

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

FALK AUDITORIUM

ANGER, FEAR, DOMINATION: DARK PASSIONS AND THE POWER OF POLITICAL SPEECH

Wednesday, September 10, 2025

DISCUSSION

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RAUCH: Welcome everyone to the Brookings Institution and the newly renovated Falk Auditorium. My name is Jonathan Rauch. I'm a senior fellow here, a friend, colleague, and mentee of Bill Galston's. I will take three to five minutes to introduce Bill and his book this morning. The book is,

and I don't use this word lightly, I am completely serious. The book is a masterpiece, full stop. It's a landmark in modern political thinking. It will be read in 50 and perhaps 100 years. I should also mention that I'm struggling with the remains of a mild cough. If you hear a little bit of that noise, it's just sinus clearing. After I introduce Bill, he'll talk about some of the key ideas in the book for ten minutes, whatever. We'll talk among ourselves, we'll go to you. You all know the drill.

Something that happened in this very room a bit over 20 years ago that I was present for was when the late Senator Edward F. Kennedy, Ted Kennedy, recounted a conversation that he had at that point fairly recently had with then British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Blair told Kennedy that he, Blair, was puzzled why Al Gore in the 2000 presidential race, had not run on the strong record of the Clinton-Gore administration, to which Kennedy had replied, well, the Gore people polled it, and they focus-grouped it, and all the focus groups and polls said that the voters didn't wanna hear about the Clinton administration. And so it was public opinion. To which Blair's reply was to say, ah, that's unled public opinion.

We in Washington very often forget something that the ancients and Shakespeare and Machiavelli and for that matter Mussolini and Hitler and Vladimir Putin understand, which is political rhetoric doesn't just express the pre-existing opinion or sentiment of the public. It doesn't just express the public's character. It shapes the opinion, sentiment, and character of the public. It changes who we are as a polity.

Our politics have been fundamentally reshaped by the last 10 years of an extraordinary kind of political rhetoric. And it's that kind of political rhetoric that Bill's book is about. In the book, he explores in detail what he calls the dark passions and the specific ways in which political rhetoric has been deployed to activate and exploit those dark passions. He also discusses how to address that fundamental problem. And with that, Bill, the floor is yours.

GALSTON: It's appropriate and more than appropriate to begin with some thanks. First of all, to John Rauch for agreeing to moderate this session, despite a lingering cough that a lesser man would have used as an excuse to find a substitute, and for much more, for unswerving support through the tortuous process that led to the writing and publication of this book. Secondly, to the communications team, which has done a marvelous job of getting the word out about this event, you know, witness a nearly full house in refurbished Falk auditorium, and what I'm told is upwards of a thousand people listening online to this. And finally, to Governance Studies new events manager, Maryam al-Hassani, who's done a punctilious job of making this particular train run on time and pull into the station right on schedule.

Let me try to situate this book in the arc of my career. I published my first book 50 years ago this month. And so this is something of an occasion for looking back as well as looking forward. And I came to a realization. Everything of significance that I have done in my entire career has been dedicated, either in theory or practice of both the defense, preservation, strengthening, and improvement of liberal democracy.

And to make sure we're all on the same page, by liberal democracy I don't mean the alternative to conservative democracy. By liberal democracy, I mean the alternate to total democracy, that is to say, the unchecked power of majorities. Liberal democracy, as you know, protects individuals through systems of rights, through the defense of private spaces that are more or less immune from government interference, and by the division of powers, the generation not of a single majority, but of multiple majorities, addressed in one way in the chief executive, another way in the legislature, and also in a judicial system that is selected through a process that ultimately rests on the will of the majority, but what's selected exercises independence. The book, obviously, has been evoked by the contemporary assault on liberal democracy. Not always in the name of autocracy, although we've seen plenty of that, but also in the name of an unfettered majoritarian democracy. "I've been elected so I can do anything I want" version of democracy.

The thesis of the book is that rigorous clarity about liberal democracy, about human beings, and about the circumstances in which we find ourselves is a precondition for its effective defense. And

doing that requires us to face up to certain comforting allusions about liberal democracy and replace them with a realistic view of where we stand as defenders of liberal democracy. Why defend it? It's really simple. Because every realistic alternative to liberal democracy in contemporary circumstances is worse than liberal democracy, and often much worse. That goes for autocracy, but it also goes for unfettered majoritarianism.

What's my argument, my illusion-dispelling argument in the book? I'm going to read a few sentences, because I cannot express my thoughts any more compactly, and I don't want to take too much time here. Rational self-interest does not always drive human events. The passions matter, and evil is real. Economics isn't everything, or even, as the Marxists would have it, the base of everything. Culture and religion have retained and will not lose their independent power to shape human understanding and motivate human action.

Nor does history guarantee the victory of liberal democracy over its adversaries. Nothing does, because it always remains possible to mobilize the dark side of our nature against efforts to create a better world. Human beings can and often do destroy what they've built. History has no side and no end. You cannot, as some U.S. Presidents of the 21st century have been fond of saying, you know, do something that is on the wrong side of history because history has no side. History is the totality of what human beings do in the circumstances in which they find themselves, for better or for worse.

Well, what are these illusions that I have in mind that are important to dispel in order for the defenders of liberal democracy to gain a clear view of what they're defending and how best to defend it? Illusion number one, liberal democracy is easy to establish and to preserve. That was the sort of thinking that led too many American leaders to believe that all we needed to do was get rid of a tyrant in Iraq and liberal democracy would spring up, as though it had been a seed in parched soil that suddenly received, in good desert fashion, a flood of rain and immediately sprouted. The natural thing to do. It's not. Liberal democracy, in many ways, goes against the grain. As you've heard, it restrains majorities. It requires the acceptance of and coexistence with people who are very different from yourself, yourselves, ourselves. It prevents us from translating our personal visions of a good life and a good world into a civic vision, starting with religion. Non-establishment of religion means, very simply, that we can't take our own personal religious commitments and make them normative and binding for the community as a whole. But that applies also to non-religious convictions. And liberal democracy, finally, in circumstances of difference, makes compromise necessary in order to survive and thrive. Why is that? Because in circumstances of liberty, as James Madison rightly reminded us, differences of interest and opinion and values will always emerge. And we have to find a way of coexisting with them. So that's the first illusion. Liberal democracy is easy because it's natural. It isn't.

Illusion number two, I have already pointed to in my earlier remarks, so I'll go through it briskly. Illusion number two is what I call myopic materialism, the belief, especially pervasive among elites, that economic issues are the real issues and that cultural issues are diversionary. It's the kind of conviction that gives rise to books like "What's the Matter with Kansas?".

Illusion number three is transnationalism, which is encapsulated in phrases like "the international community" and "citizens of the world." The conviction that national boundaries and loyalties are morally irrelevant at best, irrational and retrograde at worst. This is the kind of illusion that leads to programs and policies such as open borders, right? If borders are an affront to human equality, then the only way to be true to our convictions is to open the borders. Seductively simple, dangerously wrong. Here's why: transnationalism is the parochialism of elites. Particular attachments are key elements of our lives, and they are not going away. Illusion number four, naivete about human nature in the course of human events. And here, I am both a Madisonian, and if you will, a Jewish Augustinian. We have a capacity for evil. Anger, fear, and what Augustine called the *libido dominandi*, the urge to dominate others, are permanent features of our nature, at war with other features of nature, which I do not wish to deny, our capacity for generosity, for self-restraint, for sacrifice for others, peaceful collective action with others. Continuing with this analysis of naivete about human nature, reason and self-interest are not the only forces moving us to act.

The passions on which this book focuses, anger, fear, the desire to dominate others, are real and they're often dominant.

And finally, historical progressivism, the idea that some invisible hand is moving us inexorably toward a better world. This is an illusion that has deep roots in the thought of the past three centuries. If I had more time, I would give you an extended quotation from Condoleezza Rice, the former secretary of state, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, where she said, we were supposed to be past this. The use of force to change national boundaries, we thought that was all in the past. And she actually uses the phrase linear progress. As you've heard me say, history has no side, no end. History is nothing but human beings making choices, some good, some bad, with no guarantee that things will work out well or even as we intended them.

I conclude with some remarks about the nature of politics. Building on this analysis of human nature and the circumstances in which we find ourselves. The foundation of decent politics, I didn't say perfect politics or utopian politics, decent politics is the establishment of institutions and norms and understandings that minimize the probability that the great evils of politics, namely cruelty, tyranny, and civil war, will dominate our lives. These institutions, ideally, will be combined with incentives to adopt policies that improve the well-being of all citizens.

The core of politics, and here I go back to the Greeks, the core politics is persuasive speech. That is the defining difference of what it means to act politically, as opposed to economically, where the fundamental idea is exchange, or militarily, where the fundamental idea is force or threat of force. The distinctive difference of politics is our capacity to use speech to persuade our fellow human beings to do something that they might not otherwise have done. There are two basic kinds of political speech, those that whip up the dark passions and put them in the service of domination, and speech that soothes these passions and works for decent politics. In my book, I have numerous examples of both kinds of speech arrayed for your inspection and consideration.

And finally it is the defenders of liberal democracies' neglect of persuasive speech, the belief that not only their programs and policies, but also their regime speaks for itself. Why do we need to persuade others when the virtue and effectiveness of what we're doing speak for themselves? The biggest mistake you can make if politics is persuasive speech at its core. It is the belief of technocratic elites, leaving them open and vulnerable to leaders who mobilize speech, not only against their policies and programs, but against liberal democracy itself. With that, we proceed to the conversation.

RAUCH: Bill, thank you. For those who are standing and don't wish to, we've got plenty of seats up here toward the front. We don't bite.

I confess that in the 90s, at the end of history, I committed every single one of the sins that you mentioned, the misconceptions that you mentioned about liberalism: better than other systems, we're basically good, and if you simply allow people to, they will build liberal democracies. And I still remember the moment of my first disillusionment. Of course, it was only the beginning of my disillusionment, which was after the Iraq War invasion, U.S. invasion in April or May of 2003, some American troops, with time on their hands, took an empty field and turned it into a soccer pitch for local kids, the Iraqi kids, and they put up goalposts and nets and stuff like that. And overnight, it was all gone. Now, this was just an empty lot. It was just dirt. And I still remember the quotation in the Washington Post from an American serviceman saying, they looted dirt. What kind of people loot dirt? So this is when I began to realize that there's a lot more to liberal democracy than we realize. I want to start our conversation with a striking sentence in the book, and I'll read it, because it says something about you, and it also says something about the person whose name we have not yet mentioned, but who is central to our conversation. You say, "When I watched a Trump rally for the first time, my first response was horrified fascination. But this quickly gave way to the realization that I was watching democratic politics in its purest form, a man using speech to mobilize a multitude to act as he wishes them to." And I was struck especially by that phrase, "democratic politics in its purest form" because I was brought up to believe that democratic politics in its purest form looks like people lining up to vote. Or the people in the Norman Rockwell

town hall. What did you mean by saying that the Trump rally, the dynamics you saw there was democratic politics in its purest form?

GALSTON: Well, I think you can probably guess at my answer from what I said previously. If you believe that persuasive speech is the heart of politics, then persuasive speech designed to induce enough people to see things your way so that you can win an election and gain the power to carry out your program is the core of democratic politics. Persuasion is the beginning, and all else flows from that. And so when I watched Trump rallies for the first time, as I said after I got over my initial shock, I said, wait a minute. This man is out on this high wire all by himself. No intermediaries. Him, a microphone, and an audience. Now, of course, in Greece, there was no microphone, which is why the scale of politics was a good deal more restricted back then, or one of the reasons that it is now. We have technology that enables the human voice to be projected not only to people who are within normal hearing distance, but to 60,000 people in an auditorium, and to 350 million people in a country, and to 8 billion people in the world. That's a dramatic change wrought by technology but that doesn't change the heart of the matter. Right? And Donald Trump inherited a Republican Party that was in favor of limited government, free markets at home, free trade abroad, and the defense of democracies and the rule of international law. Ronald Reagan and his epigone deviated from those ideals from time to time. But that was the dominant description of one of the two major political parties in the United States. We've never had more than two that lasted for any length of time. So if you are able to persuade a majority of one of the two great political parties in the U.S. to change its mind, not only on details but on fundamentals, that is persuasion. And I will grant, you know, it fell on fertile, fertile soil. The public, in a way, was prepared. But to articulate, to bring into the public what is inchoate in the minds of individuals is one of the functions of it.

RAUCH: So you speak in that sentence of horrified fascination. And I think we would all have said before 2016 that we understood that it's important to be able to give a good speech and communicate and Reagan was good at that and Nixon couldn't do a TV and all of that. What was new in that speech and what horrified you was the nature of the rhetoric and the purpose of the rhetoric being employed. And that was toward what you call the dark passions. Now, the book, one could, of course, taxonomize that all kinds of ways. In the book you taxonomized those as basically five, anger, hatred, excuse me, anger -- we'll set hatred to one side. I think it's sort of a compound -- anger, humiliation, resentment, fear. And the culminating dark passion in the book, the drive for domination.

GALSTON: Correct.

RAUCH: And what you were seeing that day was the marshaling, correct, of rhetoric to inflame all of those dark passions in the service of domination. Is that right?

GALSTON: That is 80% right. And the 20% is the nagging voice in my head that says, and I think it's important to put this on the table, it is clear that the current president of the United States would prefer a world in which, and this is a direct quotation from a recent remark, I can do anything I want. In his first term, he said, I have an Article II, which perhaps he's read, that allows me to do whatever I want. But now he's cut out the reference to Article II, which suggests that his respect for the other branches of government is at most minimal. He has totally cowed and subordinated the Congress of the United States, at least the members of his own party, and we shall see how far the Supreme Court permits him to go. I think the jury is still out on that. So yes, a drive for the kind of near-absolute power that we have rarely seen in this country. But at the same time, we have to remember that Donald Trump actually believes in a handful of things that he has believed in all of his political career. And I take him at his word, and his actions certainly suggest that all of us should, that, you know, immigration is bad. Trade, at least unfair trade, and he thinks that virtually all of the trade relations in the United States for the past half century have been unfair, and globalization at the expense of the nation, all of those are bad. He was determined to oppose all of them. He's as good as his words. So it's not the pure drive for power, but it is a drive for unfettered power to do what he wants including major shifts in the orientation of the country.

RAUCH: And these passions that he turns out to be so gifted at mobilizing, they are, as I understand it in your argument, human universals.

GALSTON: Yes.

RAUCH: There was a strand of liberalism to which I was a party, but it has roots in people like Rousseau and many others, which is that through habit, through good institutions, good practices, good education, we can be habituated out, we can train ourselves beyond those dark passions. And the core argument of this book is, forget it. We are living in a world with these dark passions forever. Is that right?

GALSTON: They are perennial possibilities of our nature, right? And then the question then becomes, are these perennial dark sides, dark passions of our nature, to be activated or not? Because to say that something is a possibility is not always to say that it's a reality. These tendencies are always lurking. And I think if we're honest with ourselves, we'll have to acknowledge that we can understand from the inside, and not just as abstract students of human nature, what it means to be angry, what it mean to be fearful, what what it means to be resentful, and what resentment leads, can lead to, what humiliation can lead to, I would be surprised if there were anyone in the room who hadn't experienced from the inside these feelings. That's just, you know, I mean, we have to be honest with ourselves before we claim the right to be honest about others. But there are some circumstances that activate these dark passions which can be enormously destructive, and others that tend to tamp them down.

RAUCH: Well, you put that in the passive, but the circumstance that has activated those passions in the United States in the last 10 years is that thing which the founders feared the most, a demagogue. So what I take from the book is one must never underrate the power of a demagog to marshal and use these passions.

GALSTON: That's absolutely correct, to which I would add only one thing. It's important also to keep in mind the circumstances that either prevent a person with those intentions from making political progress and gaining power, and the circumstances that don't. And I'm not saying anything very original. You know, when I say that the past 30 years have had an unintended byproduct. And that is tens of millions of Americans who feel, for a variety of reasons, that they're being not only left behind, but also disrespected. This is a standard argument. I don't have to review the details. But those are the enabling conditions that allow, that allow people who are moved by the drive for power to gain it. Let me give you an historical example. You've all heard, I'm sure, of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I. It was a punitive theory designed to punish Germany as the leader of the losing side. Some farsighted voices, led by the famous economist John Maynard Keynes, who was a young economic advisor at Versailles and subsequently, to warn, don't do this. You are humiliating a great nation. You're going to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. And I can make an argument, if I wanted to, that ignoring Keynes's advice and other farsighted people that saw that the Treaty of Versailles would be received as a national humiliation by a great power that wasn't going away despite its defeat had a lot to do with creating the enabling conditions for the rise of Adolf Hitler. One of the morals that I take from that story is that if you're about to say something or do something, that people on the receiving end of your speech or your action are going to interpret as profoundly disrespectful and humiliating. You ought to think twice before you say or do that, because you too are sowing the wind and may reap the whirlwind.

RAUCH: Always good advice but if I'm understanding the fundamental argument of the book correctly it's that although the needle of vulnerability to demagoguery may shift within some range depending on circumstances, you know economy, the culture, we will never be in the clear.

GALSTON: Correct, absolutely not.

RAUCH: And Hitler might have come to power even without Versailles. It's possible. We should not underestimate the power of the demagogue as an agent in a democratic society and we must not under-emphasize the power at the dark passions in ourselves to respond to those agents.

GALSTON: Absolutely right and and this is, on my part, a profoundly unoriginal thought. Read --.

RAUCH: And yet shockingly needed right now.

GALSTON: Well, George Orwell once said that in times like this, the restatement of the obvious is the first duty. I think he went on to say something like, intelligent men. I suppressed the end of that quote because I didn't want to be accused of self-flattery. But frequently, you know, frequently, because we're carried away by an idea, something in our heads about the way the world must be, we don't look at the world as it is. We don't see the obvious. And you're absolutely right. One of the purposes of this book is to rub our collective noses in the obvious,

RAUCH: The founders warned us, Christian theology warns us, that we are fallen. Hamilton, for example, there's so many quotes about this, but this is a famous one from a letter in 1792. Hamilton writes, when a man unprincipled in private life, desperate in his fortune, bold in his temper, possessed of considerable talents, known to have scoffed in private at the principles of liberty, when such a man is seen to mount the hobby horse of popularity, it may justly be suspected that his object is to throw things into confusion, that he may ride the storm and direct the whirlwind.

GALSTON: Well, my book was totally unnecessary, because Alexander Hamilton said it in a paragraph but you know but you could.

RAUCH: Madison said it, Washington warned about it, Lincoln in his first great speech warned that this was the main threat to democracy and yet somehow I missed it. I thought my reaction when I saw those initial Trump speeches and still today I confess is no one's gonna fall for this. That that's completely on me your book is, I'm going to use the word scathing. You may disagree with that. But I think appropriately scathing, or at least correcting at a minimum of we liberals who lost sight of this ground truth.

GALSTON: I would not like to leave the word scathing there because I think whatever you think of this book, its tone is not scathing.

RAUCH: That's for sure, yeah.

GALSTON: It's classic, you know, it's a classic more in sorrow than in anger book. You know, I'm not, I don't think I'm really angry in the book. You know, I'm profoundly saddened by what's happening in the country and in the world. Since we're trading confessions of error and incapacity, I didn't think that Donald Trump was going to win the 2016 election. I mean, I, you know, I could sense the power of what he was doing, but I didn't think there was, of course, there wasn't a majority for it, but didn't even think there were enough people for it to give him a chance of getting over the top in the Electoral College. And I made some very unwise remarks to that effect in 2016, or at least unforesighted remarks, because, like you, I couldn't believe it. And so you, although, and I say that despite the fact that I started writing papers on the rise of populism in Europe for Brookings 15 years before I published this book. It was clear that something was happening. But the idea that enough of it had happened in the United States to make this possible was the farthest thing from my mind in 2016.

RAUCH: Yes, to me this book has the force of a reset. Some books change you when you read them, and this one changed me in the sense that it reset me back to the baseline of the founders and of fundamental Christian teaching and where we had been until the triumphal narrative of the past 30 years, and that is a huge service. Um, the book, we can discuss sort of the solutions-oriented aspects more in the questions and answers.

This is not a book about policy. It doesn't have an agenda or a platform. It's about human nature and its exploitability. But it does have a general model for how we tackle the dark side over, historically and successfully. And it's basically two things. The first is, on the demand side, which

you alluded to, do what you can to address the legitimate causes of anger, betrayal, feeling left behind, feeling demeaned, and that there are all kinds of ways politicians can do that. And that people like me, frankly, again, I missed this too. We did not work hard to listen to those sounds when we should have. The second aspect, though, which flows very directly from your thesis, is the supply side aspect. That there are ways that the providers of political rhetoric can and should modulate what they do. Can you talk a bit about that?

GALSTON: Well, yes. And as I said, I provide examples in the book of politicians in very challenging circumstances who leaned against the dark passions that they saw swirling around them. Here are two of the most dramatic. When FDR took office in March of 1933, he was facing a fearful, traumatized country. And he diagnosed that perfectly in the famous sentence, the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. He went on to name the problem with fear that was specific to his time. And he said, went on to say, the nameless terror that paralyzes us and prevents us from acting to get out of the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Now, I've reflected a lot on that word paralyzed, paralyzes in FDR's speech. How could he have used that word without thinking of himself and his circumstances? And if you look at what happened to him, I mean, he was, you know, he was an arrogant, cocky young man, in the estimation of everybody who knew him as a college student, as a young government official, as a very young vice presidential candidate, et cetera. And the onset of polio that paralyzed him could have generated a circumstance in which he allowed fear to overwhelm him and simply to retreat from life. And he decided in the early 1920s that he was not going to be confined by his polio. He would surmount his fears and become an agent of his own resurrection, if I could use that word. And so when he talked about nameless terror that paralyzes himself, he was talking to a nation about an experience that he could understand from the inside. And because of that, he could credibly tell the country your fears can drive you astray, badly astray if you allow them to dominate. Don't. And here's a different way of thinking about our circumstances. And he went on to say, our ills, thank God, concern only material things, that the basic resources, the energy of the people, the goodness of our political institutions, et cetera, will allow us to overcome our fear if only we realize that we can be agents of our own improvement. And history shows that that summons to overcome fear, coupled with wise and effective action, turned retreat, to quote FDR once more, into advance. During that period, there were people making very different use of those circumstances. For example, Huey Long, right, who was, you know, whom FDR, FDR didn't fear very many people, but he feared Huey Long for exactly the reasons that I talk about in this book.

RAUCH: And of course, voices across Europe. I know the second example, if you'll forgive me, I'll use the prerogative of the chair to simply, since we need to move to the audience, to simply say that's a very famous speech that Robert F. Kennedy, Sr. gave in Indianapolis the night that Martin Luther King, Jr. was shot, heads nodding around the room. It's an impromptu speech in which he urged calm upon the crowd in Indianapolis, unlike so many cities, did not burn that night.

GALSTON: Let me just add a little bit of color, color commentary. He got the news that Martin Luther King had been shot while he was flying to Indianapolis. He had good reason to believe that his mostly African-American audience would not have heard the news yet. And in fact, that assessment turned out to be correct. So it was his sad duty to break to an African-American audience the news the Martin Luther had been shot, to anticipate that the reaction would be anger, to talk about what anger can do if it's not restrained by the better angels of our nature. The crowd dispersed peacefully, and history, I think, records that there were no major disruptions in Indianapolis.

GALSTON: You can watch the speech on YouTube, I recommend it. A third example that was very striking to me is you all remember that moment in the 2008 campaign when John McCain is doing a town hall and some person, I think it's a woman, here again, heads are nodding around the room. My colleague E.J. remembers this in detail. Stands up and begins to say something, something hateful about Obama not being American or something of that sort. And McCain cuts her off. He makes a deliberate choice at that moment to short circuit the cycle, the process of amped up rhetoric, which he sees as beginning, and to say, no ma'am, I disagree. He's a good American. It's a very striking moment and very unusual today.

We're going to turn to questions. We've already got a few good ones in advance online. I'll just ask two of them. Bill and I hereby promise to make brevity a virtue so that we can get as many of you into this conversation as we possibly can. First question is, it's a bit of a challenge, actually, which says, OK, 10 or 20 years ago, we could use the power of positive rhetoric against the power negative rhetoric. But at this point today, how do you un-normalize forms of dark rhetoric that have become so common as to be effectively normalized? How do put that genie back in the bottle?

GALSTON: I'll be brief. Fighting fire with fire frequently generates a bigger fire. What about fighting fire with water or foam? You know, foam, they use it in airports all the time, works by taking by creating an oxygen-free seal over the fire, which gradually goes out. You can't denormalize this form of speech by adopting it yourself. That normalizes it, contrary to your intention. So I recognize the force of that challenge, but I simply reject it.

RAUCH: So when they go low, we go high.

GALSTON: When they go low, we do the right thing. Now, don't misunderstand me. You know, if someone says, we're going to break with norms, redistrict in the middle of a census cycle, and take five seats away from the party we don't like, I'm not telling Gavin Newsom or anybody like that to turn the other cheek. But when you turn that other cheek, you say, this isn't what we want to do. This isn't the way we think politics should work. This is being forced upon us, and if we get the power to change things, we will back a law, a national law, that prohibits, you know, mid-census redistricting, unless a court requires a state to do so. A very simple law, perfectly constitutional, which turns, you know a bad action into the possibility of progress.

RAUCH: It's interesting, we're starting to see the emergence in the Democratic Party of younger voices that seem to understand the power of rhetoric and how to use it positively. One is that young guy in Texas whose name E.J. will remind me of --

GALSTON: Talarico?

RAUCH: Yes, Talarico, another is Zohran Mamdani, whatever you think of his policies, he's a good rhetorician and he uses that positively indeed. So maybe they're getting the hang of it. Another group of questions that we got in advance, whole separate subject, which we won't go into, but they revolve around talk radio, social media, algorithms, AI, and all the other forms of media and computational media that seem to be rewarding the worst kinds of rhetoric. You don't go to media in your book, it's not about that. Is there anything though you want to say about the forms of media at the moment and how they do and don't apply to your thesis?

GALSTON: Well, I'll pick just one example. Algorithms that are deliberately designed to intensify whatever feelings you have. And there's a lot of evidence that these are being deliberately designed into the system ought to be exposed for what they are. And if there is any legal and constitutional way of preventing big tech companies from doing this in order to increase eyeballs on screen. But I would caution against what I think of as media determinism, because the dark passions will always find a way to express themselves, whether it's through pamphlets after the invention of the printing press, or the telegraph, or the extraordinarily effective use of radio that people like Hitler made in the early 20th century, or the use of television that people like Vladimir Putin have perfected, the idea that without modern communications technology, we wouldn't be grappling with these problems, I think, is just falsified by the historical record.

RAUCH: Yeah, that's a very important point. I wrote a whole book about disinformation and the like. And one of the things that's clear from the literature is that far and away, the number one technology that spreads falsehood lies, disinformation, conspiracy theories, and all the rest is the same as it's been for 3,000 years, and that's politicians. Far and away the number source.

OK, let's go to the room. There's a gentleman here in the fourth row who's been very patient. Short questions, please. And I will police ourselves to keep our answers short. Good.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Great. Thank you, guys. Great.

RAUCH: Who are you?

AUDIENCE QUESTION: I'm Zach. I'm a graduate student at Georgetown University. Very nice. So great conversation. Thank you guys. Earlier this year, I was reading a great Atlantic article by Mr. Rauch on one word that describes Trump, which is the patrimonialism. And I was kind of curious about maybe expanding upon the connection between the bureaucratic proceduralism, that the the aversion to bureaucratic proceduralism and then this new idea of dark passions and how those two things interact . Thank you.

RAUCH: Well, there's a PhD thesis for you.

GALSTON: Absolutely. I think you've just assigned yourself a task. That's an interesting question. But what I will say is this, that one of the central features of liberal democracy is respect for law and the rule of law, acknowledging a force to the law that is there regardless of whether it's consistent with your will or not. And one reason that I think demagogues are a threat to the rule of law, is that they see law not as an expression of the popular will, so much as a hindrance to their own will. And one of the features of patrimonialism that strikes me is the mistrust that's built into it. Right? The, and, so, if your experience is running a family business, not a large public corporation, but a family business. You have, I think, institutionalized the view that the people who are most to be trusted are members of your own family. And by extension, people who try to become quasi-members of your family through demonstrations of absolute loyalty to you. And absolute loyalty means that when there is a choice between the law and loyalty to the head of the enterprise, your instinct is to take loyalty over law. And I could flesh out that connection in a variety of ways, but I think that, for me, is --

GALSTON: Yeah, demagoguery can serve ideological purposes, policy purposes, it does, but it can also serve the purpose of patrimonial rule. That, for those of you who don't know, that's the word for when the state is run as the personal property and the family business of the head of state. And that's a system that's being put in place right now. Ties of loyalty supersede ties of bureaucracy, and of course it opens itself to all the problems of demagoguery. Who else?

GALSTON: Wow, a sea!

RAUCH: A sea of people. My gosh, I'm going to go to the very rear of this quadrant to the bracelet at hand that's connected to someone I can't see.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Hello, I am Barbara, a retired black immigrant technology professional. I have this question. You mentioned that Trump thought that immigration is bad. I didn't hear you mention the underlying racism, because he's married two immigrant wives. How does he convince his demagogue to be anti-immigration when he has chosen as his two wives, immigrants? Any thoughts?

RAUCH: Bill, any thoughts on any thoughts on hypocrisy as it relates to demagoguery? It hasn't been much of an obstacle in the past.

GALSTON: No, it has not. And I don't mean to diminish the force of your question any way by relating it to a personal experience that I had. As some of you know, in my youth, I was the policy director for Walter Mondale's presidential campaign. Walter Mondale, as you know, was a Norwegian, surrounded by a Norwegian brain trust from a state heavily populated by Norwegians. And when I attended Mr. Mondale's 90th birthday party, which was a big day-long celebration, Donald Trump, in that week, had mused out loud, "Why are we getting all of these immigrants from these expletive deleted countries? Why aren't we getting more immigrants from Norway?" And the repetition of this line, you know, brought down the house in the Twin Cities. But clearly, it spoke to something quite fundamental about what's going on. And that is that the othering of most

contemporary immigrants reflects the fact that since 1965, the immigrants who have transformed America have not come from European countries. They are not predominantly white. They are not predominantly Christian. And over the 60 years since the reopening of the immigration gates, and it is now 60 years, the demography of the country has been transformed in a way that many Americans celebrate, but others fear. And I do think, going back to my own analysis, that the root of the anti-immigrant sentiment is fear. And it is that fear that allows people to believe that immigrants, for example, are more likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans. Which is pretty clearly not the case. It is that fear that induces people to worry that their way of life, the stability that they've taken for granted is being eroded or even erased. And if I can just, one more sentence.

RAUCH: Okay, we've got to get more questions.

GALSTON: I understand. I'm trying your patience, but patience is a virtue.

RAUCH: You must come over and try mine sometime.

GALSTON: And that is... Now I forgot what I was going to say. All right, you win.

RAUCH: Moderating 101. I'll just add to what Bill said that part of what this book taught me, it's between the lines but I think it's there, is that Trump, the MAGA movement, and all of those people are playing one game and we at Brookings and liberal democrats are playing another. They're playing the passion game. It doesn't really matter if you point out inconsistencies in their logic, hypocrisy. They're touching chords of emotion. We're playing a logic game, the reason game. It's a different game. They're both important. But we have not figured out how to play on their turf. Let's go to this quadrant here, where we haven't been yet. The gentleman three rows back. Oh, we have been to this quadrant.

GALSTON: Yes, you're uncharacteristically neglecting the center.

RAUCH: Yes, we'll come to the center next. That's my promise.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Hi, my name's Ayush. I'm an undergrad student at Georgetown University. And my question is, I can't speak to my entire generation.

RAUCH: Oh, go ahead.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: I don't want to speak for everyone, but I have a general sense that Gen Z as a whole is fatigued. We're tired because it feels like we have no say, nothing is getting done, nothing that we want is getting done and we don't know how to make change. I mean, we got millions of people to turn out for No Kings, millions of to turn out for all these protests. It doesn't seem like anything is happening. Is political speech the means through which we can reinvigorate my generation or is it a lost cause?

GALSTON: Let's take a look at what's just happened in New York City. Where, once again, I am, as I think readers of the Wall Street Journal will know, I'm not a fan of the Democratic Socialists of America. I think their platform is amazingly misguided and dangerous, if you take it seriously. But Zohran Mamdani is a genuinely talented politician. He was an obscure state assemblyman a year ago with no money, no rank recognition, no nothing. What did he have? He had his ability to talk to people in a way that respected them, in a way that brought them into the conversation. And he went from the southern tip of Manhattan, he walked to the northern tip of Manhattan as one of his campaign events, talking with people along the way, listening to them, you know, and showing every sign of caring as much about what they had to say to him as they did about what he had to say to them. One man and speech generated a movement that amazed everybody and could end up changing the trajectory of the country's largest city.

Now, is that the nation? No. New York City is not a microcosm of the nation, but in the past 12 months it turned out to be a microcosm for a very old-fashioned version of American, of democratic politics, which didn't focus on mediated communication, TV ads, all of that, I mean there was that, but the heart of it was one man speaking to a multitude. Exactly my definition of democratic politics. So look, let's be realistic. There are a lot of other people in the country besides Gen Z. You are not a majority. You are a piece of a potential majority. And that means that the needs and beliefs of generations other than your own will inevitably be part of a larger coalition. But you can have a voice. And what's happened in the past 12 months in New York City proves that.

RAUCH: No, I would just add that I think actually I don't know how to talk to your generation and I feel like Trump's forms of rhetoric are already starting to feel stale and dated. I don't think they'll actually survive him very much longer. And I think, actually, it's the kind of blank slate relationship that your generation brings to government and to rhetoric, which is our best shot, because I think you guys are going to figure this out for your generation. You don't know what the answer looks like yet, but I think you get there, actually.

Let's go to the middle, the long neglected middle, where we have two hands in the front row. And guess what? I'm going to do both of you.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Thank you. I'm Diane Perlman. I am a clinical and political psychologist with Transcend International and I'm very excited about your book and I wish I had written it. It's very close to my work. So I guess just a point and a question. Well one is people are most dangerous when they're afraid. And also humiliation, Evelin Lindner, who's founder of Dignity and Humiliation Studies, said it's the nuclear bomb of the emotion and also the partner --

RAUCH: He'll like this book, it's detailed on that. Do you mind going to a question?

AUDIENCE QUESTION: And also envy. Well, I guess the worse that the Democrats made people, that also a lot of people are in, Trump appealed to people based on humiliation. And the Democrats make people feel worse and they made them feel better. But I'd like to sort of take it over to the obvious, most horrifying example of the dark passions in the Middle East, where also living under occupation is humiliating, like a slow enduring inescapable. But also the Israel, there's a top down humiliation, also like Pearl Harbor and 9-11, and a reaction to that. So if you could apply.

RAUCH: So we'll also pass the mic to your seat mate. And can we just grab the two and then we'll go.

GALSTON: Of course. I'm sorry, I jumped the gun.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Well hello, my name is Jordan. I am a grad student at American University. I wish I brought a tie like y'all since it's elegant. I wanted to ask, how do you go about reconciling, kind of to the point that you were talking, playing on different games, how would two opposing parties or ideologies meet in the middle or converge to eventually reconcile the nation to prosperity or to move forward in a different direction where there isn't exactly a constant tug of war as we've seen in the past decade. Thank you.

RAUCH: Good, thank you. Well, two very different things there. I don't know that we can really take on the Middle East in the six minutes we have remaining.

GALSTON: I don't intend to, but I will say this. Your question diagnosed something important about my book, and that is I am trying to bring political psychology from the periphery of political science and political commentary much closer to the center, and I drew extensively on studies from the Center for Humiliation Studies as I constructed that section of the book. I agree with you. I agree with you a hundred percent. Look, I have spent... I've been a scholar. I've also been a political activist. I've wandered in and out of six presidential campaigns. And there is a through line. That is, I've looked for what might be called the progressive center, ways in which people can get

together across ideological lines to make progress on the problems that really concern Americans. So for example, and I actually put this question to someone who disagrees with me in an email just last night. Suppose we discarded our priors and said, OK, we have a big housing problem in this country, not just in New York City, we're short millions of units of housing that ordinary people can afford. Why don't we forget about throwing stones at corporate America or government and sit down. And see if we can make some progress together, solving the housing crisis. I have a feeling that by focusing on the specific problems that people care the most about, and on credible solutions to them that pass the test of public common sense, as well as policy effectiveness, we could do a lot better than we're now doing.

RAUCH: Well said. Let's see. Have we been to this sector yet up here? There's let's go with, let's do another lump and dump because there's three hands over there. Is it too ambitious to try to get three of you in? There's a gentleman on the aisle, the gentleman just behind him, and then a woman sort of back by the wall. And please be very brief. We're down to four minutes.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Thank you very much, and thank you for the presentation. My name is Bill Klay. I'm a retired banker. If I heard you correctly, you attribute much of Mr. Trump's success to appealing to voters who feel left behind and disrespected. However, I will admit, like many people in this room, I'm sure we know upper middle class people who voted for Mr. Trump. And there are four classes that I don't think fall into your group. Upper-middle class, normal upper middle class voters who voted for Mr. Trump, much of Wall Street supports Mr. Trump, much of Silicon Valley supports Mr Trump, and also there's a billionaire class, which has gone into the administration in many cases, who also supports him. And how do you fit them into your thesis?

RAUCH: You know guys, you'll forgive me for double-crossing you. We're so close to the end, and that's such a good question. Let's just take that one for now. How do we explain people who have not been objectively humiliated, impoverished, left behind? What enthralls them about this kind of rhetoric? .

GALSTON: Oh gosh, there's nothing in my analysis that exiles self-interest from human psychology. If I were, if I were a, you know, some billionaires are outraged, like Warren Buffett, are outraged that they aren't being taxed more, right? And he's put together a little coalition of under-taxed billionaires, a very honorable group in my opinion. But you know but if you're the head of a large corporation, you're responsible to your shareholders and responsible and your performance will dictate what you take home on an annual basis. And you see a chance to, for example, increase your depreciation schedules, accelerate depreciation to the great advantage of your return on investment. You're a retired banker. You know what I'm talking about. Am I surprised when people like that rally to the side of someone who promises to do that? No, I'm not. But all of the four classes you listed add up to maybe 20% of the U.S. population, which the last time I checked is a lot short of 50%. And so the art of coalition-building is to put together the interests of different people and different groups into a majority faction in the country or close to it. And without the kinds of people that I referred to in my remarks, all the billionaires in the world, if you put them end to end, would not reach from San Francisco to Washington. I do think that the heart of this coalition is the people who felt left behind and disrespected. And then the current president of the United States has artfully added other groups to them. I have a much longer analysis of this thesis, but there's no time for it.

RAUCH: In other words, the dark passions may not be sufficient to build a coalition, but they're a damn good start.

GALSTON: They're a damn good start and if you can then appeal to the self-interest of people who have more money than votes so much better

RAUCH: Classic passage. This is the most important thing I will say today. I have saved it for last. Copies of this book are available for your purchase outside this auditorium. This book is 130 pages long, and they are loosely set pages. You can read this book in an hour, but then you will want to reread it. And then you'll want to reread it again. If Aristotle and George Orwell had had a baby, it

would be this book. So please do yourself a favor. It's a transformative, I think, seminal work of political thinking. Check out the book and buy it if you're inclined. Thank you all so much for coming.

GALSTON: Thank you. Thank you.