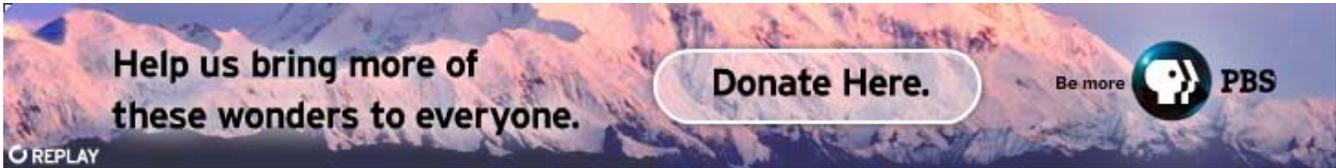


Support for PBS.org provided by:

What's this?



December 5, 2008

BILL MOYERS: Welcome to the Journal.

No sooner did President-elect Obama begin announcing his appointments to office than the chattering classes of print, the airwaves and cyberspace began The Great Debate:

Ah-hah, some said, this proves he will govern right of center. Karl Rove cackled with glee, and even Rush Limbaugh — from his underground bunker — hailed Obama's choice of Hillary as a shrewd political masterstroke.

Establishment Democrats watched the parade of familiar faces and exclaimed: we're back! Not so fast, shouted the Obama net-root activists who pounded their keyboards with fury all year. "In his heart you know he's one of us," they're saying. These appointments will give him cover to channel FDR.

And from their lofty perch above it all, Obama's fellow Brainiacs twirled their Phi Beta Kappa keys, smiled and said "Foolish ideologues." You know intellect will carry the day! And as always, corporate chieftains the country over rubbed their palms in anticipation of a New Age of Pragmatism, crossed Republicans off their Christmas list, and started writing checks to Democrats.

And Obama's not even President yet!

Meanwhile, the people most uncertain of where they stand right now are that political species known as progressives. They hold a healthy distaste for the orthodox ways of the Washington elites who seem to have a permanent grip on how things work, no matter who wins the election.

Progressives are holding their fire right now, giving Obama the benefit of the doubt, but unsure whether all those establishment figures Obama is gathering around him — largely from the Clinton administration — represent a brilliant strategy of co-option or a signal of his true intent.

So what does the leading progressive member of the United States Senate think about all this? We'll ask him.

Russ Feingold came to the Senate in 1993, from Wisconsin, birthplace of the Progressive Party and that great progressive hero, Robert La Follette, Sr., "Battling Bob," the people's crusader against the power of money in politics.

Russ Feingold has kept La Follette's faith. Perhaps best-known as co-author of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill, he's also been one of the foremost critics of the Bush administration's use of executive power. Not only did he speak out against the war in Iraq, he was the sole Senator to vote against passage of the Patriot Act.

MALE VOICE: The ayes are ninety-eight, and the nays are one. And the bill is passed.

BILL MOYERS: He said it would give the government too much power to snoop into the private lives of its citizens. Not two months after 9/11 Russ Feingold told the Senate: "Preserving our freedom is one of the main reasons that we are now engaged in this new

war on terrorism. We will lose that war without firing a shot if we sacrifice the liberties of the American people." Feingold even proposed that the Senate censure President Bush for allowing Americans to be wiretapped without court order.

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: When the President of the United States breaks the law, he must be held accountable. [...] The President authorized an illegal program to spy on American citizens on American soil, and then misled Congress and the public about the existence and the legality of that program. It is up to this body to reaffirm the rule of law by condemning the President's action.

BILL MOYERS: Russ Feingold did not officially endorse any of the candidates during the race for the Democratic presidential nomination, but he voted for Barack Obama in the Wisconsin primary and supported him against John McCain. Senator Feingold is with me now.

BILL MOYERS: Welcome, Senator, to the Journal.

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Good to be on the show.

BILL MOYERS: In modern terms what does it mean when you say, "I'm a progressive?"

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Well, our Wisconsin progressive tradition is one of a very serious commitment to farmers, small business, people that do manufacturing. But we also have a commitment to clean government, to open government. That's what "Fighting Bob" La Follette was all about. And some of the major reforms in the history of the country in terms of ethics, in terms of unemployment compensation, in terms of child safety laws, were all part of that great progressive movement that was started in the late 19th century and early 20th century in Wisconsin. And by the way, progressivism in Wisconsin also means fiscal responsibility. So it's an interesting twist. But that is sort of some of the things that have gone into this belief, that we don't like government to be involved unless it has to be. We believe in people's liberties and their freedom. But sometimes, government has to step in, in order to make sure the community is working together.

BILL MOYERS: Especially-

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Especially Wisconsin progressives.

BILL MOYERS: -especially when the market doesn't deliver what people need, right?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: This is one of those moments when a progressive belief in the ability of government to fix things when it has to fix things, only when it has to fix things, is something that is part of Wisconsin tradition.

BILL MOYERS: Now, here's the conundrum to me. If you read all the polls, clearly the public is for ending the war in Iraq, and it's for a sane, just economic level playing field. So is the public at large progressive, or are we making a mistake when we frame their concerns around a progressive label that enables say, the Democratic leadership conference, the centrists, to marginalize that progressive concern?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Well, I think the public is interested in protecting their families. And that's where they go. I don't think they're interested in ideology. So what happened during the '90s, and to some extent, the '80s, people were told over and over again, it's anti-business to vote against bad trade agreements that are going to hurt American jobs. This is the new era. It's going to be good for all the families if we sort of eliminate the rules that protected us from abuses on Wall Street. You know, pushing this kind of legislation through.

Of course, now this is all falling apart. And now, people are realizing that all the way back, of course, to the progressive era and Teddy Roosevelt era, we needed legislation to bust the big monopolies. We needed legislation to make sure that the marketplace could actually work in a fair way. And I think people now realize this was a big mistake that was made during the '90s, to undo all the protections that were there and were put in place largely after the Great Depression.

BILL MOYERS: What do you want from the Obama administration?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Well, I would like the new president to do exactly what he

said he's going to do, first of all. He wants to bring the country together as much as he can. And that doesn't mean, I think, giving up your principles. But I think it does mean saying even though the Democrats have the House and the Senate and the presidency, that we should engage Republicans who are willing to work with us as much as possible. Because the public is so turned off by the fighting and by the sniping that goes on. Those of us who really believe in progressive government have got to portray a government that can work together with as many people as possible.

At the same time, I would like to new president, of course, to stick to the kind of things he campaigned on, such as making sure that we close down Guantanamo, making sure that we do end the war in Iraq in an orderly manner. He should not go away from this to simply look like he's in the middle. And I don't think he's going to do that

BILL MOYERS: I had dinner the other night with Ted Sorensen, who's 80 years old now. He was John F. Kennedy's alter ego, soul mate, the author of so many, with Kennedy, of those great speeches. And I said to him, "Ted, you know, the one thing people remember from Kennedy's inaugural address was I'm — you know it, as you were a young man listening at the time — 'Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country.'" And I said, "What's the one thing that you think Barack Obama could say that would be the most memorable, the most riveting, and the most compelling, and the most urgent? And he said, echoing Russ Feingold, "Restore the rule of law." You've been talking about this for some time now. Why is that so important for Obama to put it on the marquee early on?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Well, of course, the new president, minutes after he's sworn in, in this wonderful moment — it will be cold out there. It will be short speech. But included in the speech, I would hope, would be some attempt by this new, wonderful president to renounce the extreme claims of executive power. To simply renounce these claims that were made by the Bush administration. If he does not say it in some way, at least there, or soon thereafter-

BILL MOYERS: Such as? What do you mean? What claims do you think are most abusive?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: The most important thing — there are many examples, such as torture issue, Guantanamo, detainees, many other things — the fundamental thing is to get away from this argument that under Article Two of the Constitution, the president can basically look at a clear statute, such as the wiretapping statute, and say, "You know, actually, I can do whatever I want in this. I don't have to follow the clear laws of the Constitution, because under the Commander-in-Chief powers, I can basically do whatever I want." That is essentially the argument, the extreme and dangerous argument that the Bush administration has advanced.

So I would like to see this new president say, "You know, that goes too far. I believe in presidential power. I will protect the prerogatives of the president." But at some point — and I think this is where the Bush administration went too far — they've actually undone the basic balance that our founders believed in.

BILL MOYERS: But he must be heading to the White House concerned that there could be a 9/11 on his watch.

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Absolutely.

BILL MOYERS: And that he can't be as prudent or as prudish as a constitutional lawyer, as he might have been before 9/11. What would you say to him if he asks you about that? "Russ, I don't want 9/11 to happen on my watch." Bush didn't want it to happen again. He turned to John Ashcroft and said, "John, don't let this happen again." So what would you say to Obama about the balance between the fear he has that Mumbai could happen here, and your concerns, all of our concerns, for the Constitution?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Well, he would be absolutely right to have that concern. And I'm on the Foreign Relations Committee-

BILL MOYERS: Right.

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: -and the Intelligence Committee. There's-

BILL MOYERS: And the Judiciary Committee.

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: And judiciary.

BILL MOYERS: Yeah.

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: And these are all — the three committees that really relate to this issue. My top priority is to stop us from being attacked again, is to protect the physical safety of the American people. That's my top priority. That's going to be President Obama's top priority. Though he will do nothing — and I will support nothing — that will undo the ability of us to go after those that we have a reasonable reason to believe are going after us, that are going to harm us. What he will do as president, and what he understands, is you can do that without going after people's library records, where there's absolutely no evidence they've done anything wrong. Or, for example, allowing, as the new Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act does, the bulk collection of every single international conversation that anyone does, even though there may be no proof at all that anybody's done anything wrong.

Our system of government is based on the belief that we have a rule of law. And although, as Justice Goldberg once said, "The Constitution is not a suicide pact," it is our faith. That doing things under our system of government is not only the right thing to do, but is also the efficacious thing to do, the thing that will actually produce the most result and cause people to feel free. For example, in a minority community in the United States, where they might know somebody in their midst who is potentially a problem. They're going to be a lot more likely to talk to us about that if they believe that their fundamental rights as innocent Americans are being protected. That's the balance we need to have.

BILL MOYERS: What do you think happens if Obama decides that this can't be his top priority? What happens if he doesn't act to reverse what President Bush and Dick Cheney have done?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: He's in the amazing position of having to have about fifteen top priorities. And nobody envies his job. Look, he's got to deal with the financial issues. He's got to deal with the stimulus issue. He's got to deal with energy and health care. So he doesn't need to sort of make this the number one issue.

Hillary Clinton, when she called me after her appointment as Secretary of State because I'm a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, said, "We have to learn how to walk and chew gum at the same time." Well, that's exactly what President Obama's going to do. He can change these things in the rule of law, relatively quietly. He can get rid of Guantanamo by executive order. He can get rid of the bad torture policies by executive order. He can get rid of the practice of assuming that something's a classified document, and bring it back to what it was under the Clinton administration, where the presumption is in favoring of opening information.

So he can do that quickly and quietly. And then, he can be supportive, as he's doing the other major projects, of legislation that I and others will introduce to try to fix these things about the Patriot Act and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act that went too far. So this doesn't have to be sort of the marquee issue. But it does need to be something that gets attention right away.

BILL MOYERS: I don't want to put you on the spot, but I'm going to put you on the spot. You admire Hillary Clinton. Have you ever asked her to explain why she voted for the Iraq resolution that you opposed? Joe Biden, too. Two of your colleagues sitting not far from you on the Senate floor both stood up and argued to give the president the authority to go into Iraq. You stood against them.

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: I was with them in the caucus, when each of us spoke, both privately and publicly on this. I was in the intelligence committee briefings. I heard the questions being asked. I mean, it was a scary time. And it was a judgment call that each of us had to make. I listened carefully to the CIA when they talked about some of the arguments that were made. And I thought they had a very tepid argument that they didn't even believe in, was the way I read their body language and way I read their argument, that this really wasn't something that had to be done, and didn't have to be done right now, and didn't relate to 9/11.

BILL MOYERS: So you-

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Other people took a different conclusion from it.

BILL MOYERS: Looking at the same material, you reached a different conclusion?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Absolutely.

BILL MOYERS: Did you try to argue with say, Joe Biden, and Hillary Clinton

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: I argued vigorously in caucus and on the floor, that this didn't make sense, that the connections to 9/11 were phony, that there was not solid evidence of weapons of mass destruction. That even if there were, there wasn't necessarily the kind of evidence you would want that he could deliver, or that he would even want to do it. I remember most is the belief we got from the intelligence people, that they didn't really think Saddam Hussein was going to come after us with weapons of mass destruction even if he could. And how other people came to the other conclusions, I don't know. I give Hillary Clinton credit. She was pretty consistent on this. There were others who frankly, I won't get into the details of who they were, who-

BILL MOYERS: Democrats?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Democrats, who said this was a terrible idea, we shouldn't do this. And then, when the push and shove came, they switched. Those are the people that troubled me the most, who knew, I think, in their gut, that this was a bad idea.

BILL MOYERS: Barack Obama told a mutual friend of ours that he intended to model himself in the Senate after you. This was 2004, when he came to the Senate, was running for the Senate. And I think he may even have told you something to that effect, although you're too modest to acknowledge it. And he actually went the way on Iraq that you did. He has used his opposition to that Iraq resolution to separate himself from Biden and Clinton. But now, Obama, who wanted to be Russ Feingold in the Senate, has put Biden a heartbeat away from the Oval Office, and Clinton in charge of his foreign policy. Since they were wrong then, what gives you the assurance they'll be right now on Iraq and Afghanistan and these other policies, which the hawks in Washington, Republicans and Democrats, are urging him to do?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: I'm not sure anybody's going to be right in the future. I can't guarantee that. But I'll tell you something. Whenever I made a decision, I listened to Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden, too. I wanted to hear what they had to say. I didn't always agree with them. And so I think that's good that he has people that might have a different perspective or a different way of looking at things, advising him. They're not going to make the policy. The most important thing is who is the president. The president is the one guy in the whole race. And I wanted to be, to vote for somebody — I said this repeatedly — who had the wisdom to understand this was a bad idea. Now, that person is going to be our president, the person who got it. The person who said, "I'm for wars when they're necessary, but not dumb wars." So I'm not worried that Barack Obama can't listen to Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden and disagree. And frankly, they both have indicated some concerns they have about the decision they made.

BILL MOYERS: Senator, as the Reagan people used to say when they were populating the United States government with Reaganites, "Personnel is policy." Isn't there some concern on your part that a hawkish foreign policy that was followed the last eight years, with the support of many Democrats, may be the subliminal agenda of these people who are coming to the foreign policy establishment?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Well, as a progressive, I have a little concern about that. I do believe that the people we're talking about here, and others that are in the administration, understand the terrible problem that has come from the foreign policy that's been pursued with regard to Iraq, and not really understanding the global threat that actually exists out there. So I do have a little concern about it. But I do think and hope that the president will bring in progressives in one way or another to make sure that it's balanced. I think he needs to do that. But by itself, the fact that these two distinguished Americans are in these positions, people that I think really see the errors of the last few years, I think they've learned from those errors, and I do not think they're going to push a hawkish policy that is different from the fundamentally progressive attitude that Barack Obama has shown in almost every statement he's made on foreign policy. I feel good about the direction he wants to take this country. And I also think that if these folks don't follow his lead, they're not going to be in there any more, regardless of who they are.

BILL MOYERS: Given the fact that you've been saying we should withdraw from Iraq sooner than even Obama is saying this, how do we do that, given the political and humanitarian concerns in Iraq right now, which could easily turn to kind of a bloodbath of

people who opposed whatever's going on there.

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: We have to stay engaged on those things. We have to stay engaged in terms of-

BILL MOYERS: What do you mean engaged?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Well, we have to get our troops out of there. But that doesn't mean we just abandon the area. This is a mistake we've made before. We find things going badly militarily in Somalia, we just leave, lock, stock and barrel. We have nothing there. We get the job done in Afghanistan, work with, you know, the Al Qaeda people and all this, with regard to the Russians, and we just pull up stakes and we abandon the area. That's not what you do. You engage the countries in the region, and all the countries that have a tremendous interest in the stability of Iraq and the funding and activities, to fix the judicial system, to make sure the borders are secure, to have a decent effort to rebuild the country and to make sure that it gets the benefit of some of the changes that are made. That's the kind of engagement that has to continue, not having 150,000 Americans posted there. That isn't going to change the situation. It's not going to help. That country's ready to stand on its own now. And it won't be pretty in every case. But we as Americans need to keep our commitment to the Iraqi people. But it does not mean a military occupation of Iraq has to continue.

BILL MOYERS: What about Afghanistan? No empire that's ever gone in there has come out with its reputation intact, whether Alexander the Great, the Persians, the Russians, the British, all of them.

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: It's amazing that people don't look at the lessons of history. These are the most ancient lessons. I mean, just the notion that invading Islamic countries and staying there for very long periods of occupation doesn't recognize the feeling of humiliation and anger that's created not only in the country that's invaded, but throughout the Islamic world. We're basically manufacturing our own enemies when we do that. Now, I thought it was necessary to go into Afghanistan. I thought it was unnecessary to go in Iraq. But the idea that you just stay there and stay there until things are exactly the way you think they ought to be, is an invitation to cause hatred not only of the government that's in power, for example, the Karzai government in Afghanistan, but also enormous resentment toward the United States. So I think we have to have a strategy that involves transitioning away from a military occupation into a multilateral effort to help Afghanistan be as stable as it can be. But it may never be a completely stable place. And we may have to simply think about how we contain that, rather than believing that we can do nation building in a place that has found it so difficult throughout time to have that kind of a government.

BILL MOYERS: You're probably best known to people around the country as the Feingold in McCain-Feingold, which everybody understands.

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: McCain says that people think my first name's McCain.

BILL MOYERS: I think a lot of people, Republicans, wrote in "McCain Feingold" on their ballots. But you're known as a of campaign finance reform. And here we've just come through the most expensive campaign, federal campaign, president and Congressional, ever. Obama, the "New York Times" says this morning, raised \$750 million more for his campaign than all the candidates in 2004 together. I mean, what happens now to the notion of — do we deep six the idea of campaign finance reform?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Absolutely not. Look, expensive is bad. But corrupt is worse. And the system that existed before John McCain and I passed our bill was one where members of Congress could call up union leaders, corporate leaders or individuals, and ask them for unlimited contributions, 100,000, 500,000, million dollar contributions. We got rid of that system. We turned that into a federal crime. You can't do that any more. What was the result? Well, it allowed a certain candidate to go to the internet. And to, instead of asking for unlimited contributions, to say, "Hey, I'm this type of candidate. Send in \$10. Send in \$20 through the internet." And it created a much more populist, much more democratic system. Now, I think there's still too much money in it. But we've gotten rid of one of the most corrupting elements of the system. And now, what we need to move on to is real public financing.

BILL MOYERS: Public funding?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Absolutely. The presidential system had a good public funding system for decades, until recently. And even though Senator Obama did not adhere to it, which I expressed my disappointment about at the time, he is a co-sponsor of my bill, along with Republican Senator Susan Collins, that would modernize the presidential funding system. And we're getting indications that we might get support.

BILL MOYERS: It must have broken your heart when he broke his pledge.

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Didn't break my heart, but I wasn't happy about it. Look, this is politics, and things happen. And you have to look to the next battle. But we do need to fix the system. We also need public funding of Congressional and Senate races.

BILL MOYERS: But if it's politics always to say that a man's word, a woman's word doesn't matter in a primary, and we can change our mind if we want to when it suits us to do so, even though we've given our word?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: I have always found that a difficult thing in politics, when somebody says that they're going to go a certain way and they don't. Everybody's entitled, I suppose, to change their mind. I think Barack Obama has shown himself to be a consistent, honest person in almost every instance. I have great faith in his integrity. And I believe he will demonstrate his integrity on this issue by helping us pass the bill that he co-sponsored that would fix this system. Even though it may be to his advantage not to fix it, I believe that he will help us fix it in time for the time when he presumably will run for reelection. That's my faith and belief about him.

BILL MOYERS: You opposed Bush's and Paulson's \$700 billion bailout. And now, as I read the papers, you are supporting the bailout of the Big Three in Detroit, the automobile industry. How do you explain the contradiction there?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: It's not a contradiction. Of course, I have to see exactly what's going to be in the bridge loans for the auto industry. Here's my view: This \$700 billion bailout had no real rules to it. First of all, it gave Paulson unlimited power as Secretary of the Treasury to do whatever he wanted. Secondly, it didn't do anything for the homeowners, or the bankruptcy courts, to allow a bankruptcy court, to allow some adjustment of those mortgages. Perhaps most importantly, it didn't do anything about the abuses that led to this in the first place: the derivatives and the leveraging, and all these things. It was essentially just a giant gift.

My thinking is if we can do \$700 billion for that, how can you not take 25 or 35 billion for companies that actually employ people on Main Street in the United States, including my hometown of Janesville, Wisconsin, and say to them, "We want to keep a domestic auto industry." I am a person who believes we still need to make things in America.

We still need to have jobs that are both directly related to auto manufacturing and all the suppliers, and all the connected things. Maybe this isn't the right formula. But forcing the auto industry to come up with a decent plan, which is what's going on, is far more serious than what was done with regard to 700 billion. The idea you can't have 25 to 35 billion dollars for something that has to do with the working opportunities of average Americans, to me, is frankly, a little offensive, and against the average American citizen.

BILL MOYERS: You mentioned your home town of Janesville, Wisconsin. Your grandfather was a grocer there, as I understand it.

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: That's right.

BILL MOYERS: And bought the first car that rolled off the assembly lines there?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: It's a bittersweet story, because we're maybe facing the closing of the plant. In 1920-

BILL MOYERS: Before Christmas, right? I mean, GM said they're going to close this-

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: I just got interviewed about it yesterday in "The Janesville Gazette". My grandfather, one room, wooden grocery store, with his little apron on, you can see all the prices from 1923 behind him. He's standing in front of the first truck. It says under, "I bought the first Chevy truck. Max Feingold." And so, yes, I am going to fight to preserve the auto industry in this country.

BILL MOYERS: But the government didn't bail out the grocery business. And the government didn't bail out the horse and buggy industry when its time had come and gone.

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: I understand. And I realize that there has to be a limit to this. You have to make a judgment about that. We have to get away from these bailouts. We can't do this indefinitely. But this is a particular thing that I think would cause such a tremendous shock into our economy, that we have got to try to preserve the ability to make autos in this country. I can't imagine a strong economy in this country if we're not making automobiles in this country. We are not going to make it if we let the rest of the world make the real things that people make with their hands.

If we're going to have everything based on services and funny money on Wall Street, as opposed to the ability of people to have good paying jobs back in the home towns, in places like Wisconsin and Illinois and Michigan — if we're going to have that kind of economy, we are going to be subject to the whims of the rest of the world. We will not have an economy that protects the American worker. And this follows on, of course, these trade agreements, all of which I voted against.

I voted against NAFTA. I voted against GATT. I voted against most favored nation status for China. Because all these decisions are basically calculated to move jobs overseas for the benefits of large companies. And in fact, it has been devastating to the working people in my home town and my home state.

BILL MOYERS: There is a profound sense in this country that something truly dysfunctional has gone wrong with our system. It isn't working. And they don't hear anybody really addressing the deeper symptoms of that. That it's not working for regular people any more. What's your take on what's wrong with the American political system right now?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: I think the main thing is that all the distinctions — when journalists did their work and politicians did their work, and people in companies did their work, there were separations. There were conflict of interest rules. Everything wasn't all a revolving door, in a social life between New York and Washington. What I notice on some of these television interviews, is everybody all knows each other. And they can't even relate to the reality of the place like Janesville, Wisconsin. And the rules that have to do with banking, and the distinction between investment houses and banks. All of this stuff — everybody decided in the 1980s and 1990s that these were silly old rules. Well, in fact, they were rules that were always meant to create checks and balances, much like our own system of government. The economy itself needs checks and balances. And when you start breaking down the distinction, and people can move quickly between these things, making all kind of money, go into government, go back, it creates a series of loyalties that has nothing to do with your home state, but has to do, frankly, with the dollar and making money. And I think our country has been co-opted by those who have pushed for these kinds of changes in so many parts of our system.

BILL MOYERS: Do you really think Obama understands this?

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: I don't know. I think he does. But I think that's something I want to work with him on. Because there is a tendency in this country of people to think in terms of the elites that run the country, and not enough about the people who actually, every day, get up and have very hard jobs, and produce the food and produce the products. And I'm worried that especially, frankly, on the East Coast, even though I enjoy being here, that there's a lack of sensitivity to what's really going on on Main Street, America.

BILL MOYERS: Senator Russ Feingold, thank you for joining me on the Journal.

SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD: Bill, it's a pleasure.**BILL MOYERS:** We'll be back in a bit with a return visit from a young man seeking global harmony through music. But first this is when we remind you that we need your pledge to keep this station on the air with your favorite programs. Please call this station now.

BILL MOYERS: What keeps our nation vital is a continuing discussion of diverse and often conflicting ideas. But what holds us together is the belief that everyone should share in what we call the "American Dream."

The ways in which that dream has been imagined are as complex and often contradictory

as America itself. Some see it as the acquisition of fortune and material success. Others see it as social or personal change or ways in which we can work to perfect the union or stand as an ideal for the rest of the world. Still others see the dream as a myth, perhaps even a nightmare.

We've asked the men and women who have appeared on the Journal to share with us their vision for the future of the American dream. Here are some examples.

KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON: My concept of the American dream is well capsulized by Congressman Barney Frank who said that the notion that a rising tide lifts all boats presupposes that you have a boat. In my American dream everybody has a boat.

ORLANDO PATTERSON: My vision of the American dream is an America which is able to make available its enormous resources, the wealthiest, most powerful country in the world, to all its citizens. To remove poverty from this society, which it is quite capable of doing.

EMMA COLEMAN JORDAN: I see a time when every American with talent will be given an opportunity to contribute. And I look for a nation that embraces all of its children and gives every child with talent the opportunity to discover the thing that will be able to light the light of creativity within them. That, we will be able to capture as a nation and go forward and make this century another century of America.

ROBERTO LOVATO: We need to fundamentally alter the American dream. Because the American dream as we knew always had a foundation of imperialism, of domination of other countries of domestic racism. The degree to which we can truly overcome the downside of the dream, the invisible side of the dream is the degree to which we and the rest of the world not just survive but thrive.

GEORGE SOROS: If you mean an ever-increasing living standard, then I think that that dream needs to be revised, because we have been living beyond our means. And we now have a reckoning.

STEVE FRASER: My vision is for all of us to set to work to build the kind of cooperative commonwealth that our late 19th century ancestors, who opposed the inequities of their own day, dreamed about building. In which we all care more about the commonwealth than we do about the acquisition and amassing of great sums of wealth.

REV SAMUEL RODRIGUEZ: There must be a prophetic element. Prophetic means speaking truth, truth telling, truth to power, justice, righteousness. Addressing the issues of those that are around us in need. Caring for every single person around us. The collectiveness of the village, the culture, of looking beyond ourselves.

MARTHA NUSSBAUM: My vision would be of an America in which we each recognize that we each have a conscience, that each of us is searching for the meaning of life — it's a very hard thing to do — and that we agree to respect one another as equals as we carry out that search.

MICHAEL ZWEIG: The idea that there is a bright future ahead of us in the country is only to the degree that we can organize and fight for. I think the American dream is going to have to be based and fulfilled as it always has been in the past, collective action for real democracy and for economic justice. That's what we're going to have to do and it's going to be one hell of a fight.

BILL MOYERS: You'll find many more ideas about the "American Dream," and you can tell us your own, on our blog at PBS.org.

BILL MOYERS: In just the last month unfortunately, we've lost two women whose gutsy, soulful voices embodied the conscience of their homelands.

First to leave us was Miriam Makeba, known as "Mama Africa." She spent more than 30 years banned from South Africa for the outspoken, joyous songs that rang out from the ramparts of the anti-apartheid movement. But exile could not silence the township radios and tape decks that continued to fill the air with Makeba, in defiance of the law. "Her music inspired a powerful sense of hope in all of us," Nelson Mandela said. "She was a mother to our struggle and to the young nation of ours."

We also said goodbye to Odetta Holmes — known simply as Odetta. She was born in

Birmingham, Alabama, during the depths of the Great Depression. And she made the blues and the work songs and spirituals of the Deep South a mainstay of American folk music, the soundtrack to the struggle for civil rights.

Despite failing health, she performed to the very end, and hoped to serenade Barack Obama at his inauguration.

Though we mourn their loss, the voices of Odetta and Makeba will live on. Music continues to cross all boundaries and to touch what's common to the human heart.

My next guest continues to believe that through song we can change the world. We first introduced him to you a few weeks ago, and we were overwhelmed by your response. One woman whose family has been pitched overboard by the sinking economy wrote us to say: "I haven't felt much joy lately," but after watching the program, "for the first time in a very long time, my heart felt something other than pain and fear."

We lost count of the number of people who requested an encore so we're delighted now to oblige.

Mark Johnson is the co-director of a remarkable documentary about the simple but transformative power of music: "Playing for Change: Peace Through Music."

MARK JOHNSON: Well I think music is the one thing that opens the door to bringing people to a place where they are all connected. It is easy to connect to the world through music, you know. Religion, politics, a lot of those things they seem to divide everybody.

BILL MOYERS: The film brings together musicians from around the world — from blues singers in a waterlogged New Orleans, to chamber groups in Moscow and a South African choir — they celebrate songs familiar and new, to touch something common in each of us. Here is one you might recognize:

VARIOUS SINGERS/MUSICIANS:

Oh yeah, my darling, stand by me
 No matter how much money you got, all the friends you got,
 You're gonna need somebody, to stand by you
 When the night has come. And the land is dark
 And that moon is the only light we'll see
 No I won't be afraid, no I won't shed one tear
 Just as long as you people come and stand by me
 And darlin', darlin', stand by me, oh stand by me
 Oh stand, stand, stand by me
 Come on stand by me
 When the sky that we look upon
 When she tumble and fall
 Oh the mountains they should crumble into the sea
 I won't cry, I won't cry, no I won't shed a tear
 Just as long as you stand, stand by me
 So darlin', darlin', stand by me, oh stand by me
 Please stand, stand by me, stand by me
 Oh baby baby,
 Darlin', darlin', stand by me, oh stand by me
 So darlin', darlin', stand, oh stand, oh stand, stand by me,
 Come on stand by me
 Stand, oh won't you stand, oh stand, stand by me, stand by me,
 When the night has come, and the land is dark,
 And the moon is the only light we'll see,
 I won't be afraid, I won't be afraid,
 Not as long, not as long as you stand by me

BILL MOYERS: The filmmaker is Mark Johnson. He's a Grammy award-winning producer and engineer and a film director who has worked with some of the most renowned musicians and producers in the field. Mark, welcome to the Journal.

MARK JOHNSON: Thank you so much. It's an honor to be here.

BILL MOYERS: What in the world prompted you to do this?

MARK JOHNSON: The idea came about ten years ago, here in New York City. I was in a

subway station on my way to work. You know, every day in the subway, people are just running around like crazy to get wherever they have to go.

BILL MOYERS: Oh, tell me about it.

MARK JOHNSON: But this particular day, I was in the subway and I heard these two monks playing music. And they were painted head to toe, all in white, wearing robes. And one of them was playing a nylon guitar and the other one was singing in a language that I didn't understand and I imagine most people didn't understand.

BILL MOYERS: Everybody was just standing around. I've done that. Yeah.

MARK JOHNSON: You know, there were about 200 people just stopped. Didn't get on the train and started watching this music. And I looked around and I saw people with tears in their eyes. And I saw jaw dropping. And I just saw this collection. And it occurred to me that here is a group of people that would normally run by each other. And here they are, collectively coming together. And it's the music that brought them together.

So it really inspired me. And it occurred to me that when there's no separation between music and people, when music is just happening and people can walk by and it can affect them, that this is an opportunity for us to really find a way to bring people together.

BILL MOYERS: A hundred musicians took part, right?

MARK JOHNSON: Yes. Yes.

BILL MOYERS: Ten years, it took you.

MARK JOHNSON: Ten years it took me.

BILL MOYERS: Did you ever think of just giving up?

MARK JOHNSON: You know, I remember, as I started this project, it started to build more and more importance. And I remember at some point or another, realizing that we were going to represent the eyes on the faces of the kids on this planet.

And that that was going to be our motivation. So there was no chance we were going to stop. Because the truth is, they need us to inspire each other and to create a better world. I mean, there's so many problems now with the economy and with war and a lot of depression. But at the end of the day, there's also so much hope because I can assure you, all over the world, people are beautiful and they want to unite together.

BILL MOYERS: But there are also some very ugly situations in the world. And you went into the heart of some of them. What took you to those places to try to sprinkle this hope you talk about?

MARK JOHNSON: Well, I think that in order to really unite people, you know, we have to show that in our darkest situations and in the places with the most struggles in the world, that we can find a way of uplifting each other out of it. I remember hearing somebody that said, you know, "The last person who knew why we were fighting died a long time ago."

We all know the world is changing. And we get to decide if it's changing for the better or if it's changing for the worse. And so with music, it opens up these doors that ordinarily wouldn't be opened.

BILL MOYERS: What have you taken from this yourself?

MARK JOHNSON: Well, I think that maybe the biggest lesson that I've learned from "Playing for Change" is that all over the world, we can be different and still be together. And I think that that was the most profound thing. I mean, here we have in just in the song, "Stand by Me", we have different religions, different political points of view. We have rich people, poor people, different economics, different cultures. And when it came time to singing together, they all united without any trouble.

BILL MOYERS: Why did you choose "Stand by Me"?

MARK JOHNSON: I chose "Stand by Me" — or it chose me as it may have been, because I was walking in the streets in Santa Monica, California where I live. And I heard the singer, Roger Ridley, playing the song on the street. And I was maybe a block away, and I still heard him. And I remember running back over to catch the performance.

ROGER RIDLEY: No matter who you are. No matter where you go in life. You're going to need somebody to stand by you.

MARK JOHNSON: And when the song ended, you know, I was so moved by him, his voice sort of representing everything to me that music is, with soul and perseverance and talent all wrapped into one voice. So I approached Roger and I said, "Hey, you know, if I come back with some recording equipment and some cameras, I would love to take this song around the world and add other musicians to it."

BILL MOYERS: What do you hope comes from this?

MARK JOHNSON: Well, I mean, with "Playing for Change", my ultimate thing would be that people understand that in a world with all this division, it's important for us to focus on our connections.

BILL MOYERS: You are starting some schools from this, called Playing for Change, right?

MARK JOHNSON: Many years back, my brother, Greg Johnson, who's been a huge source of inspiration for me, he had given me a Christmas gift which was a photo book called "A Day in the Life of Africa." And in that book was one photograph that he had framed for me.

And the caption was something along the lines of, "One of the more dangerous townships in South Africa finds solace through backyard jazz." And I had this picture on my wall for years. And it served as a symbol for me and for the crew that I was traveling me.

And so, I did some research. And I found out that the band leader was the upright bass player named Pokei Klaas. And he is the upright bass player you see in the "Stand by Me" video with the children in front of him.

BILL MOYERS: Right.

MARK JOHNSON: And so when we traveled down to Cape Town, South Africa, and we were going to eat at a restaurant, and we heard this music down the street. So the crew and I, we walked down there to hear their music. And when the band was over, we asked Joe Peterson, who was the singer in the band, "Have you ever heard of Pokei?"

And he said, "Oh, yeah, Pokei. He's my best friend. I'll take you to see Pokei." So the next day, we all got in a van and we drove out to Guguletu township. Which is passing thousands of shacks and an incredibly humbling experience. And we went out there and we show up and we meet Pokei. I remember there were a number of little homes in the backyard. And a lot of sorrow because there was a lot of HIV in the area. A lot of poverty.

So we decided, okay, we'll put on a little concert in the backyard because the people here need something to celebrate.

And I have never in my life seen something more beautiful when the people came out of their little homes and just started dancing and celebrating this music. And it was almost a form of an exorcism where all the sorrow was gone and they were now filled with all this joy and connection to us and to each other. And so we asked Pokei, as we had all the musicians along the way, you know, "Well, what can we do to give back to your community?"

I mean, they let us in their homes. They fed us. They give us their music. They told us their stories in the world. And Pokei said, you know, "The kids here, they really need a music school. They need some hope. They need something that can give them some inspiration." And so just this — a couple months ago we went down there with some shovels and we built the first Playing for Change music school in that exact spot. In the backyard.

And now it's a chance for kids to get together, to have something positive to look forward to. And what we're doing with this foundation is we're going build hundreds of schools around the world. And installing them all with recording equipment and cameras. So that

people can log on to the internet and they can watch recitals and concerts in the schools we're building, to kind of break down that whole distance barrier.

BILL MOYERS: Did anybody ever say to you, "Mark, don't be naïve"?

MARK JOHNSON: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. But to me, naïve is thinking that there's any other choice. You know? The only choice we have is to come together. And to inspire each other because that's the way that we'll create a better world for us now and for the kids tomorrow.

And the other truth is, I mean, you know, a lot of people are living in a world of fear. But we don't even know how long we're going to be in this world. So there's really no reason to fear anything. The most important thing is while we're here, let's make a difference together. That's what Playing for Change is trying to represent.

BILL MOYERS: What's next for you?

MARK JOHNSON: Well, to continue to build schools around the world. The beautiful thing about Playing for Change is that it never ends. And so that we're going to continue to connect more and more musicians around the world. Build the family together. And build more schools.

BILL MOYERS: Mark Johnson, we'll close with your favorite song on the DVD, "One Love."

MARK JOHNSON: Thank you, Bill.

VARIOUS SINGERS: One love, one heart
Let's get together and feel all right
Hear the children crying (One love)
Hear the children crying (One heart)
Sayin', "Give thanks and praise to the Lord and I will feel all right."
Sayin', "Let's get together and feel all right."
Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa

Let them all pass all their dirty remarks (One love)
There is one question I'd really love to ask (One heart)
Is there a place for the hopeless sinner
Who has hurt all mankind just to save his own?
Believe me

One love, one heart
Let's get together and feel all right
As it was in the beginning (One love)
So shall it be in the end (One heart)
Alright, "Give thanks and praise to the Lord and I will feel all right."
"Let's get together and feel all right."
One more thing

Let's get together to fight this Holy Armageddon (One love)
So when the Man comes there will be no, no doom (One song)
Have pity on those whose chances grow thinner
There ain't no hiding place from the Father of Creation

Sayin', "One love, one heart
Let's get together and feel all right."
I'm pleading to mankind (One love)
Oh, Lord (One heart) Whoa.

"Give thanks and praise to the Lord and I will feel all right."
Let's get together and feel all right.
Let's get together and feel all right.
I want to feel around
One love, one heart
Let's get together and feel all right.
Come on
Let's get together and feel all right.
As it was in the beginning (One love)
So shall it be in the end (One heart)

BILL MOYERS: That's it for the Journal. I'm Bill Moyers. I'll see you next week.

© 2008 Public Affairs Television. All Rights Reserved.