

Rocco C. Siciliano Forum:

*Considerations on the Status
of the American Society*

Karl Rove

Senior Advisor and Assistant
to President George W. Bush

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The Siciliano Forum
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by Rocco C. and Marion S. Siciliano
to enhance the thoughtful deliberation
of public issues



Karl Rove

About the Lecturer

Karl Rove is the Senior Advisor and Assistant to President George W. Bush. Mr. Rove oversees the strategic planning, political affairs, public liaison, and intergovernmental affairs efforts of the White House.

He previously served as chief strategist for the Bush for President Campaign and for 18 years before that, president of Karl Rove & Company, an Austin, Texas-based public affairs firm that worked for Republican candidates, non-partisan causes, and non-profit groups. His clients have included over 75 Republican U.S. Senate, Congressional and gubernatorial candidates in 24 states, as well as the Moderate Party of Sweden.

The Colorado native attended the University of Utah, the University of Texas at Austin and George Mason University.

He has taught at the LBJ School of Public Affairs and in the Journalism Department at the University of Texas at Austin and was also faculty member at the Salzburg Seminar.

He was a member of the Board of International Broadcasting, which oversaw operations of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, and served on the board of the McDonald Observatory before entering government.

Mr. Rove and his wife, Darby, have one son, Andrew.



David W. Pershing

Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

This is one of the most prestigious events in the academic year here at the University. The Siciliano Forum offers us the opportunity to engage in informed discussions about major challenges facing our nation. In the past, it has brought a series of national and world speakers to the University who have talked about intriguing and challenging ideas, and I promise you today will be no exception to that. It is my great pleasure to introduce a man whose vision and generosity have made this forum possible, Mr. Rocco Siciliano.

Rocco is truly the embodiment of a complete public servant. He believes in working for a better society. This forum is a perfect example of that. He has had successful careers in business, in government, and he has worked extensively with public and private volunteer organizations. In government, he served as assistant secretary of labor and special assistant to President Eisenhower, and as undersecretary of commerce to President Nixon. He was also a business leader of several large corporations. This is what you get for doing so many good things, Rocco.

Rocco's service record is equally impressive. My personal favorite, and one he is quite eager to talk about if you get him alone, is that he is currently the chair of the Congressionally established Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission in Washington,

D.C. He was also a founding member of the California Business Roundtable, a trustee emeritus of the Committee for Economic Development and the J. Paul Getty Trust, and on the board of the Cedar Sinai Medical Center. He served as president and chairman of the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

In addition to all those things, he is an author and will shortly have a book coming that you will want to look for. For all of these reasons and more, the University of Utah bestowed upon him our highest honor, an honorary doctor of law, in 2001. So now he is Dr. Siciliano. I'm pleased and proud to announce that in 2003, the Siciliano Forum will be renamed the Rocco C. and Marion S. Siciliano Forum to reflect Marion Siciliano's intellectual contributions to these events. I am very pleased to present Dr. Rocco Siciliano. (Applause)



Rocco C. Siciliano

**Introduction of the 2002 Siciliano Forum
Distinguished Lecturer
Karl Rove**

Thank you, David. Thank you all for coming today. This is an auspicious occasion for me. The timing happens to be very good as far as our main speaker is concerned. We had no idea he would be on the cover of *Time* magazine this week. But in any case, I am privileged to introduce him. He is not only a distinguished guest speaker, but in my judgment, he is something that most people don't think of. He is a very scholarly student of government processes. I call him a political theorist. At the same time, he is a very successful, pragmatic political adviser. This is a rare combination. His talents can be expressed in both ways – first, with respect to academics and the scholarly and historical side, second, to the operational side - or how our government works.

I have to talk about another phase of this presentation, which has to do with Utah. Most of us have an inordinate sort of pride as to where our ancestors came from. I have to say, very quickly, that people from Ireland come to mind because they're the most militant about where they're from. With a name like mine, I don't have to worry about that. (Laughter) I am not too sure about Karl Rove. I don't think he has Irish ancestry, either, but in any case, I do know it is very clear that we are both proud

of our Utah heritage as well as our University of Utah affiliation. And I just learned this morning, we even happen to have been members of the same college fraternity here at the University of Utah. We do have a generational difference, which I am going to ignore, but in any case, he has a lot to tell us. I had the pleasure of hearing some remarks he made this morning which were very revealing. They displayed his own erudition and his own knowledge of what makes our country and our government tick.

This forum was established to help us understand some of the intractable problems that face our society. For that purpose we are very privileged today to have and to hear Karl Rove, who is the senior adviser and assistant to the president, George W. Bush. Thank you.



Karl Rove

**Sixth Annual Lecturer
November 13, 2002**

Thank you, Rocco. It is an emotional homecoming for me, in a way. I am pleased to be at a great school, the University of Utah, a school of which I am enormously fond. In the spring of 1969, when I was a senior at Olympus High School, I received a letter from the University admitting me for the fall of 1969, which was a pretty good thing, because the only school I could afford was the University of Utah. It was the only one I applied to. So if I hadn't received that letter I'd be in difficult straits.

I had a huge scholarship to allow me to attend the University — \$1,000 a year from the William Randolph Hearst Foundation. It paid for my books, tuition, and fees and my card to get meals here at the student union. I worked a couple of jobs to make the rest of the ends meet. I waited tables. And it may be hard to believe now, me being a conservative Republican, but I manned a cash register at a 1960s hippie shop on Main Street selling patchouli oil and beaded curtains.

But it was a great time. I remember that this is where I first really read Shakespeare. I had read Shakespeare before but I had a magnificent teacher (I think she was a nun) who taught in the English Department, and she really made us read Shakespeare. I was in the honors program and had a fantastic experience. I still

have, some 30 odd years later, my freshman honors Western Civilization books. I nearly failed my first accounting class here, and I took way too many history and political science courses.

And, of course, here is where I met the big man on campus, J.D. Williams (applause), which was a life-changing experience. I left in 1971 to go to work in Washington, and recently a wag said that I was J.D.'s greatest failure. I guess he was suggesting [that] because I hadn't exactly turned out like J.D., but I disagree. I know what J.D. Williams' greatest failure was. It was the 1972 Utah McGovern campaign.

None of J.D.'s students have been failures, regardless of their political views, as long as they left understanding a few simple messages – love of country, love of our political system, a desire to participate in our political system, and a recognition that true patriotism is serving something greater than self. Those are the greatest gifts that a teacher can give a student. Thank you, J.D. (Applause.)

I am also honored to deliver a lecture named for another great American, Rocco Siciliano. Some talk about the American dream. But this man and his family have lived the American dream. Think about this. His father came to this country at the age of 12 with only the name of a half brother whom he had never met who lived in Livingston, Montana. He came here to Salt Lake and started a restaurant [and] encouraged every one of his children to get a good education, even though he could barely read and write himself.

Rocco is of the great G.I. generation that saved the world from Fascism. Inspired by Dwight D. Eisenhower's call at his 1953 inaugural that "we must be ready to dare all for our country, for history does not entrust the care of freedom to the weak or the timid," he went into government service as one of the youngest members of the Eisenhower administration as deputy assistant secretary of labor. He later became the youngest assistant to the president at the White House.

Whatever he did in government or business or service to his community, he did with integrity and grace and

keen judgment. And what is interesting to me is that throughout his experiences, he has left behind a trail of admirers, many of them young, inspired by him as he had been inspired by others before him. He has lived the American dream of being able to rise in life. Gabor Boritt, the Lincoln biographer, calls it the “right to rise.” In Rocco’s life, in the life of his family, we see this great American promise of rising as far as your hard work and your effort can take you.

Since 1997, each Siciliano Forum has discussed an important issue, the status of the American society. I would like to talk narrowly about one of America’s great institutions that affects society, and that is the presidency, because, for good or for ill, it plays a vital role in the life of the country. The president’s performance is often a measure by which we all judge the performance of our country. A president who succeeds makes us feel that the nation can succeed, and it is also through the president’s performance that we understand America’s role in the world and America’s hopes and aspirations for itself.

The presidency today is not what it was when Washington became President. It has constantly changed; generally, though not always, expanding in power and influence. For example, before Andrew Jackson, no president vetoed a piece of legislation he disagreed with unless he felt it was unconstitutional. Since Andrew Jackson, bills have been routinely vetoed because the President felt that while the bill was constitutional, he disagreed with the policy. But I don’t want to focus on the evolution of the presidency. I want to focus on the characteristics – the changeless characteristics – of presidential greatness. What makes presidents able to rise to the moment? What makes presidents successful as history judges them in retrospect? Being a successful president means being a leader, but what, exactly, are the characteristics of leadership? What are the characteristics, most importantly, of successful leaders in the Oval Office?

Some suggest there aren’t good presidents. William F. Buckley once famously remarked that “the office of the presidency is so staggeringly complicated that nobody, nobody, can be a good president.” I

disagree. It is clear that it is, perhaps, one of the world's hardest jobs. There was a sign on Ronald Reagan's desk when he was president, and it said simply, "It can be done."

So how can it be done? What distinguishes the successful president from the unsuccessful president? I would like to suggest a few characteristics. I do this with trepidation, because people have studied this far longer than I have; and my experience is obviously colored by the last two years, and those two years are not necessarily representative of the sweep of American history. But it strikes me that one of the most important things that a president has to have to be successful is clarity of vision. Effective presidents have a strategic vision and a direction in which they want to lead the country. They are concerned with big issues and big challenges, and seek to explain their vision in a way that allows people to understand their circumstances and develop confidence in those proposals. One thinks of FDR's fireside chats, where he inspired the country to overcome the Depression. We think of Lincoln with the "House Divided" speech, saying very clearly his goal was to save the Union while limiting the expansion of slavery.

There has to be a clarity about the goal, if not always clarity about the method. For the clarity of vision doesn't necessarily always lend itself to a clarity of direction, which is the second great characteristic – consistency of purpose but a willingness to change strategy in moments of crisis. One again thinks of Lincoln. Lincoln's purpose remained the same while the strategies continued to be modified.

The third thing, and this is what I have come to understand acutely in the last two years, is that in moments of crisis presidents benefit, for good or for ill, from the legacies that have been left to them by the previous presidents. One of America's great presidents of modern times left a tremendous legacy for those who followed him, and yet at the time he was reviled – Harry S. Truman. What Truman did in changing the national security structure of the United States made it possible for America to win the Cold War and develop the military strength necessary to keep the peace. Lincoln, on the other hand,

unfortunately inherited the legacy of his predecessors, who kept putting Southern sympathizers in top military posts, so that when Lincoln inherited the military, he inherited a military full of Southern sympathizers.

I am a Texan now, but I am also a Yankee sympathizer. So one of my least favorite legacies of James Buchanan is Colonel Twigg, who had the federal arsenal in Texas and surrendered it in January of 1861 to the Confederacy. I have a little place in Kerrville, Texas. Kerr County, Texas is the only site of a monument to Union war dead erected by a community south of the Mason-Dixon Line. We voted as we fought for 140 years. Few Democrats ever carried Kerr County, Texas for 140 years. And they still don't. I don't know what that has to do with presidential greatness, but what the heck.

One of the interesting legacies that Franklin Roosevelt inherited, was that he was guided by the failed legacy of a previous president, the failure of Woodrow Wilson to prepare for World War I.

The fourth characteristic comes from Professor Fred Greenstein of Princeton. His book on presidential greatness had this really weird phrase. He said that successful presidents are presidents with "emotional intelligence," which he described as "free of distracting emotional perturbations." I couldn't understand at first what that was, but then I thought about that, and he is right. A successful president must have an internal self-confidence. A good president doesn't wet his finger in the morning and put it in the air to see which way the wind is blowing, but has core values and confidence in self. Everybody gets nagged by self-doubt at some point, even our great presidents. Even in moments of melancholy Lincoln doubted the outcome of the enterprise in which he was involved. But he knew the importance of staying the course for great presidents are not frozen by doubt and indecision, but are comfortable making decisions.

The fifth characteristic of a successful President is a recognition that the responsibility of leadership causes a president to have a healthy respect for public

opinion, but not to be dictated to by opinion polls. In the year between 9-11 of 2001 and 9-11 of 2002, there were more public opinion polls conducted in America asking questions about the conduct of the war on terrorism than were asked in the entire four and a half years of World War II. I think that is a sign of decline, not growth. What would Lincoln's attitude have been if he had looked at the public opinion polls of the summer of 1864?

A presidency driven to accept only what has been validated by focus groups and polls is a presidency that doesn't believe in the ability of leadership to change public opinion. A president focused on creating a legacy by adjusting what he does and says to what's acceptable to public opinion at that moment is a president focused on the wrong thing. History will make its own judgments. Long after a president has departed the White House, history will write a judgment about what the president does.

President Bush is fond of saying that, in the short run, history always gets it wrong. He is also fond of telling a story about Sam Houston. Sam Houston was the only person in American history who was governor of two states and failed to serve out his term in either state. He was the governor of Tennessee in the 1830s, married a much younger woman (which is always a mistake) and was embarrassed by the marriage. History argues over exactly what happened. But, feeling embarrassed, he resigned his office and lit out for the Indian territory. He had been raised by the Indians at a young age and was given the name "The Raven." After he went back to live with the Indians after resigning, his name was "The Big Drunk." Ultimately, of course, he ended up in Texas. He was Texas's greatest hero. He won the Battle of San Jacinto to free us from the control of Mexico and was the second president of the independent republic, was its first United States senator, and in 1859, was elected governor of the state of Texas.

He loved the Union. He was a follower of Andrew Jackson, and all his adult life labored to bring Texas into the United States. So when the election of 1860 occurred, he could not bring himself to sever Texas from the Union. A constitutional crisis occurred. A

secession convention was called. The convention issued an order to every statewide elected official that every statewide official would have to sign an oath of loyalty to the Confederacy or their office would be declared vacant. Texas's greatest hero sat on the second floor of the governor's mansion and thought. The deadline came and went without Sam Houston signing the oath of loyalty to the Confederacy. His office was declared vacant, and his lieutenant governor was made governor. Houston packed up his belongings, loaded them in a wagon and left the governor's mansion to drive back to Huntsville, Texas. When the occupants of the State Capitol heard he was leaving town, they poured out of the State Capitol, lined the road, and hurled garbage and epithets at him as he left town – Texas's greatest hero. He died two years later. Virtually no one went to his funeral.

In the short term, history said Sam Houston was a traitor to the cause of his state. But long term history has judged him to be what he was – a great man, of vision and leadership, who was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for what he thought was right. And he could care less about public opinion. He once said, “Do right and damn the consequences.”

Successful presidents are also successful coalition builders. No president can operate effectively by himself. A president must build coalitions within his own party and between the parties. He must also rise above parties. That's not to say to triangulate against both parties, but at times, to put the interests of the country above the partisan interests of either party. But the role of party leader is vital for a president: no president can be a successful leader without being a party leader.

A successful president surrounds himself with a strong team. Think about George Washington. He started both [with] Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton in his cabinet, two men who hated each other, strong-willed individuals, yet both of them sitting around the table.

A successful president also organizes advisers to give him what a president most often lacks – solid, straightforward advice. President Bush talks about

how he wants to create a spirit in which people feel comfortable coming in and saying what they feel in the Oval Office. Because people will sit outside the Oval Office and say, "I'm going to tell the president what I feel. He is absolutely wrong on this." But they walk in the Oval Office and say, "Oh, Mr. President, you look fabulous today." Chester Cooper, who served on LBJ's National Security Council, said that his goal during the depths of Viet Nam was to be able to walk into the Oval Office, or walk into a meeting in the Cabinet Room, and say, "Mr. President, I strongly disagree." He said his greatest failing in life was that he could never bring himself to say that. The office awes people that much.

So an effective leader is one who can allow people to give advice that may not be in agreement with his views and values and opinions, and yet to feel secure in the knowledge that they are serving the president by doing so. Creating this environment for rigorous give and take, and minimizing leaks and the use of the press to pay back other members of the staff who said something with which you might disagree, is a difficult thing for a president to do, but a vital thing.

Finally, there must be a readiness to act and a comfort in deciding. One of the great easy deciders was Theodore Roosevelt. This is the 100th anniversary of the West Wing which, incidentally, for those of you who have not been in the real West Wing, looks nothing like the one on television. There are nowhere near as many attractive, handsome people as there are on "The West Wing." I don't know where those glass partitions come from. People tend to walk a little slower in the real West Wing. The offices are one heck of a lot smaller. The lighting is nowhere near as dramatic as it is on the television program, but it is a pretty nice place to work. But a week ago Monday was the 100th anniversary of the West Wing.

The West Wing was built in characteristic Roosevelt style – a very short period of time. In March 1902, even before the appropriation had been voted by Congress, Roosevelt sent a letter to the architect in New York, McKim, [Mead] & White: "I expect you to begin the construction no later than the first of July [they hoped to get the money by the end of

June]. I want the building completed by October and the grounds put back in order by Nov. 15.” In a few short months the West Wing was constructed.

There are two interesting sidelights to that. One was a battle between President Roosevelt and his wife. The site Roosevelt had picked for the West Wing was where the garden conservatories were. In 1857, Buchanan began building these ornate glass conservatories. Over the years, they had grown and grown and grown. It was a great social highlight of Washington to be able to go, particularly in wintertime, to see the orange trees with the First Lady. Mrs. Roosevelt did not want the conservatories to be removed. She lobbied the architect to find another location for the West Wing. He reported this to Roosevelt, who in characteristic style said, “Smash the glass houses.”

It was also characteristic of Theodore Roosevelt that they built the West Wing so fast. They got it done in time – they finished it in mid-October – let the paint and the plaster cure for a couple of weeks, and they moved in on the fourth of November. But it was so hastily built, so shoddily built, and so small that they had to tear it down and double its size in 1909, when the first Oval Office was created. Roosevelt got his way, but someone had to clean up after him. But he was comfortable in making decisions.

None of these characteristics are enough for a president to be successful. It is how the presidents apply their abilities in times of crisis that matters. Buchanan, perhaps one of the most inept presidents in the run-up to the Civil War, had great abilities, but certainly didn't apply them. One of my favorite historical figures is James Madison, (my son is named Andrew Madison Rove). He was a fabulous constitutionalist but one of my least favorite presidents. He almost single handedly brought together the Constitutional Convention, [and was] author of the Bill of Rights. But he was a lousy president. All of the great characteristics that helped him write our Constitution were of little help in governing as president.

One of the great things I have found out is that when you call somebody up and say, "Will you come and give a talk at the White House?" inevitably they say yes. I don't know exactly why that is. We have had some fabulous speakers come to the White House. One was Forrest McDonald, the great revisionist historian, who gave a talk on presidential greatness. Afterwards, he asked a very interesting question: "Who are the great presidents we don't know are great?" His answer was William McKinley. This tripled the size of the McKinley caucus in Washington. It was Bob Novak, me, and now Forrest McDonald.

But McDonald said nobody knows McKinley is great because history demanded little of him. He modernized the presidency, he modernized the Treasury to deal with the modern economy, he changed dramatically the policies of his party by creating a durable governing coalition for 40 years, he took a special interest in finding the rising generation of young leaders and putting them into the government, he attempted deliberately to break with the Gilded Age politics, he was inclusive and he was the first Republican candidate for president to be endorsed by a leader in the Catholic hierarchy. The Protestant, Anglo Saxon Republicans were scandalized by his 1896 campaign, in which he paraded Portuguese fishermen and Slovak coal miners and Serbian iron workers to Canton, Ohio to meet him. He just absolutely scandalized the country. Yet the times demanded little of him. Yet the times could have demanded as they have of other Presidents, some of whom rose to the challenge. Who would have thought that a guy who was a failed one-term congressman, a failed U.S. Senate candidate, and a railroad lawyer would have had the capacity to rise, as Lincoln did in a time of crisis, to do the greatness that he did?

Great presidents are made not just by themselves and their upbringing, but also made by the times in which they live. In October of 1962, following the Cuban missile crisis, President Kennedy remarked to his aides, "I guess this is the week I earned my salary." In reality, every president has to earn his salary every

week. But some presidents like Kennedy are thrust into moments of greatness and others are not. As Roosevelt said, "To each generation [he could have said to each president] comes its allotted task, and no generation is to be excused for failure to perform its task." This is particularly true today in our country.

I appreciate your coming today to visit about the presidency, and the status of the American society. I wish I could give as great a tribute to the University as it has given to me by inviting me back. I remember many a day spent here in the Student Union. I played a mean game of ping-pong. The meals weren't that good downstairs, but at least there was a lot of it, whatever it was. I appreciate the opportunity to be back here today and to honor a great man, Rocco Siciliano, and his rise to the American dream. Thank you. (Applause.)

Questions and Answers

Dean J. Steven Ott: Mr. Rove has graciously consented to take a few questions. Immediately following this question-and-answer period, we will take a break. We will pull the table forward, move the podium out of the way, and set the stage for a roundtable discussion, which we trust will be lively and interactive. Please stay as long as you can and will.

Two cadets will be carrying microphones so people can hear the questions. I will direct them to you if you will flag my attention. I would ask, please, that questions be pertinent to the topic that Mr. Rove talked about today. Do I have a first question?

Audience Member: Thank you, and welcome home, Mr. Rove. We appreciate your remarks just now and, of course, this morning also. The election has come and gone, and that was one great week for your White House and for your boss. Then we had “This was the week that was” with your United Nations action that was unanimous, and I guess you heard the news today that our not-so-friend over in Baghdad has “accepted,” quote-end quote. Would you speak in the context of what you just talked about – the political capital of the president, the challenges he faces which are of historic meaning, how you see this man you work with daily handling that, and how we can be helpful as citizens in that context.

Mr. Rove: The news today, on the surface of, is it very good, but we need to be watchful. The statement needs to be examined in its totality. More importantly, even if the statement is as it has been depicted, what really matters is results. We face an adversary who has thumbed his nose at the United Nations for 11 years – in the face of 16 United Nations resolutions. He has diverted literally billions of dollars from oil sales to continue to fund his programs to develop weapons of mass destruction – and we should not kid ourselves [about] how open and how desirous he is of obtaining these materials. This is not a man who hides his desires. When he meets with his nuclear weapons scientists, it appears in pictures on the front page of Baghdad newspapers

with headlines that he is meeting with his “nuclear Mujahadeen.” We should not fool ourselves that we are dealing with a man who has thumbed his nose at the world for 11 years. We need to make certain that we have zero tolerance for any violation of the most recently enacted U.N. resolution.

Foreign policy is something that every president ends up having to deal with whether he likes it or not. We live in a world that is increasingly connected, in which America is the sole superpower, and in which if we blink, the rest of the world falls asleep. It is a dangerous world we live in, one in which presidential authority must be exercised cautiously and deliberately and in concert with as many allies as we can garner around the world. But it has to be exercised. This is not a situation where the United States can blind itself in the belief that we are protected by two vast oceans and two big allies to the north and south. After 9-11 we ought to know this with clarity.

No president wants war. Every president understands that there is one person who gets to hug the orphans and comfort the widows and the husbands. It may sound corny, but I have seen him do it. I saw him do it on 9-14 in New York. I saw him do it on 9-11 this year at the Pentagon, in a windy field in Pennsylvania, and at Ground Zero. I have seen the fathers and husbands, and wives and sons and daughters, visit with him in small back rooms in airports – at the Tri-Cities Airport in Johnson, Tennessee less than 10 days ago. It is not a task that any president wants. Any president who faces war does so with an understanding that there will be a real human cost. But if we do not act, if we do not hold this man to account, if we do not insist that he disarm, the things that he is trying to collect, may have collected and has collected, may end up back here in a very ugly way.

Audience Member: Mr. Rove, you spoke of the need for diversity of opinion in a healthy organization. I wonder if you could share with the audience an example of that in the current administration.

Mr. Rove: I can not tell you the particulars, but I will tell you this. One of the greatest things is the high quality of people that this president has drawn into both his cabinet and into his White House staff. When I walk into the 7:30 A.M. senior staff meeting, to the side of me is Condie Rice, on the other side of me is Margaret LaMontagne-Spellings, the domestic policy chief. I look around this table and I see incredible people with enormous ability and intellectual firepower and integrity.

One of the great things is being able to discuss an issue, to be blunt about where you are coming from, and to have the confidence in your colleagues – a trust in your colleagues – that even if you have diametrically opposite points of view, there is a mutual respect. However it is resolved, everybody will sort of salute and march forward. This president insists upon it. Franklin Roosevelt was Machiavellian. He encouraged open warfare among his cabinet and among his senior staff, pitting people against people. This president encourages straightforward candor. But he makes it clear that the price of straightforward candor is to treat everybody else's opinions with respect. When things are done, you don't leak.

Let me give you one example. In the summer of 2000, I went into the Austin Library of the Governor's Mansion in Texas and sat there with the governor, candidate Bush, and the head of his vice presidential selection committee, and told them why I didn't think Dick Cheney should be the president's running mate. Of course, the head of the vice presidential selection committee was Dick Cheney. This showed I was a political genius. And this is what this president encourages. As a result, you see a lot of it. We can have spirited disagreements. We can have spirited arguments. The president insists on those arguments being presented to him. If we can come to consensus, fine, but if we can't, everybody gets their shot to come in at one time, lay out their arguments, and it works.

Maybe it works because of the unusual chemistry, but I am absolutely convinced that this is one of the most difficult things a president can do and one of the most dangerous things not to do, because the office is

so awe-inspiring. I mean awe-inspiring to everybody. You walk into the Oval Office, and it causes you to get just a little haywire. An example: Vladimir Putin came to see the President of the United States. Here is the leader of Russia, a great power. He was in the Roosevelt Room across the hallway from the Oval Office, he walked across the hallway, the door opened to the Oval Office, the President of Russia walked in, and his first words were; "Oh my God, this is beautiful." That is what the office does. Because the office, in a way, is an expression of the American presidency. A president who is successful, I am convinced, is a president who spends a lot of time figuring out how to cultivate this truth-telling, because you can get very isolated inside that bubble. Sixteen hundred Pennsylvania Avenue is 18 acres of sheer utopia, and like Utopia it can be isolated from reality quickly.

Audience Member: Mr. Rove, in the context of presidential greatness, of the recent elections, and of the energy this White House expended to get Republicans elected all across the country, could you talk about what benefit it is to a president to have the entire government of one party at a time when the nation is relatively split 50-50 along Democratic and Republican lines.

Mr. Rove: It was closely split in 2000. I am not certain it is so closely split now. Nothing stays in gridlock in American politics. Things move one direction or the other. To some degree we have evidence that things are beginning to move in one direction. For example, in the contests for the United States Senate, it was not simply that the Republicans picked up three seats, a net of two, it was that 52 percent of the votes cast in the U.S. Senate races were cast for Republican candidates and 47 percent for Democrats. In races for the U.S. House, it was not simply that the Republicans picked up six or seven or eight seats (depending on the outcome of two contests left undone). The last three congressional elections before this were all decided by less than one percentage point with neither party getting over 50 percent, instead 48 [percent] to 48 [percent], basically for 2000, '98 and '96, and this election it is 53-47, Republican versus Democrat.

To me perhaps the leanest example that things are moving in a new direction is in the races for state legislatures. You can always make an explanation for why the Republicans won the Senate or did well in the House. But since 1938 when people began keeping good statistics on it, the White House party, Republican or Democrat, has lost an average of 350 state legislative seats in its first off-year election. In this election, the Republicans will have gained 195. We are 545 seats ahead of where we should be if we were suffering the normal deprivations of the first off-year election. Something is going on out there. I attribute it to the president, to the president's agenda, to quality candidates and quality campaigns, to some tactical advantages in our ground game, our getting out the vote, but I think something else more fundamental is happening there, but we will only know it retrospectively, in two years or four years or six years [when we] look back and say the dam began to break in 2002.

Audience Member: Mr. Rove, it is a real privilege to have you here. One of George W. Bush's greatest assets seems to be that his opponents always underestimate him. Perhaps you could maybe shed some light on why people seem to do that, and as one who truly knows the president, maybe you could just shed a little light on what makes the president such a great leader and such a good man.

Mr. Rove: I can't explain why they underestimate him, but they do. Whatever the reason, I hope they keep doing it. I think it is because he is from Midland, Texas, and his idea of a vacation spot is Crawford, Texas, rather than Hyannisport. I have known him for 29 years. He is one of the best-read people I have ever met. He was a Yale undergraduate, a history major. He has a great sense of history and its forces. He is the first president to be an MBA, a Harvard MBA. I had read Peter Drucker, but I had never seen Peter Drucker in action until I saw George W. Bush as governor of Texas. The governorship of Texas is constitutionally a very weak office. He defeated a very popular Democratic incumbent, faced a Democrat House and Democrat Senate, and yet pressed through his legislative program and won

reelection with an historic margin for a Texas governor.

I think a great deal of it is his personal characteristics. He is a person who is “centered.” This is a person who, as you know, went to Sam Houston Junior High – who grew up in Midland, Texas. He knows who he is and is comfortable with who he is. He doesn’t need validation from the editorial pages of the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times*.

I think he is also someone who is driven by a vision. He ran for governor, became a candidate in the first instance, because he wanted to help bring about a change in the culture of Texas. He wanted to help bring about an education reform system. He was afraid that our system was leaving too many children behind.

The maddest I have ever seen him – I know exactly when it was the maddest I’ve ever seen him. It was February of 1995. He was getting his first briefing from the Texas Education Agency. They came in and gave him little old numbered charts – “we have 2.3 million children in the public school systems of Texas, etc. Last year on the minimum reading skills exam, 43,000 third grade students failed the minimum skills exam.” That caught his ear: 43,000 third graders failed the minimum reading skills exam. Now this is not the *acceptable*, nor the *maximum*, reading skills exam. This is, “See Spot run.” He said, “What happened to those 43,000?” They said, “39,000 went on to the fourth grade.” He got hot. What this said to him was that we had an education system in Texas but a bunch of kids are not learning. Maybe English was not the first language in their home. Maybe they are from the wrong side of town. Maybe some kids can’t learn. But we are going to just shuffle them through the system. This was unacceptable to him. He was hot. Out of that was born the Texas education reform package [that was] then embodied in H.R.1, the national education reform package that every state is now going to have to begin to meet.

Let me tell you what happened in Texas. We put the accountability system in place, raised the standards, and said every child is going to be tested, every child

is going to learn. We are going to disaggregate the data. I didn't know what "disaggregation of the data" meant until I met George Miller, a liberal Democrat from California. On the 19th of December, he came down to Texas and sat with President-elect Bush in the Governor's Mansion and said, "I'm willing to work with you on the education package because you said 'disaggregate the data.'" Disaggregation of the data means you take the data for kids that you test and break it out by Latinos, African-Americans, and Anglos, so that rather than hiding the failure to teach Latino kids, or African-American kids, with the successes of teaching nice white suburbanites, you break the data out so you can say, "We're not doing the job we need to do in society for kids for whom education is the only way out, the way up."

I think he is successful because he is a person who is entirely comfortable in his own skin. He knows what he believes. He is willing to listen to others. He knows that he is not always right. He has an ease in making decisions. He has a vision of where he wants to go, a comfort that he is going to do the best he can do, and if people don't like it, he is going back to Crawford, Texas and mosey around his 1,600 acres, get a new pair of boots, watch baseball games, and read some good books. A lot of people underestimate him. Thank God they do.

Audience Member: Hello, Mr. Rove. I like your tie a lot. Today is a "code pink alert". My question for you. You indicated that the president, the administration (I know it is not just the president) isn't paying too much attention to popular opinion polls about the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Mr. Rove, interjecting: That's not exactly what I said, but go ahead.

Audience Member: You hinted at that. But what I want to know is apparently, [you are] not paying a lot of attention to the 200,000 people who marched in Washington on April 26 and the hundreds of thousands who have marched all over the world, and there are one or two people here today. My question to you is: How can we get our government's ear, those of us who are opposed to this invasion. Thank you. (Some applause and cheering from crowd.)

Mr. Rove: The way to do it is to do it the way that everybody else does, which is talk to your representatives and petition the Congress, and petition the President. You talk about 200,000 people. With all due respect, I worry about the 3,000 people killed on 9-11. (Applause.) I have a 13-year-old. I would like to leave to my child a world that is peaceful, not a world that is threatened by transnational global terrorism. (Applause.)

Let me give you just one example. We need to see the world as it is, not as we would desire it to be. We have an organization that is sophisticated, well financed and dangerous. It is not five guys in some cave someplace. Al Qaida—these people, have access to cash flow in the tens of billions of dollars. We shut down one charity in Arlington, Texas that last year shipped \$13 million to Al Qaida. Do you know how many people went through those training camps in Afghanistan? One hundred thousand. Some of them, 15,000 or 20,000, went through sophisticated training in electronics, spycraft, small weapons, explosives, biological and chemical weapons.

These people mounted a sophisticated operation aimed at the United States of America, and if anybody thinks they have now gone away or that they do not desire to hurt us and harm us, or to drive us back out of the world, you are kidding yourself. If we want to leave our children a legacy of a dangerous world, where people unbound by convention have access to some of the world's worst weapons and have demonstrated a willingness to use them, then we either do not see this job to its conclusion or we fail – because that's exactly the legacy we will leave them. (Applause.)

Every generation receives its challenge. It might have been the Great Depression or World War II. This is our challenge. As a country, we had better understand that it is a challenge we must meet, or we will leave the world in a much more dangerous and much more difficult way. I, for one, am not willing to leave that to my child. (Applause.)

Audience Member: This has to do with comments you made about unsung heroes who were president. I was curious who, in addition to perhaps McKinley, you might feel was an unsung hero as a president that we don't necessarily look at as a "Lincoln".

Mr. Rove: James K. Polk.

Audience Member: And why?

Mr. Rove: He led Texas into the Union. (Laughter.) I don't want to make too much of a claim for my man, McKinley. I left the University of Utah and never got my degree. So I continued in a desultory fashion to pile up credits at various colleges. The great irony was that I got accepted into the Ph.D. program at the University of Texas Government Department. Their only requirement was that I finish my undergraduate degree. I was teaching, at the time, a graduate course at the LBJ School, proving that God does have a sense of humor.

But I signed up for a course to fulfill my upper-division writing requirement, because they needed evidence I could string two words together. I looked around, I read the catalog, and lo and behold I found a thing called "Seminar in Historical Source Writing." I went over to the History Department and asked, "What is this?" They said, "You have to get a professor, pick a topic, go do original research, and write it up." So I asked, "What professor is in, today?" I walked in, and it was Robert Divine. UT has one of the great History Departments, and Robert Divine is one of the great historians of modern diplomatic history. I walked in, and he asked, "What do you want to do?" I said, I would like to write a paper on the 1940 Republican presidential convention. He said, "Great! I listened to it on the radio as a young man...Great, go do it."

I found that literally every book written about the 1940 convention, with the exception of one, is incorrect. Every contemporary account is incorrect, and every book written about it – except a very eccentric book written by a woman who may have been one of Wilkie's many admirers, a very weird stream-of-consciousness book. Every one of them was wrong, because they say [on] the sixth ballot, the

Pennsylvania delegation was recognized, they switched their votes from Gov. James to Wilkie, and this made Wilkie the presidential candidate. I was going through the minutes of the Republican convention, and had this little chart showing how Wilkie had this secret plan to win the nomination. Lo and behold, I found out that on the sixth ballot they came to Virginia, which voted just before Pennsylvania, which [had] passed. [Virginia] got recognized and changed its votes. Wilkie was put over the top by Virginia. But the convention was so chaotic (it was 1:30 in the morning) that nobody knew that Wilkie had just gone over the top, so they then called on Pennsylvania.

I got an "A" in the course. However, as luck would have it, between the time I signed up for the course (it was the spring) and when I turned in the paper in the fall, they had removed the course from the list of courses that you could take to fulfill the upper-division writing requirement. So I went into the dean of students' office, and like all dean of students offices, being helpful and courteous and kind, they said, "No way we are making an exception for you. It wasn't in the catalog when you turned in your paper. You don't get credit for it. Go find another course."

I looked again at the catalog the following spring. They had put it back on the list. So I went back and said, "Dean, hear this." [He said], "No, you've got to take it over." So I took it over. I had decided I wanted to do a paper on Theodore Roosevelt and the 1896 campaign, because it was the turning point for his entire life. He had been made police commissioner in New York in 1895, and he loved the job. He wrote his sister about how he donned a hat and a cape and was going out at night to find the drunk policemen and rouse them from their slumber and put them back to work. He loved the job in 1895. But by 1896, he hated the job. He was in a lawsuit with the other two police commissioners. He had backed the wrong candidate for president, the Speaker of the House. He literally had written a letter at the time of the Republican convention saying that he thought McKinley was a dolt and not up to it, and he had absolutely nowhere to go in life.

Yet at the end of the 1896 election, Theodore Roosevelt got the plum job of his life. He was made the assistant secretary of Navy, and when the secretary of Navy made the mistake of going on vacation, he sent the orders to Dewey at Hong Kong saying, "Make steam for Manila," thereby ensuring the great success of, "Fire when ready, Gridley," when Dewey destroyed the Spanish fleet in a matter of minutes outside of Manila, which allowed Theodore Roosevelt to become the head of the "Rough Riders," be elected governor after a six-week campaign, become vice president and, on the assassination of McKinley, become president. How did this all happen? How did his political career get rescued in the 1896 campaign by a guy who did not like him? At the end of the 1896 campaign, McKinley wrote a letter to the sponsors of Roosevelt saying: "I do not trust your young man, Roosevelt. I think him too ambitious."

I walked into the History Department. A professor, who turned out to be one of the leading historians of the Progressive Era and of the Gilded Age, said, "I would love to take you on. But I've got one requirement. And that is that you go read the McKinley papers, because history gets McKinley wrong." He said: "They get Mark Hanna wrong, and they get McKinley wrong." I got the microfilm, and read the McKinley papers. I had my then nine-year-old son photocopy all of the sheets I pulled off the microfilm. And when you read the papers, you see that McKinley was a masterful political genius. This guy was very impressive.

Whitlaw Reid, the editor of one of the leading publications in America, had lung problems and wintered in Arizona. Every year he arrived in Arizona to find a hand-written note from McKinley inquiring about his health, saying that he hoped that while in Arizona, if any occasion arises when he thought that there was something that he, McKinley, ought to hear, he would love to hear from him. When he was ready to go back east every year, he wrote Reid a letter saying that if he stopped in Washington to come by. He wrote him every year just like clockwork.

And, he was a brilliant selector of talent. Illinois was the heart of the Republican Party, Lincoln's home. In

1895, McKinley picked a 31 year old lawyer with no political history to be the chairman of his Illinois campaign. And this kid actually ran the presidential campaign. Mark Hanna did not run the presidential campaign. The campaign was actually run by a young man who, by the time of the 1896 campaign, was 32 years old or so. McKinley installed a long-distance phone line and had him call him everyday to give him reports. He also had him write letters reporting on what was going on. They are marvelous letters to read. It is clear that McKinley was in charge of the campaign.

He installed his young cousin who was 36 years old [to be] in charge of the New York campaign headquarters – William McKinley Osborne – who writes equally marvelous letters reporting on what was going on in New York. There was this fabulous letter that he wrote in October saying, “Major (that’s how McKinley liked to be known), we had a meeting of the Republican National Executive Committee today, and in attendance were Hanna,” and he names all these rich guys. “I reminded them as you oft told us, it is with the interest of the working man that we must be concerned. Capital can take care of itself.” You can see this 36-year-old snotty kid saying, “Look, that’s not what the major wants you to worry about. The major says focus on the working man, you plutocrats,” to Mark Hanna et. al.

The 31 year old who ran the presidential campaign was Charles Dawes, who later went on to be the third American to win the Nobel Peace Prize, first head of the Bureau of the Budget, vice president under Calvin Coolidge, ambassador to Great Britain, and the first head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. But in 1896, he was literally a young lawyer entrepreneur in Chicago, and McKinley picked him out of the crowd.

McKinley did that not do this only with Dawes. He did it for a lot of people, including Roosevelt. (You’re getting more on McKinley than you ever wanted to know, I know that.) He recognized that he was the last of the Civil War generation to serve. He knew he was the last person who fought in the Civil War who would be president, and he absolutely loathed the

generation that came after him in politics. There was a famous lawyer-lobbyist from Wisconsin, who took two years out of his life to work for McKinley as a volunteer. At the end of the campaign, he asked for his reward, and McKinley turned him down because he represented the old politics. Instead he picked out the 30 some-odd-year-old punk from New York City, who was the irascible, uncontrollable Theodore Roosevelt, and said that he represented the rising generation. Although he distrusted him, and although he did not like him, he represented the future of the party and the country. He was going to make him the assistant secretary of Navy.

There are very few people like this in American history. McKinley saw how the economy was changing and changed the government to match it. There are very few people who do that, who are able to move with the times and to see and to be farsighted. The problem was all the important things came before him or after him. As a result, we see him today as he was, which was a second-tier president.

Remember, he was killed in 1901, assassinated by a terrorist. The nation mourned – enormously. All across America, school children contributed pennies and nickels to build an incredible mausoleum outside of Canton, Ohio... [When I visited] the Antietam Battle Field, [I went] to see the McKinley Monument. They took me to it at the end of the battlefield tour because they knew I was a McKinley enthusiast. It shows Sgt. McKinley—it is a wonderful, tall piece of marble with a great bronze plaque on it and it – doing his heroic deed of delivering hot coffee to the troops at the Battle of Antietam. There was enough money left over to glorify being the “Starbucks” of 1862. But McKinley was a rare individual. There have been others. I think Polk was one of them. But neither one was called upon to deal with the greatness of the times. Thank you again. (Applause)

Dean J. Steven Ott: Mr. Rove, thank you very much on behalf of the University of Utah for your wonderful thoughts. We would like to present to you a copy of *The University of Utah: 150 Years of Excellence, The History of the University of Utah*.

And (presenting him with a jacket) you must wear a blazer with a “U of U” on it in the White House. Thank you, very, very much.



(left to right: W. Carey McWilliams, Karl Rove, Ted Wilson,
Nancy Lyon, Dan Jones)

Siciliano Forum Panel Discussion

Following the sixth annual lecture, forum participants attended a panel discussion sponsored by the Hinckley Institute of Politics.

Moderator

Professor Ted L. Wilson

Director, Hinckley Institute of Politics
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, Utah

Panelists

Karl Rove

Senior Advisor and Assistant to President George
W. Bush
Washington, DC

W. Carey McWilliams

Professor, Political Science
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey

Nancy S. Lyon

Assistant Vice President for Governmental Affairs
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, UT

Dan Jones

Adjunct Professor, Political Science
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, UT

Wednesday, November 13, 2002

at 2:00 p.m.

**Olpin Union Ballroom
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, Utah**



About the Siciliano Forum

“Unique” describes the Rocco C. Siciliano Forum: *Considerations on the Status of the American Society* at the University of Utah. In no other place has a program been designed to offer such an open, nonbiased forum for students, faculty, and the citizenry to focus their energies and attentions on the most important, current, long range public issues facing America today.

The ties that bind the forum’s founder Rocco C. Siciliano – public servant, business man, attorney, civic leader, and family man – to the University of Utah are strong indeed. It is no wonder, then, that he chose Utah’s flagship institution of higher learning as the home for the forum that bears his name and fosters thoughtful discourse on the many key issues facing America today. A Salt Lake City native, Mr. Siciliano graduated from the University of Utah in 1944 with an honors degree in political science and earned his law degree from Georgetown University in 1948.

Leadership and public service have been the hallmarks of Mr. Siciliano’s distinguished career. As a young lieutenant during World War II, Mr. Siciliano led an infantry platoon of the U.S. Army’s 10th Mountain Division in Italy. He received the Combat Infantryman’s Badge, the Bronze Star Medal for Valor, and the Army Special Commendation Award.

The forum’s inspiration comes from Mr. Siciliano’s

extensive involvement in both the public and the private sectors. He served in several presidentially appointed positions including assistant secretary of labor and then special assistant to President Eisenhower for personnel management in the White House and later under secretary of commerce for President Nixon. He also was a member of President Nixon's Federal Pay Board. He played a leadership role in corporate America as chairman of TICOR and chairman of the California Business Roundtable. Currently, he is chairman of the Dwight D. Eisenhower World Affairs Institute in Washington, D.C. and the Center for Governmental Studies in Los Angeles. Mr. Siciliano also serves as cochairman of the California Commission on Campaign Financing and is a board member emeritus of United Television, Inc. and the J. Paul Getty Trust.

The Siciliano Forum sponsors a lecture series as the main focus of its annual programs. Participants include nationally recognized commentators, public officials, educators, and others qualified to address a specific issue. Each presentation is both oral and written and deals with at least one of the most pressing, least tractable issues facing America.

The topic addressed by the annual forum lecturer is woven integrally in to the academic and research curricula of a number of courses of study within fields such as political science, business, economics, ethics, anthropology, education, psychology, environmental studies, sociology, geography, family and consumer studies, sciences, arts, and others when applicable. In this way, students have the opportunity to gain the most from the lecturer's perspectives.

In addition to the annual lecture, the most high profile of its events, the forum sponsors allied presentations and discussions involving faculty and students with other local, regional, and national commentators, and public officials, and educators. The overall purpose of the Siciliano Forum is to ensure opportunities for the thoughtful deliberations of the public trust and related issues. The inquiry is based upon the total available facts, but also may include ethical or spiritual considerations.

In all, the Rocco C. Siciliano Forum: *Considerations on the Status of the American Society* offers an uncommon opportunity for informed discussion of the major challenges facing the nation. It makes a significant contribution to the intellectual life of the College of Social and Behavioral Science and the University of Utah; indeed, the community, state, and nation as well.

Ever present in Mr. Siciliano's work and life for over 50 years is the artist Marion Stiebel Siciliano who fled Hitler's Germany. Mrs. Siciliano's paintings have been featured nationally and internationally as well as at the University of Utah Museum of Fine Arts. In Spring 2001, the Sicilianos were awarded Honorary Doctoral degrees from Gettysburg College, Pennsylvania; hers in Fine Arts and his in Public Service. The Sicilianos have five children: Loretta, Vincent, Fred, John, and Maria as well as six grandsons and one granddaughter.