up and utilize.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think freedom has been really collapsed or restrained to a kind of arch libertarianism, which is deeply economic. So freedom is really a free market. I mean, it's sort of been conflated with the free market, which is not to say that it doesn't have something to do with the free market.

But the other larger constitutional definition of freedom is dependent upon things like due process. It is dependent upon the, you know, the amendments to the Constitution. And those have been given very short shrift in recent years. And so the re-acquaintance with you know, our Bill of Rights as a foundation of freedom without a price tag of freedom as a notion of the beloved community is something that I think hopefully we'll see more of.

BILL MOYERS: Pat Williams and Eric Foner, thank you very much for joining us on the Journal. I've truly enjoyed this conversation.

PATRICIA WILLIAMS: Thank you.

ERIC FONER: You're welcome.

BARACK OBAMA: Because of what we did on this day, change has come to America. I will never forget who this victory truly belongs to. It belongs to you. It grew strength from the young people who rejected the myth of their generation's apathy.

CROWD: Yes we can!

BARACK OBAMA: Where we are met with cynicism and doubt we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: yes we can.

BARACK OBAMA: This morning we woke up to more sobering news about the state of our economy. The 240,000 jobs lost in October marks the tenth consecutive month that our economy has shed jobs. Tens of millions of families are struggling to figure out how to pay the bills and stay in their homes. We are facing the greatest economic challenge of our lifetime.

BILL MOYERS: For almost 40 years now, after every election I've gone back to gauge the results against this book, "The Emerging Republican Majority." It was written in 1968 by a young political analyst named Kevin Phillips. While poring over voting patterns for Richard Nixon's campaign, he spotted some trends that would prove to be political dynamite. People were moving in droves from the old northern industrial states into what Phillips called "The Sun Belt" just as Democrats were losing southern white support by pushing civil rights for African Americans. He believed a so-called "southern strategy" would bring working class Democrats into the Republican fold.

He told the "New York Times" in 1970: "The more Negroes who register as Democrats in the South, the sooner the Negrophobe whites will quit the Democrats and become Republican."

Sure enough, it worked. Southern whites would help the GOP win seven of the last 10 presidential elections, by ensuring that no Democratic presidential candidate would get a majority of white votes from 1968 to 2004. "The Emerging Republican Majority" became a bestseller and a seminal reference for modern politics, establishing Phillips as a leading thinker of the conservative movement. But over time, he grew disaffected with the GOP's takeover by the religious right and with its economic policies favoring the rich. With his 1990 book on "The Politics of Rich and Poor," Phillips' break with his old comrades was complete.

Kevin Phillips became a political independent and the author of a series of best-selling books on politics and history. You saw him on the Journal a few weeks ago discussing his latest, this one "Bad Money: Reckless Finance, Failed Politics and the Global Crisis of American Capitalism." Now he's back to talk about, what else? The election and the economy. Welcome.

KEVIN PHILLIPS: Happy to be here, Bill.

BILL MOYERS: How do you explain the catharsis of Tuesday night? The dancing in the streets, the tears in the eyes the jubilation?

KEVIN PHILLIPS: Americans always have a sense that the election of a president, is somewhat like a new king coming into a country that has monarchy, will change everything, will open up new pages, will get rid of the things we didn't like. We tend to overstate it. And that's part of what's going on here.

BILL MOYERS: I would say that the answer to that question is because the country is changed. When you and I were young men in Washington in the 1960s, America was almost 89 percent white. Today it's 66 percent white. And someone said to me last night, "Minorities voted as if it's finally their country, too."

KEVIN PHILLIPS: Well, actually one of the interesting things was, according to the exit polls, among people who thought that race was a reason to vote one way or the other, the majority voted pro-Obama, and my guess is that's because you had a proud black turnout. The same way that in 1960 the Catholic vote in Northern suburbia, which had been Republican was pretty heavily for John Kennedy because of the religion.

BILL MOYERS: He won among blacks nine to one. He carried Hispanics by 66 percent. He won the under-30 vote by two to one. There's your new emerging majority, right?

KEVIN PHILLIPS: I think demographically it may be. I think you get confused about what happens in the political institutional sense. I think the Democrats are going to have enormous problems over the next four years, taking a coalition in which they represent these new emerging demographic groups.

But they also, based on contributions and political geography, represent the financial community now, the upper-income groups. And how they straddle this, which is

something they've never had to straddle before, especially in difficult times, I think will strain the demographics.

BILL MOYERS: So he's got a tension there that is incoherent, a seesaw that's going to be hard to balance. How does he improve the lives of those ordinary people who voted for him?

KEVIN PHILLIPS: I think if we have a serious economic recovery in which the conservative trickle-down economics is not part of it and, as a result, you have spending that moves money in the direction of middle-income and poor people, that'll make a big difference. But I think it's going to be an enormously difficult balancing act.

And forget just the fact of the financial people and the role in the Democratic Party. You're going to have Obama torn between people who want him to help his electorate, the ordinary people, and those who say can't do it because of financial constraints, fiscal constraints. The famous thing that was said to Bill Clinton about, you know, he can't do anything the bond traders don't like. And he had his great response and described what he thought of the bond traders. But he did it their way.

BILL MOYERS: So you look at this new economic team that Obama has appointed, this advisory group that was announced yesterday, you know, names like Warren Buffett, Robert Rubin, Paul Volcker, CEOs from Chase, Xerox, Time Warner, Citigroup, I mean, people who served their time on Wall Street and in corporate boardrooms and are big supporters of this bailout. Do you see anyone in that list who represents working people?

KEVIN PHILLIPS: Well, oddly enough, the richest man on the list at least represents skepticism of Wall Street. Warren Buffett's told more jokes about that crowd it's really funny as well as prophetic. But I think it's also fair to say that Paul Volcker doesn't automatically represent the financial community. I think he's transcended that. He has much more of a sense of he'll do what's best for the country. And I'm not sure a lot of the others quite think of it that way yet.

BILL MOYERS: Then there's Robert Reich who was Clinton's Secretary of the Labor.

KEVIN PHILLIPS: Bob Reich, generally speaking, is there for balance as opposed to having a whole lot of impact. I didn't really see that there were representatives of the labor movement there except Bob. And he really isn't. I mean, he's not somebody who came up through the union movement. That's the weak link in the Democratic coalition. What are they going to do for labor and the people who are just falling behind in the movement of the United States away from manufacturing to finance?

BILL MOYERS: You know, I still look often at your book, 1990 book, "The Politics of Rich and Poor" and we've now had this long run of corporate and right-wing free market economics that has produced the most massive distribution of income in our history, which you anticipated, by the way in that book. The top one percent of households in this country saw their real income more than triple while the majority of labor of the labor force got virtually no increase at all in real wages over the last 35 years. How does the new administration turn that around?

KEVIN PHILLIPS: I don't think they've even confronted it as a particular problem yet. I think they're aware of what's happened to the distribution of wealth and of income. But I don't think they've come to grips with the fact that that has been a corollary of the rise of finance because whereas manufacturing had a huge labor force and moved a lot of blue-collar people up into the middle class, the impact of finance is basically to turn the whole country, whether it's overpaid CEOs or even consultants in the economics sphere, into a people who sort of follow the markets, follow finance.

And the rewards there go to a very, very narrow group comparatively. If you look at the employment of the financial sector relative to the whole labor force, it's total peanuts compared with what manufacturing did when it was elevating people in the manufacturing era.

BILL MOYERS: There's an argument apparently going on within Obama's inner circle even as we speak. Some of his advisors say it would be politically and economically disastrous if those billions of taxpayer dollars in the bailout were just to sit in the vaults of the bank. On the other hand, the Wall Street and the corporate types, according to the press this morning, are pushing back. They say leaving the money

in the banks would help stabilize them and prevent a further crisis in the credit market. What do you think?

KEVIN PHILLIPS: Well, I think basically that's the most screaming set of self-interested analyses that I can remember. When this thing was passed, they basically had people on television saying that if this bailout doesn't go through, you're not going to be able to get money out of your ATMs, all sorts of dire things were going to happen. And now it turns out that, well, maybe they weren't expected to spend that money after all. Maybe that was all a great camouflage outfit.

Because what they want to do with the money and seemingly it's okay by a lot of the people involved is use it for bonuses, for dividends, for sitting around so they feel comfortable, for mergers. It's mind boggling. They created a panic psychology, which has taken a lot of people's 401(k)'s and savings accounts and pension opportunities and pointed them right toward the toilet. And now they got their bailout, scaring everybody to death, and what do they want to do with it? Nothing.

BILL MOYERS: How do you think the bailout played out in the election results? I mean, I've seen that Putnam the Republican from Florida who supported the bailout and even Blunt the Republican leader in the House who supported the bailout, are stepping down from their party positions. Do you think there's a connection there?

KEVIN PHILLIPS: There's a very strong connection. If there's one spot of the election returns that were relatively bright for the Republican, it was in the House of Representatives. The Republicans didn't lose nearly as many as people thought in the last week or two. And I think it was because of the bailout. I think finally they stood up to Wall Street, which is like the Democrats in earlier days standing up to the unions or standing up to the teachers' union. The Republicans stood up to Wall Street, say this is no good. And people who took that view survived. And I think the administration really ought to take a look at that because between the populist Republicans and progressive Democrats and the blue dogs who are going to be worried about the budget, they may not be able to get a majority out of the House of Representatives for all the bailouts which I think they want.

BILL MOYERS: If Obama proves unable or unwilling to tackle some fundamental injustice in this country, if he just nibbles at the edges or strokes the symbolism, which is so powerful, I mean, might there be a racist backlash against a black President that will have white voters saying, "Never again"?

KEVIN PHILLIPS: Well, I think there could be a backlash. And I think the Republicans could make gains in the midterm elections and maybe win the next presidential election. I say "maybe" there because I think it's going to take a lot to make them look good, too. But what I would say "could happen" is I think black voters would be disillusioned. And instead of flocking to the polls, they might actually turn fairly lukewarm.

And I think a lot of the whites in the middle, the lower middle class, the blue-collar people, the sort that he made some ill-chosen remarks about, not you know, sort of not responding too much and sitting out there and sulking. I think if he doesn't get anything done, they will sit out there and sulk. And that's a danger to him, too.

BILL MOYERS: There is this argument going on among commentators in the "punditocracy". I mean, the right wingers saying this is still a country that is center right. And Jon Meacham, the editor of "Newsweek" told Charlie Rose the other night this is a center right country and progressives had better understand that. On the other hand, on the other side, you've got Nancy Pelosi saying the center of the country today is progressive. Where do you think the center lies in public opinion?

KEVIN PHILLIPS: Well, I think the demographics of the change that we started out discussing, which is the great rise in non-whites it's not a center right country anymore in my opinion. But I think it's a centrist country with tendencies towards frustration. And back in the 1970s I remember Pat Caddell, who was Jimmy Carter's pollster, was polling on some of this stuff.

And we sort of semi-collaborated a bit because we thought that affected both parties because the radical center so to speak was angry in a way that neither side could count on. I think that'll develop again. I don't want to say radical center. But I think it's going to be a frustrated centrism that can lurch either left or right, outdated terms, but it's probably going to be very unhappy if anybody says, "We can reform and privatize Social Security." And the voter then says, "Yeah, but you bailed out the rich." End of debate.

BILL MOYERS: You know, as you looked at the map on Tuesday night, the red, blue, and now purple map, the red runs from South Carolina, below the Mason-Dixon Line, all the way over to Arkansas and my home in East Texas. What does that map say to you today?

KEVIN PHILLIPS: Well, the first thing it says to me is I think what we've seen develop in the eastern United States is a megalopolis. That word doesn't get used too much anymore. It was big 40 years ago, but it's still very relevant. It doesn't just run from Boston down to Washington. You now have a rapidly modernizing suburban and research belt that runs all the way down through Virginia to the research triangle in North Carolina.

And you can start to make some argument for Charlotte, North Carolina, being pulled into that. And I think that is a major inroad on what can be thought of as the South. And, of course, the other version of that is in Florida where the northern part of Florida starts in the South and then peters out as you go north, culturally. And I think this is a major caveat. I don't advise the Republican Party and wouldn't dream of it. But in terms of looking at what's there of the South they can count on, it just got narrowed

BILL MOYERS: So, if you were writing the emerging new majority today, where is the emerging majority today?

KEVIN PHILLIPS: I would say it's the emerging non-majority. In other words, you can't count on more than a plurality because party attachment isn't going to run deep enough, which means you can't possibly build a generational supremacy. I mean, after 1968 Republicans held the White House for 20 of the next 24 years.

And I believe if Bill Clinton hadn't had a zipper problem, the Democrats would have had it for three terms. But at this point I think what you've got is a troubled enough set of circumstances for the United States, economically and globally, that people in the White House are not going to be able to make enough of a stalwart rallying impression to set up another supremacy like you got out of 1860 with the Civil War or 1896 or 1932. I think they're gone. I think the roots of political parties are more tenuous now. And nobody will have that sort of supremacy.

BILL MOYERS: So what do you think the implication of that might be over the next four years?

KEVIN PHILLIPS: Well, I think the Democrats have to figure on trouble. The Republicans have to figure on some opportunity for a rebound. But I think mostly they both have to think about that in a lot of ways they're a duopoly, a double monopoly that no longer has meaningful ideas but has entrenched interests. And if that's true again, and I think it could be, then Americans are really going to start to say, "How do we get something new in this country?"

BILL MOYERS: Pat Buchanan said this week the conservative era is over. What do you think about that?

KEVIN PHILLIPS: Well, I think it's over in the sense that supply side and trickle down economics is gone for a while. I think that's fair to say. It's also clear that we have socialism coming in a big way. But it's socialism for the rich. You know, the profits go to finance but the liability of something goes wrong, well, that's the taxpayers. You know, that's the so what you've seen is conservatism in the old sense of free markets was totally trashed by Ben Bernanke and Hank Paulson, you know? Not your everyday garden variety Riverside Drive leftists.

So we now have socialism on right center. And I don't see that we come back to the free market stuff for quite a long time. But I would say is the bailout liberal? Is the bailout conservative? Or is it some hybrid? Or do those words not mean anything?

BILL MOYERS: State capitalism.

KEVIN PHILLIPS: Well, the bailout is state capitalism. But opposition to it, some of it's "conservative". Some of it's "progressive". And maybe these people in the end will have more in common than they realize and will start to vote together on some things. That could be an unexpected breakthrough.

BILL MOYERS: Quickly connect the dots of this recent era for us, ballooning debt, sliding home prices, recurrent money supply expansion, growing inflation, peak oil, crumbling dollar, stagnant wages. What do they have in common?

KEVIN PHILLIPS: Well, I think they're all part of something I'm starting to think of as the mega bubble, 25 years of just pumping up the money supply and deregulating and not worrying about the ordinary person but sort of faking him or her out with friendly statistics and feel-good stuff. We are in an age of disappointment. And I don't think that's going to be eradicated easily. I'm not sure it will be at all. And I think all of these things you mentioned point in that direction.

BILL MOYERS: The book is "Bad Money: Reckless Finance, Failed Politics, and the Global Crisis of American Capitalism". Kevin Phillips, thanks for being again on the Journal.

KEVIN PHILLIPS: Always good to be with you.

BILL MOYERS: In just the last week, our country has lost two of its most original progressive voices, and I've lost two friends.

So much has been said about Studs Terkel, there's no need to embroider any further a remarkable life spent listening to America. But I'd like to share with you a scene or two from a documentary Studs and I did back in 1984 for CBS News.

TRAIN CONDUCTOR: Amtrak welcomes you aboard.

BILL MOYERS: We traveled by train from Chicago to San Francisco, on the Amtrak Empire Builder, the train that crosses the Northern Great Plains to the Pacific Northwest, then down the West Coast from Seattle. Along the way we buttonholed anyone who was willing to talk, and Studs and I, well, we just listened.

STUDS TERKEL: What's your big worry in the world today? What worries you?

MAN: Benjamin Franklin said something to the effect that with all the technological advances that they had had at that time, and we've had much more since, it was such a pity —he expressed it much better than this —that we had not had moral progress.

BILL MOYERS: Here's a moment I remember when Studs started talking with a young mother-to-be.

STUDS TERKEL: All right, that baby. Pretty soon?

WOMAN: Three months.

STUDS TERKEL: Three months. Okay. What sort of world do you want that baby, boy or girl, to have? What sort of America?

WOMAN: I want this to still be available. I want this to be accessible, and I want that baby to have the same opportunities that I've had.

CHARLIE FIKE: Homeward bound, I wish I was homeward bound...

BILL MOYERS: You know, you asked a lot of people on this trip, "What —what are you worried about?" Let me ask you, Studs Terkel, 72 years old --

STUDS TERKEL: Yes, sir.

BILL MOYERS: -- seen a lot of this world, a lot of this country. What are you worried about?

STUDS TERKEL: I'm worried about what Einstein was worried about. And if he's scared, I'm scared. He said, "We've taken such a leap in weaponry and technology and science. Unless we take that same leap as far as understanding one another in this society and in the world, we're in for a catastrophe." And wouldn't it be good if we had more passenger travel and if all these roadbeds were fixed, that have been on the bumpy side? And I'm always thinking one less missile and so many roadbeds and so many passenger trains traveling. Wouldn't that be something?

BILL MOYERS: Oh, yes, Studs, that would have been something. A few weeks ago Studs sent me two of his many marvelous books —"Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression," and his own memoir, "P.S.: Further Thoughts From a Lifetime

of Listening." He taught us all how to listen, and in the best progressive tradition made noteworthy the lives of the folks he called the "Non-Celebrated" —the people who keep the wheels going 'round.

The other friend who just left us was John Leonard, one of our most prolific commentators, critics, and essayists. A frequent contributor to CBS Sunday Morning. He was possessed of an insight that saw the early promise of such writers as Toni Morrison, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Maxine Hong Kingston.

Like Studs, he had a knack for perceiving what was at the heart of American society and our culture. Even though he was at the end of a long fight with lung cancer, one of the last things John did before dying was to get to his polling place Tuesday so he could cast his vote for Barack Obama.

So long, John and Studs. It was good to know you.

That's it for this week. I'm Bill Moyers.

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