

Transcript of The Gavin Newsom Show
July 12, 2008

ANNOUNCER: Live from San Francisco, the epicenter of the progressive nation, this is The Gavin Newsom Show on Green960.

GN: Well welcome to The Gavin Newsom Show on Green960, and I am honored today to have in the studio someone that clearly needs no introduction, especially for folks out in the San Francisco Bay Area, but for that matter across the state of California and the rest of the country and around the world, and that is the founder of the Daily Kos, Markos Moulitsas. The writer as well of two books now, a new book he just finished called Taking On The System: Rules for Radical Change in the Digital Era, which is available now on preorder on Amazon.com.

MM: Preorder right now; the book comes out September 2nd, right after the convention.

GN: Imagine that. I imagine any coincidence. So you wrote a book before, and folks are probably familiar with Netroots, Grassroots, and the Rise of People, Power, Politics and that was a coauthor with Jeremy Armstrong. So what's this book about?

MM: This book is really—you know what I set out to do in the beginning is look at where I've been the last four years, five years. I started writing a blog, I was a nobody when I first started writing it. I was a project manager here in San Francisco when I started it.

GN: How old were you when you started it?

MM: Thirty years old I believe. And—thirty-one. Thirty-one. In the course of the last six years, five, six years, we obviously built this powerhouse website that has become a nexus for progressive online activism. We played our little role in the Howard Dean candidacy back in 2003, 2004.

GN: Is that the time when people really started paying attention?

MM: That's when they started paying attention to the sort blogging phenomenon. And we picked up steam in 2006 when we helped win several high profile Senate and House races. And now here we are in 2008 as part of the Obama machine. Not apart of it I guess, but in support of the Obama machine, and doing our part to sort of push the party into a progressive Democratic Party—into a progressive stance. So you know, I was thinking, I came from nothing, and now apart of this incredible movement, and what were some of the lessons that I've learned in these years, and what could sort of be translated so people could learn from those lessons. Because one of the problems, or I don't know of problem is the right word, but one of the realities of what I've been doing is that no one else has really kind of done what I've done before. There's few of us sort of at the bleeding edge,

and the forefront of the movement, so we haven't had the luxury of seeing what works and what doesn't work from other people, we have to learn on our own, make our own mistakes.

GN: So when you started six years ago, I mean, who the heck was out there? Was Drudge even out there at the time?

MM: Drudge was out there, he's been out there for at least a decade, but it was a very conservative dominated medium. The online world was a bunch of conservatives. I mean remember the Monica Lewinsky, and that stuff was really pushed a lot by the Free Republic, which was a right-wing website. Lucy Anne, and Lucy Anne Goldberg was actually Linda Trip's agent. So there was this entire right-wing machine online, which sort of mimicked the right-wing machine offline on talk radio and what was started to grow as Fox News on cable news. So the media landscape was really completely dominated by the right-wing, and so we were sort of the seedlings of the left online. We still—we've made inroads on talk radio, some inroads on cable news, but we've come to dominate the online world compared to our counterparts on the right.

GN: So that's interesting, and what were the seeds of domination besides I mean, obviously you were a big part of that, but why—and you would think in the progressive—now it's to me, I just accept your premise now that I mean, the progressive movement is dominating in terms of the blogosphere and the net and the like. But why was that—I don't understand why we were missing that? What was it that became—I mean was it just you? Who else jumped in at that time?

MM: I have a theory.

GN: I always accept this as a more progressive medium. So I am surprised the right had dominated it early on in the first place.

MM: I think what really turned things—I mean, I have a theory here. And the theory is as follows. The right is very authoritarian, and I don't mean that in a negative sense. I mean, there is a negative sense about authoritarianism, but for them it works really well, because you have someone sending out the talking points and the marching orders and they follow along, and it makes for very a affective, brutally efficient movement.

GN: Now let me—this is a really important point. When people say take their talking points, you literally are suggesting these folks get their marching orders and this whole machine goes into effect.

MM: Absolutely. I mean you see it in action anytime there is any kind of scandal, they are all on the exact same talking point. We saw it just recently with Wes Clark saying that John McCain's military service really has little to do with his qualifications to be president, which makes perfect sense; it's logical and commonsensical. Within ten minutes, every single right-wing outlet was

parodying the exact same talking points about how Wes Clark had besmirched McCain's military service and that they are attacking our men and woman in uniform and blah, blah, blah. So they were brutally on message, and that's when they are most effective. On the left, on the other hand, we like to fancy ourselves as sort of freethinkers, we're going to do our own thing, we aren't are going to take orders from anybody. And again, I don't mean this in that we are better than the right, it just is what it is. It's who we are, and politically that's been an absolute disaster for us in the recent past, because it means while they are sort of on the same page, following those marching orders, and working in concert together, on our side we have been all over the place. Some people want to talk about choice, and the environment, and impeach Bush, and oh don't impeach Bush, but we're going to do something else. And so there is sort of this cornucopia of noise on the left that's really weakened us. Which is one of the reasons the right has been so effective in the last two decades despite the fact that the vast majority of the American people are with us on the issues. By and large, just go down the list. So what happened when the online bloggers came on the scene and MoveOn before us, is suddenly you have a medium that allows for a two-way flow of communication. It wasn't look, Markos has a website, and he's telling you what to do, so do it, because that's not going to work on our side, it never has and it never will. But what you had is, hey guys let's come over, let's hang out in my little virtual bar, let's have a few drinks and let's shoot the breeze. Let's talk about the things we care about, and oh hey, let's go grab a pizza, let's go catch a movie. So we can sort of move in a general direction, but that's because we are all getting together, we are having these conversations, and we are all deciding collectively as a group to work for a particular candidate or engage in activism of behalf of a particular issue.

GN: And we are listening to The Gavin Newsom Show on Green960. And my guest today as you can hear, is the founder of the Daily Kos, Markos Moulitsas. You've never hid in that advocacy component of this. I mean you're not ever or never have suggested being a subjective journalist in that respect. Do you describe the beginning of this as being an advocate, did you have a strong subjective point of view, or do you subscribe to the notion that this is a democracy and whatever ends up on the site, ends up on the site. And you've got your editorial component, or you try your blend your point of view with the audience. How does it work?

MM: I mean, well there's a couple questions wrapped up in that question. First of all, I absolutely am not objective. Right? There's no reason to be objective. I don't believe it's possible to be objective. So you have the traditional news media that claims to be unbiased, but everyone has their bias. Well that's not even tradition—that's just Fox News lying. They are a bunch of liars over there.

GN: *(laughs)*

MM: I could play a—I could pull a Fox News, and claim that I was fair and unbiased, and balanced, and all that stuff, but I won't. I am honest with my

audience. I don't try to b.s. them like the way Fox News tried to b.s. the world. So basically I came in from this—in the sort of traditional sense of what media use to be. It used to be very partisan. It used to be very partisan at the start of this nation's history. Right? That's why you have papers that are called The Republican and The Democrat, The Press Democrat. The such and such Independent, because they were politically affiliated, and suddenly it evolved into this notion that no, we can't have any opinions, which is patently absurd and ridiculous. If you go to Europe, there is a strong, strong tradition in England and Greece and a lot of these countries, France and Italy of partisan news outlets. And you have a very vibrant media landscape because of that. It's not like in the United States where television is losing viewers, newspapers are losing circulation. In Europe it's the opposite, there's a vibrant media. There's very little in the way of a blogosphere actually in Europe believe it or not, because everybody feels that their viewpoint is represented. And some people, especially in a traditional news media here, take that as, well people just want to preach to the choir. But that's not necessarily true. We've seen in the run-up to the war, what a strong progressive press could have done, had it existed, could have exposed a lot of Bush's lies. I was, but I had like six listeners in 2002, 2003. Nobody was reading Daily Kos at the time.

GN: (*laughs*)

MM: So we were very, very tiny. We were unable at the time to really exert that kind of influence, because at the end of the day it's actually a good thing—would have been a good thing to have a left wing press motivated in exposing George Bush's lies. That doesn't mean you make up stuff, again, we aren't Fox News, but it means you have a little bit of healthy skepticism. Now I perfectly don't mind once we have President Barack Obama which we're going to have January next year, the right-wing press is going to help keep him honest, because they are going to have a skepticism to anything he does. And hopefully, that means that he has less chance to become as corrupt as the Bush administration has become, and to stray as much from the things that really matter to Americans, the sort of policies that improve our lives as opposed to endanger them.

So Daily Kos always was from the beginning, a very partisan news outlet of course. And quickly, it evolved into we're here, we're together, and these are the values that unite us. And clearly, not only is the Republican Party not living up to those values, but the Democratic Party is also failing as well. I mean we had in most of the nineties and the early part of this decade a Democratic Party that thought that well this is a conservative nation, and only way we can win is to be a little bit less right-wing than the Republican Party. But the voters, given a choice between Republicans and fake Republicans—

GN: (*laughs*) Saw through it.

MM: Always take the real deal every single time. And so we helped—one of the things we did in the last few years by supporting certain candidates and supporting certain legislation is that we pushed the party into standing up for

strong principles, such as getting out of the war in Iraq, and not being afraid of saying that they are strong progressives and that they believe government has a role, not a universal role, but a role in making people's lives easier. It's not always a solution, but in a lot of times whether it's healthcare, whether it's education, government has a role to play in improving people's lives. And as soon as Democrats realize that, hey, we can run against the war in Iraq, and yeah, they are going to accuse us of being soft on security, but people don't care, because people want to get out of Iraq.

GN: And we're listening to my guest today, founder of the Daily Kos, Markos Moulitsas, and I'm talking today about his new book which just came out and you can purchase on Amazon.com, [Rules For Radical Change in a Digital Era](#). You're listening to Green960, this is The Gavin Newsom Show.

(Commercial Break)

GN: My guest today as you can hear is the founder of the Daily Kos, Markos Moulitsas, and I'm talking today about his new book which just came out, you can purchase on Amazon.com, [Rules For Radical Change in the Digital Era](#). I encourage everyone to do so, but we're also obviously talking about the upcoming election. When did you go see the change? I mean, you've been at this for years, and you're absolutely right. We started triangulating, we started talking the language, trying to talk more in the language of religion, gods, and guns, and every vote was given their talking points even Democrats, I was one of them. After we got involved in the gay marriage thing, everyone started saying, no, you got to quote scripture and the Bible, you've got to listen to country music. I'm not kidding you, I mean these were the folks that were coming in, leaders in our party, and I started hearing them talk about the Bible all the time. Intuitively, I'm Irish Catholic, I kind of accepted it at the time, but I didn't necessarily feel I needed to start talking about it in public to get votes, but I started to see that change. But that was about the low point it seems to me of our party. When did you start to see the shift where people started developing a backbone and started saying publicly what a lot of us were saying privately?

MM: Yeah, in 2006, we decided, and by we I mean bloggers like myself, decided that we were going to challenge Joe Lieberman in the Democratic primary.

GN: Do you think literally was that a turning point in this election?

MM: Literally, because what happened is—still at the time, you couldn't run against the War in Iraq. We'd be seen as weak. And we staged a challenge, a primary challenge that was—you know, a guy named Ned Lamont, who ran his entire campaign just about—90% of the campaign was, let's get out of Iraq. And Joe Lieberman, by the end of this campaign was actually saying, I want to get out of Iraq too. I mean, he resorted to downright lying about the situation, but Joe Lieberman lost the primary. And I think it's at that point—I mean we're talking Joe Lieberman, former Vice-Presidential nominee

GN: Al Gore's pick.

MM: We're not talking some random backbencher Democrat. We're talking one of the highest profiled Democrats in the caucus, and we kicked him out of the party based on the war.

GN: You got a lot of critique at the time from the party.

MM: Ugh it was brutal. I mean it was brutal, but I think that's what sent the message to the party that wow, people are really pissed about the War in Iraq, and are willing to act on it. If we don't get our act in gear, we may suffer not just the indignities that Joe Lieberman suffered by losing that primary, but also fail to capture a lot the energy and activism that was really starting to gear up at the time. And it was those candidates; a lot of those candidates really embraced opposition to the War in Iraq, and started embracing change in the direction of our country away from this sort of right-wing conservative approach. That was one of the reasons we won huge in 2006. In two of the races that we really focused on, people like me, were races Jim Webb in Virginia and Jon Tester in Montana. These were two conservative red states. Jim Webb in Virginia was running against George Allen who was considered to be the top choice for the Republican nomination.

GN: Until the famous video.

MM: And in Montana, Jon Tetser was running against a Senator named Conrad Burns, who had been in office for about eight thousand years, or looked it.

GN: *(laughs)*

MM: And people laughed at us. I mean, these aren't states that normally Democrats could win in.

GN: I mean, in Virginia, a president hasn't won since the 60s right? I mean they've never won that state. Since '64 I think.

MM: And in Montana, George Bush won by twenty points, 60-40.

GN: And we'll talk about, because those two states might be in play this year, but we'll get to that in a moment.

MM: Absolutely, and so what we did was, we didn't just pick our candidate, but the establishments picked someone else. They had their establishment safe, wealthy, lawyer type individuals who they wanted to run as Democratic nominees. And we defeated them in the primary before we even got a chance to run these impossible races against these impossibly strong Republicans, and we did so by building a movement. I think it's telling that in Montana particularly,

there was a moment in one of the debates where Jon Tester and Conrad Burns were debating, and Conrad Burns accused Jon Tester, to want to tinker with the Patriot Act.

GN: Mmm, imagine that.

MM: Right, the Patriot Act, you can't touch the Patriot Act.

GN: What a name by the way, *The Patriot Act*. Just think the about the frame itself.

MM: And Jon Tester looked over and said: Conrad, I don't want to tinker with the Patriot Act, I want to end it.

GN: Wow.

MM: And of course—

GN: A politician saying what they think definitively.

MM: But also running against the media narratives, right? Because Democrats cannot oppose the "Patriot Act". Like you said right, it's unpatriotic.

GN: (*laughs*) Exactly. Un-American, where's your lapel pin?

MM: And yet he was against the war, and he was accused of wanting to open the doors to the terrorists. He wants to invite the terrorists into our country, and all sorts of crazy things, yet, he won that race, and Jim Webb won his race. They were the last two races called because they were so close that they went way into the early morning. And those are the two races that gave control of the Senate to the Democratic Party in 2006.

GN: And now Jim Webb is on the shortlist as a potential running mate for Barack Obama.

MM: He is. He wont be.

GN: You don't think so, why not?

MM: He will not be. You know, I know Jim very well, and he's not the campaigner type. He really is a soldier, and an author, and if it was up to him, soldiering or authoring. The thought of campaigning absolutely destroys him. And he is great at what he is, but the politician campaigner type is really not up his alley, and I think you sort of need that in a vice-presidential nominee.
(*laughs*)

GN: Yeah, well let's talk about that. You're listening to Green960, The Gavin Newsom Show. We're here today with the founder of the Daily Kos, and Markos, we're talking about presidential politics now, but let's talk about vice-presidential picks. How important do you think it is this year? Is it less important because Barack's profile is so strong, so powerful, and representing more than just a personality but a movement? Do you think it's critical, his pick? Or that he'll get through with anyone?

MM: I think historically, vice-presidential nominees really don't matter in a lot of ways. They don't deliver states, they don't deliver demographics, and so really to me—there's different ways to choose a vice-presidential candidate. You can decide, well I'm weak on national security; so let me put Wes Clark on the ticket. You can say, I need to show my support with a certain demographic. It would be great to get Latino support, so let me pick Bill Richardson. I think those are both mistakes. Bill Richardson is my number one pick, but I still think picking somebody on for those reasons is a mistake. Pick someone based on the perceived shortfall, the weakness sort of approach. You're basically telegraphing everybody, hey everybody; I'm weak on national security.

GN: Good point.

MM: And this is what Al Gore did with Joe Lieberman. He picked him because of Bill Clinton's zipper problem, and therefore we are going to pick Joe Lieberman because he is a sanctimonious, moral, you know, fool, and he'll show how serious we are about morality. But basically, all it did was gave license to everybody to talk about how Al Gore felt that he needed to sure up his support with people who didn't like Bill Clinton, or were outraged morally. It was a bad pick. A good pick I think at the end of the day, are those based on some sort of chemistry and that reinforce your core message.

GN: Now did Clinton in your mind do that with Gore?

MM: Absolutely. Clinton's whole shtick was that he was this sort of new Democrat, southern Democrat, young, dynamic, and well Al Gore might not of been dynamic, he sure was everything else. He was young, southern Democrat who was really seen at the time as the future of the party. Getting away from the urban, northeastern, liberal elite. Sort of a down-home, southern, rural type Democrat. He reinforced Bill Clinton's message.

GN: Who reinforces Barack Obama this year? Who's out there you think?

MM: I think there's a couple out there. It has to be someone outside of Washington D.C.

GN: Yeah, especially with a message running against D.C.

MM: Somebody who is relatively new to politics. Hasn't been around too long, and somebody who is relatively young. You don't want someone who can eclipse Barack Obama from a personality—

GN: It's going to be hard to do candidly.

MM: You know, Brian Schweitzer, who's the governor of Montana, and forget it.

GN: You've got it. That's true.

MM: So there are people out there who'd meet the test, but you got to be a little less charismatic. I mean, I think Governor Kathleen Sebelius of Kansas is a fantastic choice. Again, there's a lot of chemistry. They obviously like each other. They reinforce each other's messages. And this is a Democratic governor in a state like Kansas, which is pretty impressive. I think Claire McCaskill, Senator from Missouri has been one his most loyal and effective surrogates on television. And I don't pick those because they are woman, and the whole Hillary Clinton thing. Literally, the three top choices, two of them are woman; the third would be Tim Kaine who is governor of Virginia.

GN: God, I'm hearing more and more about Kaine.

MM: Kaine is another very, very impressive politician in one of the very toughest states to win as a Democrat. But again; reinforces that message, hasn't been around politics too long, isn't charismatic enough to overpower Obama but reinforces that message.

GN: Hillary Clinton is out in your mind. Not even a chance?

MM: Not even close. First of all she's been in D.C. for eight thousand years it seems right? And if you're talking about change, she's sort of the antithesis of change. She's the opposite of change.

GN: Edwards? Not another run?

MM: But also, I think with Hillary you're also energizing the right-wing, right now they are demoralized. Let's not give them easy red meat to rally around.

GN: Right, right.

MM: I think what she accomplished was impressive, she wasn't my choice, but it was impressive.

GN: Eighteen million votes not too shabby.

MM: Right, but when we are talking about reinforcing his message, it just doesn't do it.

GN: John Edwards? You think he can come back one more time?

MM: I like John Edwards. There's sort of a retread feel to sort of being on the presidential ticket again with a different person at the top of the ticket. It just doesn't feel right. And again, if you're talking about change, bringing the guy back for an encore doesn't really reinforce it greatly. I like him from a substantive standpoint. He's great, but from a political standpoint, I just don't think it works.

GN: Why not Bill Richardson? You said your choice. I know you've talked a lot and written a lot about the Latino vote. You're not as fearful that Barack Obama is going to fall short of capturing the Latino vote?

MM: I don't think so. I mean, it would—I think somebody like Bill Richardson, and if you park him sort of in the El Paso area of Texas, and sort of have him swing back up and down to Colorado, I think he actually helps make Texas competitive believe it or not. I think he locks on New Mexico obviously. I have said that candidate's veeps don't deliver geography, but New Mexico is pretty much a fifty-fifty state. All he has to do is deliver one point—

GN: Literally.

MM: And forget it.

GN: And speaking of that, we're not seemingly at all talking about Ralph Nader any longer. Is there concern for that? Nader picking up a few thousand votes here, a few thousand votes there, that one point margin is gone. Is that concern? Is anyone talking about that?

MM: I mean Nader picked up what, I think a third of a percentage point in the last time? I don't think this one is going to be as close.

GN: Pick up a few thousand votes in Santa Fe?

MM: And I think the right has a bigger spoiler in Bob Barr, who's running as a Libertarian, former Republican congressman.

GM: Yeah, that's true.

MM: And someone who is a lot more credible than Ralph Nader ever was. I think Bob Barr could pick up two or three points. There's a lot of disaffected Republicans right now, and I think they are looking to send a message. A lot of them will come home to John McCain, but I think there's going to be just enough of them available that they'll more than offset any problems we may have with Ralph Nader. Not to mention that Nader's message is really beyond obsolete. I don't think anyone will argue anymore that there is no difference between the

Republican and Democratic Party, and especially between John McCain and Barack Obama.

GN: Now that's true. Do you think the recent issues of public financing, the changing the position, the FISA vote, issues—sort of ambiguities about positions on gun control are going to hurt Obama in any meaningful way?

MM: I think gun control as an issue is that—I don't think that—

GN: Interesting.

MM: The NRA won, the Supreme Court sort of ratified the decision the NRA position. And Democrats have sort of noticed the last six years that the issue is a loser and they run away from it. So, I don't think it really plays very well. And you sort of have this new generation of Democratic governors who have really vocal about being 100% behind the NRA. And anybody who still believes in gun control as a political issue, they are going to be sorely disappointed, because nobody's carrying that banner anymore, it's a political loser.

GN: Except those mayors in cities like San Francisco that are dealing with a different reality, but that's not a Republican or Democrat issue. Mayor Bloomberg and others leading the charge, the antigun charge, but recognizing suburban, rural realities and the right to bear arms at the same time.

MM: Right. It has become a more complicated issue.

GN: It has.

MM: But I think from a national scale, nobody is going to touch it anymore.

GN: So what about the public financing? There had to have been a lot of blow back? I saw it on your site and others are writing about it, blogging about it. Do you think it has any permanency in terms of being concerned?

MM: No, absolutely not.

GN: *(laughs)*

MM: Nobody votes on public financing. I've been an opponent actually, not of the public financing, of the campaign finance regime. I think actually this system that was designed to lessen the impact of big money in politics has evolved with small dollar donors, people like me, giving their \$25 donations, has evolved in a way that the laws had failed to keep up with. I mean there was an effort two years ago to essentially destroy what I was doing. To have the government regulate my site because it was speaking—it was engaging in electoral politics and spending money to do so. According to the law, that's not allowed believe it or not.

GN: Under McCain-Feingold? Or just in general?

MM: Under the broader—just in general, because if you spend money in the election year, suddenly you're regulated. So we had to fight this action where we basically argued that we had a first amendment right, and we won. There was a first amendment right that trumped the campaign finance regulations, but that's sort of what the campaign finance regulations are doing. They are saying that you cannot spend money to talk about electoral politics beyond the limits; \$2,300 to a federal candidate and so on and so fourth. So, I think the laws are failing to keep up, and there's this sense from a lot of these "reformer groups" that fight for campaign finance regulations, that what's evil in politics is money. While somebody like me will say, money is not the problem, you need money to communicate with people on television, radio, the Internet. You need to spend money to talk to people. What's the problem is the source of the money. If you have corporate donations that are buying legislation, that's the problem, but the laws are so focused on money that people have lost track of. The problem is not the money per se, but corrupting money. And somebody giving \$25 to a campaign doesn't corrupt anybody. Ideally, that is the perfect ideal; you want people to purchase candidates \$25 per time as opposed to Halliburton and AT&T. So for me, the notion that Obama somehow has done something wrong by opting out of the public finance system, when in fact he is opting out, because he is getting millions of regular Americans to give one hundred bucks, fifty bucks is patently absurd. If he was opting out and getting big checks from AT&T, I'd have a serious problem with it, but he's not doing that; he's being funded by regular Americans and Republicans can't do that. Which is why John McCain is opting in to the campaign finance system, because he can't afford to raise the kind of money that he would need to given the donation limits. There aren't enough people, regular Americans, available to give him one hundred bucks to compete against Barack Obama. But you know again, you know you say, well are people going to be upset? Is it going to hurt him? John McCain opted in to the public financing system in the primary, midway decided, you know what, I don't want to anyway, and dropped out against the law, but there's no blow back for that right?

GN: No, not like Barack Obama.

MM: At the end of the day, no one cares about public financing unless you want to talk—as much as people talk about it, nobody will ever vote on that issue.

GN: My guest is the founder of the Daily Kos, Markos Moulitsas. The writer as well of two books now, a new book he's just finished, called [Taking On the System: Rules For Radical Change in a Digital Era](#). Again, you're listening to The Gavin Newsom Show on Green960.

(Commercial Break)

GN: You're hearing the voice of the founder of Daily Kos on The Gavin Newsom Show on Green960. In what circumstance, Markos, will there or could there be a President John McCain.

MM: If Obama and his campaign do everything right, do the minimum. They're going to have to work hard. I'm not talking that they take the next four months off and chill right? But if they work hard the way they have been working, there's no way McCain can win unless there is a massive, epic, collapse of some sorts, a major gaffe, or scandal of some sort. But assuming that everything goes according to plan, and they work their butts off, there's no way McCain can really—

GN: Even if we lose Florida, Democrats, and lose Ohio? Barack Obama can still pull out this election?

MM: The amazing thing about Obama's map, which wasn't the case with Hillary Clinton by the way. Hillary Clinton was running on a traditional map. She does not do very well in western states. Barack Obama on the other hand, does extremely, extremely well with states West of the Mississippi. So suddenly, you have states like Iowa, New Mexico, Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, these are states that by no means should be in play for a Democrat traditionally, this year are suddenly in play. Well Iowa actually was always a purple state, but you know, Montana, North Dakota that's crazy talk.

GN: No, I'm getting married in Montana.

MM: *(laughs)*

GN: Trust me, but the idea that it's in play is an extraordinary testament.

MM: Obama also locked down Washington and Oregon in a way that no Democrat has been able to lock down. Those are traditional purple states that right now are—Obama's leading in, in double digits in the polls. McCain doesn't have a chance. So, McCain's suddenly has to find a ways to pick up votes, states without losing too many of the Bush states. He's going to have a really, really hard time. I mean, I think Colorado is already a done deal, that's an Obama state. I think New Mexico is pretty much a done deal. Those three states offset Florida or Ohio, but we only need one or the other. And that's not to mention, Obama actually is leading in the polls in Ohio, and is just narrowly trailing in Florida. McCain has a real problem because he's again, he limited by his public financing for the general. He's going to have to play defense in a lot of these red states. I mean, he doesn't want to play defense in Montana. I mean, they just announced they are running ads in Virginia. This is a state Bush won fairly comfortably, now suddenly he has to run ads in Virginia because Obama is leading in that state. Alaska, believe it or not, the two are tied in Alaska.

GN: Wow. Interesting. So, speaking of John McCain, and we're getting close on time, what could he do to galvanize people's attention? What could he do, short of some external factor, as you say, some gaffe or some god forbid, something happening in terms of an attack or something of the like, that could then galvanize his base? What could he do? Is there a V.P. choice out there somewhere that you just think will resonate and pull folks out and get them thinking and pounding the pavement once again?

MM: I'm not in the business of giving advice to John McCain. (laughs)

GN: No, I know, don't, but is there at least somebody out there? What are we hearing?

MM: There's a Republican politician that sort of scares me, it's a guy named Bobby Jindal, who is the governor of Louisiana. He's only about thirty-five, thirty-six years old.

GN: Wow.

MM: Indian American, just an incredibly talented politician. I see him as a potential 2012 Republican candidate. There was a lot of talk about him being on the ticket, which I don't know if it scares me, but it's sort of intriguing.

GN: Yeah, half of McCain's age.

MM: That's the problem right? They sort of look like okay—he's like a third of McCain's age. (*laughing*) Right, like a third?

GN: (*laughing*) Right.

MM: So they can't have somebody who's too young and dynamic because talk about overshadowing.

GN: No kidding.

MM: And again, it accentuates the fact that McCain is really, really old.

GN: Good point.

MM: So what I took from that is that they have to pick somebody old and boring (*laughing*). But you know, Mitt Romney is somebody who they keep talking about lately. I would actually be more afraid of Mike Huckabee, but the establishment absolutely hates him.

GN: Why?

MM: Huckabee has this really disturbing talent, knack for being completely nutso, and seeming really reasonable about it. You hear him talk, and he's really funny and he's personable.

GN: Yeah I know, down-home.

MM: And there's substance there. Once you sort of pick away at it, you go, oh my god this thing is pretty scary stuff. I mean the guy is a dominionist, but—

GN: So true.

MM: But he comes across so well doing so, that he was always my—I thought he was going to win the nomination believe it or not for the longest time, this was two or three years ago.

GN: Yeah. Yeah, I think you and Bill Clinton, of all people, were the only two who predicted that.

MM: And for the longest time he was making me look really bad, because he was at zero in the polls, and then he had this moment where he suddenly shot up at the end of last year, at the end of 2007. But what I didn't expect is that the Republican establishment really freaked out when they squashed him like a bug. They hate him because he is what they call a big government conservative. He really believes in the compassionate part of what Bush use to claim was compassionate conservatism. He actually is someone who isn't lavishly anti-immigration. He thinks that the children of undocumented immigrants, who do well in school, should be entitled to scholarships to go to college. And these are the sort of things that seem reasonable, but drive the right-wing crazy, and therefore they absolutely flipped out. He was also against the foreign entanglements like Iraq. I mean, the guy is pretty...scary.

GN: I'll never forget one of those first debates, and he had the courage to actually stand up and suggest something. I remember watching Fox News after, and just one after the other, Hannity say 'how dare he say that', and of course you heard Rudy Giuliani. But Rudy Giuliani, what's become of him?

MM: He's making a lot of money in the lecture circuit. I mean, he's fine, he'll do okay.

GN: He's going to be all right? We don't have to fear and feel for him?

MM: Unfortunately when you're a Republican, and you fail, you actually—

GN: They take care of you in the party? (*laughs*)

MM: Yeah, exactly. It's actually very lucrative to fail as a Republican. You get awards and big speaking engagement fees. But I think, I don't see how John

McCain can pull this off. The differences are so stark between him and Obama, and the fact is that he is truly the third term of George Bush, because he cannot distance himself from Bush without pissing off the 30% of dead-enders who still support George Bush. So he's really locked in his vice grip, he either loses his base, or he loses the 60% of everybody else. So I think, it's going to be an absolute crushing when this is all said and done, again, assuming there is no external scandal, attack, etc, etc.

GN: What are the other issues you think that could define the next few months? I mean, besides the war, which is dominant, is the environment. I see McCain trying to make a case for his environmental record and his vision on the environment; energy independence being his particular niche which sounds good, but when you are starting with oil-drilling off the coast, it's not a great way to resonate, and doesn't necessarily connect with voters out here or Florida or elsewhere. Is immigration going to be a critical issue you think? They've tried to push it, do you think it's actually going to—

MM: It would have been a huge issue with anybody but John McCain, but given that John McCain was one of the cosponsors of this comprehensive immigration reform. He's turned his back on it, now he says he would vote against his own bill, but the fact that he was one of the supporters of that bill means that he really, really can't touch it. And I think they've realized—you had Karl Rove and George Bush pushing for comprehensive immigration reform, because they knew that if they lose Latinos they are in trouble. And it's clear now that the sort of xenophobic rantings of the right-wing are really hurting the Republican Party brand, and I wouldn't be surprised if Latinos go to Obama 75-25. Right now it's about 65-30.

GN: 65-30 in the polls. Where did it work out with Kerry?

MM: With Kerry-Bush, Kerry won fifty-seven, Bush got forty-three.

GN: Bush did extraordinarily well.

MM: That was pretty good, He was making some good gains, and he knew how to talk to that community, and he paid attention to them in a way Republicans hadn't in the past. Then again, here comes the rest of the party basically saying, we don't want any brown people anywhere near this country. And the way that they've alienated everybody in the northeast, they've lost the northeast to this country. They've lost the West coast. They've lost African Americans. They've lost the gay community obviously. They've lost Muslims.

GN: I remember a big part of it—Muslims most assuredly.

GN: In Michigan and Detroit, there's a huge Muslim community, and it was Republican leaning believe it or not. No longer of course. They've alienated all these groups because they always need a boogey man, whether it's San Francisco

liberals, or whether it's gay people, or whether it's black people. They've always had their enemy and now the enemy is immigrants. So now they are in the process of losing the Latino vote, and once they lose that, they lose the southwest, and Texas—I mean Texas is next, there not going to have anything left really except for Nebraska and Alabama it's pretty much going to be Republicanland. I'm looking forward to that actually. I just wish it didn't have to be so much demonization and hatred getting there, but it is what it is.

GN: So you're optimistic. You're optimistic about the presidential race. You're optimistic about the future of the Democratic Party?

MM: Well those are two different things all together (*laughs*).

GN: Yeah, good point.

MM: I'm optimistic about the presidential race. The Democratic Party still needs a lot of work. One of the things I'll be focused on, not this year, this year we're going to win the White House, we're going to win five to seven, maybe eight seats in the Senate. If we win thirty seats in the House, thirty-four seats in the House, we have a one hundred seat majority in the U.S. House. So we can potentially have huge majorities. Now you look back at these two years, and what have Democrats done in the House and Senate, and it's kind of depressing. They promise to change course on Iraq, they refuse to really, really stand up to Bush on the issue. On FISA, on foreign intelligence, the spying on American citizens, they have completely have capitulated to that.

GN: That was a disappointing vote. Unbelievable.

MM: So you go down the list, and they'll—whoa, you raised the minimum wage. It's like fantastic, but the War in Iraq, the Constitution, these are—

GN: But the big challenge there has been that sixty votes needed in the Senate.

MM: Part of the challenge, we still have too many Democrats still in the caucus who think that they need to be Republican light. We have too many Democrats who are beholden to corporate interests, and will listen to them, AT&T and Verizon before they listen to the American people, and their own oath to office, promising to uphold and defend the Constitution. So one of the things we are going to be doing in 2010 with these majorities, is we're going to have the flexibility to start engaging in some targeted primaries. Just like we knocked off Joe Lieberman from the Democratic Party, we won one primary this year in a Maryland seat against a corrupt and corporate Democrat named Al Wynn who was replaced with a wonderful woman named Donna Edwards. And we're going to really start going after the Democratic Party to make sure they remember who their bosses are, and to hold them accountable for what they do. Because do you know what happens when you don't hold our elected officials accountable? They become corrupt and lazy, and ineffective, and you're going to have what

happened in 1992 when Democrats—1994 when Democrats lost control of the House, and what happened in 2006 when Republicans lost control is that the voters are going to punish the party for having become so corrupt and ineffective. And I'm not going to let the Democratic Party do that, or I am going to do my part at least to try to make sure that does not happen.

GN: Do you think it's possible that Barack Obama can live up to expectations? Particularly if he has these kinds of majorities in the House and in the Senate, I mean, then there is really no excuse. Do you think he can live up to this? I mean, my greatest fear is expectation; get us out of Iraq, turn the economy around, deal with income inequality and healthcare, turn us around on the environment, energy independence all at once.

MM: I think there's a real opportunity in the next year. Not two years, because once you get into 2010 it's election year, and things get worse. But I think we have real opportunity, because even if we do not have a filibuster proof majority in the Senate, there's about three to five Republicans who are either moderate, or in vast, vast electoral danger in 2010 who'll we may be able to pick off on an issue by issue basis to pass certain legislation. I absolutely think that things like Iraq, universal healthcare, and energy independence, we can make huge gains on those issues. Now, if the expectation is that Obama is the next messiah, yeah that's not going to happen (*laughs*). Those aren't my expectations, I'm more of a realist. I know a lot of people are a lot more—if you think he's going to change politics, he's not going to change politics. Politics are what politics are, and he's just very good at it, but he's not going to change it because nobody in the history of this country changed politics. It's the nature of the beast. So, I guess it depends on what those expectations are. I do think, he can accomplish a lot of good given the majorities we're going to have in Congress, and I think if we play our cards right, in 2010 we can actually make more gains, especially in the Senate, it's a good Senate map. And then sky's the limit, but it's going to take a party that's not afraid to push on those progressive issues. I mean, their instinct is to always retreat.

GN: Yup.

MM: And if you hear—some Republican is going to say, well if Democrats insist on pushing with universal healthcare, it's going to hurt them. And they're are going to think, oh my god, maybe he's right. What if it does hurt me? And they are going to get really timid and weak and scared. And so our job is going to make sure to remind these voters, I mean these elected officials that the voters elected them for a reason, and it wasn't to do what Republicans were doing before them.

GN: Well it's been a great, great hour with my guest, the founder of Daily Kos. Markos thanks so much for being in on Green960. We could spend hours together talking more about this, but if people want to get more information, or get in touch with you, or find out more about your book, they can contact you how?

MM: Well you can visit DailyKos.com. That's [Daily K-O-S.com](http://DailyK-O-S.com), and the book is coming out in September, you can take pre-orders now. There's information at the top of the page at Daily Kos itself. But I mean, to me it's—if believe about politics, if you care about your politics, and you want to be involved, you want to be engaged visit Daily Kos. It might not be the place for you, but it will be a good starting point to find other sites that are similar that may be more up to your interest, and just get engaged and involved.

GN: Thanks for spending the time today.

MM: Thank you.

GN: You've been listening to Gavin Newsom, Green960, and if you have anything you want to say to us, any idea for guests or thoughts, give us a phone call at 415-275-5754.