

Republican Forum - aired September 27, 2007

Tom Joyner: Good evening. I'm Tom Joyner. And I'd like to welcome you to the 2007 Republican "All-American Presidential Forum" at historically Black Morgan State University.

This event is brought to you by PBS and my dear friend and colleague, Tavis Smiley.

I'm excited to be here, but I admit I'm a little bit out of my comfort zone. I kind of feeling like Dan Rather at CBS premiere week.

But we're all here for a very positive reason, and I salute each of you for participating in this evening's event, including all of you here in the audience.

We may not agree on all the issues, but we do agree on the importance of an evening like this, and you demonstrate that sentiment with your presence.

And to the esteemed candidates, whether you're pro-life or pro-choice, for the war in Iraq or against it, for Kanye West or 50 Cent, it's your turn to share your message with an audience that's stretched further than it's ever been stretched before, and that's a good thing.

Is Dr. Richardson in the house? Dr. Earl Richardson, president of Morgan State University.

And let me take a moment right here and now to say hello to those of you viewing from home. Mayor Rudy Giuliani. Senator John McCain. Governor Mitt Romney. And Senator Fred Thompson. Well, you know, I had to call them out.

Also, while I'm doing shout-outs to those who might be viewing at home, a special shout-out this evening to Mychal Bell and his family in Jena, Louisiana.

Mychal Bell is out of jail and at home, after 10 months in jail for what amounted to a high school brawl. It all started because Black kids couldn't sit under a white-only tree in Jena, Louisiana.

The "Tom Joyner Morning Show" has more than 8 million African American listeners, and there is a perception out there that the Republican Party holds only the interests of the majority population. That is a perception many Republicans say is unfounded. In fact, there is a large audience of Black Republicans here tonight that will swear that this is not true.

Well, this evening is a rare opportunity for Republican candidates to address the concerns and the interests of people of color. I can only assume that Republican candidates who hope to become the president of all the people are here tonight.

Fifty years ago, in Little Rock, Arkansas, the glare of hatred and racism shone on what became "the Little Rock 9." Fifty years later, that ugly light shines just as bright in Jena, Louisiana. We've got a lot of work to do and it's going to take a special kind of unity, tolerance and understanding to get it done.

But nothing will be accomplished until we open our eyes to what still divides us in the first place. Pretending that racism does not exist only assures us that we'll be revisiting the same issues another 50 years from now, another five months from now, maybe another five minutes from now.

This evening is a step in the right direction, and I'm proud to be a part of it.

So let's loosen up, everybody. You don't have to wave your arms in the air, but at least unfold them.

And since I called out the candidates who chose not to join us here tonight, let's give it up for those who are here.

And now, please welcome, my friend and moderator of the "All- American Presidential Forum," Tavis Smiley.

Tavis Smiley: To my dear and abiding friend Tom Joyner, first of all, thank you.

Let me commence tonight by thanking Morgan State University and Dr. Richardson for hosting us and my network home, PBS, for broadcasting this "All-American Presidential Forum."

We live now in the most multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi- ethnic America ever.

Public broadcasting, then, I think, at its best, celebrates that reality.

It is our hope tonight that, as you watch this "All-American Presidential Forum on PBS," or listen on Public Radio International, you'll come to appreciate that, as Americans, we all want the same thing: to live in a nation as good as its promise.

And so we're here tonight because of "The Covenant with Black America," a book that details the most pressing issues of concern to black America, and what everyday black people can do to create change.

Princeton professor, Dr. Cornell West, offers us, in that book, "The Covenant," a powerful formulation on leadership. Says Dr. West, "You can't lead the people if you don't love the people. And you can't save the people, if you don't serve the people."

And so tonight we ask of these Republican candidates: What's the depth of your love for everyday people and what will be the quality of your service to them?

And speaking of love and service, earlier this week, I was in Little Rock, Arkansas, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the integration of Central High School, following the historic Brown v. Board of Education decision.

And tonight we are honored to have with us two authentic American heroes.

Please welcome two of the "Little Rock 9:" Dr. Terrence Roberts and Jefferson Thomas.

Thank you both for being here. It is our honor. We are blessed to have you in this house this evening.

Finally, some of the campaigns who declined our invitation to join us tonight have suggested publicly that this audience would be hostile and unreceptive.

Since we're live on PBS right now, I can't tell you what I really think of these kinds of comments.

But, that said, we're going to be meeting the six candidates who are here tonight. I know you'll join me in showing them your utmost respect.

Fortunately, there are those in the Republican Party who do understand the importance of reaching out to people of color.

I am grateful to former RNC Chairman Ken Mehlman, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, former Congressman Jack Kemp and former Maryland Lieutenant Governor Michael Steele, all of whom have lent their support over the last year to this event.

Indeed, last week, President Bush was asked about those GOP candidates not attending tonight, and responded by underscoring the importance of reaching out to communities of color.

We believe that when we make communities of color better, we make our country better. And so enough said about the no-shows.

Here now to introduce the candidates who are here. Please welcome the former Maryland lieutenant governor and current chairman of GOPAC, Michael Steele.

Former Maryland Lieutenant Governor Michael Steele: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you guys very much.

The value of participation in the public life of your community is immeasurable. Each of us has a duty to be engaged in the public debate of ideas, and that's what draws us here this evening.

Good evening and welcome to the campus of Morgan State University for this "American Presidential Forum on PBS."

As we gather this evening, we do so in the shadow of the nine black students who entered Little Rock high school 50 years ago, under watchful protection of Republican President Dwight Eisenhower, who made clear to a weary nation that segregation was not compatible with the ideals of America.

Together, the "Little Rock 9" and President Eisenhower changed the course of a nation.

But since that time, the Republican Party and the Black community have stood at arm's length from each other. Republicans assuming a "Blacks will never vote for us" mentality, and Blacks ignoring real solutions to very serious problems facing their families and communities solely because those solutions have a Republican label. Very often, both have missed genuine opportunities to communicate and reach out to each other.

But not tonight. Tonight, African Americans and Republicans take hold of their political destinies, and come together in a renewed spirit as we welcome the Republican candidates for president.

Once again, we have an opportunity to change the course of a nation.

So I'm proud to introduce to you former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee. Texas Congressman Ron Paul. Kansas Senator Sam Brownback. Colorado Congressman Tom Tancredo. California Congressman Duncan Hunter. Former Ambassador Alan Keyes.

Tavis: The podium order was determined by a random drawing that included all 10 announced GOP candidates.

Those candidates not here tonight are represented by an empty podium. Each candidate will have one minute to answer all questions until we get a little short on time later, and then we'll use moderator's prerogative to advance the conversation.

Before we get to the first question tonight, from our radio contest winner at BlackAmericaWeb.com, let me throw this out to each of you candidates who are here tonight, starting with you, Governor Mike Huckabee.

Please tell me and this audience, in your own words, why you chose to be here tonight and what you say to those who chose not to be here tonight.

Former Gov. Mike Huckabee: Well, Tavis, I want to be president of the United States, not just president of the Republican Party. Frankly, I'm embarrassed. I'm embarrassed for our party and I'm embarrassed for those who did not come, because there's long been a divide in this country, and it doesn't get better when we don't show up.

Quite frankly, for a lot of people there's a perception that Black Americans don't vote for Republicans. I proved that wrong in Arkansas, with 48 percent of African Americans voting for me.

But I want to make sure that the people of this country recognize that we've come a long way, but we have a long way to go. And we don't get there if we don't sit down and work through issues that are still very deep in this country, when it comes to racial divide.

I'm honored to be here. I appreciate you having us. I wish all of the candidates had come. But tonight we hopefully will make up their time and make up their ground.

Tavis: Thank you. Congressman Paul?

Rep. Ron Paul: Well, the main reason I'm here is because I was invited. And I'm delighted that I was invited. And I'm very pleased, because I go wherever I'm invited to talk about freedom. That, to me, is the most important thing, along with the emphasis on the Constitution.

I believe so strongly that individuals have their rights and their life as a gift from God, and the purpose of government is to protect life and liberty.

But I'd also like to extend that. If you have the fruits of your labor, I would like you to keep the fruits of your labor as well.

And under those conditions and under a freedom philosophy and under the Constitution, we would be so much more prosperous, because we wouldn't be policing the world, we would be bringing our troops home, and we would take care of our people here at home.

Tavis: Thank you, Congressman. Senator Brownback.

Sen. Sam Brownback: Thank you very much for having us here.

I want to say just at the outset, I apologize for the candidates that aren't here. I think this is a disgrace that they're not here.

I think it's a disgrace for our country, I think it's bad for our party, and I don't think it's good for our future.

You know, you grow political parties by expanding your base, by reaching out to people and getting more people. What they're doing is sending the message of narrowing the base, and that's not the right way to go. It's not good for the Republican Party, it's not good for the country. And I'm sorry. I'm sorry to you and I'm sorry to those watching that they're not here.

I've got a suggestion, though, for a way to fix it. A lot of people on the Republican side say: Well, OK, we can't get votes in the African American community. I say: Why don't you pick one of the early primary states, like a South Carolina or a Michigan, register Republican, and vote for one of the six of us?

And then let's see what takes place.

Tavis: Senator Brownback, thank you very much. Congressman Tancredo?

Rep. Tom Tancredo: Thank you, Tavis. I am here likewise because I was asked and because I made a commitment on your show. I must admit to you that it is pleasurable and a little bit different to be in this kind of an environment with my colleagues who are here because the last time I was at an event of this nature, it was the NAACP convention and I was the only Republican that showed up.

So I am glad that my colleagues have joined me on the stage tonight.

And I am especially glad to be here to be able to talk about something that was mentioned during the original introduction, something you said, I believe, Tavis, when you talked about -- we're here to talk about the promise of America.

And that is what drives me, that's -- I think, probably all of my colleagues up here. That is exactly why we can get up, do the next event, go get on the plane, do the next event. It is because the promise of America is something that we all have to actually share in, and we have to explain to everybody that's listening to us how we would fulfill that, what would we do for that promise of America -- to every single person in this room and for every person listening on the radio and television tonight.

Tavis: Thank you, sir.

Tancredo: So, certainly, that's why I am here to do so.

Tavis: Thank you. Congressman Hunter?

Rep. Duncan Hunter: Thank you, Tavis.

You know, when we have family reunions and some of the family members don't show up, we do talk about them.

But I'm not going to do that.

You know, tonight we have about 160,000 Americans in Iraq -- in a war. We have over 20,000 of our uniform personnel in Afghanistan. And I'm going to talk, tonight, about how we leave Iraq in victory.

We have a border and we've got a big piece of this border, obviously, shown right behind us here. We have a border which is on fire with massive amounts of narcotics and people being smuggled across, illegally, as we stand here. I want to talk about that.

But you know, most importantly, I want to do what my little grandson did when he walked up to his first grade teacher about a month ago, stuck his hand out, said, "My name is Duncan Hunter."

We call him "D-3."

And he said, "My grandpa's going to be president."

And then this little 6-year-old looked his teacher right in the eye and he said, "Now, can I count on your vote?"

I'm coming here for your vote.

Tavis: Congressman, thank you. Ambassador Keyes?

Former Ambassador Alan Keyes: Now, I wouldn't want to seem to be the fellow who's going to speak up in defense of our absent colleagues here.

But I think it is a little unfair to assume that they didn't show up tonight because they were sending a message of some negative kind to the Black community, for the very obvious reason that they didn't show up at the Values Voters Debate, either -- which, of course, sent a very negative message to the people who are interested in the issues that were discussed there.

Do you know what these two debates do have in common though? The Values Voters Debate was the first debate I was included in. And this is the second debate I'm included in.

I've been barred from the debate in Michigan, for reasons best known to the party there. And what do you want to make of that? The other guys will show up there.

Now, that suggests that they may or may not be afraid of all Black people, but there seems to be at least one Black person they're afraid of.

And I think the reason -- the reason that they have this fear is pretty evident. They don't believe that it's possible to address a significant portion of the Black community...

Tavis: Mr. Ambassador?

Keyes: ... on the basis of solid Republican principles, and I do.

Tavis: Mr. Ambassador, thank you very much for being here.

Let me now introduce, to get this conversation really started, Lucille Victoria Rowels of Chicago, winner of our online contest in which we asked listeners of the "Tom Joyner Morning Show" to submit their questions to the Web site.

Lucille, please welcome her.

Lucille Victoria Rowels: Even though a majority of individuals who have served as president since Abraham Lincoln have been Republican, I believe that most Black Americans who will vote in the year 2008 are not able to name even one Republican president in the 142 years since Lincoln's death who have left a positive and significant legacy for Black Americans.

If you are elected president in 2008, what positive and significant legacy, if any, will you leave for Black Americans?

Tavis: Governor Huckabee?

Huckabee: Well, I would say, first of all, that I would hope they would name President Eisenhower. Because he sent those troops and federalized the National Guard in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957, when it was a Democrat governor who stood at the schoolhouse door and said those young people couldn't come in.

And I would like to believe, if I were fortunate enough to be the president, that at the end of my tenure -- hopefully, eight years, by the way, not just four -- that housing opportunities would be better, that we made some real strides in the criminal justice system so that you don't have a different sentence for a 17-year-old kid caught with a lid of marijuana than you do some upper-middle-class white kid who gets caught with cocaine. He goes to rehab, and the Black kid goes to prison for 10 years.

We'd change that. We'd have a different system as it relates to such things as health care, because there is a disproportionate level of people in the African American community with hypertension, with stroke, with diabetes. And there needs to be a disproportionate level of funding to help them.

Those are the kind of things that could make a difference and end this divide that we have.

Tavis: Governor, thank you. Congressman Paul?

Paul: I would like to believe that if we had a freer society, it would take care of Blacks and whites and everybody equally because we're all individuals. To me, that is so important. But if we had equal justice under the law, I think it would be a big improvement. If we had probably a repeal of most of the federal laws on drugs and the unfairness on how Blacks are treated with these drugs laws, it would be a tremendous improvement.

And also, I think that if you're going to have prosperity, it serves everybody. And if this is done by emphasizing property rights and freedom of the individuals, making sure that the powerful special interests don't control Washington, that the military industrial complex doesn't suck away all the wealth of the country, and then we would have prosperity.

This is what we need and we need to share it. The free society is the only society that can provide goods and services and distribute them in the most fair manner. And that is the society that I would advocate and argue for and believe it's available to us.

Tavis: Thank you, sir. Senator Brownback?

Brownback: Lucille, it's a great question. It's one we should ponder and ponder seriously. There are several things that I would do. One is focusing in on rebuilding the family, and that's been at the core of my campaign -- is rebuilding the family.

We pushed that in Washington D.C. where I chaired the committee and developed marriage -- development accounts, and really urging that.

The second one is I think symbols are important, and I would hope I would be the president that would open the National African American Museum of History and Culture on the Mall in Washington, D.C.

I pushed for that. We've gotten the funding on it. And that symbolism would be important to do.

And the final thing that I think is critical that we do. I think we need to have -- and we need to pass in the Congress, and the president sign it and say it, an official apology from the U.S. government for the institutions of slavery and segregation in this country. I think that needs to be done.

Tavis: Senator, thank you. Congressman Tancredo?

Tancredo: Thank you.

First of all, I do believe that there are a number of Republican presidents who have done a great deal for Black Americans, because they've done something for all Americans.

Ronald Reagan, from my point of view, did something for every single American by increasing individual liberty.

You know, it is, I think, destructive to only talk about the politics of race, and suggest that all of the actions taken, or all of the specific programs that we identify and talk about tonight should be focused on race.

It really does not do a service, I think, to us as Americans and again, that promise to America. And I'll tell you this, one of the things that I will do as president of the United States, to increase the economic opportunities for every American, especially people in the lower economic rung of the ladder in America, is to reduce the flow of illegal immigration into this country, which depresses wage rates for the lowest-income earners in this country.

And it's got to be dealt with. It's got to be dealt with forcefully. And I tell you, yes, Black America, brown America, white America, all will be enhanced by actually enforcing our laws.

Tavis: Congressman Hunter?

Hunter: Thank you, Tavis.

What a wonderful question. And, you know, I think that we also have to add, with Governor Huckabee's statement about Ike, that calm hand of Dwight Eisenhower that brought about desegregation -- also, you know, in 1964, that Civil Rights Act was passed with a greater proportion of Republican votes in the United States Congress than Democrat votes, a fact that's been forgotten over the years. I want you to remember that.

But, you know, I can't talk about young Black Americans, the need for them to be shielded from pornography, which is certainly a need, without talking about the need for all Americans to be shielded from pornography.

And in the barrio where I practiced law before I ran for Congress and got this job, I remember Mr. Sanchez down the street with his family, working 18-hour days, a need to have less regulation, less taxation. That would help all Americans.

And I guess I would go with Jack Kemp's great statement: A rising tide lifts all boats. A Republican administration, my administration, would lift all boats.

Tavis: Congressman, thank you. Ambassador Keyes.

Keyes: I would hope that the most important legacy of my administration would be to remind people that in spite of all the talk, I don't believe there is this deep divide between Blacks and whites in America.

I believe that we are, in fact, part of one nation and one community, and that we stand together right now in danger of our rights, because the core of that community is not race; the core of that community is not money. The core of that community is the moral consensus that we are all created equal and endowed by our creator, God, with our unalienable rights that we have the right in our policies and in our laws to honor and respect the creator, God.

And as a practical matter, I would want to see that unity, that moral understanding restored where it is most important -- in the education of our young by adopting an approach to education that empowers every parent in this country to send their children to schools that reflect their faith and values...

Tavis: Ambassador...

Keyes: ... so that the Black community can re-instill moral, community-based schools that reflect their Christian beliefs.

Tavis: I appreciate it. Lucille, thank you very much.

Let me now turn this conversation over to a terrific and very able panel of journalists who will take us the rest of the way.

First up, Cynthia Tucker, editorial page editor for the "Atlanta Journal Constitution" and a recipient this year of the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary. Please welcome Cynthia Tucker.

Up next, Ray Suarez, well known to PBS viewers for his work on "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer." Please welcome Ray Suarez.

And Juan Williams of NPR and a contributor to FOX News channel. Please welcome Juan Williams.

Tavis: Ms. Tucker will start the conversation. Governor Huckabee will answer first. And then we will move down the line giving every candidate the chance to answer the next question first.

Cynthia Tucker for Governor Huckabee.

Cynthia Tucker: Governor, I want to ask about race and unemployment.

In 2006, the unemployment rate of Black high school graduates -- that's high school graduates -- was 33 percent higher than the unemployment rate for white high school drop outs. What do you think accounts for that inequity?

Huckabee: Cynthia, part of that is it is that there is still racism in this country, and the opportunities aren't the same. Some of it has to do with the fact that there are people who unfortunately still look at a person's face and their skin, and that's something that government can't change, but leadership certainly can speak to.

One of the things all of us need to be aware of is that there isn't an equal opportunity for every American yet. There just isn't. We could say there is, but it's not true.

And in some cases, it's because those who try to lift themselves up find that they get most importantly the heel of someone's boot on top of their head every time they try to raise their head.

And the reason answer is to make sure that there are not only educational opportunities that bring equality, employment opportunities that ensure that people have the same chances as anybody else.

Tavis: Governor, thank you. Congressman Paul?

Paul: Walter Williams, a very astute free-market economist, has studied this extensively, and he has found that prior to minimum wage laws there was no discrepancy like this. So he put a lot of blame on the minimum wage law. Once government gets interfering, this takes away opportunities. And I believe there is a lot of truth to this because it eliminates an opportunity and a chance for a marginal worker.

So once again, though, the economy is supported only when you have a sound economy perpetuated by a government with sound policies. You have to have sound money. You have to have minimum taxes. You have to have, you know, a wise foreign policy.

But I have a bill in that might help a lot of people, Black or white or whomever. I have a bill in that would immediately help these people who are trying to get a start, that they would never have to pay any taxes or payroll taxes, if they just happen to be a waiter or a waitress, to give them a chance to get ahead and get a good job.

Tavis: Congressman, thank you, sir. Senator Brownback?

Brownback: I think there's a couple of things -- I think there's a couple of things that are at work here. One is, I think clearly, we still don't have a colorblind society. And we're seeing that. We continue to see it.

I think we've made some great progress. I've worked with Congressman John Lewis on a number of projects, worked with him on this museum that I just spoke about tonight. That museum is going to happen, and we worked together.

But there is still racism that does exist in America.

There is a second issue here that I think we need to address, and it's the growth of the economy, particularly where people are located.

I come from a rural state of Kansas. And I've got places in my state where there's economic growth taking place, and I have places where it's not.

And what you have to do to try to stimulate it is really have a tax policy, something I've talked about, about an optional flat tax, and maybe you put it in places where they need the economic growth to take place more than in other places. So you stimulate the growth of the economy where people are needing the most opportunities to grow.

And that's something I would do and work on. And I think it is part of the issue.

Tavis: Congressman Tancredo?

Tancredo: OK, I just cannot agree with this race-baiting kind of comments about the reason why we have these problems.

My friends, I'll tell you that I believe, with all my heart -- look, why was it that in the '50s, in the '40s, and actually leading up into the early '60s, the ability for Blacks in the United States to improve themselves economically was working? They were moving up the ladder.

Families were in tact -- in better shape, by the way, than most white families of that same period of time. What happened? Two things have happened to -- I believe -- to devastate the Black community when it comes to economic opportunity.

One, the welfare state; it began to pay people to not be in the home.

And when that happened, what we saw is a decline in wage rates.

And two, of course, is the importation of millions upon millions of low-income workers that depress the wage rates for the lowest income among us. Those two things are responsible, and it's got nothing to do with race.

Tavis: Congressman Hunter?

Hunter: Thank you.

You know, Republicans, when we had that great match up of a Republican majority in Congress in the '90s and President Bill Clinton, the Republicans initiated legislation three times to reform welfare.

The first two times, President Clinton vetoed it, and the third time he signed it and took credit for it. It's something I've done every now and then in my career.

When we did that, let me tell you what happened. The number of jobs of single moms, the employment rate went up. Families did much better. You had the average income go up in the communities where the welfare reform took place. You had, according to HHS, 32 percent increase in employment in those jobs and in those families which previously were on welfare. We did very, very well by breaking this cycle of welfare.

But lastly, there is one party that is very important to jobs, jobs in the community for everybody.

Tavis: Congressman Hunter?

Hunter: That's the small businessman. If we help the small businessman, and that's a Republican trademark, we'll do it...

Tavis: Thank you, sir, very much. Ambassador Keyes?

Keyes: I have to say I think the most important factor in all of this does have something to do with policies that had an impact on race, but it was the disproportionately

destructive impact that a lot of government programs had on the moral foundations and family structure in the Black community.

You talk about folks finding job opportunities. You know where a lot of Black men find job opportunities these days? In prison.

And that is something that reflects the reality that when you allow the family to break down, when you have government regulations that drive the father from the home, you have established the conditions for the upbringing of children to be nonproductive, to be violent, to be turned in directions that will be destructive of their economic future.

And when you add to that the promotion of a culture of promiscuity, a culture of selfish hedonism, that leads people not to understand that that marriage partnership is the most important foundation of any real economic life, then you have especially destroyed the Black community.

And I believe the disproportionate impact of these negative things...

Tavis: Ambassador Keyes, thank you sir.

Keyes: ... has accounted for a lot of these bad results.

Tavis: Ambassador Keyes, thank you. Ray Suarez will get the next question now. Congressman Paul will answer first.

Ray Suarez: Congressman Paul, the most commonly cited statistic for the number of illegal immigrants living in the United States is 12 million people. Is it desirable, is it even practical to try to send them all home?

If the next Congress passes comprehensive immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship, will you sign it, or will you support sending the 12 million home?

Paul: I'm very sorry, but I didn't hear your last sentence, because of the acoustics.

Suarez: In the next Congress, if the next Congress passes immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship, will you sign it, or will you support sending the 12 million home?

Paul: I would not sign a bill like you describe, because it would be construed -- and it would be amnesty, and I haven't supported amnesty.

I also think that it's pretty impractical to get an army in this country to round up 12 or maybe 20 million. But I do believe that we have to stick to our guns on obeying the law, and anybody who comes in here illegally shouldn't be rewarded. And that would be the case.

But I see the immigration problem as a consequence of our welfare state. Welfare because we encourage people not to work here, but the welfare we offer the people who come -- they get free medical care. They get free education. They bankrupt our hospitals. Our hospitals are closing. And it shouldn't be rewarded. That means that if you don't round them up, you don't reward them, you don't give them citizenship. At the same time, you can't solve this problem until you have -- you get rid of the welfare state, because in a healthy economy, immigrants wouldn't be a threat to us. There would probably be a desire for more, because we would be starved for workers.

But today, they have become scapegoated because of the weak economy and the lowering of our standard of living.

Tavis: Congressman, thank you, sir. Senator Brownback?

Brownback: Thanks. Thanks, Ray, for the tough question.

The American people are for immigration. They don't support illegal immigration. That's what they want to see take place. They want a legal system. They're for legal immigration; they're not for illegal immigration.

We've been through this debate now for a couple of years. They want to see us secure the border, and that's something I will push and do and have voted for and will in the future.

They want to see us have enforcement at the worksite. And that's something that I will do and push and enforce as well, because that's the key attraction -- not the only one, but it's the key attraction -- at the worksite.

I will not support new paths to citizenship. I do think in the future we should look at different work-visa-type programs as a way to be able to deal with the problem that you're identifying, which is the realistic problem of where we are today.

Tavis: Congressman Tancredo?

Tancredo: Twelve million to 20 million people in this country illegally. Then that is the ultimate question, is: What do we do about that situation today, because we can all rave about how we're going to secure the borders -- which I'm glad to hear, by the way, these newfound positions with regard to the borders and security?

Great. Happy they're there.

But you're right, what are the -- the real issue is: What do we do about the people here? And I will tell you, when you use phrases like "rounding them up," I mean, it -- those are -- they are improperly used in this respect. Because we're not talking about rounding people up.

If you, in fact, simply enforce the law -- I know that's a scary topic sometimes and a controversial attitude to take -- but enforcing the law, especially against hiring people who are here illegally, you will see people returning home, voluntarily.

It's happening today in states all over this nation. That's exactly the key to this. You do not have to round people up. You simply have to enforce the law.

Tavis: Thank you. Congressman Hunter?

Hunter: Thank you.

Tavis, thank you.

Thank you, Ray.

Folks that are here illegally have to leave and let me tell you why. Today, if you're a dry wall contractor and you play by the rules and you pay \$27 a loaded hour for each of your employees, you will be constantly under-cut by contractors who use people who are here illegally.

That's not fair to Americans who play by the rules. And we just talked jobs a few minutes ago. That's one reason you have, in certain areas, especially in the construction trades now, higher levels of unemployment.

You have to build a border fence and you've got to have a real border, not just for immigration issues, but also because of security issues.

And right now, I wrote the law that extends that border fence 854 miles across Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and California. We need to build the border fence. It's the law.

And when people come to this country, they've got to knock on the front door, because the back door's going to be closed.

Tavis: Ambassador Keyes?

Keyes: Well, I think, especially in this context, it's important to remember a number of things. The border is a matter of security, first of all. And we have to make sure that we control it, or no laws we pass have any significance. People will still cross on their own terms.

So the very first priority has to be to get back control. But we also have to remember why we lost control, because these elites who have been under the thumb of certain corporate interests have an interest in cheapening the price of labor in America.

Do you want to know who's first hurt by that cheapened price of labor?

Black folks are first hurt, as they've been hurt in the rebuilding of New Orleans, in the rebuilding of other parts of the United States that were affected by those hurricanes. It's time we stopped fooling around with this issue.

I think people, including a lot of the Black liberals, are more worried about what we do with illegal immigrants than they've ever been about the impact of illegal immigration on Black Americans who have been in this country all along. I'm sick of seeing it.

Tavis: Governor Huckabee?

Huckabee: I don't believe the average American resents that people want to come here. I've said oftentimes we ought to get on our knees every night and thank God that we still live in a country that people are trying to break into, not one they're trying to break out of.

But securing the border is something I think every one of us agree on. You've got to have a secure border because otherwise our borders are not only open to illegal immigrants, but to somebody bringing a suitcase with a dirty bomb.

But, more importantly, if we're going to deal with the supply, you touch it at the point of the demand. And until something is done to touch the people who are employing illegal immigrants because of the very reason that they've talked about on this stage, to create what amounts to another version of slave labor, then we're never going to stop the flow.

You're not going to get illegals to admit that they're here illegally, because they're desperate enough to do anything to feed their families.

What we have to do is to start putting the penalty on the people who are most benefiting from them, the employers who are using those laborers in order to keep from having to pay decent wages.

Tavis: Governor, thank you.

The next question will be asked by Juan Williams and be answered first by Senator Brownback.

Juan?

Williams: Senator Brownback, tonight, as young Black and Latino Americans are watching this debate, they often feel quite alienated from the Republican Party, a party that does not seem to respond to their issues.

You realize about 50 percent of young Black and Latino people dropping out of high school, 35 percent poverty rate, nearly 60 percent of America's prison population Black and brown.

The one area of these problems touching on federal government policy has to do with criminal justice. Today, in Jena, Louisiana, it was announced that one of the Jena 6, originally convicted as an adult, will be tried now as a juvenile.

Name one reform, Senator, that you would endorse to assure young Black and Latino people in America that they will have equal justice in America's courts.

Brownback: Could you say the last sentence again? Your mike's not on up here. I want to make sure I hear.

Williams: Can you name one reform, one criminal justice reform, that you would endorse to assure young Black and Latino Americans that they will have equal justice in America's courts?

Brownback: OK. I think I may be the only person up here on this stage that's spent a couple nights in jail, of my own volition, and I went in to look at the system. I spent a night in a prison in Kansas and I spent a night in a prison in Louisiana. I've stayed in homeless shelters to answer and to get a feel for what you're talking about.

And you hear about it very fast. And you get a feel for it about how people have become loners and went to crime, in some cases, and then caught and want to turn their lives around. So it spawned me to push the Second Chance Act.

It's something that we've gotten through the Committee on the Judiciary, and what it's primarily focused on is to help people if they have been caught and they are in prison, that they not go back again. Because right now in the United States of America, if you go to prison, the chances of you going back are two-thirds, 66 percent. That is a travesty that that number is that high.

This bill in five years we cut it in half. A lot of it is faith-based institutions. A lot of it is mentorship and work programs. So we can help people that are chains they can't break themselves.

Tavis: I hate to cut you off. Congressman Tancredo?

Tancredo: I believe that it was mentioned earlier, and I certainly agree with the fact that first of all, there are far too many criminal statutes at the federal level. The Constitution establishes the roles for the federal government and the state government, and we have taken on far too many things at the federal level, especially drugs laws -- mandating certain penalties and that sort of thing.

I do not believe that that is the responsibility of the federal government. That should be at the state level, and I would certainly not support.

And as a way of reform, by the way, I would move the federal government out of that whole business.

Now, let me say one thing other -- that, I think, that has to be mentioned here. When you talk about the crime rate, so much of this is connected to another huge problem, and that you cannot take apart and you cannot look at just in segments.

And that is this. The family -- what is happening to the Black family in America today and what has been happening for the last 40 years is a disgrace. It is because, of course -- as I said earlier, the welfare state has helped create this.

But you know what? The welfare state cannot be the -- it can be the breadwinner, but it cannot...

Tavis: Congressman...

Tancredo: ... it cannot give you morals, values or discipline. And that's what it takes...

Tavis: Congressman Tancredo...

Tancredo: ... in America today.

Tavis: Thank you, sir. Congressman Hunter?

Hunter: Thank you, Tavis.

Juan, I don't know as much about the facts as you do in this particular case. But the facts, related, that I read in "The Washington Post" was that the one young man there was knocked unconscious and was kicked in the head while he was unconscious.

And I would say this: This is the nation that has rules of law based on accountability, and that that accountability should be followed. And I don't know what particular divisions between juvenile and non-juvenile courts are being made in this case, but there must be accountability.

If, in fact, the young man was kicked in the head while he was unconscious, there has to be accountability for that. And that is clearly criminal accountability.

Now let me go beyond that. You know, while we talk about this, we've got hundreds of thousands of Americans from all groups and all ethnicities depending on each other, saving each other's lives, every day being with each other in this partnership that we call the U.S. military in Afghanistan and Iraq.

We ought to learn from them. And we ought to find that common ground that's allowed them to go forward together. That will make a great America.

Tavis: Congressman Hunter, let me jump in right quick. This is the first time I've had to do this, because I want to make sure we get answers to these questions.

Your answer notwithstanding, Mr. Williams' question was not answered by you, respectfully.

And that is: Is there a particular policy that you would support to guarantee young Black and brown men watching right now a fairer equal justice system? That part you did not get to.

Hunter: OK. Here's my answer.

Tavis: OK.

Hunter: I don't think there's any way you can be more fair than to have people in this country, under this wonderful Constitution that we put together, where people who are tried for criminal acts are tried by a jury of their peers.

Juries, obviously, are blemished in many ways and are not perfect, but a jury trial under the law is, I think, the best system of justice on the face of the Earth.

Tavis: Move on now to Ambassador Keyes.

Keyes: Well, I've always favored, and if you look at a book I wrote some years back called "Masters of the Dream," there was a proposal in it that was part of a package of what we need to do to restore real local self-government, which in our case would be neighborhood self-government in a lot of our urban areas.

One of the features of that neighborhood government would be the reinstatement of what were called in the old days things like justices of the peace.

They were people who lived in the community, came out of the community, were empowered to judge offenses committed by folks who were in and lived in that community so that there would be sensitivity to the truth that you're not just dealing with crooks.

Sometimes you're dealing with young people who, if you treat them in the right way, can be put on a path that will be constructive instead of destructive.

But only the people who live in the community would understand that. So they need to have justices of the peace. They need to have judges who come from amongst them.

The other thing I would do is I would make sure when people were in prison and they were being paroled, that you had to consult the community and make a deal. The community would agree to receive that person back, but they would also promise to help that person to establish a decent life.

So, that community partnership would be restored.

Tavis: Thank you, sir. Governor Huckabee?

Huckabee: Well, first of all, we really don't have so much a crime problem in this country. We have a drug and alcohol problem. Eighty percent of the people who are in our prisons and jails are there for a drug or alcohol crime. They either were high or drunk when they committed the crime, or they committed the crime to get high or drunk.

And what has made a huge mistake is that we've incarcerated so many of the people who really need drug rehab more than they need long-term incarceration.

In our state, we established over 20 drug courts, that gave people an alternative course, rather than just putting them in prison, giving them the opportunity to get what they really needed, which is off the addiction.

We've got to quit locking up all the people that we're mad at and lock up the people that we're really afraid of, the people who are sexual predators and violent offenders.

But the nonsense of three strikes and you're out has created a system that is overrun with people, and the cost is choking us.

I would go for more drug courts and for a lot less incarceration of drug-addicted people.

Tavis: Thank you, Governor. Congressman Paul?

Paul: A system designed to protect individual liberty will have no punishments for any group and no privileges. Today, I think inner-city folks and minorities are punished unfairly in the war on drugs.

For instance, Blacks make up 14 percent of those who use drugs, yet 36 percent of those arrested are Blacks and it ends up that 63 percent of those who finally end up in prison are Blacks. This has to change.

We don't have to have more courts and more prisons. We need to repeal the whole war on drugs. It isn't working.

We have already spent over \$400 billion since the early 1970s, and it is wasted money. Prohibition didn't work. Prohibition on drugs doesn't work. So we need to come to our senses.

And, absolutely, it's a disease. We don't treat alcoholics like this. This is a disease, and we should orient ourselves to this. That is one way you could have equal justice under the law.

Tavis: Thank you, Congressman.

The next question will be asked by Cynthia Tucker, answered first by Congressman Tancredo.

Cynthia?

Tucker: Congressman, recently a push to give the District of Columbia voting representation was defeated because of heavy Republican opposition. In addition, many voting rights advocates are worried about rigid voter ID laws, which require photo ID, like a driver's license.

Are you concerned that some eligible voters will be denied the right to vote simply because they don't have a driver's license?

Tancredo: Well, let's first take the issue that you mentioned with regard to the District of Columbia. It is not a state and, therefore, not entitled to representation as a state.

If, in fact, you want -- if it becomes the desire of the country to have that kind of representation, then the district -- then it should be split up, and the portion that was ceded to the federal government by Virginia should go back to Virginia, the portion that was ceded by Maryland should go back to Maryland. Then they would be represented by states. It would work.

Also, with regard to voting opportunities and the use of a photo ID -- let me tell you that it is really not that difficult to obtain. And I don't think that we're asking too much of people when they're doing something that is one of the most sacred duties of anybody in this society, to actually show that they are the person who they say they are. I don't think that's asking too much.

And I think you can get a photo ID and they don't even have to -- you don't even need a driver's license. You can get a photo ID, a state ID, you can do it relatively easily.

Tavis: Congressman? Thank you, sir. Congressman Hunter?

Hunter: Well, thank you, Tavis.

You know, I might be a little more open to statehood for D.C. if they would allow their citizens to be able to keep and bear arms in their houses to protect their safety.

And I offered that amendment a couple of years ago. It passed and when it passed, the Democrats brought down the entire crime bill rather than let D.C. residents have the right to keep and bear arms.

And on the issue of allowing -- mandating some type of ID, you know the first 21 Black congressmen were Republicans who came out of the South, and they went into a series -- they went into a series of poll taxes and all types of deals that the Democrats put in, road blocks the Democrats put in their place to keep them from being able to vote.

So I don't agree with those types of stumbling blocks. But I would say this: We have right now a real danger of people that are illegally in the country being rounded up, herded into the polls -- we've seen that in California -- voting illegally. That disenfranchises everybody in that community.

I think you have to have some IDs.

Tavis: Thank you, sir. Ambassador Keyes?

Keyes: I think the most important thing to remember about Washington, D.C., is that it was established to be a unique representation of the whole people of the United States.

That's a city that's supposed to belong to the nation, not to any one group and not to any one region. That's why it was put together in the first place.

I think it's terribly important to maintain that symbol of the unity of our country. We're a free people. If folks don't want to live in the conditions that prevail in Washington because of its unique status, they can go to Maryland. A whole bunch of folks have done so.

They can go to Virginia. A whole bunch of folks have done so. Some of the biggest churches and everything else now exist in Prince George's County, because people left the District.

They have that right, and I think that they can exercise it. But I think that the country is entitled to have this possession that symbolizes our whole united people, standing together as one community. I think it's terribly important that we sustain it.

Tavis: Governor Huckabee?

Huckabee: Well, I may be a little different on this one. I believe that the people of D.C. should be able to vote for representation.

I think that's appropriate, for the simple reason of equality and justice. And if we need to amend the Constitution to make that possible, it should happen.

D.C. is not the same city it was when it was first created, and I think it just makes sense to not have a group of people -- I don't care what color they are, I don't care how they vote -- they ought to be able to vote, and their color and their political affiliation ought to have nothing to do with the equality that we should give them.

As far as identification -- I have to show photo ID to get on an airplane in my home town. I think it's not asking too much to make sure that people who are voting are truly eligible voters.

But look, if it's a driver's license issue, we've gone to Motor Voter -- let's have Photo Voter so, when you register to vote, they take your picture, put it on a card, and you simply are able to make sure that you're a registered voter.

That way it doesn't dilute the vote if a lot of people who aren't registered voters try to fraudulently vote.

Tavis: Thank you, Governor. Congressman Paul?

Paul: It's very clear, under the Constitution, that we couldn't give the vote to the residents of D.C. without an amendment to the Constitution. And it should be pursued in that manner.

But when it comes to national ID cards, the identification, I think the states have the prerogative and the right and the obligations to identify the voters and they should.

But the reason I get worried about when we start talking about it nationally is, you know, they might want to use the Real ID. They might want to think it's a good excuse to have a national ID card to vote, and I am positively opposed to any move toward the national ID card.

Tavis: Thank you. Senator Brownback?

Brownback: Yes. It's a good question. It's a tough question. I have chaired the D.C. Subcommittee, both the authorizing and the Appropriations subcommittee. I support the residents of D.C. the right to vote. But there's a way to do it and there's a way not to do it. And the way to do it is to amend the Constitution, and the way not to do it is to pass something that's unconstitutional.

In the 23rd Amendment to the Constitution, it gave D.C. the right to vote for president.

But it didn't give them the right to vote for Congress. And what you have to do what we have to do. And what I support is amending the Constitution so they can have the right to vote. D.C. deserves that right. There's a way to do it, there's a way not to do it.

Tavis: Ray Suarez will ask the next question, first answered by Congressman Duncan Hunter.

Suarez: Congressman Hunter, the Federal Agency for Health Care Research and Quality recently reported that both Latinos and Blacks receive "significantly worse," in their words, medical care than whites in the United States.

One out of three Hispanics, one out of five Black Americans is uninsured. Hispanics are 2.5 times as likely as non-Hispanic, white Americans to be uninsured. One of three Hispanics hasn't been to the doctor in more than a year. And as has already been

mentioned, diabetes, asthma, hypertension are untreated or under-treated in communities across America.

What does your health care plan contain to address some of these disparities in access to care and access to quality health care?

Hunter: Well, Ray, the first thing I'd say is I can't -- as a guy who practiced law in the barrio and took lots of cases that anybody who couldn't pay didn't have to pay, as people came into my office, down there in the barrio in the waterfront in San Diego, I didn't separate them out. So I'm not going to separate them out now. And I'm going to talk about how I think we can have affordable health care.

The first thing you've got to have is the ability to buy your health care insurance across state lines. And right now, nobody in the United States can do that.

And that means that the same policy that costs 70 bucks a month in Long Beach, California, costs \$343 a month in New Jersey, but the New Jersey policyholder can't change policies and buy the policy in California. So we've got to change that.

Secondly, I think we bring back the family doctor. And I think one way you bring back the family doctor is by taking away massive malpractice burdens, these massive insurance premiums that we place on people.

And finally -- finally, Ray, let's try a little freedom. How about if we said in the tax code that if a doc will be a family doc, in the barrio, in the community, and he will do office visits for 30 bucks or 40 bucks a visit, he doesn't have to pay taxes on that, he doesn't have to have three accountants, he doesn't have to do all those things?

Tavis: Congressman Hunter, thank you.

Hunter: Bring back the family doctor.

Tavis: Thank you. Ambassador Keyes?

Keyes: I think two things are important, very briefly.

First, before I would think about bringing back the family doctor, particularly where the Black community is concerned, it might be helpful to bring back the family.

And that would mean that you are going to do what is necessary to support married couples, to encourage marriage, to encourage the rearing of children in the context of a two-parent household.

Not because one is disparaging one-parent households, but because the statistics show that people are more likely to sustain their education, to be in better health, both mentally and physically, if they are raised in that environment.

That's step number one, and I think it's vitally important.

The second step is we all know that in America these days, your ability to have access to health care depends on -- what? -- primarily: your job and whether or not you're able to get that insurance at your job.

So the first thing we need to take care of is to make sure that in areas where Black folks and Hispanics and others are living, you are encouraging the kind of entrepreneurship that will create jobs in those areas...

Tavis: Congressman Keyes, thank you, sir.

Keyes: ... to give people that foundation of health care access.

Tavis: Governor Huckabee?

Huckabee: The first problem with our current health care system is that it's upside down. It focuses on intervention. We wait until people are catastrophically ill, and then we spend enormous amounts of money trying to fix them. We need to be putting the money on the preventive side. Prevention is a lot less expensive than is intervention.

The second thing, there has to be ownership of the individual consumer. As long as the government, the employer, as long as the doctor is in charge of your health care, and you have no idea what it costs, and you have no idea what they're doing, and you don't control it, we're never going to get the system fixed.

And the third thing that has to happen is that we have portable medical records so that your health care records go with you. They don't stay with your doctor. You shouldn't have to ask permission to see the records of your own body. Those are your own records. They don't belong to anybody else.

And the policies that we can put in place have to start with individuals buying in, not only on insurance, but buying in on health, their own personal, to start with.

Tavis: Thank you. Congressman Paul.

Paul: We've had managed care in this country since the early '70s, and it hasn't worked well. It's very, very expensive, and it's the fault that we changed our ERISA law and our tax laws that created this corporatism that runs medicine. Wall Street rakes off the profits. The patients are unhappy. The doctors are unhappy. And it's a monopoly now. Who lobbies us in Washington? The drug companies and the HMOs. They come.

And now what is the cry for? Socialized medicine. That's not the answer. We need to get the government out of the way. Inflation hits the middle class and the poor the most. Those are the people who are losing it. It's just not minorities, anybody poor, because inflation wipes out the middle class, and we have to deal with that.

If you have a product that's not dealt with by government, prices go down when you have modern technology. And medicine, with all this technology, prices still go up. But that's because the government is involved.

We don't have enough competition. There's a doctor monopoly out there. We need alternative health care freely available to the people. They ought to be able to make their own choices and not controlled by the FDA preventing them to use some of the medications.

Tavis: Congressman, thank you, sir. Senator Brownback?

Brownback: Ray, it's a serious question, it's an important one. I've been in my state and communities and in places experiencing what exactly what you're talking about. Not on a personal basis, but seen individuals that are having to go to a community health center at the last minute, after the disease has already really grown and pronounced itself and they hesitate because they don't have insurance coverage or they don't have the money to be able to do this.

This is a real problem. It's real people that are involved in this type of situation.

I think the question you have to ask is: Which is the best way to go, then?

Do you do it with more government or do you do it with more markets?

Because these are real people experiencing this. And I pick more markets and real markets with it. Because I have not seen, in this country, ever, when the government enters into something on a bigger basis, do we get higher quality service or more of it?

We don't. It doesn't work that way. So I really -- and one thing that hasn't been talked about up here is health savings accounts. We need to expand that so people can save money, tax-exempt, from their work, the employers putting that in so they can have some money for their health care coverage.

Tavis: Thank you, Senator Brownback. Congressman Tancredo?

Tancredo: The important thing, the most important thing to remember about your health care is it's your health care. You have a personal responsibility here, every single person does, to do everything they can to stay healthy.

Most of the things that happen to us are lifestyle problems, and, really, I mean, there are things that we do to ourselves that cause us to then have to access the health care industry.

We have to first look to ourselves, individually. Again, it's kind of a scary thing again to say, but, you know, individual responsibility does work, also in health care.

And, yes, I believe, by the way, in the expansion of health savings accounts because it does put you in the connection -- it's you and you're the consumer and the doctor, and there's nobody in between, and that's good.

Also believe, by the way, that you should be able to get your drugs from any place that, in fact, it's cheaper to get drugs. If it's cheaper to get drugs in Canada, get drugs from Canada -- it's OK with me. We shouldn't be blocking that.

Again, individual freedom -- expand individual freedom and take some individual responsibility for your own health care.

Tavis: Thank you very much.

Next question asked by Juan Williams, first answered by Ambassador Alan Keyes.

Williams: Ambassador Keyes, I think you're familiar with the fact that America has a tradition of Black military heroes, going from Crispus Attucks in the Revolutionary War, to the Tuskegee Airmen in World War II, to General Colin Powell.

And tonight, Tavis, I'd just like to take a moment to acknowledge one of those heroes who's here with us in the audience. We have with us Vernice Armour. She's the first African American combat pilot in U.S. history -- I should say, first female African American combat pilot. And she served two tours of duty with distinction in Iraq.

Today we see a decline in Black and Latino enlistment because of one reason: the war in Iraq.

What do you say to the one-third of the nation that's minority and overwhelmingly opposed to the continuation of this war, even as the GOP in Congress continues to block attempts to set a deadline to end this war?

Keyes: I think the most important thing to remember is that our efforts in Iraq and elsewhere right now that followed in the wake of September 11 aren't an effort to defend Black people, white people, Jewish people, Christian people, et cetera.

They're an effort to defend the United States of America from a deep and terrible threat that came against us in disregard of the fundamental -- the fundamental moral principle that is supposed to govern all international affairs, all wars that are conducted by countries, and that is that you do not consciously target innocent human life.

My father was a soldier -- fought in Korea and Vietnam and World War II, did not stand in defense of this race or that, but stood in defense of the common principles of moral decency and justice that are derived from that premise that I talked about, that our rights come from God.

I don't think it's hard to ask anybody in this country to stand in defense of those principles.

My one criticism? I think unfortunately, President G.W. Bush put a lot of emphasis on democracy for people in Iraq, when our real goal is security for people in America.

Tavis: Thank you, Ambassador. Governor Huckabee?

Huckabee: One of the tragedies is that our military veterans have kept their promises to us; we have not kept all of our promises to them.

Many of them have come back to be told to wait in line for their health care, to be told that mental health would be something that might be rationed out.

That's not acceptable. And, if I were president, I'd like to see us have a very plainly written, simple-to-understand veterans' bill of rights that would make sure that every single thing that these veterans have been promised is delivered. And it's delivered as the first fruits of the federal Treasury before anyone else gets their nose in the trough, the veterans get their benefits paid -- not on the basis of a limited budget, but on the basis of making sure that we keep promises to the people who have kept us free.

That, I believe, will help people want to be a part of the military.

Tavis: Thank you, Governor. Congressman Paul.

Paul: The most important promise we keep is the oath to obey the Constitution. We just shouldn't be going to all these wars.

We shouldn't have so many injured and in our hospitals because we shouldn't go to war unless it's declared.

If it's declared, we should go win it and get it over with. Now we're in this war for five years or so and nobody sees the end to this.

So, we went in under false pretense. There were no weapons of mass destruction. There are still -- there are still people who believe that Iraq had something to do with 9/11, yet 15 of the people were from Saudi Arabia.

We need to live up to our principles so there are less injured veterans, but when they come home we better jolly well take care of them, and we're not doing a very good job right now, because all the money's going overseas.

We're broke. We got to do something about it.

And we can't -- we can't perpetuate a welfare state and police an empire without going bankrupt.

Tavis: Congressman?

Paul: And we're nearly on the verge of that.

Tavis: Thank you, sir. Senator Brownback?

Brownback: One, I think it's clear what we need to do at this point in time, and I think we need to talk about at this point in time, where we are. We declared war. We voted in Congress to go to war, Republican and Democrats. People can say things weren't right, we shouldn't have done this, shouldn't have done that.

We are where we are today. The military, I believe, has done and is doing a superb job. We have had a terrible political answer on the ground in Iraq.

A terrible -- yesterday, in the Congress, a bipartisan political solution passed. It was the Biden-Brownback bill -- or, since I'm here, it was the Brownback-Biden bill.

It declares a three-state federalized solution to Iraq -- a Kurdish north, a Sunni west, a Shia south, with Baghdad as a federal city; weak federated government; most of the policies devolve down to the local units of government. Because Iraq is less a country than it is three groups of people. We need to recognize that. And we can move forward with that political solution...

Tavis: Senator.

Brownback: ... and pull our guys back.

Tavis: Thank you. Congressman Tancredo?

Tancredo: What's the constitutional responsibility of the Congress when it comes to war?

It is, one, declare it; two, fund it; or three, not fund it. That's it.

You know what, when you talk about, Juan, you talk about the number of bills that we have killed because of attempts to, sort of, end this thing?

Well, every one of them has inside of them all these provisions about how have to fight the war, how many people can be dispatched at any particular point in time and who they can fight.

I will tell you this, that the founders of this country knew very well that -- what would happen to us if we ended up with 535 generals in the Congress of the United States. And that is, you lose wars.

You need a commander in chief.

And then the Congress has every right -- and you know what? It has every right to be involved in it. It has every right to talk about this and to condemn it if you don't agree with it.

But you know what? It ends up with this. If you don't want it, don't fund it. But you cannot micromanage it from the Congress of the United States.

Tavis: Congressman Hunter?

Hunter: Thank you, Tavis.

Vernice, thank you for your two tours in Iraq. And I want to say I've got a son who's done two tours as a Marine in Iraq.

He's getting to see a new country in Afghanistan right now. And who knows? You may be there shortly.

Thanks for your service to our country.

Ladies and gentlemen, we can leave Iraq, and under my leadership, we will leave Iraq in victory. And let me tell you what I would propose.

The key to handing off the security apparatus in Iraq, now that we've stood up a free government -- and it is a free government. It's stumbling along, it's inept, but it's a free government. The key to a security handoff is to have a reliable Iraqi army.

Right now, we've got 131 battalions in the Iraqi army. We've trained them and we've equipped them, and we are moving them into the battle.

And my recommendation to the president, the Joint Chiefs and General Petraeus is to make sure that every one of those 131 battalions gets at least a three- or four-month combat tour in a contentious area. When they are battle-hardened, we can rotate them into the battle zone, rotate our America's heavy forces, Marines and Army, and bring them home.

That's the right way to leave Iraq, in victory.

Tavis: Congressman Hunter, thank you.

We've covered a lot of ground tonight. We're starting to get a little tight on time now, just a few minutes left in this conversation.

I would like to then use the moderator's prerogative and privilege to ask you now if we can squeeze a couple more questions in, to cut your answers down to 30 seconds and see if we can't get a couple more questions in right quick.

Cynthia Tucker will ask next; answered first, 30 seconds, by Governor Huckabee.

Tucker: Governor, does the U.S. have a role to play in ending the genocide in Darfur? And, if so, what should that role be?

Huckabee: I think we have some role to play in it, but I guess what disturbs me even more, we have not even addressed the genocide that's going on and the infanticide in our own country with the slaughter of millions of unborn children.

And we also have extraordinary poverty in this country.

Yes, we ought to be involved. But you know something? There are a lot of people in America that don't think the only poverty is in Darfur -- understand there's poverty in the Delta.

There are people who don't have running water, people that don't have access to medical care and don't have a decent school to go to and you don't have to go halfway around the world to find it. We've got it right here in this country.

Tavis: Congressman Paul?

Paul: The U.S. government has no authority. There's no constitutional authority. There's no moral authority. There's plenty of moral authority and responsibility for individuals to participate. But every time we get involved, no matter where, for good intentions, believe me, we're getting involved in a civil war.

Even when you send food, it ends up in the hands of the military and they use it as weapons. So it's not well-intended. We should direct our attention only to national security and not get involved for these feel-good reasons of going overseas for the various reasons.

And this is the main reason why I think we ought to just come home from every place in the world and bring our troops home from Iraq.

Tavis: Senator Brownback?

Brownback: I know this won't be a crowd-pleaser, but I couldn't disagree more with that last answer.

We are the greatest nation on the face of the Earth, and we are ones that can stand up. And we need to stand up in the face of second genocide when we had declared years ago in Rwanda: Never again.

And what is happening? It is happening again. And it's not just the first genocide that's taken place in Sudan, it's the second. And I've been there.

We need to do divestiture campaigns here. We need to support the African Union troops there. We shouldn't put our own troops. We don't need to put our own troops.

Tavis: Thank you.

Brownback: We need to provide food and medicine as well.

Tavis: Senator, thank you very much. Congressman Tancredo?

Tancredo: First trip I ever took -- the very first trip I ever took as a congressman of the United States was to Sudan. I came back, worked two years to pass the Sudan Peace Act.

I believe we do have a moral responsibility to act. It is not to send troops, believe me. I do not believe we need boots on the ground in Sudan or in Darfur to deal with this issue.

But you know what we could do?

We could see whether the United Nations is worth its salt and force them into participating in this issue and getting that -- and in getting that solved.

Tavis: Congressman, thank you. Congressman Hunter?

Hunter: The outside troops, U.N. and African Union, are not getting the job done because they're garrisoned far away from the villages that get hammered by the Janjaweed.

By the time the damage has been done, the troops always get there late.

What we probably need to do is get a humanitarian corridor driven up through that vast country, where we have armed convoys, U.N. convoys or African Union convoys to get food and medicine to those people that need it most.

And lastly, teach those villages self-defense, because the troops aren't getting there in time.

Tavis: Ambassador Keyes?

Keyes: I have to say I'm appalled by the suggestion that we retreat into some kind of fortress America and forget who we are. We are a nation of nations, a people of many peoples. We are in touch with every people on the face of the Earth. If somebody is being hurt somewhere in the world, somebody in America grieves for them.

And I don't believe we can turn our backs on that universal significance, that universal mission.

I think a lot of suggestions made here in terms of how we get involved are good ones. We don't have to send troops, but we need to support and reinforce the sense of local, regional responsibility...

Tavis: Ambassador Keyes...

Keyes: ... for both humanitarian and military order in that region.

Tavis: Thank you, sir. Ray Suarez for Congressman Paul.

Suarez: Congressman Paul, support has gradually been slipping for the death penalty among all Americans. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life reports a large minority of whites still support capital punishment, while Blacks and Latinos do not.

Now, I know this is mostly a state function, but the president does appoint appellate judges, and of course, the highest appellate judges in the land, the Supreme Court justices, who often review death penalty cases.

Do you think the death penalty is carried out justly in the United States? And do you want to see it continued during your presidency?

Tavis: Thirty seconds, Congressman.

Paul: You know, over the years, I've held pretty rigid all my beliefs, but I've changed my opinion about the death penalty. For federal purposes, I no longer believe in the death penalty. I believe it has been issued unjustly. If you're rich, you get away with it; if you're poor and you're from the inner city, you're more likely to be prosecuted and convicted.

Today, with the DNA evidence, there have been too many mistakes. So I am now opposed to the federal death penalty.

Tavis: Thank you, Congressman. Senator Brownback?

Brownback: We need a culture of life in the United States, a culture that recognizes every life at every stage. It's beautiful, it's unique, it's a child of a loving God, period.

I have difficulty with the death penalty. This is an individual, though, in that case, that has committed a heinous crime. I think we should limit the death penalty to cases only where we cannot protect the society from the individual, such as when Osama bin Laden is caught.

We need to be able to use it then.

But we should use this very limited and only in that circumstance, in order to talk and to teach a culture of life in America.

Tavis: Senator Brownback, thank you. Congressman Tancredo?

Tancredo: It is, in fact, a state issue, almost entirely. The restrictions that we talked about with regard to the federal government and whether or not we should have a death penalty, I will tell you, I would absolutely support the continuation of a death penalty, especially for crimes like treason.

I mean, we really have to consider the possibility that there is an appropriate penalty for a crime of that nature. It is the death penalty.

Tavis: Congressman Hunter?

Hunter: I think there is a need for the death penalty. And it's called deterrence. And that means that, when that Charles Manson is getting rid to pull the trigger on an innocent American, just maybe the idea passes through his mind that he, himself, is going to lose his life.

Now, that might only deter five percent, 10 percent, 15 percent, 20 percent. It does deter some people. And for that reason, the death penalty, dealing with some very rough, very ruthless people, is necessary.

Tavis: Ambassador Keyes?

Keyes: I support the death penalty. I think it has a basis in universal justice that isn't just about deterrence and all that, it's about respect for life. It's about making sure that we don't send the signal, especially where Black killers are concerned, because we do understand, don't we, that they mostly kill Black folks.

And I wouldn't want to send the message that when you kill another Black human being, we somehow don't take that seriously. We'll cheapen the significance of that by not applying the understanding that when you cold-bloodedly and calculatively take another human life, more has (inaudible) you than more than all can take.

We can only dispatch you to the ruler of us all so that he may ultimately judge you for your misdeeds.

Tavis: Governor Huckabee?

Huckabee: I probably dislike the death penalty more than anybody on this stage, but for a very different reason. I've actually had to carry it out, more than any governor in my state's history. I had to carry out the death penalty because that was my job.

I did it because I believed, after reading every page of every transcript and everything in that file, it was the only conclusion we could come to. But I didn't enjoy it.

And God help the American who somehow has this cavalier attitude about the death penalty and says they support it and they can do it. Let me tell you something from the person whose name had to be put on the document that started the process: It's a necessary part of our criminal justice system for those crimes for which there is no other alternative.

But God help the person who ever does it without a conscience and feels the pain of it.

Tavis: We know, given the time, we're not going to get everybody in on this, but, Juan, last question right quick?

Williams: Certainly.

The Supreme Court, gentlemen, recently ruled that even voluntary integration in America's public schools is unconstitutional and illegal. That comes even as two-thirds of Black and Latino students go to schools that are so-called minority majority and disproportionately poor.

We all know of a tremendous achievement gap between Black and white students in America.

Is the Supreme Court right to say that school integration is no longer key to the promise of equal educational opportunity for all?

Tavis: Senator Brownback, you'll start with that?

Brownback: I live in the town of Topeka, Kansas. Brown v. Board of Education was decided in my hometown.

I believe we still need integration taking place in the schools, and I think it's an important thing. I think we need to do it on a voluntary and incentivized basis as much as we possibly can, but it is important for us to maintain it as a goal and objective of this country.

Tavis: Congressman Tancredo?

Tancredo: I think it's a racist thing to say, to even suggest that the only way that a Black child can learn is sitting next to a white child or any other kind of child.

It can happen. We can teach children of all colors and we've proved it. We can do it by giving choice -- choice to parents, choice to pick from a wide array of educational opportunities, and then kids go to those schools. They're all over the country now. There are charter schools and voucher systems. That's what will give that integration -- make it a natural phenomena and it will make kids much, much better in terms of their ability to succeed.

Tavis: Congressman Hunter?

Hunter: I think the population of the school should depend on the community that you live in.

And it should be, in my mind, small schools, and they should be schools that are close enough to mom and dad that you can get them down to the school when the teacher needs them. It shouldn't be based on any forced mandate by government, and I think it will work out a lot better that way.

Tavis: Unfortunately, we are out of time. Let's show our appreciation one more time for those candidates tonight -- who showed up here at Morgan State in Baltimore.

And our terrific panel of journalists: Cynthia, Ray and Juan, we thank you. We thank everyone here at Morgan State, everyone behind the scenes who made this night possible.

That's it from here. Good night from Baltimore. Thanks for watching. And, as always, keep the faith.

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