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TITLE: FINDING COMMON GROUND: THEN & NOW
INTERVIEW WITH DAVID GERGEN, CHRIS MATTHEWS,

MODERATOR: JOHN YEMMA

MODERATOR: JOHN YEMMA

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MEDIA ID: THEN & NOW.MP3

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00:00:00;00

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

EISENHOWER RECORDING:

00:00:04;24

Our people expect their president and the
Congress to find a essential agreement on the
issues of great moment, the wise resolution of
which will better shape the future of the nation.

00:00:14;22

(MUSIC)

RECORDING:

00:00:19;11

The Congress is so partisan, so divided that it
will refuse to even address this issue.

CLINTON RECORDING:

00:00:27;03

The political divisions we see in our country

today, it is a countermodel for how people ought to make all kinds of decisions.

RECORDING:

00:00:34;23

People have to reach across the aisle and start workin' with each other.

OBAMA RECORDING:

00:00:38;03

Put aside partisan posturing and do what's right for the American people.

REAGAN RECORDING:

00:00:43;17

But never better than in those times of great challenge when we came together, not as Democrats or Republicans, but as Americans, united in the common cause. (APPLAUSE)

00:01:02;16

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

BRUCE:

00:01:08;17

So let's begin. John, the floor is yours.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:01:10;05

Thanks, Bruce. And thank you all for coming out tonight, and thank you for caring about this whole idea of finding common ground. And-- tonight, we're gonna-- as Bruce said, we're gonna talk about then and now, see what's different and

what could be the same, and what lessons we can learn perhaps from the-- Reagan/O'Neill years.

00:01:29;16

Let's begin by getting personal with the past. We're gonna-- we're gonna look at leadership styles and the relationship that drove the president and the Speaker of the House during the 1980s, and see what-- what we can learn from that. But before we begin, let's listen to President Reagan speaking at a dinner honoring Tip O'Neill on March 17th, 1986. And as you listen, try to image President Obama saying the same words to Speaker Boehner today. (LAUGHTER)

REAGAN RECORDING:

00:02:00;12

And ladies and gentlemen, I think you know Tip and I have been kidding each other for some time now. And I hope you also know how much I hope this continues for many years to come. A little kidding i-- is, after all, a sign of affection, the sort of things that friends do to each other.

00:02:18;01

And Mr. Speaker, I'm grateful you have permitted

me in the past, and I hope in the future, that singular honor, the honor of calling you my friend. I think the fact that-- (APPLAUSE) I think the fact of our friendship is testimony to the political system that we're part of and the country we live in, a country which permits two not-so-shy and not-so-retiring Irishmen to have it out on the issues rather than on each other or their countrymen.

00:02:56;10

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION) (APPLAUSE)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:02:59;13

So Chris, you've just written the book on this. What was different about those two men, and what was different about-- a-- and-- and can you imagine that today? What was it about the two?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:03:08;22

(CLEARING THROAT) Well, David knows better about this, but I think it was that-- first of all, they were both older men, and they were getting old. They knew that this was their last act. So it wasn't gonna be about posturing and press releases and speeches; it was gonna be about

getting things done.

00:03:26;06

And that was a big difference from today, that sense of urgency, that you had to meet deadlines, you had to make deals. I also think Ronald Reagan was a-- very interesting political figure because although he would pamphleteer on the right and read human events, when he governed in California, he was a moderate centrist conservative.

00:03:46;08

And when he was president, he was the same. So-- and O'Neill, my boss, despite his liberal gut, would make deals. And I think they were both professionals. I think today, we have politicians who want to give really good speeches, they want to posture, and that's the-- the endgame. And I think that's the difference; productivity.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:04:09;11

David, we're gonna talk a little bit about that-- a little bit more about that period, but first I just maybe thought for our audience we would come

up to the present. We've got Patty Murray and Paul Ryan, and we've got a-- some kind of a budget deal after a huge amount of partisan divide in Washington.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:04:24;16 Uh-huh (AFFIRM).

JOHN YEMMA:

00:04:25;04 Take a minute and tell us whether you see any possibility that there's a breakthrough going on here, or-- and whether the-- the-- discourse that's so divided changes because of this kind of thing, or is it just a-- momentary blip?

DAVID GERGEN:

00:04:39;09 Well, first of all, let me-- join Chris in-- in sayin' how a-- appreciative we are to be here tonight. And-- Chris has written a-- really good book, and it's a great read. So when you go--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:04:48;24 It really is (?).

DAVID GERGEN:

00:04:50;01 --to the book signing tonight, I hope you'll buy his book. (LAUGH)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:04:51;14 Thank you (?). (LAUGH)

DAVID GERGEN:

00:04:51;24 It-- it-- it-- it's well worth it. He won't say that, but-- actually he would. The-- (LAUGHTER) but-- but I can. And-- and I'm-- I'm (UNINTEL) where I'm coming back, I hope to see some of you. We're g-- doin' a series this spring on leadership, and I hope we'll have a chance to see some of you-- a little later in the year or next year.

00:05:11;12 But today-- look, I-- I-- Chris may disagree with this, but I don't think this was a breakthrough. I think it was a muddle-through, you know? It-- it was sort of the bare necessities-- to keep things going, that Republicans got badly hurt over these shutdowns. They didn't want to go through that disaster.

00:05:26;02 They'd rather keep campaigning on Obamacare and they wanted to take that-- they didn't want

another shutdown to-- to-- to interfere if they could possibly help it. I think it is good news for possibly-- you know, there's still a big question about-- the g-- the government debt limit will be hit again next year, but I think this suggests they'll find a way out of it.

00:05:43;11

But it-- you know, there-- there's an old saying that-- that-- that in the desert-- a one-story building looks like a skyscraper. And that's true of this bill. This is like a one-story (CLEARING THROAT) building. This ain't a big deal. I-- I just want to-- I want to give you a (UNINTEL)-- *Politico* yesterday came out with a piece I'm sure Chris has read about what this Congress has done. They have passed some 50 laws so far this year. I want to get-- give you the names of some of them. The United States Parole Commission Extension Act of 2013, the School Access to Emergency Ap-- Epipherine (SIC)-- epipherine?

JOHN YEMMA:

00:06:18;24

Ep-- epiphedran (SIC).

DAVID GERGEN:

00:06:19;10 Ep-- epiphevrans (SIC). What do I know? (LAUGHTER)
The Organization of American States
Revitalization and Reform Act, the Helium
Stewardship Act of 2013.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:06:29;18 That's a big one.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:06:30;06 The Powell-- the Powell Shooting Range Land
Conveyance Act, the District of Columbia Chief
Financial Officer Vacancy Act. (LAUGHTER) Whoa,
that saved the day, didn't it? And then there's a
bill that even specified, quote, "the size of the
precious metal blanks that will be used in the
production of the National Baseball Hall of Fame
commemorative coins." Don't you feel more
comfortable (LAUGHTER) (UNINTEL PHRASE)?
(APPLAUSE) Congratulate this (UNINTEL).

00:06:59;24 (OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:07:00;18 Okay, so it's not a great time in Washington.
(LAUGH) Let's-- let's go back--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:07:03;24 We didn't need to come here tonight--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:07:04;24 We didn't--

00:07:04;14 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:07:05;07 --we didn't need that. Let's go back to the '80s.
And you guys are on separate sides, right?

BOTH:

00:07:08;24 Right. Yeah.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:07:09;06 I mean, you're-- you--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:07:10;21 I knew who he was. (LAUGH)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:07:10;18 You-- you knew--

00:07:11;14 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:07:11;24 I knew what he was doin'--

00:07:11;24 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:07:12;12 Yeah, okay.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:07:12;18 He was--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:07:12;24 I watched 'im.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:07:14;07 He was the guy writing the one-liners--

00:07:15;24 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:07:16;14 --snappers.

00:07:16;19 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:07:17;08 That was a pivotal (LAUGH) election year, though--
-

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:07:18;08 I had introduced Tip O'Neill to Jewish humor.
(LAUGHTER) That was my job. One-liners, that was
my specialty.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:07:25;02 Yeah. (LAUGH)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:07:25;01 So I mean, 1980 was a pivotal election year. I--
I remember, I-- I was in Cairo as a foreign

correspondent at the time, and this Egyptian foreign minister-- foreign ministry official was just beside himself that an actor could become the president of the United States. He was sure that the United States would have to change its political system. You know, that was how shocking it was in--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:07:41;09 Well--

00:07:41;24 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:07:41;24 --the world.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:07:41;24 --we'd just had a peanut farmer there. What the hell?

JOHN YEMMA:

00:07:44;04 Well, there you go. (LAUGH)

DAVID GERGEN:

00:07:44;21 Okay.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:07:45;24 But then-- yeah--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:07:45;10

Well, look, I-- I think a lot of-- first of all, Reagan was an autodidact, like a lot of us are in-- in later life. You either are or you aren't. You-- you don't keep goin' to school. You need to keep learning or you don't. And Ronald Reagan, based upon-- his diary, based upon the letters he wrote in the '50s, the commentaries he wrote personally, they're all available now thanks to Doug Brinkley; this man may not have been broad in his thinking, but he was very intense and he took seriously a couple things.

00:08:09;17

I thought Jim Baker said it best, who was himself, as David knows, the best chief of staff we've ever had for a president. And he basically said when it came to the issues he cared about, he was solid. There are obviously areas that-- like Middle East politics, everybody was off the beam on.

00:08:24;24

Nobody understood it when it really struck us

with the Marine barracks being-- and Tip O'Neill said, "We never thought it would be a terrorist attack." I mean, it was just a whole-- peop-- they thought people came in uniforms and attacked, but they didn't know they got-- a crazy car-bomber came through the gates in the middle of the night.

00:08:39;03

So-- but when it came to fighting Communism, he knew his Communists. He knew them at home. He knew them abroad. (CLEARING THROAT) He got 'em. He had their number. And when it came to his beliefs on the economy, they were solid. And he knew where to negotiate. He knew what he believed in and he personified conservatism.

00:08:52;21

So I think-- I think-- the idea he was just an actor-- one thing I tried to bring out in this book was he was always a citizen politician. And all the-- the acting was a career, but his heart was in leading people up against the establishment. He always wanted to-- ever-- since

his days as a student at college, he wanted to lead the strike, he wanted to speak for the people against the power. That's what he always wanted to do.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:09:14;08 David, you were seeing him up close?

DAVID GERGEN:

00:09:16;15 Yeah. But I-- listen, I think this is bigger than Reagan and O'Neill. I think Chris has told a wonderful story which helps to-- see it up close, but this is about a political culture of that time. These were men of their own time, and it's a very different time, it's a very different culture. You know, Chris and I both came to Washington before th-- you-- you came back--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:09:34;20 Seventy-one.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:09:35;24 Seventy-one. Now I came at just about that same period of time. And that was a period when the World War Two generation was running the country. And basically, we-- we had a-- group of

presidents from Kennedy through George Bush, Senior, seven presidents, all of whom came of age during the World War Two period.

00:09:57;10

All seven wore a military uniform. Six of them served during the war. Jimmy Carter was in the Naval Academy when the war-- when the war ended, and he went on to serve honorably as a submariner. And that-- pri-- that service when they were young, fighting under the same flag, believing they were part of the same country, and it was a victorious war, gave them a sense of bonding that made an enormous difference right on through that period.

00:10:24;24

So what you had was a-- as-- as President Reagan said in one of those clips, people in effect came in. There were strong Democrats, there were strong Republicans, but they thought of themselves as first and foremost strong Americans. And that made a major difference, because they thought the country came first; it

came before party and it even came in front of--
you know, they-- they obviously fought for their
own reelection.

00:10:46;09

But one of the wonderful things about Reagan and--
- and-- and Tip O'Neill was that they would fight
like hell-- 'cause Chris points out in his book,
they would fight like hell fo-- during the day.
Chris would turn out those one-liners. We'd
volley back-- back and forth, but at si-- 6:00 at
night, they called a truce.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:11:02;14

Yeah.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:11:03;05

And-- and that's when they could lift up a glass
and tell old Irish yarns and (UNINTEL PHRASE)
have a good time. Chris tells a wonderful story
in his book about the-- about the party-- when--
when Reagan gave that birthday party for--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:11:13;06

Yeah--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:11:13;02 --for--

00:11:13;09 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:11:13;24 --December of-- '69.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:11:16;00 Yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:11:15;20 I mean-- yeah, '89. I'm sorry, '81. It was the first year, and-- Kenny Duberstein told me a lot about it. He was there. And-- Reagan wrote about it. And-- it was-- it was Tip's birthday and Reagan hosted it at the White House. It-- it was a-- it was a stag dinner.

00:11:29;19 It was basically a bunch of guys sittin' around. Deaver I think was there. And-- Duberstein-- Kenny was the-- one of the top Congressional (?) relations people. And Reagan-- really got into it. He told this over-the-top Irish thing about how if-- if-- "I have a ticket to heaven and you don't, I'll"--

00:11:46;20

(OVERTALK)

DAVID GERGEN:

00:11:45;24

--one too.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:11:46;08

--"and you don't have one, too," you know, the--
the-- the lyricism (?), "I-- I'll give ya mine.
I-- I'll-- I'll-- I'll-- I'll-- I'll give away
mine and go to hell with you." (LAUGHTER)

00:11:54;12

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:11:54;24

Which is obviously an overstatement. But--
(LAUGHTER) because they were both--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:11:58;22

It got a laugh (?).

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:11:58;19

--they're both believers, so it wasn't really
meant to be true. But-- and anyone-- and-- and he
really kinda ceremoniously-- 'cause Reagan
(CLEARING THROAT) hardly drank at all. He drank
like my dad used to drink, like a sip or two to
keep-- to keep the company. Tip drank
differently. But-- (LAUGHTER) but he didn't drink

at work, I'll--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:12:13;24

He--

00:12:14;23

(OVERTALK)

DAVID GERGEN:

00:12:14;06

He was-- he was a--

00:12:15;13

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:12:15;24

--the only time I ever saw the slightest-- now
(UNINTEL) a different case. (LAUGH) The only time
I ever noticed th-- the slight influence of
alcohol was I called him one Saturday afternoon.
He'd obviously been out playing golf and it was
at the 19th hole with some old general somewhere
up in the Cape.

00:12:29;03

And he was too nice to me. (LAUGHTER) Now this
wasn't the Tip I'd gotten to know. Th-- this
wasn't the boss talkin' to me. This was a guy
havin' a good time. But-- but they-- but Reagan
says, "Bring on the champagne." It was like in
the movies. (LAUGH) And they bring on the

champagne. They're there the whole afternoon.

00:12:44;05

But the-- I think-- I don't want to belittle this, because it was-- th-- as Kirk O'Donnell, the chief counsel of the Speaker, who was in many ways the-- the leading-- leader of all of this-- he'd been with him forever. He said, "You have to always be able to talk."

00:12:56;11

And this is true in marriage. This is true with kids. Always be able to talk. Never get to the point that we're not talking. And-- and Reagan and Tip, because of the Irish background, because of the age similarity, because of spending a lot of time together in these social occasions, all these Irish lunches and all that stuff, were able to get on the phone.

00:13:13;01

And this is the key thing you mentioned; get on the pho-- "Hey, Tip, what time is it? Can you (UNINTEL) set your watch? Can you make it 6:00? I wanna talk to you about somethin'." And he could

do that. And in his diary in the beginning especially, said things, that, "I'm gettin' more help from O'Neill, the Democrats, than I'm gettin' from the Republicans." I mean, it was hot. It was heavy. It was tough. It was brutal at times. But the best thing about it was they both knew there was a clock ticking in this country on f-- saving Social Security, on reforming the tax system--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:13:40;24

And they got both done.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:13:40;24

--on-- on--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:13:41;01

Right.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:13:41;16

--ending the Cold War. And Tip played a very small part in that, but it-- it was the best he could do, which was to back Reagan up, every time he met with Gorbachev. In fact, even before he met with (UNINTEL PHRASE) over there and delivered a letter from Reagan, saying-- how much

Go-- he wanted to meet with Gorbachev.

00:13:54;24

And then saying how much Reagan spoke for the country; there was gonna no be a-- no second front or t-- or not-- no division of this country. And then he went back and told the peace-- the-- the freeze (?) people to shut it down for a while, and talked 'em into doin' it, Delms (PH) and-- Markey (PH). He also talk-- he said, "No-- no fighting over defense spending while Reagan's in Geneva. I want him to be able to pick up the check." That was Tip's line.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:14:13;24

Okay.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:14:14;24

So-- when you-- when you talk about patriotism, it was there.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:14:17;09

Yeah.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:14:17;17

Yeah, and I'm-- John, let me ask, was-- (CLEARING THROAT) one other thing; the-- this-- that was a

generation that was full of wit, as well, and it was bipartisan in nature. Republican Bob Dole walks into a Gridiron dinner one night, one of those big, fancy press dinners in Washington. And up on the dais were three former presidents, (LAUGH) Jimmy Carter, Gerry Ford, and Richard Nixon. Dole deadpans, "Look up there. Hear no evil, see no evil, and evil." (LAUGHTER)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:14:53;18 Only Dole.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:14:55;13 Only Dole. (LAUGHTER) And by-- and he was a Republican. He loved r-- he loved--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:14:58;02 Yeah.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:14:58;05 --Nixon, but they didn't let (UNINTEL)-- and he gave a eulogy at the-- at the funeral. We all wept.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:15:02;05 You know, it wasn't just--

00:15:02;24 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:15:03;04 --these two guys. I don't-- I--

00:15:03;20 (OVERTALK)

DAVID GERGEN:

00:15:03;24 Yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:15:04;09 --so the great story about how a lot of it is technical. I can-- I don't want to-- well, I'll call some names out. But when they used to travel by car, that changed-- that was the old way. Tip would f-- drive down. It took a while to get from Boston to Washington.

00:15:17;10 It's a nice ride. I'll give ya a better ride; every weekend, Rostenkowski, a Democrat from the mach-- daily machine (?) would ride out with Bob Michel, the top Republican. Two guys in the front seat, one driving, one keepin' the guy awake, and two guys lying on a mattress on a station wagon in the back. Fourteen-hour rides every week, back and forth. You develop a relationship. (LAUGHTER)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:15:35;23 Yeah. (LAUGHTER)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:15:37;05 You-- you got-- women think guys don't talk. I hate to break it to ya: they do. (LAUGHTER) But they don't talk right away. But about three hours into the trip, they're probably sayin', "I got this kid. I don't know, if he doesn't stop drinkin', I'm gonna die," (LAUGHTER) or, "If the kid would just study his homework," or-- or "This wife is finally mad at me about this job. I'm never home. She's at home. She's gotta deal with all this mess, Mon-- Monday through Thursday and I'm down here havin' a good time. It's gettin' very hot at home." These kind of conversations bond you.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:16:03;02 So that's--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:16:03;23 They just do.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:16:04;14 That's actually getting into a thing that I

wanted to talk about--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:16:06;05

That's all gone.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:16:07;04

--which is the-- these structural changes. You've talked about a generational change. You've talked-- we-- we've-- we know we can't replicate the personalities of that time necessarily, but you've also got people who aren't spending time with one another in Washington, and then you've got these other factors, right?

00:16:19;16

The 24-hour news cycle, 24/7 news cycle, which I think maybe you guys know something about, especially you, Chris. The-- you've got-- redistricting. You've got all these various things that have polarized the nation and made the discourse very sharp and very divided.

00:16:35;12

You know, I just wonder if-- in '83, I remember the-- the barracks bombing in Beirut; if that had happened-- if that happened today-- you know, if

you think about that kind of thing today, would you get the kind of closing of ranks? Or would it just all be sniping at-- political sniping?

DAVID GERGEN:

00:16:52;12

We had a closing of ranks after 9/11. You know, and there was a-- there was a moment we thought that-- that we were gonna come together for a long period of time. Unfortunately, it vanished very quickly. But I do think there's something to this notion that the-- people are (CLEARING THROAT) much more isolated from each other in Washington than they once were.

00:17:14;24

And there's no-- you know, the-- the fact that everybody feels the need to go home, 'cause you can get home by plane, to California, so people do. You know, because it's there, you go, and-- and the result is when do they-- they tend to go out on Thursday and they come back on Monday night.

00:17:31;23

And you know, that ain't a hell of a lot of time

to spend in Washington. And more importantly, their ki-- their-- their families stay back in the district or ba-- back home in most cases. So when Chris and I got there, the families lived by cheek-by-jowl. Their kids played on the same soccer teams.

00:17:46;08

They went to the same churches or synagogues or mosque, and-- and they-- and they spent time together. And that has all sort of dissipated out. And we had people in Washington-- there-- there was a-- there was a time in Washington when-- Kay Graham (PH), this grand lady-- would give a r-- a dinner or reception, and she-- and it was a must-- you had to go. It was a dema-- a command performance.

00:18:11;24

And when you got there, you knew there were people not like you, people who had very different views from you. That's all disappeared now. If you gave one of these dinners this time-- you know, like if you had Boehner come to the

White House, he probably brings a food-taster,
(LAUGHTER) you know?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:18:29;12

Well, the one thing it's-- that's all true, by
th-- just (LAUGH) to add to that-- the 24-hour
thing-- by the way, I like the hour news cycle.
One-- at least one hour a night. (LAUGHTER) I
like that part of it. I get the sense, watching
the news like David does, pretty much hour by
hour, every couple hours. I try to keep up.

00:18:46;24

And what happens now is John Boehner, who's a
regular Republican-- we know. We recognize him.
He's Gerry Ford. He's Bob Michel. He's any-- an--
Bob Dole. He's anybody we grew up with, a
regular, business Republican, kinda small-town
guy. The-- the heart of the Republican party, the
Midwest.

00:19:00;24

And it's no longer the power (UNINTEL) Republican
Party. That's Southern, but-- he'll leave the
White House, the North Lawn. I can imagine him

almost in the car. As he gets in the car, he takes a call from his chief of staff, who says, "You can't stick to that deal I just heard about." Th-- th-- they're already raisin' hell about it.

00:19:17;13

And-- and I don't know where-- I don't know where-- Cantor is on this. By the time he gets back there, he's basically taken back every deal he's made, because th-- there's-- there's no confidence kept anymore. And I-- and Obama's bad at this, too, I think, because I've seen where somebody will say something and it's out, you know?

DAVID GERGEN:

00:19:33;21

Yeah, I agree.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:19:34;01

Who's puttin' this stuff out? Who's leakin' this, what we call "tick-tock"? I mean, you used to have to do it as part of your job. Tick-tock is what you give to the weekend magazines, to give 'em a little--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:19:41;16 Oh, yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:19:43;03 --color, to fill in. Now it's given out on the spot. (CLEARING THROAT) And-- and you can't keep a secret. I don't think there's a confidential relationship between the president and the Speaker, and there should be a confidential relationship, meaning they should be able to talk to each other and not have it leak.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:19:56;17 Well--

00:19:57;18 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:19:57;12 And I don't think that's there anymore.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:19:58;04 I agree with that.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:19:58;08 Let-- let-- let me show you something. We've got some video here of-- it's-- it's very interesting. It's video of our leaders in Congress during the recent government shutdown.

You may remember this. This is-- Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul, speaking. And-- they thought they were speaking privately, but--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:20:13;02

Oh, yeah.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:20:13;15

--you know, there's an open mic, and then there's a-- the-- and we're gonna go to a next one, which is a-- John Boehner, and you sort of get a sense of the level of discourse. But let's-- let's take a look at this video and see if we can make some meaning out of it.

MCCONNELL RECORDING:

00:20:31;04

I'm all wired up here. (LAUGH)

RAND PAUL RECORDING:

00:20:34;19

I just did CNN, and I just go over and over again, "We're willin' to compromise. We're willin' to negotiate." I think-- I don't think they poll-tested we won't negotiate. I think it's awful for them to say that over and over again.

MCCONNELL RECORDING:

00:20:44;10

Yeah, I do, too. And I-- and I just came back

from a two-hour meeting with him, and that was--
that was basically the same view privately as it
was--

00:20:52;21

(OVERTALK)

RAND PAUL RECORDING:

00:20:53;05

I think if we keep sayin', "We wanted to defund
it. We fought for that, but now we're willin' to
compromise on this," I think they can't--
(UNINTEL) we're gonna--

00:20:59;18

(OVERTALK)

RAND PAUL RECORDING:

00:21:00;24

--I think-- well, I know we don't want to be
here, but we're gonna win this.

00:21:03;24

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

DAVID GERGEN:

00:21:07;10

Trashy (?).

JOHN YEMMA:

00:21:07;24

Yeah. But that's an open mic. And then we've got
this.

BOEHNER RECORDING:

00:21:10;24

I was at the White House-- the other night, and--
listenin' to the president some 20 times explain

to me why he wasn't gonna negotiate. I sat there and listened to-- the Majority leader in the United States Senate describe to me that he's not gonna talk until we surrender. And then-- this morning, I get the *Wall Street Journal* out and it says, "Well, we don't care how long this lasts-- because we're winning." Now this isn't some damn game.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:21:42;04

I mean, that's pretty toxic, isn't it? I mean, that's-- that's the kind of-- that's the kind of talk that goes on there. First of all, you've got the open mic. You've got basically cameras and nothing's--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:21:48;24

Yeah.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:21:49;12

--private any longer, which-- which we're talking about. And then you've got this level of animus-- you know, c-- is thi-- is this a relationship, do you think, between the president and the Speaker of the House or the Republicans and the

Democrats? Is it a marriage that can be saved? Is there anything that can happen to improve that? Or is it just split--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:22:06;11 Not--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:22:06;24 --down--

00:22:06;21 (OVERTALK)

DAVID GERGEN:

00:22:08;03 Not on this watch.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:22:08;21 Not on this watch?

DAVID GERGEN:

00:22:09;09 Not on this watch.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:22:09;24 Chris?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:22:10;04 Yeah, I think-- I think it's-- it's different than it used to be. And I-- you know, ol-- old times look better, because this aspect is missing. I mean, Tip, before he retir-- after he retired, he was asked by somebody, like when he

was still alive, and he was asked-- what he thinks of the new crowd. And he said, "The people are better, the system's worse."

00:22:29;13 They're cleaner. (CLEARING THROAT) They're-- smarter, mu-- much better educated than they used to be, but they don't know how to work together. Isn't that interesting? "The people are better, the system's worse." And I think that-- I mean, in the past, there was some corruption.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:22:42;16 Well, you talk about the--

00:22:43;15 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:22:43;24 L-- I talk--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:22:43;20 You talk about that--

00:22:44;04 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:22:44;11 --with Tip?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:22:45;19 --protect each other when they play cards with

each other at night. He said, "I don't want a guy to go to can, go to prison." They'd look out for people when they got in trouble, and that's the bad part. But at least they-- they knew each other and they liked each other enough to protect each other.

00:22:57;18

But the public wasn't served in that-- th--
(UNINTEL) let me give you an example; earmarks. Everybody-- you know, John McCain made a great campaign against 'em, to the point where there's no earmarks now, no special marks that says, "This shall go to-- a Catholic college located somewhere between Cambridge and Watertown," or
(LAUGH) something like that, and it'll be a school of certain size, and of course that's
(UNINTEL) the school they-- earmarked it for.

00:23:20;05

Now you can't do that to thank somebody or to-- or to grease the-- the s-- the-- the skids a little bit, get people in to help ya. You can't say, "Okay, I'll take care of that college of

yours," or "I'll take care of that charity of yours-- a hospital." And therefore, there's no way to sort of buy each other. Now that's gone. People would say, "That's great that that's gone." But replace it with something, you know?

DAVID GERGEN:

00:23:38;09

Yeah, listen, it-- it-- this is not just a story about the Congress. It's a bigger story. It's also the story about how the executive branch, how the White House interacts with the Congress. And-- there's a play coming here to Broadway-- c-
- called-- it's about LBJ, and it's called *All the Way*.

00:23:56;21

It's a terrific play, and-- it's coming this January or February. And in any event, what you see in there is that Lyndon Johnson, as a Democrat, almost every day at 5:00 would call Everett Dirksen, the Republican leader of the Senate, and they'd talk for 20 or 30 minutes about, you know, what was going on and compare notes.

00:24:15;24

And Johnson did that because he really felt it was important to-- to establish comedy (?)-- across the aisle. And it's 1964, and in 1965, when Lyndon Johnson wanted to pass the Civil Rights Bills, he really wanted Republican buy-in, and he could go to Everett Dirksen and persuade him to support those two bills, and it made a huge difference to get supermajorities, to get a significant number of Republicans to do that.

00:24:44;13

We-- unfortunately with this White House-- President Obama has many, many good qualities. He's a man of character. He's very smart. I think he really cares about the country. He is an insular sort of person, and so he and John Boehner simply don't have that kind-- e-- he-- you know, he didn't call-- McConnell, the-- the senator, what-- when-- the Senate leader on the Republican side, he didn't call 'im for months in the beginning of the administration.

00:25:07;23

And let-- let me give you another example-- golf. You know, you-- man-- many peop-- some people here play golf, I'm sure. And you know how-- what-- that's sort of socially liquifying. It really helps relationships. Well, the president played 104 rounds of golf in the first term, 104 opportunities to reach out to members of Congress and-- and form relationships. H-- over that 104 rounds, he asked a d-- a r-- Democratic member of Congress twice to play (LAUGH) golf with him--

00:25:38;17

(OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:25:38;24

D-- a Democrat?

DAVID GERGEN:

00:25:40;24

Twice. He has one Democrat-- one Democrat twice, and he asked John Boehner once. A hundred and four rounds, that was it. Now if you want to establish relationships of trust, as-- as-- as Chris says, you've gotta spend some time together, and you've gotta sort of share some experiences together.

00:25:58;09

And what was-- happened here, it's been a com-- complete breakdown of the relationship between Boehner-- John Boehner and President Obama. They never built bonds to start with. Now they-- and now they each feel betrayed by the other one along the way.

00:26:10;05

And they really don't like each other, a-- and that makes a big dif-- it's such a long way we've come from a Tip/Reagan relationship or the-- or the-- Lyndon Johnson, you know-- Everett Dirksen. Both-- you know, which was bipartisan; a Democratic president, a Republican pre-- to where we are now.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:26:28;10

There's another piece though, and I'm not-- I think this conversation is critical, but there's another ancillary part of this, which is the-- the arrival of people that really don't want to be part of Washington.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:26:37;11

Agree (?).

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:26:38;16 When they sort of come to the town and say, "I'm not gonna meet anybody, know anybody, be coopted (?) by it."

DAVID GERGEN:

00:26:41;09 Right.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:26:42;22 And-- and there's some of that. I was just-- and the nature of the Republican party has shifted. It used to be when we all grew up, I-- (UNINTEL) when David and I grew up, where there was a tremendous overlap in the parties-- Jack Javits (?) and Ken Keating and-- Clifford Case and Hugh Scott.

00:26:56;24 The whole Northeast was packed with moderate Republicans. Every state had one or two Republican senators, all the way out to the Midwest. And there were Midwestern-- real Lincoln-esque Republicans. I'm just reading To-- Todd Purdum's great new book on the Civil Rights Act. I was looking at the galleys. And there's a

wonderful accou-- I was crying, reading about Bill McCulloch, a guy from the Midwest, who supported it, with no blacks in his district, when all-- stuck his neck completely out for the Civil Rights Bill.

00:27:21;08

And so did Charlie Hallock (PH), and so-- as you said, l-- Everett Dirksen. These guys were-- were not gonna gain politically. The black Amer-- the pattern was set pretty much in the '60s, th-- that they were-- black Americans were gonna vote Democrat. They did it 'cause they believed in it.

00:27:35;13

And-- and-- and it's just wonderful, the way that Republican party-- only six Republican senators, I believe, voted against the Civil Rights Act, whereas 22 Democrat segregationists voted against it. The fight was a bipartisan fight, and a fight-- and it was a victory for both parties, a wonderful thing. But-- a lot of it was this relationship you talk about. And I think Ike probably had a relationship like that with-- with

Sam Rayburn, where they would divvy up who-- Reagan-- I mean-- Ike sent foreign policy, as he should have, and-- Rayburn, who had-- who had huge majorities in the House and the Senate, would set domestic, pretty much.

00:28:05;12

And they agreed on that. But then they would do things like the Highway Bill, and th-- and they created the Department of e-- you know, of HEW. And they would do a lot of things-- a joint agreement, but there was this sense of balance and-- understanding of the relationship. It wasn't this fighting over little things like this thing today. This was so pint-sized, this deal. The fact that there were voices screaming "betrayal, sellout" was absurd. It was nothing.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:28:30;10

Yeah--

00:28:30;08

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:28:30;21

That's the biggest critique. It should've been, "This is nothing." But they didn't-- they--

00:28:33;15

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:28:33;24

--they fought over it.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:28:34;11

Let me give you another example-- 'cause I so think this is generational and-- and (UNINTEL) significant degree. That-- that World War Two generation, I think was just so different. But I-- I remember back in 1978, '79, the summer-- George H. W. Bush, Bush Senior, was thinkin' about running for president.

00:28:51;16

And he called me and asked me if I'd help him with his campaign. And I really didn't know him well, and so he (UNINTEL)-- he invited me to Kennebunkport-- to spend a weekend with him, which I did. And when I arrived, can you imagine how impressed I was, that here was a guy who's thinking of running for the Republican nomination for the president and his houseguest that-- weekend, his other houseguest was a Democratic member of Congress and his wife?

00:29:16;02

That just told me a lot about sort of the natu-- not just the nature of the man, but just the nature of politics, which was much more on a human scale and not so ideologically driven, but had a much greater sense of the country comes first.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:29:28;10

And there-- aren't they all-- now-- especially the-- the c-- in Congress, isn't there this problem of if you in any way show bipartisanship when you're in one of these tough districts, you get primaried, right?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:29:38;03

Right.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:29:39;06

I mean, you g-- and that's a r-- another reason, by the way, for getting back to your district as quickly as possible? So you've got this-- you've got this 50/50--

00:29:45;19

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:29:47;01 That's bipartisan, by the way.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:29:47;19 Yeah, okay.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:29:48;23 It's more extreme on the right, but you cannot lose-- if you're representing Harlem, for example, if you're in New York, Charlie Rangel doesn't have to worry about somebody going to his right. He can't (NOISE) lose to somebody to his right.

00:29:58;15 He can only lose to a younger guy or a younger woman to his left. If you go out in Utah, you can only lose to somebody younger than you to your right. So all the pressure's on you to hang to the polls in both parties. You never hear of a moderate knockin' off an ideologue. It doesn't happen. And by the way, as I said, there's no overlap anymore. There's no moderate Republicans and moderate Democrats to overlap. There's--

00:30:17;18

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:30:18;03 --just a clear division.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:30:19;03 Because of redistricting?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:30:21;04 No, in the Senate--

00:30:21;15 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:30:21;24 Oh, because-- okay.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:30:22;11 The redistricting's a big part of it.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:30:23;19 Yeah.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:30:23;24 Yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:30:24;24 Because-- you know, and the weird-- there's one weird s-- functional thing that I think people ought to understand. Why is there always a fight between the Republican House and the Democratic president? Part of it is-- is pretty much jurisdictional.

00:30:35;24

Two hundred and thirty-two House Districts, CDs, Congressional districts voted for Mitt Romney; 232, a strong majority. So that's why you'll hear Republican State officials say, "Why don't we make the Electoral College be driven by the Congressional districts rather (NOISE) than by winner-take-all?"

00:30:51;04

Because by that nature, by that system, they would win the presidency rather handily. Th-- and that's what you have in Pennsylvania, for example, where 100,000 more people voted Democrat for Congress but there's 13 Republican Congresspeople in Pennsylvania and five Democrats, because of th-- Philadelphia being 85% Democrat, Berkeley, 85%-- San Francisco 85%, New York City 80 or whatever-- San Francisco-- so Los Angeles, Chicago; all the big urban areas are minorities and liberal whites and they vote overwhelmingly for the Democrats, and if yo-- in this sense waste all those votes, because they

are (?) 85%. And all these suburban areas, they'll go 52/48 Republican. So it's-- a lot of it's just the segregated housing. A lot of it has to do with that.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:31:33;24

Yeah, and-- (CLEARING THROAT) and the other part-- the redistricting definitely has played a role. It's been done over time. There's been a quiet conspiracy between the two parties to divide up the seats. "You take these, we'll take these. We'll leave very few in the middle, and we're safe-- and those are safe seats."

00:31:49;01

That happened some years ago, start-- the trend started happening. And then the House became increasingly partisan and increasingly polarized. And one of the things that Chris and I both noticed is what you've had is some people graduate from a-- very politicized body in the House, and they go into the Senate, and they bring those patterns of behavior with them into the Senate. And the Senate, which used to have a

club-like atmosphere-- people would have-- you know, there was a-- s-- a dining chamber where they'd have lunch together, you know, on a pretty regular basis, across the aisle; that has increasingly--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:32:20;22 I hear that--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:32:20;13 --disappeared.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:32:20;24 Excuse me, I hear they don't even eat in the dining room anymore.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:32:22;20 They don't eat in that dining room anymore.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:32:23;11 Yeah.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:32:23;24 They--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:32:24;18 They don't eat--

00:32:24;24 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:32:24;23 Eat-- eat at their desks?

DAVID GERGEN:

00:32:25;24 They spend most of their time-- I talked with-- you know, you go talk to senators about-- look, they spend most of their lunches now going to their party caucus rooms, where they spend-- spend lunch villainizing the other side, as opposed to having an adult (?) lunch with 'em.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:32:40;23 Hmm.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:32:40;24 That makes a big difference in how you think about--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:32:43;24 It used to be--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:32:43;16 --the--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:32:43;23 --the committee chairs were the powers.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:32:45;24 Yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:32:46;20 Yeah, a-- top aide to Bobby Byrd, who was the Democratic leader in the Senate, told me the big change was those weekly meetings, because what ha-- they only talk about two things in the weekly meeting; resources, money-- now they can all gather their money together, and two, party regularity.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:32:59;04 Right.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:32:59;17 Discipline.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:33:00;05 Yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:33:00;10 So it becomes more like the British Labour Party-- over in London and-- and Britain, where you have people automatically voting the way they're supposed to vote instead of thinking, you know?
(LAUGHTER)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:33:12;11 Let's-- let's-- let's go back to Reagan and

O'Neill, because it's a-- kind of a pleasanter--

00:33:15;23

(OVERTALK)

DAVID GERGEN:

00:33:15;24

I-- I--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:33:16;09

--thing to talk about.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:33:17;02

--I hope before we finish, we can end on a-- the positive (LAUGH) sides.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:33:20;11

We're lookin' for that. Yeah.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:33:22;00

There's a little bit out there. We don't all have to go home and get drunk tonight. There is some-- (LAUGHTER) there is some hope on the way, if we can wait for it. But I hope we'll get to it at some (UNINTEL).

JOHN YEMMA:

00:33:27;24

Well, here's-- here's something pretty hopeful. We're gonna show some more videotape, and this time we're gonna take one of the signal accomplishments of the Reagan administration. And

by the way, he included Tip O'Neill in a lot of this. This is Reagan at the Brandenburg Gate, and you were there, right?

DAVID GERGEN:

00:33:41;15 Uh-huh (AFFIRM). Well--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:33:42;06 David was there. And this was a big moment-- based on a lot of diplomacy that had gone on, in which Tip O'Neill had actually been--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:33:49;20 In a small part--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:33:49;24 --involved early on?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:33:50;16 Yeah.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:33:50;22 Yeah, in a small part. So let's take a listen to this. It's-- the challenge to the Soviet leader.

REAGAN RECORDING:

00:34:05;08 General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization, come

here to this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate.

(APPLAUSE) Mr. Gorbachev. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall. (APPLAUSE)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:34:59;09

So there's-- there is a huge moment. You're there. And tell us what that felt like. I mean, was that-- was that a-- was that stagecraft? Or did you know that there was something shaking-- within the Reagan s-- administration, that there was something shaking within the Soviet Union, that Gorbachev was a different kind of thinker?

DAVID GERGEN:

00:35:15;19

Oh, it was clear Gorbachev was a-- yeah-- three different Soviet leaders had died (SNAP) like that, you know? And (CLEARING THROAT) (UNINTEL) couldn't sit down with anybody 'cause they kept dying. (LAUGHTER) The-- but Gorbachev came in with a-- you know, with a g-- glasnost and a very perestroika-- just a very, very different sensibility, and it opened the door to President Reagan sort of saying, "Okay, and I'll walk through this."

00:35:36;19

Now Gorbachev-- historians give Gorbachev most of the credit for ending the Cold War, but I think r-- Ronald Reagan deserves a lot, too, because he-- he understood-- and I think more than in that speech, th-- the s-- the star wars proposal-- when-- when he made that, nobody in the United States knew whether that would work. In fact, most scientists thought it wouldn't work, but in the pent-- in the Kremlin, they thought it might work.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:36:00;24

I agree.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:36:02;08

And-- and-- and in effect, because he stood tough-- and they knew he wasn't bluffing. The air traffic controllers' deal, when he, you know, took-- took them on, showed that this was a guy who was tough. And diplomacy usually is-- is best practiced when it-- when there is a-- when there's-- there's-- there's a-- glove extended to the other side but there's an iron fist insi--

inside it.

00:36:23;13

And-- people pay attention to that. They understand. They respect that. And Reagan also had, which was very important-- that was a time when there was much more bipartisan support for foreign policy, and peop-- and politics didn't quite stop at the waterline, but it was more often than not the politics stopped at the waterline.

00:36:41;24

And that-- that-- that era is gone, and now you've got a-- Richard Haass had a piece in-- yesterday in this *Politico* package that they-- mentioned earlier. Richard Haass is head of the Council on Foreign Relations here in New York. And-- he had a wonderful piece about Congress' meddling too much in foreign policy. It-- it-- making it very difficult for this president and indeed other presidents-- to govern.

00:37:04;01

They don't have trade authority, (NOISE) for

example. This president doesn't have trade authority right now, and you know, the-- the Chinese are out cutting deals with everybody right and left, and our president basically got one hand tied behind his back.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:37:14;05

Chris, you-- spoke with President Obama-- you interviewed him last week. You-- do you get a sense that when it comes to foreign policy, that he-- he fe-- he feel-- he hears footsteps? I mean, he's trying to cut a deal of some kind, it looks like, with Iran?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:37:28;24

Yeah--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:37:29;06

Who knows exactly wha-- do-- do you have-- can you hazard a thought on that?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:37:33;05

Well, I think he's-- he's been consistent on that. I mean, that's where he-- said, "I'm not gonna be W."

JOHN YEMMA:

00:37:37;24 Yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:37:38;01 "I'm not gonna-- (COUGHING) I'm gonna try to r--
wind down two wars and avoid anymore." And he's
been pressured with regard to Libya first, then
Syria, and now Iran, and-- I think he's handled
this-- I think Ker-- John Kerry's done a great
job. I mean, we know-- I mean, we think it
through, whether (UNINTEL) Likudnik or we're
somewhere over there with Yossi Baron (PH).

00:37:54;23 I mean, whatever your Israeli-- pro-Israeli
politics or thinking is, you know that no
American president will survive who lets them
weaponize. It'll never-- I don't care who the
president-- he's gone or she's gone if they let
it happen. So in the end, after trying this--
diplomatic approach, there will be a time when
we'll see whether it's working or not.

00:38:12;14 And at that point, we have to choose, with the

Israelis perhaps, how we act then militarily.
But-- so it is a risk though, because he took
some hit today from-- from-- Posner (PH) today
took a big shot at him. And-- so-- it wasn't Pos-
- who was it today? One of the big new guys,
what-- really whacked him today.

00:38:30;18

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:38:30;20

--Patoris (PH) whacked him today, a very strong
piece today.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:38:33;04

Yeah, he seemed to go to war (?)--

00:38:33;24

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:38:34;10

--Israeli attack right now, which I think is--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:38:35;21

(UNINTEL) Norman Patoris.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:38:36;14

Very tough--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:38:37;24

Yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:38:37;18

But I think he knew that was coming, and I think he's-- he's been pretty strong on this. I want to get back to something that was really great--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:38:42;24

Sure.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:38:43;11

--for Reagan, and I-- I battled him hard for six years. The-- the-- the end of the Cold War really did come about the way Rea-- David said it did, because the Soviets-- the Russian mind is always to find an American to do business with. It's very Russian.

00:38:55;04

They always have to have their American. Well, one of their Americans was Dwayne Andreas, head of Archer Daniels Midland. And he came back-- from one of his trips over there, and they love dealing with capitalists. One thing they do-- they don't like liberals or Socialists, (LAUGH) you know? As everyone knows, the great irony-- anyone who knows any politics knows that

Communists hate Socialists and hate liberals.
What they really like are big-time capitalists,
'cause they think they call the shots.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:39:15;24 Hmm.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:39:15;13 You know--

00:39:15;19 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:39:16;04 --and sometimes they do.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:39:16;13 --because they want to be a capitalist--

00:39:17;01 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:39:17;14 And-- well, maybe (LAUGH) (UNINTEL) they-- they
want some of the loot. (LAUGHTER) But-- but
basically, he-- he came back and told the Speaker
very-- right after the PATCO strike was broken,
he said, "They heard that one in Moscow," that
they knew this was the guy to do-- this wasn't
Carter. This wasn't some-- anoth-- another
politician.

00:39:32;14

This was a guy with an iron fist. And then th--
and just as you say, that played a role in 'em
saying, "Okay, we can do-- do business with this
guy. He's tough." And you always look for a
strong debating part-- negotiating partner. The
whites in Africa-- I spent two years in the Peace
Corps in Africa, and one thing I learned about
the whites over there, that small minority, they
love strong black leaders. Love 'em. They can
protect the peace. They can protect property.
They can keep order. They don't want l--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:39:55;09

That's--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:39:55;15

--loosey-goosey. They want--

00:39:56;01

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:39:56;23

--they don't want tribal leaders. They want a
strong national leader like Kenyatta or Mandela.
They were thrilled to get Mandela as a leader of
the black majority, 'cause he was a real leader,

and he was gonna keep things in line. So-- you always want a strong opponent. You want a strong negotiating partner. They had one in Reagan.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:40:12;11

Yeah, yeah. But Chris, how much do you think-- th-- th-- what-- what's the role of media in all of this now, from your perspective?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:40:19;02

Well, I think there's one person in the media that I-- I exempt from my rule. I'm not criticizing the media, which I don't-- I don't-- I don't think it's appropriate for somebody in the media to criticize somebody else in it. It's like a baseball player criticizing another baseball player.

00:40:29;09

It seems wrong. But Rush Limbaugh is powerful. I think-- I think he's a very powerful person in this country, and I think when he says something-- people snap to. And I think that's why he's fair game to criticize politically, because he is-- enormously powerful.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:40:45;17 And?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:40:46;24 I don't think (LAUGHTER) it's good. I think he moves the Republican party to the right.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:40:51;00 But do you think--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:40:51;24 And it's because he has a brilliant audience. His-- his career-- he once told me that he couldn't make it in San Francisco because he could-- and-- and he goes-- he goes-- he (UNINTEL) a young man but he was in his 30s. He was pushed down to Sacramento as the biggest place you could get a job in. He couldn't get any guests to come up to Sacramento. So he did his own show for three hours.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:41:10;19 Yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:41:11;23 He just talks, which is different than most shows. Therefore, he has a very strong argument.

And basically, he talks to people by the way
12:00 and 3:00, not-- see, in rush hour, in
travel time, you meet-- you talk to normal
people. (LAUGHTER) Normal people are traveling in
rush hour. He doesn't want to talk to normal-- he
wants to talk to that ticked-off, traveling
salesman who has really got a hell of a job.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:41:31;23 Long-haul trucker?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:41:32;07 Who doesn't get--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:41:32;03 Yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:41:32;09 --enough respect. And he attacks the feminazis,
affirmative action, minorities.

BOTH:

00:41:36;01 Yeah. Yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:41:36;24 He does the whole thing, 'cause he knows that guy
wants to hear that support group talk.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:41:40;18 Yeah--

00:41:40;24 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:41:41;11 It's a support group--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:41:41;24 He-- he could--

00:41:41;23 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:41:41;24 --you get to criticize him. That's good.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:41:43;12 Yeah--

00:41:43;16 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:41:43;19 --criticize him because he's powerful. (LAUGH)

DAVID GERGEN:

00:41:45;06 (UNINTEL) but I-- I-- this is not a per-- a critic-- I-- look, I-- you know, I-- I-- I sort of have one foot in the media, and I-- and I ta-- share some of the blame for what's gone on. The-- but I do-- I-- I-- I was deeply troubled when-- talking to Olympia Snowe, and I've heard

(CLEARING THROAT) the same story from other senators who are moderates; the voice of the moderates is not particularly welcome in the press and in the sort of modern media.

00:42:10;14

Now here's what ha-- what happened to Olympia. This happened more than once. She got called-- Tuesday, sayin', "Would you like to come on one of our Sunday chat shows? We'd love to have you on as a guest. We're gonna pair"-- she's a Republican. "We're gonna pair you up with a Democrat."

00:42:24;07

And she said, "Yes, I'm happy to do it. I'll change my schedule. I'll stay here. I won't go to Maine this weekend and I'll do it." The next day, she'd get a call from a producer sayin', "Listen, we need to-- pre-interview you. And what you're gonna say, we're gonna have to s-- we've got this-- now we've got this Democrat now. What-- what are you gonna say?"

00:42:39;22

She said, "Well, he and I disagree on this and this, but you know, I think we can find common ground on issue one, two, and three. I-- and I've love to find common ground." That was on Wednesday. On Thursday, she'd get a call saying, "Sorry, we've canceled." (LAUGHTER) And then she'd turn on the T-- TV that weekend and there'd be two firebrands finding no common ground, who've been put on the air because it builds ratings.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:43:04;11

Yeah.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:43:05;20

Because you know, throwing things and-- at each other builds ratings. And that is-- I think that all of us who are in the press feel ther-- that-- you're fighting for eyeballs. You're fighting for people's time. There's-- you're l-- your audience is, you know, sort of disappearing all around.

00:43:21;12

And so how do you do that? You go for-- you grab for something that's more sensational. And I do

different. I always think it's a c-- different cups of tea there, and everybody's different. I'm always amazed when somebody says they watch all of us. (LAUGH) I'm always amazed at that. But you know, we're all a little different. And-- I think-- I'm sort of--

00:44:02;24

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:44:03;14

--doppelganger to-- to Scarborough, in a way. I think we sort of match up, center-left/center-right. And I think-- I think I enjoy the-- the theatrical aspect of my job a lot, I think the comic aspect of it a lot. People aren't force-fed to watch me. It's not a duty to watch me, like *Meet the Press* I think has a dutiful audience, in many cases, (LAUGHTER) who watch it 'cause they feel like, "Oh, I watched *Meet the Press* this morning. I'm"-- (LAUGHTER)

00:44:27;03

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:44:27;19

--"I'm in control of the news (UNINTEL). (LAUGHTER) I-- I'm-- I'm a civic person," you

know? I don't think they get that if they're watching me, but they-- they feel a lot better about the country. They're more involved. They're more informed. But you have to-- you know, what I do, I'm very proud of what I do. It's different than--

00:44:42;12

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:44:42;20

--and I think it's-- I think what's happened with television-- I used to deliver the *Bulletin* as a kid, the big paper in Philly, of course, the afternoon paper. And it didn't have-- it wasn't a newspaper, 'cause it had to be done at noon, (UNINTEL) it didn't have much news in it.

00:44:53;10

What it had was the great columnists, James J. Kilpatrick and people like that, and-- and-- and you would bring them home to people, and then my dad or somebody (UNINTEL) on the train, but most-- - dads would sit around and read it and read all the opinions after supper. They didn't rush to the television. There wasn't *Jeopardy* and all

that stuff on, or my show.

00:45:11;14

They read the paper after supper. And-- and they got all the opinions in their heads. Well, what our kind of program-- what it's done well is like the op-ed page of a-- of a good afternoon newspaper which doesn't exist anymore. And so I think that's what we are. We're opinion.

00:45:25;09

And-- and if you get the-- I always say, "Facts have to be straight." I go crazy if there's something ever wrong. We don't have a corrections page, and you never hear anybody say, "We had a fact wrong last night," so better damn well get it right. But we're also heat-seeking. You know, we look for the-- we-- we look for the conflict. And I'm sure that's what happened--

00:45:40;21

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:45:40;24

--on that Sunday show.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:45:41;17

But sh-- but see-- but that's it. Th-- a-- and

Chris-- I-- I think Chri-- Chris represents to me
(?) the old school in a lot of ways. That's one
of the reasons I'm very attracted to a lot of
what he does in journalism. But there is this
temptation to look for the controversy and not
look for the common ground.

00:45:56;13

And you know, there's ju-- it's just an
overwhelming sort of s-- you-- you-- you are
drawn to that-- and drawn to saying things that,
you know, di-- that get a little more outrageous.
It's a little bit about way-- the way the public
discourse about sexual matters.

00:46:11;05

You know, t-- 20 years ago, people would-- you--
you could-- you talked here, and then somebody
wanted to be noticed, and they'd raise it up a
little bit. You know, they'd start sayin' words
that weren't quite acceptable. And gradually, it
keeps moving, and now s-- people say the
damnedest things in public, you know? (LAUGHTER)
It's sort of-- and we all know that.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:46:26;13 And--

00:46:27;15 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:46:27;24 But there's also this new kind of PC thing.
Excuse me, what's wrong with the president having
a good time with the Prime Minister of Denmark?
(LAUGHTER) What was so-- what-- is that an-- I--
I agree (APPLAUSE) with Jonathan-- (UNINTEL).
That's a "non-troversy."

DAVID GERGEN:

00:46:40;24 Did you see--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:46:40;20 That is a non--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:46:41;01 --the picture--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:46:41;20 --event. I saw the--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:46:41;24 Did you see--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:46:42;06 --picture.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:46:42;14 --the picture?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:46:44;00 You know, for the-- for the first time in months,
I envied the guy. (LAUGHTER) Sorry.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:46:49;21 But everything is--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:46:50;19 (UNINTEL PHRASE) picture of Michelle--

00:46:51;12 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:46:51;19 No, I meant-- I meant him. (LAUGH)

DAVID GERGEN:

00:46:53;18 Oh, yeah. Did you see the picture of his--

00:46:53;17 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:46:53;24 He looked happy. I--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:46:54;18 Yeah-- (LAUGH)

00:46:55;11 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:46:55;16 But-- the--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:46:55;17 So did Cameron (?).

00:46:56;19 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:46:57;01 The AFP photographer said, "Look, you know, you"-
 - all of us have photos taken, and you've got
 your eyes half closed. I mean, Michelle was just
 looking off to the side. She was--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:47:04;04 Oh--

00:47:04;05 (OVERTALK)

DAVID GERGEN:

00:47:04;24 --yeah, right. (LAUGHTER)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:47:06;07 That was--

00:47:07;14 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:47:07;03 The photographer--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:47:07;01 Right. (LAUGH)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:47:08;10 --said so. (LAUGH)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:47:28;17 --just chatting away with the attractive woman next (LAUGH) door. I mean, it's not as-- I think it's fun.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:47:33;02 Yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:47:34;09 I'm sorry.

00:47:34;15 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:47:36;24 Let's go back to-- let's go back to-- the '80s. And the-- maybe a last thing to talk about. I-- this is a little serious, but remember the-- the part in your book about the Boland Amendment and the whole Iran-Contra thing, which was a-- really the-- the low point of the Reagan--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:47:49;22 Yeah.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:47:49;24 --presidency? You were out of the-- out of the administration by then, but--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:47:54;24 That's where they really disagreed.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:47:56;08 Yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:47:57;07 They had two different worldviews. One was-- the classic East/West boardgame, the United States world map, you know? It's going pink here, it's going red here. I grew up-- we all believed in that. Vietnam was a big part of that, that sense of creeping red and pink around the world; China, Eastern Europe, and then countries like-- Algeria started to go pink and-- and you go, "Oh my God, they're circling us."

00:48:16;20 And here they are in Central America, and Reagan was still thinking, "They're coming to get us. They're moving." And by the way, somebody-- I bumped into somebody a long time ago who said, "Yeah, we are comin'." So I mean, they (UNINTEL) they were doin'. But-- he saw it that way.

00:48:27;20

Tip saw it from the old imperialism-- l-- to him, it just fit into his sort of worldview about the-- the rich exploiting the poor and-- United Fruit was based in Boston. And-- and he also heard from all the Maryknoll nuns in his family, who kept him up to date, (UNINTEL PHRASE) exactly who told him all about it. And he thought that the real issue was PO-- is poverty and social justice and the fact that the Sandinistas weren't that bad. And-- so they were totally at odds on that. But it did turn into a desperate move by Poindexter and-- and North, who really felt they were being circumvented by the Congress, and they went the other ways to get their money.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:49:02;01

Yeah, in some ways, at that point, Reagan-- Reagan got into that problem after his landslide second--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:49:07;05

Yeah.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:49:08;14 --victory? And he's at the height of his power,
so when you don't have that counterbalancing
force-- you know, Tip O'Neill is kind of-- he--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:49:14;20 No, he had the wrong chief of staff.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:49:16;18 Yeah.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:49:16;24 Yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:49:16;12 That was his problem.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:49:17;05 I-- I agree with that (UNINTEL).

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:49:18;03 I think he was in-- he wasn't keen enough on the-
- the personality and capability and ambitions of
his new chief of staff. He had the perfect one
for four years.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:49:25;22 Okay.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:49:27;03 And he allowed those guys to move-- move the chairs around.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:49:30;01 I'm not quite sure what you're tryin' to get to, so I--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:49:31;24 Well, I'm just--

00:49:32;01 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:49:32;14 --I'm just tryin' to-- I-- my-- my-- my thought is that you-- you've got-- you know, it-- that criticism, that-- listening to the criticism, there-- if you'd listen to O'Neill, if you'd listen to Boland, if you'd listen to the people who really had issues with the whole operation going on there, you might not have gotten into the problem of Iran-Contra? I mean, that was just such a cockamamie scheme, wasn't it, to approach the Iranians, to get the money from the Iranians, to go and support--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:49:56;03 Yeah--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:49:56;08 --the Contras?

DAVID GERGEN:

00:49:57;21 --but I-- I don't-- I-- you know, look, I th-- I think Chris is absolutely on target, that you had a chief of staff who-- was good at many things, but he was not good at being chief (CLEARING THROAT) of staff. A-- and-- you know, he had a-- significant ego. You've-- during the time he was chief of staff, it's r-- hard to find a picture of Reagan in which he's not in there-- you know, as sort of the vice president or the-- it-- it-- president-to-be. And he had a renegade guy in Ollie North.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:50:27;24 Uh-huh (AFFIRM).

DAVID GERGEN:

00:50:28;24 Who was a-- you know, who was-- just sort of car-
- got-- got-- he had a lot of latitude. I-- I-- I don't think there's any real evidence that Reagan

sort of knew, although he might have. He was also older at that time, and we all know that he was-- he wasn't suffering yet-- and-- he was suffering from age-- and not Alzheimer's at that point, from all-- all accounts.

00:50:49;13

But he was older. And-- he didn't have a firm grip on the wheel-- wheel, and he had ch-- out-of-control, bad chief of staff. So he got him in real trouble, but I-- I actually think that the real story in all of that is the way they recovered from it.

00:51:04;24

Because I think it's a-- I think it's a tale relevant to President Obama in how-- how does he rescue his presidency? How does he now-- you know, he's in serious danger of becoming a lame duck (COUGHING) with-- with basically three years to go, which would not be healthy for the country.

00:51:19;13

And he's got a p-- Congress that, you know, is--

is dysfunctional-- and that's a dangerous thing for the country. This is not a good time-- we d-- we-- these next few years are gonna be precious for us, in terms of how we respond-- how we educate our kids, how we-- how-- how they can get good jobs in a highly competitive world. And right now, we have a Washington that's broken down. And you know, so there's a lot-- and Reagan, like Clinton, had a-- had a-- had a crisis in his second term, and both of them figured out how to recover from it and go ahead and govern.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:51:51;17

So how can-- how can President Obama--

00:51:52;20

(OVERTALK)

DAVID GERGEN:

00:51:53;07

I think that is the jackpot question right there. (LAUGHTER) Yeah, because I think it's gonna be hard. I think he's gotta get this healthcare thing fixed. I think bringing in John Podesta-- was a very, very good move. But he's got a long way to go, and he gave this interview to Chris--

a few days ago, which I was quite stunned by, because he said basically, "It's not a managerial problem in the White House. The problem is out in the agencies." I don't know how you responded to that--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:52:16;20 I didn't like it.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:52:16;24 I-- I was quite stunned by it.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:52:17;24 I didn't like it.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:52:18;14 Hmm.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:52:19;24 You what?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:52:20;16 I didn't like it.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:52:20;12 Because (?)--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:52:21;06 I mean, I think his fundamental problem, which I've been saying for months, is-- is the way he

doesn't run the White House and the government. There ought to be a tr-- a strong chief of staff below him who's the s-- chief operating officer, that gets done all the things (CLEARING THROAT) he want to gets (SIC) done and gets rid of anybody who's not doing it, and making sure the words translate into reality.

00:52:37;24

And the fact that there wasn't a direct line of-- of unique accountability between the president of the United States, who'd r-- run on and won the toughest, most historic thing he'd ever do, the healthcare bill, and didn't check every day or two with a top kick who was responsible for that rollout, and he didn't even have such a person. There was no person to fire.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:52:55;08

A czar?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:52:56;05

That's the frightening thing. The COO of the CMS of the HHS was the one that Nanc-- that-- Kathleen Sebelius was pointing to and then

hearing, when Marsha Cl-- Blackburn hit her with this serious JOHN YEMMA: "Who is in charge?" And she took a while, and then she said, "Well, that's over at CMS, the Center for Medicare and Medicare Services. And under that person, it's the COO, not even the top person."

00:53:18;21

You know, that's crazy. The president-- he-- I said, "Are you spokes to the wheel? Or are you s-- strong chief of staff?" And he said, "Both." No. I don't think he's either. He doesn't have a strong chief of staff. Everybody knows Valerie Jarrett is the key person in the White House, and that Billy Daley wasn't the boss. And everybody knows that whoever is in there answers to this-- Michelle or Valerie or somebody has more influence than they do. And it's clear that there's a mush--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:53:42;00

Yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:53:43;00

--a confusion there. And what it goes down to is

you don't have anybody to call up and blame. And I-- I'm used to-- sort of-- as David is, a regimental form of government. Jim Baker knew exactly who blew it. And when I worked in campaigns, there was one guy in charge of press, usually me, and if anything went wrong, it was your fault. And that was the way it worked. I don't get this White House. Nobody's been fired because nobody can be identified as being responsible. (LAUGHTER)

DAVID GERGEN:

00:54:05;24 Yeah--

00:54:05;24 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:54:07;02 That's the incredible thing.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:54:06;24 Yeah, yeah. (APPLAUSE) Now-- now I-- to-- to go-- go back, memory lane-- for a minute. Let's-- let's figure-- let's remember how Reagan dealt with Iran-Contra. First place, Congress wanted to investigate it, and he could've stonewalled. Instead, he said, "Turn over all the documents

and everybody testifies. We're not gonna be-- we're not gonna-- call an executive privilege here. We're not gonna try to exercise that." Totally open and transparent, okay?

00:54:34;14

He brought in David Abshire and some other people from (UNINTEL) to do a top-to-bottom search, "what the hell went wrong here and what do we need to do to fix it?" No such thing has happened on healthcare. And David Abshire came in-- (CLEARING THROAT) a guy who started the Center for s-- Strategic International Studies, and he was at the time a NATO ambassador, first class.

00:54:52;24

And they-- and they went through top-to-bottom, "Here's how we change things," all the process-- the management of the White House. And then he brought in Howard Baker to be his new chief of staff, Ken Duberstein to be his deputy chief of staff, and Colin Powell to be his national security advisor. He brought in some heavy-hitters, some strong people and said, "We're

starting out anew." And his next-- the rest of his time in the White House was productive. He recovered. And he got the deal--

00:55:17;12

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:55:18;20

That was Nancy who did that, right? Nancy--

00:55:19;10

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:55:19;20

--and Bob Strauss and people like that.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:55:20;24

--Bob Strauss was-- and Bob Strauss, a Democrat, you know, had been chairman of the Democratic National Committee--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:55:26;01

So you're both calling--

00:55:26;19

(OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:55:27;11

--for-- you-- you--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:55:27;03

--friend of Reagan.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:55:28;10

You both like the idea of having somebody

responsible, maybe firing somebody, and then housecleaning every once in a while?

DAVID GERGEN:

00:55:35;06

Responsibility is absolutely critical.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:55:35;20

Yeah.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:55:36;23

I mean--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:55:37;16

You know why? Because we only elect one guy.

BOTH:

00:55:38;18

Yeah. Yeah.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:55:39;24

Or woman.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:55:40;19

Yeah. He--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:55:40;00

And we elect that person. It's the only lever we have, is that lever for that one person. That person has to-- everybody else respond to him or her personally. That's the way it works, 'cause that's the only lever we have as voters, is pick

the president.

00:55:52;24

He has to be in charge. I don't sense he has been on this regard, to the most important thing he had. Who was in charge? (APPLAUSE) And that's the wa-- I don't want to beat a dead horse, 'cause I love the effort here. I think Republicans in a billion years wouldn't have done healthcare, and they s-- but this president has tried it. He had the guts to get it through. He ran it. He won (?) election. He got reelected in a very difficult time. He knows how to get things done.

00:56:13;24

But for some reason, the executive role, which is what I asked him about last week-- "You are the CEO. You." And I don't think he likes that-- that-- that indictment. I don't think he (LAUGH) wants-- no, he doesn't want that. He-- he wants-- he has floaters around at the White House, floaters getting in the way of people who don't have clear jobs. And now he's bringing in counselors. He doesn't need three or four

counselors. He needs one chief of staff who's in charge and kicks butt.

00:56:39;04

And then that way he'll know every morning who's not doin' their job. Now if he wants to do spokes to the wheel like Kennedy did, if he was that vigorous and liked doing it-- Jack Kennedy was a junior officer from World War Two, and he knew how to get on the phone with everybody at that middle level.

00:56:52;19

And if you go back and read Thirt-- see *Thirteen Days*, their movie, any account of-- of the Cuban Missile Crisis, how he got through it, was his ability to cut through the bureaucracy and call the pilot, you know, and say, "You weren't shot" (UNINTEL). Remember that pilot doing the over-- overfl-- flyovers? "Don't say you were shot."

00:57:06;19

He was that kind of a hands-on guy, spokes to the wheel, out there with speechwriters and everybody else. But the president said, "I'm doin' both. I

have a tro-- strong"-- he doesn't have a strong chief of staff. And as for that role of-- spokes to the wheel, I don't buy it yet, because he should've been talkin' directly to somebody at HHS then. And I don't think he was.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:57:23;18

Yeah, it-- it-- it-- we-- we need to remember that leadership is not just about creating headlines (COUGHING) and giving great speeches and getting elected. And it's not even just about getting bills passed. It is also about executing the laws and managing it so you get things done.

00:57:37;22

One of the worst-- one of the worst problems we got in politics is that in our national politics, people don't feel they're responsible, and they don't even know how to get things done. One of the things you-- about New York that (CLEARING THROAT) I've admired, and I-- I happen to be a fan of the Bloomberg administration.

00:57:53;17

They haven't got everything right, but I think--

I think (APPLAUSE) they've been very good. I-- well, I-- I-- I'll tell ya, I-- I voted for President Obama in 2008. I did not want to vote for him in 2012. I couldn't take the Republicans'-- s-- side either. I did a write-in for Mike Bloomberg. (LAUGHTER) (UNINTEL)--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:58:10;22

Oh--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:58:11;24

--and-- and-- because-- what-- what's happened (APPLAUSE) (LAUGHTER) here in New York is that people are getting things done. I mean, this is a different city than what it was. Yes, there's too much poverty. Yes, there-- the stop-and-frisk has to be reexamined, and a lot of things that need to be addressed about inequality, but this is a qualitatively better city today than it was 20 years ago. (APPLAUSE) And--

00:58:30;24

(OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:58:31;14

S-- so David, that-- (APPLAUSE)

DAVID GERGEN:

00:58:32;18 And that-- (CLEARING THROAT)

00:58:33;24 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:58:33;21 Yeah.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:58:34;24 That's because these are people who are-- who are chief executives in exactly the way Chris is talking about. They ta-- they take responsibility and they get it done.

00:58:40;24 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:58:42;08 I think--

00:58:42;03 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:58:42;24 --a good start, first of all. I--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:58:44;15 Yeah, I think Bratton--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:58:44;01 I-- picking Bratton--

00:58:44;18 (OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:58:46;08 --so I think there's a good sign that he's gonna be-- he's not gonna be loosey-goosey. This city is very sensitive to crime and murder rate. If there's any change in that, there's gonna be--

DAVID GERGEN:

00:58:53;24 I agree with that.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:58:54;15 --a price to pay, quickly. People know how safe they are.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:58:57;24 So we've got questions--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:58:58;05 They don't need a mayor to tell 'em.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:58:58;24 --from the audience. Let-- let's--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:59:00;10 They know it.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:59:00;08 Let's just stay on that theme--

00:59:01;09 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

00:59:02;02 --of the first question, which is in your
respective opinions, who are the good common-
ground politicians these days?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:59:07;24 Christie.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:59:08;12 Christie is? (GROANS)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:59:11;02 Oh, tough. I named a Republican. (LAUGHTER)
Tough.

JOHN YEMMA:

00:59:15;09 You don't have your audience this time. (GROANS)
(APPLAUSE) What do you think?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:59:17;09 I don't care. (UNINTEL)--

JOHN YEMMA:

00:59:17;23 It's yours to win, David?

DAVID GERGEN:

00:59:19;17 (UNINTEL) look, I think one--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

00:59:21;13 The only popular picture of the tw-- 2012

election, the only popular picture was those guys walkin' the beach together. The only thing that made people happy, the only sign. The grownups are getting (APPLAUSE) along.

DAVID GERGEN:

00:59:31;20

All right. I-- I-- I-- I agree with Chris, but-- but (?) Christie has reached out and-- and has not been the-- sort of the ideological Republican. You have to give him credit for that. But listen, I think one of the encouraging signs is (CLEARING THROAT) that we are starting to elect a small number, but still significant number of people to Washington, to the House and the Senate, especially the Senate, of people who were-- anxious to find middle ground.

00:59:55;24

And-- Mark Warner, Virginia Democrat, has really been working hard to-- to-- to cross party lines. Rob Portman, Republican, Ohio. Both freshmen. I think he's a-- pretty much, you know, a center-right kind of guy. Kelly Ayotte from New Hampshire; you can go through the list. I think

there are people on both sides now. They're in minority now, but it's a minority to be encouraged, because it-- maybe one day we can build a majority of people who are willing to work together.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

01:00:24;17

Yeah, I think-- I think I want to disaggregate a little bit. I think there's some things where Chuck-- Chuck Schumer is really a grownup on. Other times, he plays the politics. But I'll say an example where he is a grownup on, and he and Lindsey Graham are (UNINTEL), and the late Ted Kennedy, was those guys understood the nature of a comprehensive immigration reform law.

01:00:42;06

It's a law. It's not just something to-- to deal with certain interest groups or concerns about humanity, even. It's about what law do you want to pass that you of good conscience will enforce? That's my standard; don't pass another law like Simpson-Mazzoli that wasn't gonna be enforced.

01:00:58;19

Write a law that you believe is progressive, American, and you were willing with all your conscience to enforce. You don't hear that from almost anybody, but you didn't hear it from Ted, and you heard it from-- you hear it from Chuck and Lindsey. The rest of 'em are all playing interest-group politics or not doing anything. The hardest thing about immigration reform is stopping the flow of illegal immigrants and at the same time giving citizenship to the people who have been here. That's a very hard nut to crack, because you're gonna make somebody made with any part of it. And I think it's tough. But the rest of it's just talk, and that's why we're probably not gonna get an immigration bill.

DAVID GERGEN:

01:01:31;13

We should. We need it--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

01:01:31;21

But we're not gonna get one--

DAVID GERGEN:

01:01:32;09

We should--

01:01:32;23

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

01:01:32;24 --because nobody wants to do all of it, which is-
-

DAVID GERGEN:

01:01:35;01 We definitely need it.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

01:01:34;24 --the path to citizenship and enforcement. And
that means no more illegal hiring. No more
exploitation of cheap labor. And business doesn't
want to go along with that, and I'm sure th-- I'm
not sure the Democrats are really serious about
that.

DAVID GERGEN:

01:01:47;11 I-- I think it also means a respect for and an
understanding that the Latino community in this
country could-- could be an enormous asset for us
if we give them a fair break in life. (APPLAUSE)

JOHN YEMMA:

01:02:04;24 What advice would you give the president and the
Speaker today if they asked you what they needed
to do to break the deadlock and move forward?
That's the big one.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

01:02:15;00

I think on the debt, if-- if the president is with Paul Krugman and believes that that's not the issue, it's just growth, focus on growth, and that really we can sustain-- a national debt which exceeds-- well, it is gonna exceed our GDP-- - if that-- I don't know where he thinks the tipping point is.

01:02:32;14

He probably denies there is one. But if he honestly want-- if the president really believes that, say so and stop talkin' about debt reduction. I think there's so much BS out there. The people say they want debt reduction on the Republican side, but their priority is no taxes. And they say, "Don't touch entitlements."

01:02:49;12

So as long as debt reduction remains everybody's second priority, it'll never be dealt with. And that's the way it is now. They all say it, but they're much more concerned about no revenue increase and no entitlement-- changes. So in

effect, we're gonna talk about this. It'll be in the newspapers the rest of our life, and nothing'll get done because they don't-- Republicans are much more concerned with the no new taxes than they are with this.

01:03:09;24

I think the Republicans do care more about it. Th-- I mean, I think they really do go to bed at night, my dad used to do this, worrying about the deficit all the time. (LAUGHTER) A Republican worries about the deficit, 'cause they worry about payin' bills and they r-- they do worry more than Democrats, I think. And yet, the Democra-- they're not doin' anything 'cause they've got this right-wing crazy crowd just-- you know, what's that guy's name?

01:03:30;05

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

01:03:31;09

That guy that runs that no-tax thing, Grover Norquist. (LAUGHTER) You know, they're so afraid of him nailin' 'em, they don't want to do anything that's even reasonable. But I think the

urgency is-- my bottom line is if both sides did like they did in the '80s and said, "You know what, boys and girls? We gotta do this," so that's the most important thing we agree (?) on.

01:03:48;24

We have to do this. We're gonna reduce the growth on the debt or we're gonna deal with the growth of these entitlements, which are unsustainable the way they're going. We're gonna deal with 'em, and-- and that's what we're gonna d-- and we're gonna agree by a certain near-term date to do this. That means we-- both sides have to give. The problem today is nobody agrees on the urgency, and therefore neither side really has to give. And that's why they just did this debt deal today, 'cause--

JOHN YEMMA:

01:04:10;06

Well--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

01:04:10;22

--there's no urgency--

01:04:10;22

(OVERTALK)

the safety net from out of people when-- when s--
when unemployment's still such a terrible
problem-- we really need to be s-- reforming
Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, and get
on with it.

01:05:04;04

It's-- we can protect today's seniors. We should
protect them, but there are ways. Just as the
cities are having to sort of deal with th-- with
their hard realities, especially, say, a city
like Detroit, you know, it's time for the country
to sort of deal with the underlying realities and
stop playing games with this.

01:05:21;24

And you know, I-- I-- I-- I'm not sure there is
an answer right now over the next three years. My
hope is of course that the next president will be
able to start afresh, but I think Chris is right
about the urgency. It's just-- you know, it-- it--
- it-- we're so bollocksed up now. We're so--
we're so-- wound into a-- in-- into-- got
ourselves wrapped around the axle. I s-- you

know, my-- my just hope is they--over the next three years, they do no harm. So I would buy that. (LAUGHTER)

JOHN YEMMA:

01:05:51;20 Here's a--

DAVID GERGEN:

01:05:53;06 I would buy that--

JOHN YEMMA:

01:05:53;22 That-- that-- that's a good policy. (LAUGHTER)
Here--

DAVID GERGEN:

01:05:56;06 Well, it's one hell of a lot better than we got now.

JOHN YEMMA:

01:05:58;09 Well, absolutely.

DAVID GERGEN:

01:05:59;08 Yeah.

JOHN YEMMA:

01:05:59;12 Yo-- you know-- you know, we-- we-- we've watched the-- and we've seen-- 1,000 eulogies now to Nelson Mandela, and we've seen the funer-- we're-- we're w-- we're gonna see the funeral over the

weekend. Is there anything-- this is a question.

01:06:10;12

Is there more we can learn from Nelson Mandela and his-- his story? Here at-- I-- I think perhaps of the idea of the-- of the-- the big, generous gesture. He had every reason in the world, and black South Africans had every reason in the world to be very, very angry and vindictive when it came to what had happened to them over the years, but there was that big gesture, that big-hearted gesture.

01:06:35;06

You-- do you think-- you-- you've talked about a lame-duck-- Obama administration. You know, is there anything he can do to sort of step up and cross the aisle in some way? Is there anything like that? Or is there any-- anything happening on the Republican side that would-- I mean, can you just imagine a scenario where you could see some great thing like that happening, or not?

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

01:06:57;03

It's tough--

01:06:56;14

(OVERTALK)

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

01:06:57;02

--because the Republican party's really kind of divided right now. But I will s-- I-- I did spend two years in the Peace Corps, in Swaziland, right next to South Africa, reading the newspapers all the time, the really good papers, and reading about that strange society where you had Christiaan Barnard doing the first heart transplant, that incredibly sophisticated part of the society, and then the-- the Petty Apartheid laws, the passbook laws, the "immorality act," which they called anything to do with racial mixing.

01:07:21;24

And it was (UNINTEL) show a society can be very sophisticated and also completely screwed up. And-- but I did think *Invictus* was (CLEARING THROAT) was the great story of his coming out, when he-- when he rooted for the Springboks, the South African all-- pretty much all-white rugby team.

01:07:34;24

But I do think when I-- I interviewed him and I-- perhaps more an-- important when he came out, I interviewed him but-- in that election, but I was down there voting with Bishop Tutu the day he voted. And I got to walk around with Tutu-- from the very nice-- place he lives at the Bishop's Court-- the-- where the Archbishop of Cape Town lives in a very leafy, beautiful suburb, over to a terrible place, Gugulethu, a township where-- they had killed a white woman from California-- just 'cause she was a "settler," as they called her.

01:08:05;15

But then I went out and watched people voting that day, and I had never seen anything as-- I was there for the Berlin Wall thing, but I'd never seen anything as dramatic as people waiting in line from one horizon to another, and-- with nothing, no water, no tea, no coffee, no bathroom. Just-- just say, "He said this is how we're gonna do it. We're gonna do this through

democracy. We know we have the numbers, but we're gonna go through this democratically."

01:08:31;01

And I (UNINTEL)-- I remember going up to-- there were mixed-race people they called "coloreds (?)" down there. There were-- whi-- white people voting in line. And I remember going to a line with-- and I walked-- there was this whi-- white woman, a young woman in her-- in her-- 20s, I'd say. And sh-- we had the camera on her. And she said, "This is the day I've waited for my whole life."

01:08:49;24

So there was this wonderful, positive feeling about democracy, even though they were turning over the government to a black majority. He did that. Who else could've orchestrated that over a period of a couple of years after coming out? He wouldn't come out 'til they legalized his party.

01:09:04;01

I-- that was really-- he was sitting in prison 'cause he was-- he was ruling that country from

within prison. He was saying, "Unless you legalise"-- and the minute I heard them-- that he had legalized not just his party but the Communist party, I knew then it was for real. And a lot of people in journalism in Washington didn't know enough (UNINTEL) come over here, people like Ben Bradley didn't know it. I had been down there to know; the minute you legalize the ANC and the Communist party, the whites had given up. And he organized-- not a person was shot. We all thought it was inevitably going to be a bloodbath, with the whites with supreme firepower being able to defend themselves if there was any kind of real revolution.

01:09:38;04

It would've been horrible. It could've been happening right now. Probably it would've been happening by now. And he said, "We're gonna do it a different way. We're gonna do it through democracy." And hopefully, with all the weak leaders that have succeeded him, South Africa will find a way to get a good democracy, 'cause

he set them on the road to it.

JOHN YEMMA:

01:09:53;11

So we've got-- we've got to wrap up, David. But-- just-- I just thought maybe the last thing I would do is roll this last question into a last thought for the two of you; how can the public best encourage politicians today to make the paradigm shift back to Americans and not Republicans and Democrats?

01:10:09;02

In other words, what can the public do? We've talked-- we've critiqued politicians, right? We've-- we've talked-- critiqued old and new politicians, but is there anything the public can do to-- to change this discourse? To put pressure on? Or--

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

01:10:20;10

Wel-- well, quickly, 'cause David knows this, Hillary Clinton will be very much old-school that way. (APPLAUSE) She is very friendly with Republicans like John McCain. She's very collegial. She's-- seasoned, which is a good

thing.

01:10:35;24

We haven't talked about how the problem of this president being not seasoned and coming here with not a lot of relationships. But you gotta-- you gotta come to the office with the relationships. You can't meet people in the White House. You can't audition them. You gotta know the people to put in your cabinet, the second (UNINTEL) in the third rank, the fourth rank, (UNINTEL) who you're gonna pick for a second term long before you get in there. And you have to know a lot of people (UNINTEL) deal with for years, and she's got that going. And I think that-- that would be one of her strengths, to pick a person who really is involved in-- in American political life.

DAVID GERGEN:

01:11:05;13

I-- I-- if-- if she were elected, I hope that she forms a national government. Yeah, I-- I think it's time we had a government that was really much more representative. That's what Churchill did during the war, and this is what, you know,

Franklin Roosevelt did as we entered the war. He formed a national government, and we've reached that point--

JOHN YEMMA:

01:11:20;12

Well--

DAVID GERGEN:

01:11:20;24

--where whoever wins--

JOHN YEMMA:

01:11:21;11

--what is a "national government"--

01:11:21;24

(OVERTALK)

DAVID GERGEN:

01:11:23;05

National government is when-- and John Kennedy did it. When John Kennedy became president, he understood we faced a lot of issue-- deep issues and deep divisions. He asked a Republican to be his Secretary of Defense, a Republican to be head of the CIA, a Republican to be the Secretary of the Treasury, and a Republican to be the National Security Advisor in the White House.

01:11:42;01

And it made a big difference in the way the country saw that they came together. And-- and

during the 13 days, it made a huge difference to have them there. But-- look, he-- I have the privilege now of working-- I spend a lot of my time in classrooms. And I can tell ya help is on the way. I am really impressed by the quality of the next generation, the younger generation that's (APPLAUSE) coming through now (?).

01:12:04;01

And-- you see them-- th-- there are two streams (?) of people coming out (UNINTEL PHRASE) the people who are deeply committed to social change, and they want-- they don't want to go into government so much. They want to go into nonprofits. They want to come here and work for Robin Hood.

01:12:16;24

They want to go into Teach for America. They want to do City Year. We-- I-- I'm on the board for-- for-- Teach for America, and I'll just tell ya, Wendy Kopp is one of their m-- many women leaders now emerging (UNINTEL)-- she's wonderful. You

know, she has an organization that has people teachin' in the toughest classrooms. There are 1,000 of 'em here in New York.

01:12:34;06

And we have 4,700 new core members this year. We had 47,000 applications. At Harvard, four years ago, 9% of the class applied for Teach for (NOISE) America coming out, senior class. This past year, 20%. (NOISE) One out of five Harvard students said, "I-- I don't want to go to Wall Street. I want to go to the South Bronx and teach the eighth grade." (APPLAUSE) That is real (UNINTEL).

01:12:56;24

And-- and-- and the other stream of people are come-- coming out, the second stream are these-- and it's the-- it's the silver lining from 12 years of war. We got kids comin' out, they're comin' back and taking off their uniforms now after serving in Iraq and Afghanistan; knock your socks off.

01:13:10;24

They are-- people of-- of wide bandwidth. They've served the country. They served under one flag, and they believe in that, and they're coming back here and say, "I'd like to help back here." And they're form-- joining forces with the social entrepreneur people like, you know, the Wendy Kopps of the world. And-- you see a merger now happening, an alliance happening. And-- and let me tell you, I've kept-- (UNINTEL) this one story. I met this kid last-- last-- year. H-- this is-- and he's so typical of this generation. He-- this is a young man who finished high school, decided to go in the Marine Corps.

01:13:42;02

He enlisted in the Marine Corps. Didn't go (UNINTEL), enlisted, comin' out of high school, and they made him a sniper. He had three tours in Iraq. Being a sniper is very traumatizing for many people. You don't push a button and see-- and-- and you hear an explosion from miles away you never see.

01:13:55;23

You look down the barrel of a gun, you pull the trigger, and you see somebody's head explode. That can be very traumatizing. He did that, three tours. Came back, thought maybe he could get into Harvard. Applied to Harvard. Got in. Finished this last spring. And you know what he's doing now? Teaching in an eighth grade Teach for America. That's the spirit of the generation. (CLEARING THROAT) So from my point of view, one of the things we can do is to work with this next generation, help build them up. And those of us who are older need to clean up our acts to the extent we can and we need to get the heck off the stage, (LAUGHTER) (APPLAUSE) and-- and invite this new generation up.

JOHN YEMMA:

01:14:34;22

That was great.

CHRIS MATTHEWS:

01:14:35;22

Not tonight.

JOHN YEMMA:

01:14:35;24

I-- I think you guys have given us something to look forward to, which is, you know, the--

you've-- you've got something in the future, and especially the generational idea. I think that's wonderful. Thanks for a great evening. (APPLAUSE) I mean, this was just--

DAVID GERGEN:

01:14:46;05 Thank you--

01:14:45;18 (OVERTALK)

JOHN YEMMA:

01:14:47;24 Befo-- before we go-- (APPLAUSE) Bruce Vaughn (PH)-- Bruce Vaughn was gonna come back out and say a few words, I think. Is that right, Bruce? Yeah, okay.

01:15:01;12 (OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

JOHN YEMMA:

01:15:01;24 And then we'll-- then we'll say goodbye.

BRUCE:

01:15:03;24 I agree, it was an amazing evening. Thank you, guys. (APPLAUSE) Let's have a hand. So-- just a little audience informal polling before we go. So the first question; how many of you, as a result-- and could we bring the lights up just a little bit, please?

