

Words to Live By

Through the Aspen Institute’s Alma and Joseph Gildenhorn Book Series, the written word and great dialogue have often come together. This season, the DC headquarters played host to a number of authors on books about Washington intrigue, life as a first lady, African American history, the state of academia, and many more. Below are some highlights from this season’s book talks.



JOHN PODESTA

The Power of Progress: How America’s Progressives Can (Once Again) Save Our Economy, Our Climate, and Our Country

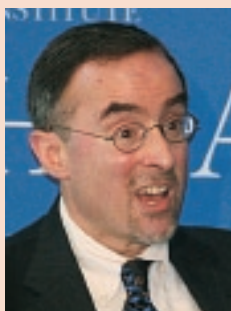
“I felt, starting in on this book, that people had given up faith that, through the power of organization and ideas and advocacy and citizen engagement and empowerment, that things could happen. The historical part of the book was to suggest that, at another time, which was then called

the gilded age, where we had great social inequality in our country, where workers were being abused, where small farmers were getting a raw deal, people got together and aggressively organized and engaged at the turn of the last century to provide change, to focus on some core elements of providing greater opportunity for people, to try to challenge that deep sense that society was off on the wrong track and was producing great inequality. And they made things happen, and they had a deep faith and belief in that power of progress itself—that you could change the way ordinary people’s lives in this country were being constructed.”

MICHAEL KINSLEY

Creative Capitalism: A Conversation with Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, and Other Economic Leaders

“Bill Gates gave this speech a year ago, at a time when capitalism was maybe in slightly better esteem than it is now, saying that there were some problems too big for government and too big for philanthropy—even for the Gates Foundation. And capitalism itself should be adapted in some way to solve these problems. ... I thought he had an interesting idea, with some problems. ... One of the ambiguities in Bill Gates’ speech is whether recogni-



tion [for doing social good] is something that a corporation wants because it is good for the company—because young people will want to work for a company that does good and so on—or is it a truly separate ideal? And if it is the latter, what right does a company have to go chasing after this ideal while my 401K goes down the rat hole?”

CHERIE BLAIR

Speaking for Myself: My Life from Liverpool to Downing Street

“I was the first wife of a prime minister to have a university education, the first wife of a prime minister to have a job. The thing about that was, of course, it meant that my work-life balance and conundrums were very much in the public eye. That’s what made [my problems] different, but, in many ways, they were exactly the same as most working mothers in our country at the time, and I was by no means unique being a working mother. ... For myself and my children to be living in No. 10 [Downing Street] at a time when Tony was making really important decisions about life or death for people, which is stressful enough in itself, and we were living in a time of huge controversy and there would be people outside protesting, calling my husband a murderer. I often think that one of the most important things to remember about our public servants is that they’re just human beings, they’re not infallible gods, and they’re not totally good or totally evil.”

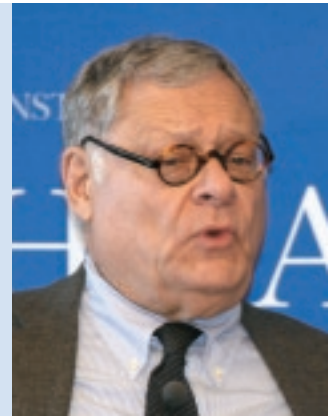


Photos by Steve Johnson

STEPHEN JOEL TRACHTENBERG

Big Man On Campus: A University President Speaks Out on Higher Education

“When I came to Washington, for 15 weeks I went to church. My rabbi, as you can imagine, was envious. I went to churches all over the city and almost exclusively black churches. I would say, “Thank you for letting me worship with you this morning. I am the new president of George Washington University, founded *in* Washington since 1821—*of* Washington more recently. I’m here to put a punctuation mark on the *of* Washington. We want your children; we want you. Come, we’re your university.’ I drove that theme for 20 years, reaching out to all aspects of the Washington community. I think urban universities make great cities, and great cities are great only if they have great universities in them.”



MARWAN MUASHER

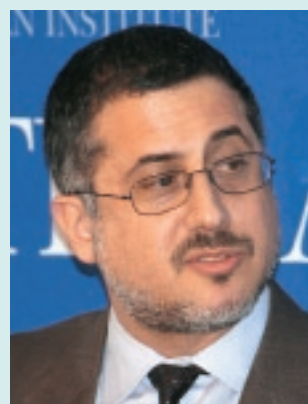
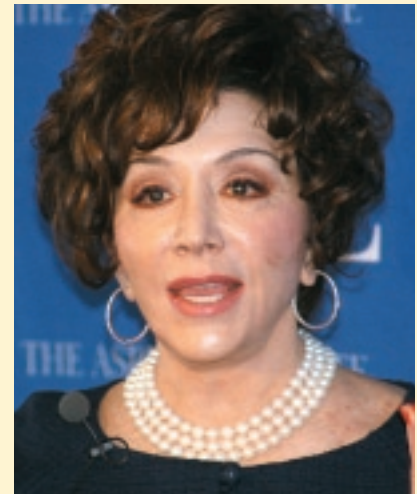
The Arab Center: The Promise of Moderation

“To the Arabs, a two-state solution after Oslo became the centerpiece of their objectives of their efforts to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. The late King Hussein also, after Oslo, decided on a two-state solution as not just a solution in the Palestinian interest, but in the Jordanian interest as well. [Then] efforts intensified—but particularly among Arab moderates in order to effect that two-state solution. I argue in the book that, contrary to Western conventional wisdom—that it was always Israel that wanted peace and found no Palestinian partner—I in fact argue that, on the issue of peace, that it was exactly the opposite: All the initiatives that were put on the table in the last ten years to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict came from Arab moderates.”

LYNDA RESNICK

Rubies in the Orchard: How to Uncover the Hidden Gems in Your Business

“[Viral marketing and the Internet]—it’s a seismic shift. It is the reason I do not fear what they are calling a second depression. It’s because of community. It’s because we can be in contact with our community, with our followers, every minute of every day. It is so inexpensive to advertise because of the great things on the Internet. I Twitter. I have a FaceBook page. I have a blog. Everyone I know that wants to be part of the public discussion is doing this today—and it’s fantastic.”



BARTON GELLMAN

Angler: The Cheney Vice Presidency

“On the level of principle, Cheney often starts with something that is completely unobjectionable, widely accepted—for example, the Constitution vests the president with the power of commander-in-chief—and then he kind of blows past all the old boundaries of the standard debate on that and takes a position that could only be called extreme. So [Cheney’s] view, both in terms of commander-in-chief power or the president’s law-enforcement power, is that the president’s interpretation of the law may not be checked by any branch of government, that [the president’s] execution of powers as commander-in-chief may not be limited in any way by any branch of government.”