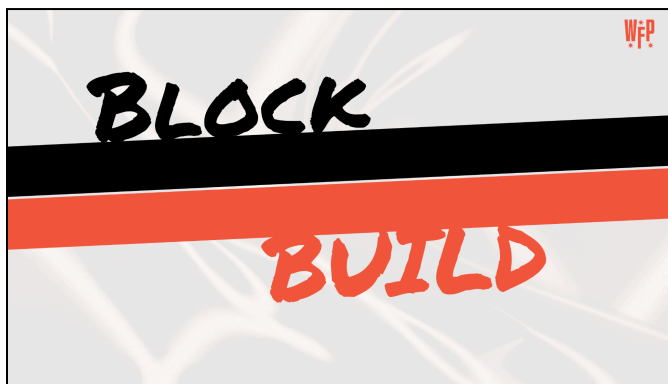


# WORKING FAMILIES PARTY **MASS CALLS**

## **2024 Mass Call #15 - Political Education Script**



- For today's Block and Build political education session we are going to talk about power again. This time we are going to talk about the power of narratives and the ability to shape people's worldview. It is a form of power that can be wielded over us. It is also a form of power that we can wield ourselves.
- Before we get into that, let's review some of the ground we have covered in past political education sessions as a foundation for the conversation we want to have today.



- Once again, we start with this slide because it is so fundamental to our shared understanding about WHY we need to build power on all levels.
- We are in a political crisis: the two major parties aren't serving us. The Republicans have been taken over by an authoritarian faction, and both major parties are heavily controlled by corporate and ultra wealthy forces. Working class people are stuck with a bad set of choices.
- When we all have a shared understanding of this, it makes it easier for us to coordinate and break down silos. Even if we have different tactics and we are doing the work with different groups of people, we are able to see how the pieces fit together.

**WHAT LANDSLIDE?**

- One of the smallest margins of victory since the 19th century
- There are already fracture lines forming in Trump's preparations to govern

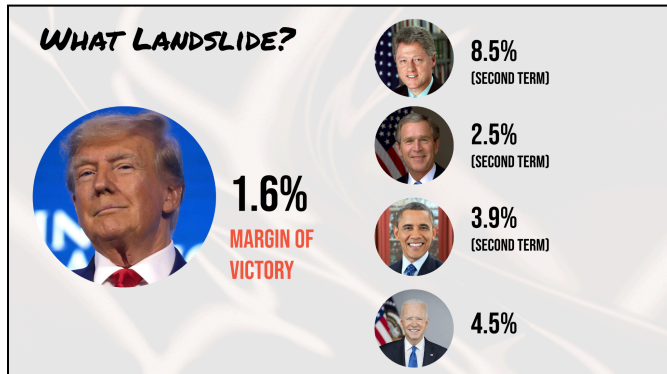
NEWS ANALYSIS  
**The 'Landslide' That Wasn't: Trump and Allies Pump Up His Narrow Victory**  
The latest vote count shows that Donald J. Trump won the popular vote by one of the smallest margins since the 19th century. But Mr. Trump claims a "powerful mandate."

OPENT TO THE PUBLIC

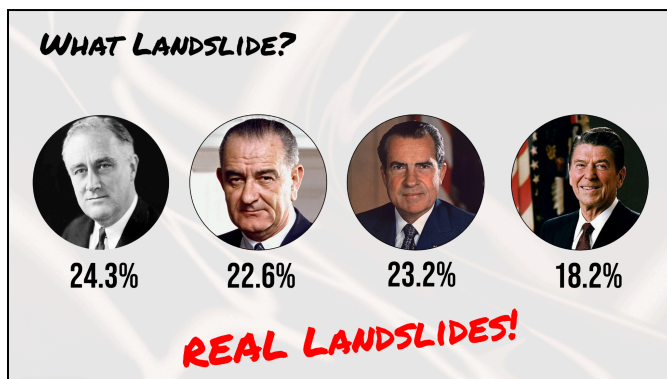
- In a previous call we talked about the fact that Donald Trump and his loyalists have been doing everything they can to spin a tale of winning the election in a landslide.
- There is a transparent reason for this. It relates to our discussion of power today: the more Trump can get people to BELIEVE something – even if it is not true – the more power it gives him.
- He is trying to create a mental picture of his power on the march. The flurry of executive orders and other actions he has taken over the last couple days are all

mapped on to this IMAGINARY mandate he is trying to claim.

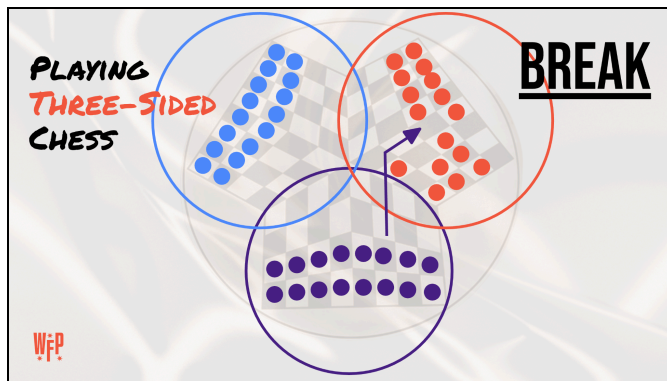
- It does not make any of his actions any less real, or any less harmful. But we need to remember that these are actions built on a foundation of sand.



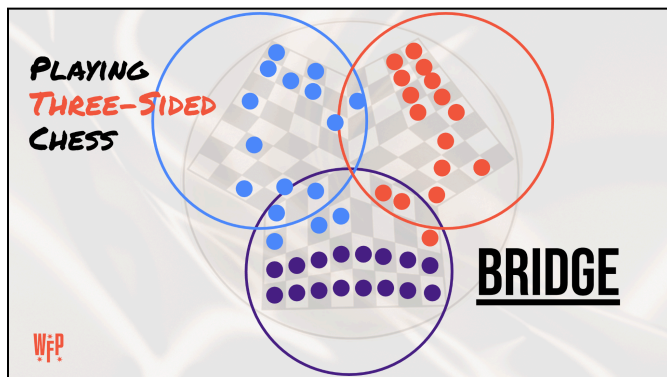
- Just how weak is Trump's so-called mandate? Historically weak.
- Trump won with a historically LOW margin of victory in the popular vote.
- And in Congress Republicans have a historically SLIM majority.
- In this context, we are already seeing fracture lines developing in Trump's coalition.



- And if he wants to talk about a "landslide," let's remember what a REAL landslide looks like.
- These are the past four Presidents that were elected with what could be considered a landslide.



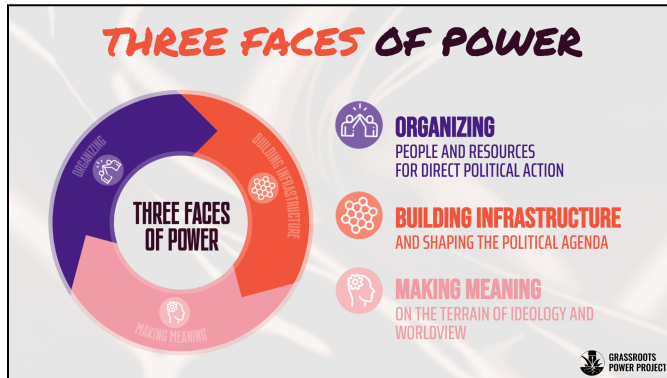
- Trump is starting his second presidency in a weak position, and he will try to bully himself into a stronger one.
- And just because he fell far short of winning a landslide, the fact of the matter is he did succeed by winning over – at least temporarily – increasing numbers of working class voters across race and region.
- So we can not be complacent. We need a strategy to fight back.
- As we have talked about past calls, the current political conditions mean that we are now playing a game of three-sided chess against both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. On that three sided chess board we need to make moves to wedge and break off support of working class voters from Trump’s coalition. The Democrats will probably join us in that work.
- At the same time, we won’t be shy about trying to wedge and isolate the corporate forces that reside inside the Democratic Party.



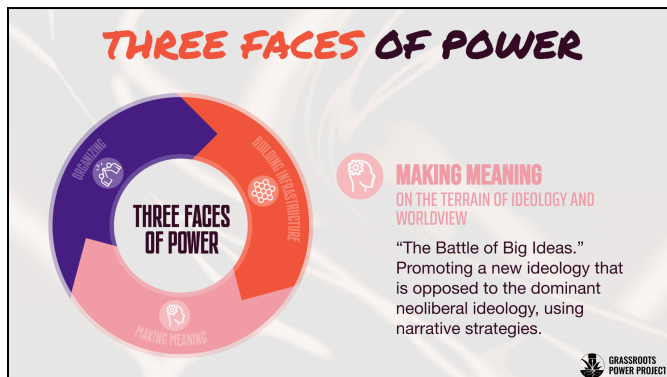
- And as we focus efforts to “break” we also need to build bridges to the working class people who are looking for a political home. Because there are many working class people of all races who are done with the major parties, and we need to do the work to organize them towards our political project.



- This will mean speaking to the issues that working class people care about, and doing it in a way that speaks to their everyday lives.



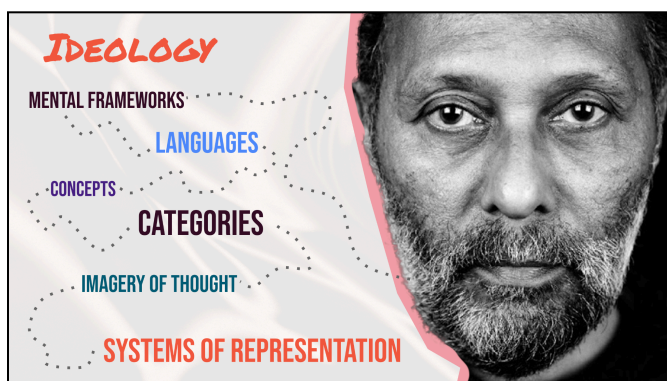
- In past calls, we have talked about an idea from our friends at Grassroots Power Project that there are “three faces of power.”
- The first face is about people power and the foundational work of organizing people to take action together. The second face is the power of shared political infrastructure – or organizations with different tactics and constituencies working together in an integrated and coordinated division of labor around a shared vision.



- The way we speak to the working class voters out there has a lot to do with the “third face of power.”
- That is what we are going to talk about today. You can see on this slide that this form of power is about fighting the “battle of big ideas.” It is about ideology and narrative strategies.
- Let’s dig into those ideas so we are clear what they mean.



- We keep bringing this guy into our conversation. This is Stuart Hall. He was a Jamaican-born political theorist who immigrated to the UK where he lived and worked.
- Over the course of his lifetime he wrote a lot about how people form their political identities. He thought about the things that contribute to a working class person developing a sense of themselves, and how that identity contributes to – among other things – the way they might vote.
- Stuart Hall talked about the role that politics plays in creating identities and – as he put it – “constructing majorities.”
- For Hall, the idea of “politics” is something bigger than elections. It is a bunch of things that happen before and after elections that contribute to people developing a sense of who they are, and which political tribe they may belong to. We’ll talk about that in a second.



- Stuart Hall thought a lot about the role that ideology plays in this process of people forming their identity.
- But let’s not get it twisted...ideology is not some stale thing that lives in a book. Ideology is a living, breathing thing. It is the water we are swimming in. It is the

stuff we see on TV and on Tik Tok and overhear in the line at the grocery store.

- All these things contribute to the mental frameworks that we hold in our heads. They give us concepts and language to make sense of the events going on in our lives. They help us create images and ways of representing the world around us.



- In a previous call we talked about how in this past election there were all kinds of mental frameworks and symbols that created a language for voters to make sense of the candidates and decide how to vote.
- This stuff is an example of ideology at work, in real time. And this kind of ideology-in-real-life moved voters and it changed votes in this election.



- So here's the challenge we have. This "battle of big ideas" is raging all around us.
- And even as we recognize that ideology contributes to "constructing majorities" in our politics, we also recognize that we don't control all – or even the majority – of the tools we would need to compete in this struggle over ideology going around us. For example, how many of you on this call own your own television network?
- So we need both a short term and a long term approach to this problem. We need to do what is needed to win with the electorate we have right now, while

also building the electorate we need.

- And to do this we need to understand how power is built through this battle of big ideas. So let's look at that...



- The first thing we need to understand is that all of us occupy a place in the political economy, and we all make some sense of that.
- What do I mean by that? Let me give you some examples:
  - Maybe you are someone who had the privilege to go to college. Maybe you were even the first person in your family to go to college. But in going to college you accrued a large amount of debt. And because of the changing economy, the opportunity you have to buy a house or get ahead in some way is actually LESS than your parents. What meaning do you make of that?
  - Maybe you are someone who grew up in the “bad part of town,” but then the city you lived in got together with a bunch of developers and they decided that your part of town was going to become the next “up and coming” district of the city. A few years go by and all of a sudden the local businesses and business owners you once knew are disappearing or gone. The taxes on the house your grandma bought have gone way up. Your neighbors are moving away, and you may have to move as well. What meaning do you make of that?
  - Maybe you are someone who grew up in a rural community that for generations supported itself on agriculture and small manufacturing jobs. Except, thanks to some trade policy decided by people in Washington DC, crop prices have

collapsed for the farmers and the factories all closed and moved production to other countries. What meaning do you make of that?

- The fact is, there are different conclusions you could draw from any of these situations. There are different people you could blame. There are different root causes you might pinpoint in your own mind for what is happening in your community.

### ADVANCE ANIMATION

- Often, what politicians are doing is telling a story to people about what happened and who is to blame. That is what Ronald Reagan did when he famously asked voters, “are you better off than you were four years ago?”
- This line is now used by politicians all the time – including, most recently, by Donald Trump in this election.
- When Reagan said it in 1980 the answer that many voters gave was “no,” and therefore they voted for him. And from that starting point, a lot of people opened up to Reagan’s sales pitch for a different kind of politics and “trickle down” economics.



- Which brings us to our next point. Politics is not just about governing, it is about HOW the work you do is PERCEIVED when you are running the government.

### ADVANCE ANIMATION

- This guy, Lee Atwater, was a notorious Republican political strategist. He is widely associated with the Republican Party’s “Southern Strategy” in which they mobilized racist dog whistles to win over white voters that had traditionally voted

for Democrats.

- The whole idea of the Southern Strategy was that you did not actually have to do anything for working class white folks to make their lives better. In fact, you could do things to make their lives worse – if you could sell the perception that they were at least doing better than those “others” over there.
- Put another way...if you can get people to **perceive** they are receiving a wage for just being white, you don't actually have to raise their wages!



- And finally, the laws that we do pass create their own politics. What do I mean by that?

### ADVANCE ANIMATION

- This is Margaret Thatcher. She was the Prime Minister of England at the same time Reagan was the President in the United States. They were cut from the same political cloth.
- When she gained power, she and her people had a very specific plan designed to break apart working class solidarity and to destroy the voter coalition that had supported the Labour Party in the UK for a very long time.
- What was that plan? They decided to privatize public housing. It worked. The reason it worked is because the law created a situation where some working class people were able to buy their homes and become property owners. Others were not able to do that.
- The privatization of public housing broke apart a shared relationship between working people and created new divisions. This was not an accident. It was part of their plan. It was their ideology made real.



- There are any number of examples where the right in this country has tried to do the same thing. And there are also examples where our side has succeeded in passing laws that **increase** solidarity between working class people across race.
- All of this represents a battle of big ideas playing out before our very eyes.



- So this is all a lot to take in, but I want to try to land this in a place that makes sense to our work in the here and now.
- Many of the people here on this call are involved in some way in helping build the Working Families Party. It might just mean that you voted for WFP-endorsed candidates. Or maybe you are helping build a local WFP chapter. Or maybe you are planning to run for office as a WFP-backed candidate.
- However you are involved in building the WFP, you are helping to advance something we refer to as the **"party idea."**
- You see, political parties are like bat signals that send up a message to voters. In the mind of your average voter, political parties have a special, **cultural** meaning. Voters see them as "standing for something" and they intuitively understand that they should look to parties for cues on how to vote.
- Put another way, parties represent ideology in real life. They are the organizations that help voters make sense of the "battle of big ideas" raging all around them.
- So when it comes to building power to compete for the hearts and minds of working class people, we may not have our own television network. But we do have the opportunity to build the WFP as a party that can signal directly to voters a political North Star that they can follow.



- This is long term work! We don't achieve this in one election cycle. But in the WFP's 26 years of existence, this North Star shines a bit brighter every year, and more and more people start to see it.

Watch the recordings and download the materials at:  
[www.workingfamilies.org/masscalls](http://www.workingfamilies.org/masscalls)

**MASS CALL #1: WHAT'S THE SCORE IN AMERICA**

In this call we talk about the threat posed by the MAGA movement, and the need for a united front strategy to defeat it. We make clear that in the context of the ongoing political crisis in America, elections are a doorway, not a destination.

[Download the Curriculum](#)



(Sample slides from the curriculum)

- If you like these political education sessions we have been doing on these calls we are posting the recordings on the WFP website at [www.workingfamilies.org/masscalls](http://www.workingfamilies.org/masscalls). We'll drop the link to that in the chat.

**TECH CUE: Drop link to website in the chat.**

**Check out the recordings and materials from our past calls:**

<https://workingfamilies.org/masscalls/>

- And we've also put downloadable versions of all the slides and speakers notes for these political education sessions right there on the website. You can find the materials at [www.workingfamilies.org/masscalls](http://www.workingfamilies.org/masscalls). We will drop that link for you in the chat one more time.

