

## **The Little Blue Book:**

*The Essential Guide to Thinking and Talking Democratic*

By George Lakoff

All politics is moral. We must show how everyday values link to policies.

Conservatives use value-based language more effectively than liberals who assume that people share their values.

Most people are morally complex and have a combination of conservative and liberal moral values. (Note: *Is this still true?*)

Any political message about politics can be understood only in terms of moral values.

### **MORAL VALUES:**

For progressives, democracy begins with citizens caring about each other and taking responsibility for themselves and others.

- They regard individual and social responsibility as inseparable
- Their basic moral values are empathy and responsibility.
- Their value system is based on progressive family values, such as equal parental authority, open communication, shared decision-making, transparency about family rules, need-based fairness.

Conservative values systems are based on conservative family values:

- A strong father figure.
- Discipline and punishment.
- They believe that democracy is about liberty, individual responsibility, self-reliance, minimal public systems.

Values provide the moral premises for policy, the concern with issue areas, and the interpretation of abstract and widely shared ideas.

Lakoff makes a pitch for reigniting progressive Christianity, which has been overshadowed by evangelical Christianity.

### **THE BRAIN**

We think in terms of *cascades* (a network of neurons that link many brain circuits). Separate ideas need context. Conservative cascades are activated more frequently and intensely than progressive ones because conservatives have a deeper understanding of the moral basis of political communication.

## **LANGUAGE**

Liberals tend to talk about policy and facts and figures. They love to quote conservatives and argue against them, citing real facts.

Liberals need to understand the difference between policy and morality and that morality beats policy.

For Democrats, Lakoff suggests sincerity and transparency.

- Understand your values.
- Speak them out loud.
- Repeat them.
- Use facts honestly.
- Link facts and policies overtly to values.

The best defense is offense.

Put the positive first.

### **USE BASIC LEVEL WORDS**

- Have I seen it?
- Touched it?
- Directly interacted with it?
- Smelled it or heard it?
- Can I draw it?
- Can I mime it?

***Tell real stories.***

### **What is Extreme Conservatism?**

- It shows up in legislation that takes away human rights.
- It shows up in court decisions that allow the corporate takeover of public life
- It shows up in the use of corporate funds to corrupt the political process.

## **HOW WE CAN MAINTAIN DEMOCRACY**

Extreme conservatives made their move while Democrats slept.

Democrats don't talk enough about the Public in general terms. Democracy's sacred mission is to protect and empower everyone equally by the provision of public resources.

No one makes it without the Public.

Democrats need to talk nonstop about the Public as the necessary foundation of the Private.

We are undergoing a shift from the Public to Corporate Government.

Conservatives talk about limited government but never about limiting corporate power.

Privatization is the replaced of elected governments with unelected corporate governments.

Corporations govern our lives with almost no accountability. They intrude on our personal lives and collect information.

When conservatives talk about 'smaller government,' they are talking about privatization.

Government has a moral duty to protect and empower the people. Private corporations have no such duty to citizens, which is why maintaining a robust Public is absolutely necessary to ensure everyone's well-being, prosperity, and safety.

Lakoff examines Public vs Corporate in a variety of scenarios:

#### Farm Bill:

- Government should promote and subsidize healthy foods. We shouldn't give public money to corporate agriculture that puts profit ahead of safe and healthy food.

#### Environment

- Dirty energy industries—oil, coal, and natural gas—make a lot of their money by not cleaning up. They profit by not paying the full costs of doing business and instead place those costs on the public.
- Nature is never free. Taking over or destroying places incurs costs elsewhere.
- Surreptitiously transferring costs and risks to the public is the economic and moral equivalent of theft.
- In extreme conservatism, there should be nothing and no one above the market. That means no government regulation, no taxation, no labor or workers' rights, no tort cases.
- We need to phase out dirty energy; not prolong it with subsidies.
- Energy is fungible. The more we save, the less we need to use. The more we use, the less we save.
- Energy saved is energy produced.
- Conservation does as much for us as production. Save, don't drill.

#### **A PHRASEBOOK FOR DEMOCRATS**

1. Use *revenue* instead of *taxes*. Debt and deficits are results of *revenue neglect*. Restore the positive phrase: *Your Taxes at Work*.
2. Avoid the term *government services*.
3. Avoid *The American Dream* and substitute *The American Ideal*.
4. Spread the message that what the Public does is carry out *civic tasks* and that these tasks are carried out by *task forces*.
5. Speak not in terms of *government spending*, but, rather, in terms of *investment*.
6. To sustain existing programs, speak in terms of *maintenance costs*.
7. Avoid the term *free market*. There is no free market. Instead, use *liberal market*, which recognizes the need for regulation, fair taxation (or *revenue raising*), and unions. The liberal market is a long-term market, recognizing that short-term greed puts stress on our economy, our environment, and our workforce. Short-term investors looking for the quickest profits put pressure on firms to dismantle their workforce.
8. Avoid the term *human resources*. Humans are not resources. They are *assets*.
9. Avoid the term *women's issues* or *war on women*. These are family planning issues that involve men and women. Lakoff regards *birth control* as a disastrous term, suggesting instead *pregnancy prevention*.