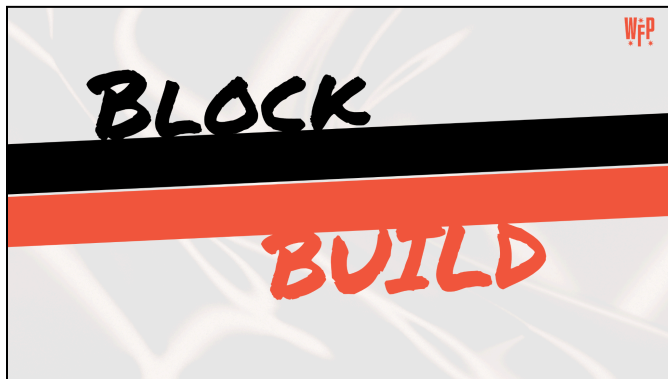


WORKING FAMILIES PARTY **MASS CALLS**

2025 Mass Call #16 - Political Education Script



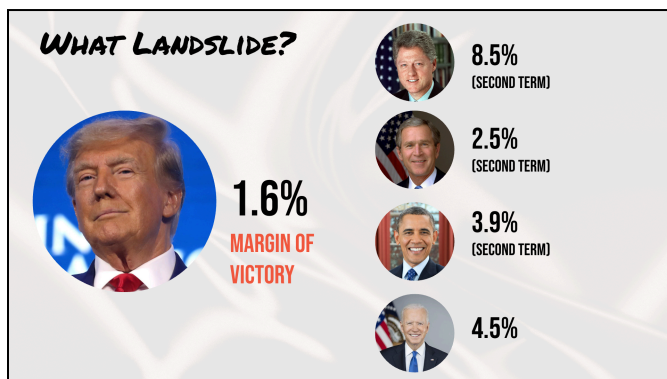
- For today's Block and Build session, we are going to try to make some sense of the whirlwind.
- It has been a disorienting month as Trump and Musk and all the other weirdos have been waging war against our senses. Today we want to put this moment in some historical context. It can help us understand where it's coming from and why they are doing what they are doing.
- To be clear...what we are NOT going to be doing here is naval gazing or saying "it has always been bad, so why bother?" And we're NOT going to just treat this look at our past as some academic exercise.
- Our goal is to understand this stuff so that we are ready to fight. If at any point throughout this session you are starting to feel the feelings of overwhelm or anger or grief...that is okay...feel what you feel. Just remember though, we are in

this together, and understanding the events of the past can give us a clearer picture of the present – and ultimately what we need to do right now to get back on our feet.

- Before we get to that though, let's take a moment like we always do to review some of the ground we have covered in past Block and Build sessions.



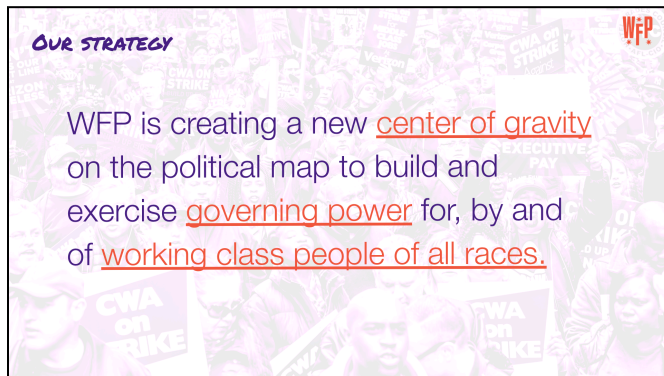
- We keep coming back to this slide because it is so important.
- We are in a political crisis: the two major parties aren't serving us. The Republicans have been taken over by an authoritarian faction, and both major parties are heavily controlled by corporate and ultra wealthy forces. Working class people are stuck with a bad set of choices.



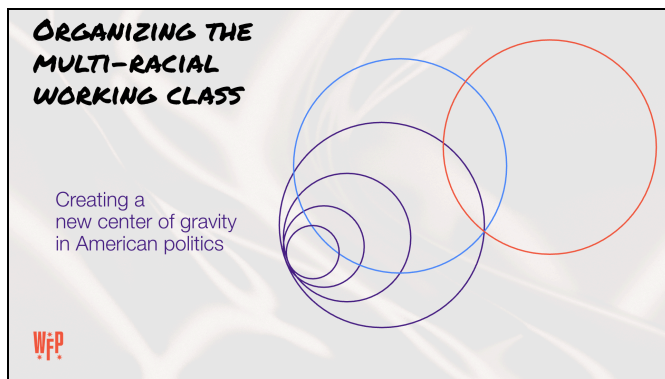
- We also debunked the idea that Trump won a “landslide.” In fact, his margin of victory was historically small. This hasn't stopped him from trying to gaslight us into believing otherwise.



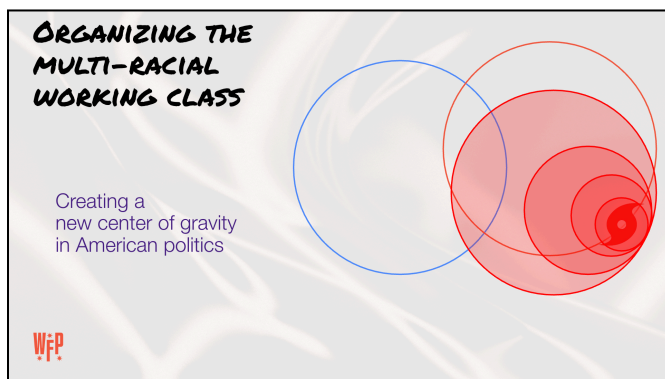
- We have talked about being in a united front moment. That means, there are a bunch of different groups of people who don't like what is happening, and we are going to need to form some unlikely coalitions to beat Trump and MAGA. Because right now none of us are strong enough to do it on our own.



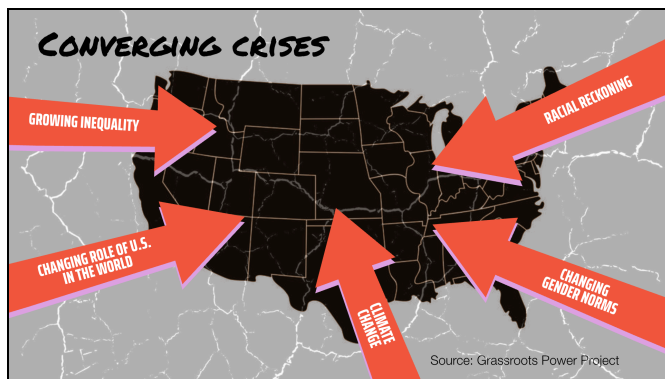
- Throughout it all, WFP has a long-term strategy. We are organizing to create a new center of gravity on the political map to build and exercise governing power for, by, and of working class people of all races.
- This strategy is a constant. So even when we are building unlikely alliances to defeat MAGA, we still have this as our longer-term vision – as our North Star.



- And if you like to see things represented visually, here is a simple picture of what that strategy looks like.
- We are starting out maybe small, but as we organize more and more people, recruit more and more working class champions to run for office at the local level, and win more and more elections, our center of gravity starts to grow. It starts to bring in people from other parts of the normally only blue and red political map of the United States.



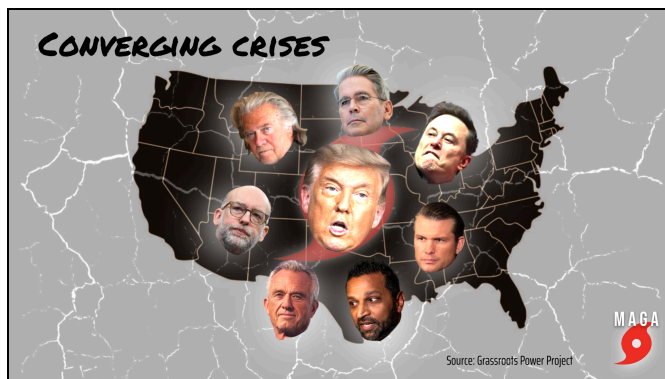
- But here's the thing...the fact is that we are not the only ones trying to build a new center of gravity on the political map.
- This is what the MAGA movement is also doing. They disrupted the Republican Party of old, and as the last election showed us, they are increasingly having success in terms of attracting new kinds of voters into their orbit – including more and more working class people of different races.



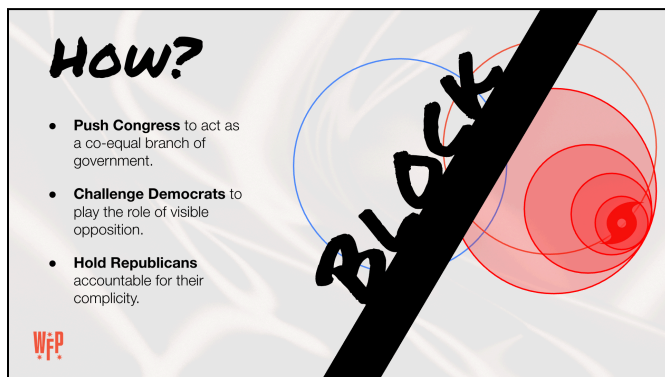
- On a past call we stepped back to look at why the political weather is so stormy right now. In many, many countries there are a series of large scale crises bearing down. Each of these storm fronts is creating new political currents and turbulence.
- Just this past weekend there were elections in Germany and the party that is the direct inheritor of the Nazi Party tradition just achieved for the first time the position as the second biggest party in the German parliament. Sadly, we are dealing with a global phenomenon.



- Donald Trump stepped onto this crisis map at just the right time. Whereas his schtick may have fallen flat at a different time, he has now proven that there is real power and durability behind what he is doing – even if he tries to keep us distracted with his clown act.
- The whirlwind he has created is capturing the winds of crisis. It's creating its own weather.



- And now we are seeing what it looks like in the form of the government he has built and the movement around it. We are talking about the weird cocktail of Wall Street populists and Christian nationalists. Libertarian tech bros, propagandists, and conspiracy theorists. White supremacist members of the manosphere and sycophants.
- They are all assembled in some perverse episode of *The Apprentice*...competing with one another for influence, making and breaking alliances, and generally playing fast and loose with our lives.



- So obviously, in the short term, this is what we need to block.
- That means pushing Congress to step up and do what it was designed to do – act as a co-equal branch of government, not a bunch of enablers of a wannabe king.
- We need to challenge the Democrats to play the role of visible opposition in Congress. The time for nuancing positions is over. Democrats need to grind the gears of government to a halt at every opportunity they get.
- And we need to make life VERY uncomfortable for Republicans in Congress. The town halls from last week were part of that strategy – we will hear more about that a bit later on in this call.



- Okay, everybody with me so far? Show me in the chat if you are one in the number to make life very uncomfortable for republicans in congress and challenge democrats who need to have some backbone in their actions to protect and defend our communities.
- Okay...okay...so I get it. People are on board with the short term plan. But there is still this question of “how the hell did we actually get here?”
- Some of you on this call may be feeling shock and a sense that we are in totally uncharted territory. Others on this call may have a sense that this is just another day in the life of the country you know too well.
- However you are showing up to this conversation, we can at least agree that much of the mainstream commentary about what is happening is framing this as some sort of profound disruption to the way things “should work.” After all these years, there is **still** this underlying idea that with enough time things will just “go back to normal.”
- And while it is true that much of the program of Trump and Musk is built around the idea of “repealing the 20th century,” a lot of this commentary is guilty of painting the 20th century as some sort of irresistible march of progress. That idea obscures the fact that every step of the way was a STRUGGLE, and none of the outcomes of the 20th century were assured.
- So let’s take a new look at some pieces of the 20th century to understand the present. And spoiler alert: none of what is going on with the Trump/Musk administration is new! All of the ideas – from the push and pull of imperialism and isolationism, to the contradiction of ignoring the courts and weaponizing them at the same time – all of this stuff (and more!) was also going on in the 20th Century.

A BIG STICK

"I took the [Panama] Canal Zone,
and let Congress debate."

- Teddy Roosevelt



- Let's start with Teddy Roosevelt. And because the Panama Canal is back in the news thanks to Trump's pledges to seize it, it is a good place to begin our look at the last century.
- There were previous efforts to build a connection between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, but the US government got involved in 1902.
- The land that the canal is on used to belong to Columbia. When the Columbian government rejected Roosevelt's efforts to access the land, he changed tactics. In a way that will be familiar to anyone who follows the role the United States has played in Latin America, he staged a rebellion for independence in Panama to break away from Columbia. And he sent in US troops to back it up.
- This was seen at the time – even in the US – as a naked power grab. But Roosevelt didn't really care. For him, this brand of American imperialism was his idea of "walking quietly but carrying a big stick," as he liked to call it.

AMERICA FIRST

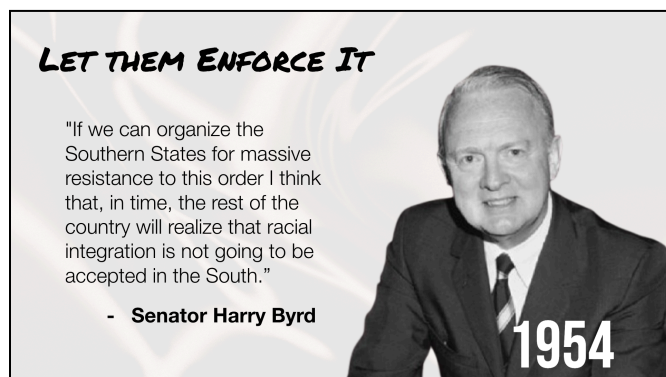
"It is time to turn from our quarrels
and to build our White ramparts
again. This alliance with foreign
races means nothing but death to
us. It is our turn to guard our
heritage from Mongol and Persian
and Moor, before we become
engulfed in a limitless foreign sea."

- Charles Lindbergh



- Let's fast forward. This may be obvious to some, but the idea of US imperialism and isolationism – or "America first" – are connected. But if the idea of "taking over the world" feels to you like the opposite of "retreating from the world," let's break it down a bit. Let's do so by understanding the complex tradition of US isolationism, which is sometimes connected to the idea of "US exceptionalism."

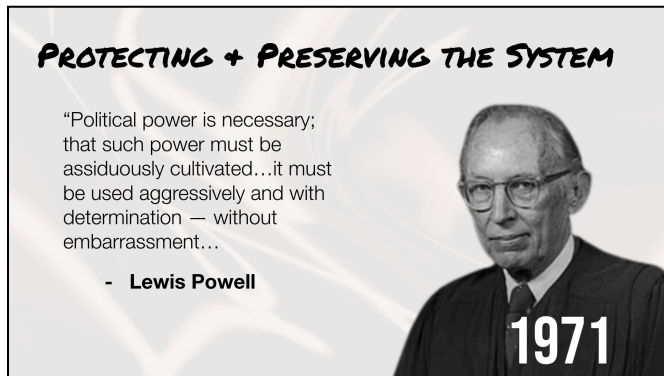
- The history of US isolationism goes all the way back to George Washington. He did not want the US to get tied up in whatever round of European wars was on tap next.
- The 1930's were a period where this tradition of US isolationism was very prominent. With the memory of the first World War still fresh, people of all political stripes in the US did not want to get sucked into another war.
- In this context, the America First Committee formed and became a powerful grassroots movement against getting involved in World War II. At its peak, the America First Committee had 800,000 dues-paying members and prominent supporters in both parties in Congress and popular culture.
- One of those supporters became Charles Lindbergh. He was an international celebrity for being the first person to fly across the Atlantic Ocean. He was also one of those Americans – and there were many of them – who openly sympathized with Nazi Germany.
- While there were many reasons that people got involved in the 1.0 version of the America First movement in the 1930's, Charles Lindbergh represented the white supremacist and anti-Semitic version of the movement. In short, his view was that we should stay out of World War II because we should not be fighting amongst white nations. Rather, we should be uniting against the more sinister threat of non-white peoples and nations.



- Speaking of white nations...let's fast forward again. We all know that by the 1950's grassroots movements were stirring to challenge American apartheid. People were organizing to fight the century's long effort to keep those with white skin at the top of a racial hierarchy in the United States.
- A major breakthrough in that struggle was the Supreme Court's *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision to desegregate schools. The *Brown* decision also launched a new era of white backlash politics that is still with us today. We see it in the form of the "school choice movement" and now even with Trump's calls to

abolish the Department of Education.

- Vice President Vance recently made headlines for citing the “let them enforce it” quote that is attributed to President Andrew Jackson. Jackson supposedly said this when he defied the Supreme Court in order to forcibly relocate indigenous nations on the Trail of Tears.
- We can see an example of this “let them enforce it” mindset in the reaction to the *Brown* decision by the Court. Here we have Senator Harry Byrd, a key architect of the Southern campaign of “massive resistance” to the Court’s order. In this campaign the white power structure showed that they would rather let schools close down than integrate. They would rather throw out the idea of universal, public education than see a world where there was equal access to the benefits of society for all races.



- But why defy the courts when you can control them? Trump, like any mob boss, knows the value of having judges on the payroll.
- And the US conservative movement has known this for a long time too. Here is Lewis Powell. This quote comes from a secret memo he wrote counseling the US Chamber of Commerce on how to build political power to, as he put it, “protect and preserve the system.”
- Not long after writing this memo, Powell was put on the US Supreme Court by President Nixon. As a result of Powell’s call to arms, the conservative movement began building infrastructure to, among other things, systematically take over the courts at every level – a project they have been pursuing for several decades now.

BREAKING IT DOWN:

- None of what Trump and Musk are doing is new.
- Imperialism and isolationism, ignoring and weaponizing the courts – these contradictions have been with us for a long time.
- The people who want to protect the system of exploitation & segregation are clear on the power they need to wield.



- So let's break all of this down. **None of this is new.**
- From the brazen imperialism to the isolationism and “America first” tendencies. From the blatant acts of ignoring the courts to the systematic project of weaponizing them against any effort that would result in greater fairness in our society. All of this stuff has been present with us for a long time.
- The 20th Century was not some inevitable march of progress that is now being interrupted by a foreign influence. There were people who fought against this progress every step of the way. They were clear on power and they had no embarrassment about using it.
- In short, the progress of the 20th century that Trump and Musk want to overturn was won through our struggle.

MINORITY RULE vs.
A MASS MOVEMENT

- It boils down to this: we are in a struggle against the rule of the few over the many. And only with a mass movement will we succeed. There is no one coming to rescue us – we are the ones who have to pick up the mantle of struggle and do the work that is necessary. I'm ready if you are!

Watch the recordings and download the materials at:
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. 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. We will drop that link for you in the chat one more time.

