

# **Take Back America**

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**[www.rockridgeinstitute.org](http://www.rockridgeinstitute.org)**

# The Rockridge Institute

A new think tank

whose mission is to

*reframe public debate*

*from a progressive perspective*

To join the new  
Rockridge Activist Network

write to  
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*Moral Politics*

*How Liberals and Conservatives Think*

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# What is framing?

The environment

Tax Relief

Negatives

Frames Trump Facts

# What is Reframing?

## Taxation as Investment

**American taxpayers have made many wise investments in people and infrastructure:**

- **The highway system**
- **The internet, semiconductors -- computers**
- **The satellite system, and cell phones**
- **The scientific and medical establishment.**
- **The stock market**

## **Strict father morality (the basis of conservative politics)**

A strict father  
is a moral authority who runs the family—  
supporting it, protecting it,  
and teaching his kids right from wrong  
through punishment (“tough love”),  
which is necessary if they are to learn  
the internal discipline necessary to act morally  
and to prosper by pursuing their self-interest.

Morality and prosperity are thus linked.  
The best people are the prosperous people.

Those who are undisciplined  
cannot follow moral precepts —  
they are immoral.

Those who are undisciplined  
cannot earn their way in the world —  
they are dependent.

Once mature, the disciplined (moral) children are sent out on their own to become prosperous and the strict father, though still protective, cannot interfere in their lives.

The strict father, being a moral authority,  
does not have to ask anyone's permission to act.  
If he did so, he would sacrifice his moral authority.

## Strict Morality in Politics

All social programs are immoral,  
since they produce dependency  
by giving people things they haven't earned.

If everyone pursues their self-interest,  
the self-interest of all will be maximized.  
The pursuit of self-interest is maximally moral.

“Do-gooders,” who try to help people,  
get in the way of those pursuing their self-interest  
and are actually hurting people.

Hence, free markets are moral  
And regulation is not.

Tax cuts for the wealthy reward the best people.  
Amassing a huge deficit serves morality  
by eliminating most social programs all at once.

Those who are not disciplined enough  
to become prosperous deserve their poverty.

There will always be losers  
and the losers deserve to lose.

In foreign policy, a strict father nation would be giving up its sovereignty and its moral authority if it has to ask permission to act in a way it judges to be moral.

# **Nurturant Parent Morality**

## **(The basis of progressive politics)**

Both parents are equally responsible.  
Their job is to nurture their children  
and raise their children to be nurturers.

Nurturance is empathy and responsibility.

Everyone has both models  
— either actively or passively.

Political idealists on both sides  
have one model fixed for their politics.

People “in the middle” have both models active,  
But in different parts of their lives.  
Either may be active for politics.

The trick is to get your model activated  
for politics in them.

You do this by using *your* language.

# **What Are Progressive Values?**

**Progressive social values reflect nurturant morality**

**— the very opposite of the strict morality of the radical right.**

**The core progressive values are:**

**Empathy**

**(connecting with and caring about others)**

**and**

**Responsibility**

**(for oneself and others)**

# **Basic progressive values follow:**

**Protection**

**Fulfillment in life**

**Fairness**

**When you empathize with someone,  
you want to prevent harm to them,  
you want their dreams to come true,  
and you want them to be treated fairly.**

# **Basic Values**

**Freedom**

**Opportunity**

**Prosperity**

**There is  
no fulfillment without freedom,  
no freedom without opportunity, and  
no opportunity without prosperity.**

# **Basic Values**

**Community**

**Service**

**Cooperation**

**Children are shaped by communities.**

**Responsibility requires serving and shaping your  
community.**

**That requires cooperation.**

# **Basic Values**

**Trust**

**Honesty**

**Open communication**

**There is no cooperation without trust,**

**No trust without honesty, and**

**No cooperation without open  
communication.**

# Basic Values

## **Strength**

**Acting responsibly requires strength**

# Progressive Individualism

If you empathize with someone  
and want them to be fulfilled in life  
and be treated fairly,  
then you will respect their individuality,  
accord them maximal freedom  
(consistent with the freedom of others),  
and you will appreciate diversity as a value.

**Unfortunately reality:** Conservatives all over the country are not just being duped. They are not stupid, nor mean, nor greedy. They are being *moral* — in strict morality.

**The possibility for change:** Everyone has both models, at least passively.

Certain values occur in both models, but in different forms. “Freedom” and “democracy” just mean something different.

The same with “individualism” and “morality” itself.

# **Individualism Over Corporatism**

In the law,  
corporations are (metaphorically) persons.

They are not really persons.  
They are collective legal entities,  
Intended to serve the needs and interests  
Of the real individuals in a society.

The needs and rights of individuals  
Therefore should take precedence over  
The needs and rights of corporations.

# **Conservative Christianity is Strict Father Christianity**

God requires you to be disciplined,  
to follow His commandments.

If you do, you will be rewarded and  
and go to Heaven.

If not, you will be punished and go to Hell.

If you have sinned, Jesus will save you  
if you accept him as Savior,

Become disciplined, and

Follow God's commandments from now on.

# **Progressive Christianity is Nurturant Christianity**

The central concept of  
Progressive Christianity is Grace.

Grace is metaphorical Nurturance.

That is what makes Progressive Christianity  
Politically progressive.

# **A Primer on Grace**

You have to be close to God to get Grace

You can't earn Grace

God gives Grace unconditionally

You can be filled with Grace

Grace can heal you

Grace comforts you

Grace makes you a moral person

# **Progressive Christianity is Nurturant Christianity**

**There are more progressive Christians  
than conservative Christians.**

**We welcome religious progressives.**

## **Morality Precedes Religion**

## **Morality Structures Forms of Religion**

Each form of a religion teaches  
Its own version of morality.

Because religions teach their morality,  
it is commonly thought that morality  
comes from religion,  
though the opposite is true.

# **Progressive Principles**

**The American Commitment**

**Political Equality**

**Responsible Government**

**Moral Leadership**

**A Better Future**

**Nurturant Family Values**

# **The American Commitment**

## **The Citizens' Commitment to the Nation:**

Work hard, play by the rules, and pay your dues.

## **The Nation's Commitment to its Citizens:**

America will provide protection, freedom, fairness, political equality, prosperity, the best possible natural environment, healthy communities, and a reasonable standard of living:

decent housing, food, clothing, first-rate public education, and health care.

# Political Equality

Political equality should be maximized.

Political hierarchy based on private wealth and power should be minimized.

# **Responsible Government**

The role of the government is to maximize the conditions for the fulfillment of American Commitment, while not interfering with that Commitment.

The role of business is to provide the level of prosperity needed to fulfill the American Commitment, while not interfering with that Commitment.

# **Moral Leadership**

In the world community, America should provide moral leadership by applying its moral principles to its own dealings with other nations.

# **A Better Future**

It is the responsibility of both government and the private sphere to work for continuous improvement in satisfying the above principles.

# **Nurturant Family Values**

## *Core Values*

**Empathy and Responsibility**

## **Overall Values**

**Protection, Fairness, Fulfillment,**

**Opportunity, Prosperity**

**Community, Service, Cooperation**

**Trust, Honest, Open Communication**

# **Progressive Principles**

**The American Commitment**

**Political Equality**

**Responsible Government**

**Moral Leadership**

**A Better Future**

**Nurturant Family Values**

# Conceptual Levels

All particular issues can be framed at three levels:

1. The Moral Level
2. The Issue Area
3. The Particular Issue

As conservatives have learned, the most effective level to speak at is the moral level.

**Take, as an example, affirmative action:**

1. Moral Values: Fairness, Equality
2. Civil Liberties
3. Affirmative Action

In the Prop. 209 debate in California several years ago, the progressives were arguing for a program (affirmative action), while conservatives argued for moral principles (fairness, equality).

# Same-Sex Marriage

Conservations argue from sanctity and definition.

Many liberals see the issue in terms of material benefits and so favor civil unions.

Material benefits cannot trump sanctity and definition.

Progressive Definition: Marriage is the realization of love in a lifetime commitment.

Level 1: Marriage is sacred; commitment is sacred.  
Values: Equality, Freedom, and Human Dignity.

The government should play no role in deciding who should marry who.

# Progressive Attitudes

- 1. Ideological -- Sticking to principle, looks upon compromise as “selling out”**
- 2. Pragmatic -- Wants things to work, willing to compromise on ideology to get as much as possible.**
- 3. Militant -- Nurturant ends, but strict-father means; competitive, strident, punitive in style.**

# **Kinds of Progressives**

- 1. Socio-economic: All issues are a matter of money and class.**
- 2. Identity Politics: Out oppressed group deserves its share now.**
- 3. Greens: The sanctity of the earth and sustainability.**
- 4. Civil Libertarians: Freedoms are threatened and have to be protected.**
- 5. Anti-authoritarians: We have to fight the illegitimate use of authority.**
- 6. Religious Progressives: A spiritual life centering on empathy, responsibility, and service.**

# How to Unite Progressives

## **Progressives share:**

- **Common values**
- **Common principles**
- **Common policy directions**

## **Progressives Differ in:**

- **Attitudes toward ideology**
- **Modes of thought**
- **Particular programs**

# Progressive Policy Directions

- **Affordable health care for all.**
- **High-quality public education, cradle through college.**
- **Renewable energy: end dependency on oil, etc.**
- **Create jobs through infrastructure development.**
- **Fair taxation.**
- **Clean air and clean water.**
- **Multilateral foreign policy based on diplomacy, international institutions, etc.**

# Progressive Business

The business of America is business.

American business runs on trust.

Trust must be restored to American business.

Reforms:

Accounting: Honest, open, and full accounting

Charter reform: Stakeholder interests are to be maximized, not just stockholder profits. Stakeholders include workers and communities.

Healthy community standards constrain the operation of corporations.

Corporations have to pay their taxes.

# **Ethical Market Capitalism**

There are no such things as free markets.

Markets are constructed and run by rules.

The rules should favor individuals  
and the environment over corporations.

# **How to Speak like a Progressive**

- Start with progressive values,  
which are basic American values**
- Envision a better future**
- Connect with people**
- Express care and responsibility**
- Be strong, moral, and optimistic**
- Be proactive not reactive**
- Reframe**
- Play offense, not defense**

# Common Progressive Mistakes

- Negating the other side's frames
- Thinking the truth will set you free,  
that you can talk truth to power
- Being logical without taking framing  
into account
- Thinking voters vote their self-interest—  
they really vote their identity and values
- Thinking you can get more votes  
by moving to the right
- Thinking you have all the ideas,  
and only need language

# Strategic Initiatives

1. They either cover multiple issues areas.
2. They are really about their consequences.

## Theirs:

1. Partial birth abortion
2. Tax cuts
3. Tort reform
4. School Testing; No Child Left Behind

## Ours:

- Apollo
- Accounting reform
- 3. Open Courts
- 4. Poison-free children's food

# Orwellian Language

**Compassionate Conservative**

**Healthy Forests Act**

**Clear Skies Act**

**Leave No Child Behind**

**These overheads will appear on  
the Rockridge Institute website:**

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