MARVIN KALB: Hello, and welcome to the National Press Club and to another edition of The Kalb Report, I'm Marvin Kalb. I think most of us would agree that the 2012 presidential campaign was too long, too costly, and too noisy except, perhaps, for the last month or so. Then in quick succession, there were three presidential debates, one vice presidential debate, and then the American people went to the polls. Those presidential debates were the most watched and consequential of the entire campaign. Seventy million people watched the first, and to the best of my knowledge, roughly more or less 60 million watched each of the other three. Now, only the Super Bowl did better than that.

And let's remember; in 11 of the last 14 presidential debates going back to 1960, there have been these debates and they have now grown into a fixed feature of the political landscape. Tonight, we have a wonderful opportunity to talk to three moderators of the 2012 debates. To my right, only in geographic terms, is Jim Lehrer, easily the dean of the debate moderators having now done 12 of these debates. No one, Jim, will ever catch up to that record. Jim, the most honored former anchor of the PBS News Hour, prolific author, and winner of just about every prize in journalism.

To my left, Bob Schieffer, who was Chief Washington Correspondent of CBS News, anchor of Face the Nation, also an author and also winner of many journalism awards. And to my immediate right, Martha Raddatz, who is ABC’s Chief Global Affairs Correspondent, who has spent an enormous amount of time in Iraq and Afghanistan. And she's also the winner of many prizes for her courageous war reporting. Candy Crowley of CNN, who moderated one of the presidential debates in 2012, cannot be with us because of a family emergency. And we send our best to her.

Two of our guests, Jim and Bob, have done this debate stuff before. But for Martha, this was a first appearance, experience. You've done so many interviews in your career. Was this any different? And if it was, in what way?
MARTHA RADDATZ: Oh, not at all. Really, it just-- [laughter] just, you know, Janet Brown called me and I thought, “Oh, fine, I'll take a vacation and then I'll go do the debate.” It was so different and I was not covering the campaign. So, I mean you heard my title, I was running around the world. And I basically crammed and crammed and crammed and did nothing else but study up for this debate. And I told someone it’s sort of like studying for the LSATs or the SATs and then taking them in front of 60 million people. When I first got the call, I was so kind of out of the loop on even how the debates worked and how they do it that I remember Janet saying to me, I said, “So how many are there?” She said, “We’d like you to do the vice presidential debate,” and I said, “How many are there?” She said, “Four, you're the second one.” I thought, “Okay, I'm the fourth vice presidential debate.” So that's how much I knew.

And I told my family, I said when she called it was right afterwards. It’s like you either won the lottery or you've just been told you have a terminal illness because you don’t hear anything after she says, “We’d like you to moderate this debate.”

MARVIN KALB: But you did the one vice presidential debate.

MARTHA RADDATZ: Yes, there was only one, it turned out.

MARVIN KALB: Now, I'm told that the GOP asked you to refer to Congressman Paul Ryan as Mr. Ryan, but you didn’t, you called him Congressman Ryan. What was that all about?

MARTHA RADDATZ: Well, the day before, we have-- and the only thing that we-- one of the people at ABC got a call from one of Congressman Ryan's people and said, “You know, there's this agreement with the commission and we get to be called whatever we want to be called.” So I'm not paying any attention to this. It’s the day before the debate. I had a little something else on my mind. But I'm driving in Kentucky and I get a
call and it’s Ed Gillespie and he says, “Hey Martha, you know we've worked this out and you're going to call him Mr. Ryan instead of Congressman Ryan.” I said, “Well, what about the commission?” And he said-- first of all, I knew I wasn’t really supposed to be talking to him. “You're not really supposed to be calling me.” And he said, “It’s fine with the commission.” And I said, “So you think at the beginning I'm going to say, ‘And welcome tonight Vice President Joe Biden and Paul Ryan?’”

So I immediately checked, we checked, there was no real agreement, so I went ahead and--

**MARVIN KALB:** Had either of the political parties asked you to do something other than that?

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** No, absolutely not.

**MARVIN KALB:** Did anybody---

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** That was the only contact I had with anybody the entire time. And, frankly, I just put it out of my head. It wasn’t even that I went up there and thought, “Oh wait, they told me to do this, it’s not supposed to--“ I just--

**MARVIN KALB:** Did anyone--

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** I called it as I saw it as a congressman.

**MARVIN KALB:** Did anyone attempt to influence you?

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** No, in no way.
MARVIN KALB: Nobody?

MARTHA RADDATZ: Absolutely no way whatsoever. But I never had contact with the-- and again, I wasn't-- you had it harder. You had it the hardest, Bob, in the way you were covering it. I wasn’t. I was off in the corner--

MARVIN KALB: You were off to one side?

MARTHA RADDATZ: Yeah.

MARVIN KALB: But Schieffer, this was not a new experience for you, the third time. Yet this time, if I'm right on this, you asked CBS not to have you report on the other debates because you wanted to avoid even an appearance of bias. So why that attitude this time but not the first two?

BOB SCHIEFFER: Because the scrutiny this time around. And what was different is the scrutiny this time around was so intense. Because you have so many-- you know, there used to be about ten people that wrote about these things. And now, there's 700 that write about it. And--

MARTHA RADDATZ: Scrutiny, thy name is Twitter.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Yeah.

MARVIN KALB: We’ll get to that.

BOB SCHIEFFER: I mean, just to give you the example-- and, I mean, and nobody holds back anything anymore. You know, I can remember a time when people used to
write letters to the editor and then they’d get it out of their system, they’d wad it up and throw it in the wastebasket. Now, they just press the old ‘send’ button.

Somebody showed me later some of the Twitter messages that people were Tweeting, if that's what you call it, on the night of the debate. [laughter] One of them said, “Who is that old guy?” Said, “Is that one of those old guys on The Muppets that makes fun of the other characters?” And it is sort of like that. But I kind of understood that in the beginning and I just thought, Marvin, it would be a good idea if I just sort of stayed under the radar and waited until my debate came along.

And CBS in the beginning, you know, they do pay my salary and they expect some work for that, they were not sure that was a great idea. But then they decided maybe it was a good idea. And I'm really glad I did it.

MARVIN KALB: Was there anything especially in your mind about this debate? Because you were the last one, as you were saying?

BOB SCHIEFFER: Yeah. I mean, this was a very--

MARVIN KALB: I mean, you were batting clean-up.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Yeah. It was a very, very close election. Somebody asked me afterwards, “Were you surprised at the outcome?” And I really wasn’t. But it was so close, the blue states were so blue, the red states were so red and the battleground states were all so close. I wouldn’t have been surprised if it had come out the other way. All I knew going into it was this was going to be a very close election.

MARVIN KALB: Jim, you've done 12 of these now. I'm not going to ask you how you prepared. I assume each time you prepared in a similar way, very intense preparation. At
the end of the day having done 12, what have you learned either about candidates or about this process of presidential debates? What have you picked up? What's your takeaway?

JIM LEHRER: Oh Marvin, there are several things. Number one, that it isn't about the questions. It’s about preparation, but it’s preparation so you can listen intelligently and make some really quick decisions, particularly in the new formats where you quickly have to react and all that sort of stuff. It isn't about sitting, spending hours and hours writing questions. It’s spending hours and hours trying to get enough in your head so if candidate A says something, you know instantly that it’s an important thing to say or it’s something that he said before or she said before, whatever. You bring a context with you for the listening. And that's the number one thing.

And the other thing is that it is never about me. It is never about the moderator. These debates are designed, and it’s not even journalism. I know that sounds weird, but you and I have discussed this before. I don't see moderating a debate as the practice of journalism, it’s moderating a debate. And the debate is among the candidates and it’s for the candidates, for the public. It has nothing to do with the people who are asking the questions, who are doing the following up and doing the time-- doing all of that. It’s a function of a democratic process that is called a debate. And those are the two things that come out of that loud and clear to me, forever.

MARVIN KALB: Thank you, Jim. It's obvious, I think, that in 2012, and Bob had alluded to this already, that we were at new heights of political polarization in the country itself. And I'm wondering why do you think, and I'm going to turn to you first, Jim, because you got a lot of it, why was there so much criticism of the moderators this time, which to the best of my knowledge had not been the case in earlier debates. You came in for a good bit of it.
JIM LEHRER: Yeah, I did. But most of it dissipated over time because the initial criticism was-- it came from partisans who thought Barack Obama did a very poor job and so those people could not criticize Obama so they had to criticize somebody and so they criticized me or the process. And once they realized that maybe that didn’t have that much to do with whether Obama did well or Romney did well, it had more to do with the two of them than it did-- that kind of went away.

MARVIN KALB: With you?

JIM LEHRER: But I think the intensity of it was because there was this dramatic difference and, “Oh my God, what happened?” “Oh well, the moderator didn’t do this,” or whatever. I mean, I don’t like being criticized, that's not one of my favorite things to be. But as I said, it dissipated and it’s gone. It’s come and it’s gone because most of the people who did the criticizing-- but many of them have come to me afterward and said, “I'm sorry.”

MARVIN KALB: To apologize?

JIM LEHRER: Yeah.

MARVIN KALB: But in an interview with Politico you said, “The moderator should be seen little and heard even less.”

JIM LEHRER: Yes, indeed.

MARVIN KALB: And then you were saying a moment ago, and you said it earlier, that the moderator should “stay out of the way of the flow.”

JIM LEHRER: Exactly.
MARVIN KALB: So my question to you, that being a very valid point of view, is why not challenge a candidate who you know yourself, you're listening to the person, either hyped something beyond reality, flat out lie, or simply mislead the public. Why not take that upon yourself?

JIM LEHRER: Well, I would if those were the only events in the course of a presidential election. Remember, this campaign has been going on-- by the time you get to October, we got to October 2012, the campaign for president had been going on for two years.

MARVIN KALB: It seemed longer. [laughter]

JIM LEHRER: Yeah, and that's putting a pretty good spin on it, saying two years. And the debates are part of the process, but they're not the whole process. If I were to run a debate between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney on The News Hour, I would do all of those things. But these particular, in my opinion, these particular events are designed for the candidates to show what they can do. If candidate B says something, it’s candidate A’s responsibility to challenge, particularly-- unless it’s some huge thing. I don't see--

MARVIN KALB: But you don’t feel it’s yours as the moderator to get in the middle of that?

JIM LEHRER: No. I would if I was practicing as a journalist, yes. But I'm not practicing as a--

MARVIN KALB: You're the moderator in a special circumstance.

JIM LEHRER: Absolutely right.
MARVIN KALB: Okay.

JIM LEHRER: It's for me to facilitate and get A to do something about it, yes. But not for me to do it. That's how I see it.

MARVIN KALB: Now Martha, when you were doing your debate, the vice presidential debate, you appear to have a different point of view on this issue because I remind you, I don't think I need to, but your first question about Libya was rather sharp. It was a, forgive me, a pointed question.

MARTHA RADDATZ: You need no forgiveness for saying that.

MARVIN KALB: And you were clearly not just setting it up and sitting back, you were part of it. And I'm trying to understand, really, whether we're witnessing two philosophies in journalism at work? Jim’s was very well expressed right now. I have a feeling Bob might agree with Jim on this, I'm not sure. But I had the impression from you, anyway, and from Candy when she was doing hers, that you had a somewhat different approach. Now, explain?

MARTHA RADDATZ: I think we all, first of all, I worship these guys, they're fantastic. I immediately read Jim’s book, I followed--

MARVIN KALB: [laughter]

MARTHA RADDATZ: I did. I mean, that was part of my homework. But I think we all bring a different style and we all-- I mean, to me, I was chosen because I was a journalist. I did not believe that I could leap to someone’s defense and leap to the other’s defense. But to me, if I ask a question, I wanted an answer. And that’s my style. I went through
this thing when I was first chosen of sort of my own horror of thinking, “Oh gosh, I'm not George Stephanopoulos, I'm not Jim, I'm not Bob.” And in the end it was I'm me. I was chosen for who I am, I was chosen for whatever body of work I have that I'm proud of, and I felt that-- that's the only thing I would say is different, too, is that I did spend a lot of time on questions. To me, that was what it was about. I absolutely crammed my head, my very small hard drive head, as much as I could and remember things.

But to me, I did want those pointed questions, and I wanted answers. And there's always this balance because we've all interviewed public figures and you usually get 20 minutes and 18 minutes and you don’t want to hound them on one topic over and over. There's this line that--

**MARVIN KALB:** So you're [OVERLAPPING VOICES] [00:16:46].

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** That you are part of it. I mean, you can't help but be part of it. You're looked at because of the questions you ask, you're looked at by what you contribute in a way to that debate.

**MARVIN KALB:** I understand. There's another question having to do with the commission having to do with the moderators. And that was this business of the political parties getting an answer to the question, “What is this 15 minutes going to be devoted to? Is it going to be devoted to economics, going to be devoted to foreign policy, Iraq, Iran, whatever it be?” I remember at CBS we used to make a big deal about never giving the questions or categories to somebody you're going to interview because you're supposed to keep that distance. Do you feel--

**BOB SCHIEFFER:** Well, this--
MARVIN KALB: Let me ask the question. My question, do you feel any sense of discomfort having to participate in what it is that you did this time because of that?

BOB SCHIEFFER: No, it didn’t bother me. It was new. This is the first time they’ve ever done it this way, and they basically-- and I don't know where it came from. I mean, Janet called me and said, “This time, we're going to-- we want to divide it up,” and I think it was six categories. And I said okay, fine. And you didn’t have to say at that point in what order or anything. But, I mean, I think you really didn’t need to in today’s sophisticated world.

MARVIN KALB: No, you didn’t, but you did, is the point. Jim, it hadn’t happened before. Why the change?

JIM LEHRER: Well, the way it was explained to me, and I agreed with it, the way the commission-- what the commission said to me was they were keen on two things. And remember, the commission’s running this. The three of us and Candy are not running these debates. The commission makes the decision.

MARVIN KALB: I know, but you're Jim Lehrer.

JIM LEHRER: I know, all right. So we had to agree to it. No, but what I mean is the commission comes up with the-- it’s like the 7th grade prom questions. “Hey Penelope, if I asked you to go to the prom, would you go?” That's how they ask, that's how the invitation goes to a debate. If under these rules, would you do the-- and so you find-- I found out exactly what they proposed and then I made a decision yes, I would do that.

And here was their argument about the-- here's what they said, because I was like that as well. “What do you mean we're going to do the subjects ahead of time?” And the feeling was the commission wanted to make sure in the public’s mind that this was a debate
between the candidates, that this was not a gotcha game. This was not about reporters, moderators, trying to embarrass people and ask them who the prime minister of whatever it is. Let's open this thing up in this new 24/7 world, let's make these debates different than everything else in the process.

MARTHA RADDAZ: And as Jim said, it is to inform. I mean, that in the end is to inform and you want the American public to know who these people are, to know how they differ. And actually, they didn’t do that in my debate, but I had no problem with that. And let's face it, there aren't that many surprise categories that we would bring up.

MARVIN KALB: Exactly.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Let me just add one thing. If they’d have said, “We need to see the list of categories and we’ll decide which ones you can use and which ones you can't,” that would have been a totally different story and I wouldn’t have done that.

JIM LEHRER: I would remind you, Marvin, the six of mine-- three of them were the economy.

MARVIN KALB: Oh, I know.

JIM LEHRER: I mean, so big deal.

MARTHA RADDAZ: I was so glad you got that one. So glad you got that one.

JIM LEHRER: And that really stumped everybody, right.

MARVIN KALB: Let me explain why I'm even getting into this. Because it’s the experience of the League of Women Voters. Now, the League sponsored the debates in
1976, 1980, ’84 and for the sake of transparency, I was one of the reporters asked to ask questions in ’84. But I remember that when we would finish with that, the League pulled out of the sponsorship and they argued at that time that there was too much party interference and they said they had no intention of becoming an accessory to the hoodwinking of the American public. Now, I think that's terribly tough language. But my question for you--

BOB SCHIEFFER: I think perhaps overstating.

MARVIN KALB: Overstating perhaps, too. But my question to you--

BOB SCHIEFFER: Just a little bit.

MARVIN KALB: --is not as moderators, but as reporters. Is it this something where there may be the beginning of too cozy of a relationship between the parties and the public? You don’t buy that?

BOB SCHIEFFER: I really don’t.

MARTHA RADDATZ: This was one of the purest processes ever.

BOB SCHIEFFER: I mean, I did a foreign policy debate and two of my sections were the Middle East. I mean, are you going to talk about foreign policy without talking about the Middle East? Are you going to talk about it without talking about Iran?

MARVIN KALB: But that's my point. It's so obvious, why do it?

BOB SCHIEFFER: Fine. If they don’t want to do it, it’s fine with me. I don’t have the problem.
JIM LEHRER: Marvin, one thing you got to remember, that these debates--

MARVIN KALB: I'll try.

JIM LEHRER: Okay, try. [laughter] These debates yes, they're about substance and they're about the Middle East and they're about the economy and they're about this. But what they're really about are the candidates, who these two people are.

MARVIN KALB: And we'll get into that.

JIM LEHRER: And do you like them? Do you have a feeling of trust? I mean, it’s about-- you take the measure of these individuals, that's what-- you'd be asking them about-- you'd ask them anything and the debate would still have value, in my opinion. At that stage of the game, remember, we're talking October. And most of the people who are interested have already been following the campaign so they know some of the differences about issues.

MARTHA RADDATZ: And we could have asked anything.

JIM LEHRER: Yeah sure, absolutely.

MARTHA RADDATZ: There's a way to ask an economic question and get anything you want in there.

JIM LEHRER: Absolutely.

BOB SCHIEFFER: We spent a lot of time talking about education in the foreign policy debate.
MARTHA RADDATZ: Yes, you did.

MARVIN KALB: Yeah, you mentioned why people do like teachers.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Yeah. [laughter]

MARVIN KALB: Jim, when you were sitting there in the middle of that first debate, afterward everyone was saying the President did poorly. When you were there at that time, as it was happening, was that your impression?

JIM LEHRER: No.

MARVIN KALB: What was your impression?

JIM LEHRER: I only had one impression, and I try to avoid impressions while they're going on because my mind’s just not capable of considering more than one thing at a time. I had the impression that Romney was really doing better than I had “expected,” but I wasn't really-- I wasn't judging him. It was just, “Oh my, he’s doing pretty well.” And remember, my own-- here again, everybody has their own way of doing things-- my own rule is if I'm talking to-- Romney's talking and Obama's standing here, I only look at Romney. I never look at the other candidate because I don’t want to be party to his reaction. You know, if you get eye contact-- so as a consequence, when Romney was talking, I didn’t know what-- even though I was closer to him than anybody, I was not watching Obama's reactions to Romney. The only time I looked at Obama was when he was talking.
And I noticed a couple of times-- I mean, I couldn’t help but notice a couple of times--
that he didn’t quite look at me or look at-- but I wasn’t-- the bottom line is no, I did not
have the impression.

MARVIN KALB: Martha, in the vice presidential debate, did you see, at the time you
were doing it, did you see or hear anything that was as television viewers of the debate,
might have missed? Was there something going on there, some chemistry?

MARTHA RADDATZ: No, I don't think I did. It’s one thing from Jim’s book, too, that
the moderators often miss a moment in that-- and it’s so different on television. I don't
think I really did. I think the one impression-- and I was aware of that. I did miss just for
the same reason I would look at Joe Biden when Joe Biden was talking, and I would look
at Paul Ryan. I never had any idea that Paul Ryan was apparently having 53 glasses of
water while-- and I didn’t notice that until the Saturday Night Live skit, quite honestly.
[laughter] But I do remember thinking in the middle of it, I thought, “Man, I am so
thirsty,” but I didn’t-- because I figured my glass would be shaking and I would spill it all
over myself. And I thought, “These guys are talking, they’ve had no water. Amazing that
they can do that.”

So I don't think I missed it. I think one of the things that happens in these debates is the
candidates come in and they're ready for whatever debate they're ready for. That I did feel
sort of maybe a quarter of the way through that they realized it might not be the debate
they thought it would be. I think Joe Biden thought it would be a little more contentious,
and it wasn’t. And it took him a while to adjust to that and moderate his decibels.
[laughter] But that’s the only-- I thought that was a really interesting thing, to sit there
and sort of realize that was going on, that you could almost sense that that was happening
with the candidates. I mean, what would you give to see those rehearsals, huh?
JIM LEHRER: I had the same feeling, now that I think-- I hadn’t thought about it until this very moment-- I had the same feeling, though, that Obama was not prepared for what Romney was doing. I mean, he--

MARTHA RADDATZ: It took him a long while to adjust.

JIM LEHRER: Yeah. But I wasn't-- yeah.

MARVIN KALB: Bob, having done it now three times, you cover at great length and so well all of the people you interview, then, in these presidential debates. What do you pick up? What are the ingredients of political success today? Because you're interviewing the people who've risen to very top. What is it about these guys?

BOB SCHIEFFER: Every one of these debates is different, talking about things that were missed in the 2008 debate, which I moderated between President Obama and John McCain. These are two very different people and two very different personalities. And when Obama would speak, John McCain would furiously take notes and John McCain is always over-caffeinated anyway. I mean, I've known him for-- I love the guy, I like him. I think he’s a really good American. And then he would take all these notes. And when you'd look over at Obama when McCain was speaking, Obama never took a note. He never took his eyes-- he tried to maintain direct, absolute direct contact, eye contact, with John McCain almost as if, “You're not going to rattle my chain, fella. I'm going to get right in your face and stay right there,” and he’d just keep looking at him.

And the only time he-- a couple of times during the debate I still to this day don’t know why he did this, he picked up his pen and would draw a straight line across the notebook. Now, whether this was some sort of a zen exercise, maybe he was putting 400 pounds of weight on it as he’s going across there. [laughter] Whatever he was doing it for, he always did that and I've never had the opportunity to ask him why he did that.
You know, during the primary debates, Romney, and I talked to him about this when I interviewed him back during the campaign, he always wrote something down at the top of his notebook. And I asked him, I said, “What do you write down there?” And he said, “What I always write down, dad. Because it always reminds me of my father and it puts me in the right frame of mind for these things.” And he said, “You know, he’s my hero.” And he said, “You know, I just like to think of him and it really helps me.”

Now, I have to admit that during this debate, during the presidential debate, I looked down but I never-- he wrote something down, but I was never able to lean over far enough to-- and I didn’t think it was appropriate to say, “Did you write your dad’s name down?” [laughter]

MARVIN KALB: I want to take a moment now to remind our radio, television and online audiences that this is The Kalb Report, I'm Marvin Kalb, and my guests are three moderators of the presidential and vice presidential debates in 2012; Jim Lehrer of PBS, Martha Raddatz of ABC, and Bob Schieffer of CBS.

Now, a question of a more general nature. Do you believe that these presidential debates make our democracy better? Now remember, this program is Democracy in Action, and we're focusing on the role of presidential debates. And so, do these debates make our democracy as we would like to think of it? Does it make it better, Mr. Lehrer?

JIM LEHRER: Yes, 100 percent yes. Enthusiastic yes.

MARVIN KALB: Because?

JIM LEHRER: Without reservation.
MARVIN KALB: Because?

JIM LEHRER: Because they are the only times in the course of a presidential campaign when the candidates are on the same stage at the same time talking about the same things in a comparative way for everyone who’s going to vote in that election can see them in action. Whatever they're doing, whatever they're talking about, it is the only time they're able to do that. And any time you can do that, that is a good step in the democratic process.

MARVIN KALB: Martha, you're not going to agree with that?

MARTHA RADDATZ: Not in the least. The one thing I would say is yes, I obviously think it’s better for democracy and a terrific experience for the American public. And it is kind of a coming together without gotchas. I don't believe in the gotchas in those, either. Yes, questions are important to me. But I would never come in there with a gotcha question. It is really you have this sense that you are doing something really important. I mean, like you've never done before, that this really matters. That you are a voice in helping the public understand, that you are helping the democratic process. I'm not saying this in some lofty way about me, but those debates helped the democratic process. It is an enormous responsibility--

MARVIN KALB: What's the proof of that?

MARTHA RADDATZ: Well, it limits--

MARVIN KALB: I want to ask you a gotcha question.

MARTHA RADDATZ: Well, let me just say this. It’s because 65 million Americans watch, and 65 million Americans learn something. And 65 million Americans are
debating the debates the next day. They're not tuning in to reporters who they want to hear. They're not listening to what they want to hear, they're hearing different things. They're not hearing on the campaign trail, people trying to get on the news that night or people trying to ask gotcha questions. It’s just different, it’s pure.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Let me give you the proof, Marvin, and that is the debates are the last political events that we have that you can get people from both sides to listen to at the same time and to watch at the same time.

MARVIN KALB: Good point.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And all you have to do is go back and look at the television ratings and look at the breakdown of the demographics. Republicans watch the Republican Convention, Democrats watch the Democratic Convention. The Washington of the day, very much unlike the Washington when I came here in 1969 when Democrats and Republicans went to the same parties. Now, they don’t like to be in the same rooms, they don’t like the folks back home to think that they're consorting with the enemy as they see it.

But they, Republicans, will sit through listening to Barack Obama so they can hear what Mitt Romney has to say. And Democrats will do the same. And it’s the last event now that you can say that's true.

JIM LEHRER: And the only event, Bob, the only event where you can do that.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And that is a good thing.

MARVIN KALB: And yet, the evidence is that political polarization is worse at this time than it’s been forever and a day despite what you just said.
MARTHA RADDATZ: We did our best, really.

MARVIN KALB: We did our best.

BOB SCHIEFFER: You know, political polarization is because of a lot of different things, cause that. But one of the reasons that we have it is that we don’t all get the same stuff anymore. You can now get the news delivered to you from any point of view that you want. If you want to hear it from a conservative point of view, it’s there for you. Democratic view, a liberal view, it’s there for you. A vegetarian view, you can find it, it’s out there now. [laughter] And the result is that people at one end of the spectrum simply are not always getting the full story.

MARVIN KALB: Okay, but I have to point out, and maybe these guys don’t know what they're talking about, but there are many scholars in this country who have done studies of the impact of the presidential debate on the result, the election itself. And many of them have come up and said these debates, they're grand and wonderful things. But at the end of the day, they don’t mean all that much to the voter. By the time, as you were saying earlier, of these debates-- let me finish--

BOB SCHIEFFER: Yeah, okay.

MARVIN KALB: By the time of these debates, people have more or less made up their minds. That it’s much more like in ’92, it’s the economy, stupid. It’s much more issues that affect individuals who are going in to vote than it is a wonderful, informative television program.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, there's no question, Marvin, that the economy is what elections are always about. I mean, that's just what elections are about. What I would
point out to these scholars that there were two shifts in public opinion during this campaign. The first one came after the first debate.

**MARVIN KALB:** Absolutely.

**BOB SCHIEFFER:** When suddenly, here came Romney. And at that point, people were saying it looked like Obama was going to run away with it. The second shift came at the end of the Democratic Convention after the speech by Bill Clinton. And so there are shifts and they do change minds. And I think they're one of the best parts of the campaign process. The fact is, I think we ought to have more debates.

**JIM LEHRER:** I do, too, I think we ought to have twice as many. But, let me say to the scholars they're overlooking the obvious. Maybe that's why they scholars. [laughter] No, scholars-- no, no, that's not a put down of scholars.

**MARVIN KALB:** No one would even think that, Jim.

**JIM LEHRER:** Scholars need to go beyond the obvious, so that’s what makes them scholars.

**MARVIN KALB:** And you're dealing with the obvious only?

**JIM LEHRER:** The obvious is that 67 million people watched the first debate, okay? Let’s say-- and four years ago, it was about the same number. Okay, and there was no two to one change like there was in 2012. But what the debates do, they are confirming exercises as much as they are-- see, the scholars tend to say, “Oh well, it didn’t change any votes, so as a consequence, the debates don’t matter.” That is not the way to look at it. People watch those debates, as Bob says, all the Democrats watch, all the Republicans watch, and if you're a Republican you're watching your candidate and you're already
leaning that way. “Ah, I like this guy,” or whatever. Or, “I'm taking the measure of—“ and there's a very small percentage of the people are legitimately undecided, that's correct.

But the debate isn't just for them, the debate is for everybody. And what it does is rouse and rally the supporters as much as it causes people to change their minds or to make a decision and to me that is hugely important.

MARVIN KALB: Martha, in these debates, based on your experience earlier as a viewer and now as a participant, who has the advantage, the incumbent or the challenger? The incumbent because he got all of the information, he knows it and can speak with greater authority, or the challenger because he doesn't have the information and could speak with greater authority? So who do you think really has the advantage here?

MARTHA RADDATZ: I think it depends on who the incumbent is and who the non-incumbent is. I actually haven't given that much thought. I know that going in my debate, there were things written about, “Oh my gosh, Paul Ryan must be-- he’s never through this and he must be studying up on foreign policy.”

MARVIN KALB: Probably was.

MARTHA RADDATZ: But on the other hand, there were people who wrote, “No, no, no, Joe Biden’s probably more nervous about this because I know a fair bit about foreign policy.” So, I mean, I think when you go in, you have some advantages and some disadvantages. As the incumbent, maybe you have to go over a higher bar. And as the non-incumbent, you just have to prove yourself.

MARVIN KALB: Was there any question that you could have come up with since you did a lot of question accumulation? Was there anyone, when you think back about it now,
that you could have asked either one of the candidates that might have put them off stride for a moment?

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** Oh, I'm sure there-- you know, I think probably all three of us are, “Oh, I wish I'd asked this, or I wish I'd followed up that, or I wish I'd done that.” But it wasn’t-- again, I really didn’t try to do gotcha. I just wanted to know what they knew. And there's also this line that you don’t want to look like a complete jerk. You don’t want to ask that question in a way that makes you look like it’s just too cute or you were really trying to throw them off. I mean, let's go back to Bernie Shaw. I looked and that was-- I was actually out there as a somewhat young reporter, a local TV reporter, and I remember hearing that in Los Angeles, that debate was. I'm sure you guys were there. And it was stunning. I mean, in the end, though, talk about a debate that changes things.

**MARVIN KALB:** Well, Bernie Shaw asking Michael Dukakis what he would do if his wife--

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** Asking Michael Dukakis, yes, if his wife was raped, would he then believe in the death penalty. And I love-- it was probably in your book too, Jim, that Michael Dukakis later just saying he was over-briefed. He just had his answers there and he didn't think about it. And I do think there's-- just as much as there's that moment that moderators might miss, there is that over-briefing problem, too, or there-- I mean, one of the debates I watched was Cheney and Lieberman. And that happened to be Bernie Shaw, too. And Lieberman staring directly in the camera the whole time, even though they were at a table with just the three of them seemed just way more briefed and he was going to do it--

**MARVIN KALB:** Because Bernie Shaw-- Bernie Shaw had the view, which he’s expressed many times, that if he has an opportunity to talk to somebody who may be President of the United States, or is, picking up your point again, Jim, that it isn't special
that it’s in a presidential debate. If you have that opportunity to ask him a pointed question about a major issue, take the opportunity because most of the time, in Bernie’s view, and I share a good part of this by the way, the politician will use you, will use your network, essentially, to sell his point of view and himself. So if you have an opportunity as a reporter, do your thing and ask the tough question. That's the other-- that's the Bernie Shaw line on this.

A question I'd like to ask here is I think we learned during the 1960 debate-- there's been a lot of research on this, too-- that John Kennedy arrived on the scene looking tan, rested, healthy. And Richard Nixon arrived looking pale, 5:00 shadow, rather anxious.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Sweating.

MARVIN KALB: And the studies-- sorry?

BOB SCHIEFFER: And he was perspiring.

MARVIN KALB: And he was perspiring. And at that particular time, the studies suggest that Kennedy won the debate on television but Nixon won it on radio because he came through a very authoritative. So you guys have been at this now for a while. What is really important today in our world of television, which is still so critical to this society? What is the key thing? Is it a wonderful, clear, policy presentation, or is it wearing the kind of socks that you are today, Bob? [laughter] I mean, really lovely socks. What is it that really grabs you like Walter Mondale in 1984, “Where's the beef?” Senator you know Jack Kennedy? Is it the line or the more structured presentation?

BOB SCHIEFFER: I think that people vote for president-- I think the vote for president is an entirely different vote than any other vote that we cast. If you vote for a city councilman, you generally vote on the issues. Is this the guy that's going to keep the 7/11
stores open on Sundays or he is going to close them? Is he the guy that's going to zone your neighborhood so they can't put mini warehouses in there or not? And I don't think personality plays much part in it. But the vote for president is different, and I think most studies suggest that people vote for the person that they have the most confidence in, or would have the most confidence in, in a time of national crisis. And I happen to think that's a pretty good reason to vote--

MARVIN KALB: Absolutely.

MARTHA RADDATZ: And the communication skills matter.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --for a president. And so I think that in that case, I think communication skills do matter. American people are not stupid, they're actually pretty smart and they generally come up with the right idea and generally pick the right candidate. So, I think-- and that's why these debates are so important. You get a fuller picture of the person who’s running for president. You don’t just get the talking points, you get to see him react. You get to see how he reacts when the pressure is really on.

MARTHA RADDATZ: Or she.

MARVIN KALB: Or she, probably next time around.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Yes. Well, I hope so.

JIM LEHRER: The ability to communicate, Marvin, is critical. I mean, you can have the greatest ideas in the world, but if you can't communicate them to the American people in such a way that they understand, forget it.
MARTHA RADDATZ: And that presents in the debate, too, because that's about leadership. It is not just about a performance on television or a performance in a debate. It’s leadership, it’s leading this country.

MARVIN KALB: I want to test the three of you now on a totally different area. You alluded to it earlier. There were more than 10 million Tweets in the first presidential debate. The most ever in American politics. If this was important to you as a moderator, if it was important to you as a moderator, or if this fact alone has any importance at all, please explain it to me. [laughter] And I want to start with Martha.

MARTHA RADDATZ: I mean, Twitter, as much as you might want to fight it, Marvin, it’s out there. It’s the voices-- there are voices out there that have influence. There are. I mean, I think we as journalists, it’s a great journalistic tool. It is. I mean, you can find all sorts of stories--

MARVIN KALB: No, but how did it affect you as a moderator in the debate?

MARTHA RADDATZ: I had some kind of strange press the day before that for about 15 minutes rattled me. It did not affect me as a moderator. I'll tell you what it affected me. It affected me as a mom and my son’s on Twitter all the time, it’s the only way he communicates, really. It’s like if he’s in the bedroom it’s like, “Are you coming to dinner?” You know, and I Tweet it. But I was worried because there was such nasty stuff.

MARVIN KALB: You mean directed at you?

MARTHA RADDATZ: Yeah, yeah. I mean, but then my son’s like, “Mom, the people-“ I said, “You know, there's some crazy people who write really mean things and don’t worry about it.” I mean, my son’s in college, he’s a football player so he wasn't really that worried. He goes, “Mom, are you nuts? These people have three followers that you're
looking at. Quit answering them, and they're all living in basements with 75 cats.”
[laughter] But really, what I really want to do some day is a reality show where I go find
those people and I knock on the door and say, “What do you mean you don’t like my
hair? Yours isn't so great, either.”

**BOB SCHIEFFER:** Wring their neck.

[applause]

**MARVIN KALB:** Jim, did these Tweets bother you in any way as moderator?

**JIM LEHRER:** I got millions of critical Tweets. I understand. I never read any of them,
got no report on any of them, did not want to know about them. I knew that--

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** You're a better person than I am.

**JIM LEHRER:** Well, quick story. When that debate was over, we went to dinner, my
family with Kate and our kids and some other people. And I came away from the Denver
hall to the hotel where we were having dinner. We talked about the debate and all that
sort of stuff. There was no feeling that-- we were just talking about the debate. It wasn't
that Obama had done poorly or that I was a fool or this or that or whatever. And then one
of the people at the table had one of these little gadgets and said--

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** Do you think there's like a Twitter gadget, Bob?

**JIM LEHRER:** Yeah, like a Twitter gadget.

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** There's no Twitter gadget, okay?
JIM LEHRER: So one of my friends said, “Well, they're Tweeting this.” And I said, “Well, what do they say?” He said, “Oh, they're saying all kinds of things. Some of the stuff you don’t want to know.” And I said, “That's great,” and that was the end of it. And then afterward, I heard about these millions and millions of Tweets, and I knew that some of them were critical of me. But look, the bottom line here on this, I felt good about that debate. So no Tweet and Twitter-- a million, ten million Twitters and Tweets weren't going to change my view of that.

MARVIN KALB: Okay. Bob--

MARTHA RADDATZ: I want right now to hashtag Bob’s purple socks, okay? And let’s just see how many Tweets we can get, hashtag Bob’s socks.

MARVIN KALB: Bob, I want to ask you this question relating to the new technology. We are probably caught right now in twin revolutions having to do with politics and journalism. And one affects the other in a very dramatic, real way. And your sense as a longtime political observer, your sense of the impact of the new technology on the manner in which we conduct our politics?

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, it’s turned everything upside down.

MARVIN KALB: Tell me?

BOB SCHIEFFER: I mean, it has turned everything upside down. You know, when I was a young reporter back in Fort Worth and I worked for the Fort Worth Star Telegram, every election we had down there, about ten days out from the election there would be a whispering campaign that one of the candidates had a girlfriend out on the east side. Now, I don't know why it was, but all the girlfriends lived on the east side. And so as reporters, we would go out there and we’d check it out and if it amounted to anything, we
might do something. I can't remember very many times it ever amounted to anything. It was just a whispering campaign.

Well now, there are no whispering campaigns in politics anymore. If somebody has a vicious rumor, somebody writes it on a blog and suddenly it’s out there. That means that we as journalists, we treat these things as news tips. We would never print or broadcast something like that unless we found out if it was true.

MARVIN KALB: Well, you wouldn’t, but a number of others would.

BOB SCHIEFFER: That's true, not everybody follows the standards of mainstream journalism. But the problem it presents for the politicians, they have to decide, do I deny this and give it wider circulation out into the general community? Do I ignore it and just hope it goes away? There's no financial recourse. If I make a mistake, if I libel somebody, CBS has deep pockets. They can sue us. You're going to sue this guy in the basement with the cats that Martha’s talking about? I mean, these nothing you can do about it. And we're all trying to come to grips with this and figure out how to handle it. But it has changed everything and the way politics operates now.

MARVIN KALB: Let’s look ahead in the time that we have left to 2016, a look toward the future for a moment. Both of you had said earlier that you would prefer there be more debates rather than fewer. Do you think that in this age of the social media where the patience of the American people is measured by the length of a Tweet happens to be rather limited, do you think that they would be able to tolerate more 90 minute discussions of serious issues?

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, I mean, we're getting 60 million people to watch them. So maybe they would. I mean, what I would like to see, I would like to see six debates with the first debate coming immediately after the last political convention. If the Democrats
are last, then the next week, have the first debate. If the Republicans are last, the next week have the debate. I think, and I do believe these debates are influential, I think they can kind of set the tone. I think if you can have that first debate as quickly as possible affect the conventions, it might actually change the tone of the debate itself. At least it would get it off to a serious start.

I would also say, Marvin and since you asked me, I think the right format is to have the two candidates seated at a table with the moderator. That just seems to work. The last two that I've done, that was the format. It just seems to work better and I think you exercise better control--

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** I think it does, too.

**MARVIN KALB:** Not standing?

**BOB SCHIEFFER:** --than you have them standing behind a podium. And I would also say that I, if the debate commission were to ask me, well they don’t have to ask me, I'm going to tell them. [laughter] I would suggest that you do away with the town hall forum. It just seems not to work in my view as well. It gives them a chance to put too much show business into it. You know, you get the candidates kind of performing and walking over and getting in the other guy’s space sometimes.

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** I kind of like it.

**BOB SCHIEFFER:** Well, that's fine. I mean--

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** I think that shows something about the candidates too, I do. But I'm not sure I'd say six debates. I like the four debates. I was done with those debates by the end. I think you just topped it off perfectly there in the end, Bob.
MARVIN KALB: What about the idea, Jim, of doing a debate, if we do more debates, if that idea is ever seriously considered, what about doing that 90 minutes on one subject?

JIM LEHRER: Well, that's why I would want to do six, because you would have-- you could drill in on one subject--

MARVIN KALB: You mean six rather than four?

JIM LEHRER: --for the whole 90 minutes and another subject for the whole 90 minutes and do it by subject rather than format. And whatever anybody thinks about the town hall, I agree with Bob. My experience with the town hall formats is, first of all, the moderator chooses the questions, anyhow. You're going to get 22 questions no matter what. You have 140 people, that's 280 questions, 22 of them are going to be asked. There's no give and take. It's not a real town hall. But, it does have-- it's got some appeal. But in terms of substance, it’s not a place to-- a town hall meeting doesn’t go for-- it’s a different kind of thing.

But if you were to do six and you do one subject at a time-- and I think the evidence is out there that the public would watch them. I mean, 67 million people sat on television and watched those debates. Another 15, 20 million watched it later and followed-- I mean, there were over 100 million people, watched some or all of that first debate. And the same thing, the same kinds of numbers, continued through them all. The people really are about this, this is-- it’s serious--

MARVIN KALB: We've only got a little more than a minute to go and I just want very quickly to ask Martha, why do you think they came to you and asked you to do a debate?
MARTHA RADDATZ: I don't know. I mean, I really don’t know. I mean, maybe it’s because I wasn’t covering the campaign. I mean, I covered the White House for 2 ½ years and that wasn't my favorite assignment because I think I'm kind of an independent operator and I highly respect the White House press corps.

MARVIN KALB: And if they asked you again in 2016?

MARTHA RADDATZ: It’s an honor. You know, and that's all I'll say. It’s an honor. I hope I was chosen for my body of work and that I'm a reporter that people trust and that I work hard. That's all I can say.

MARVIN KALB: Okay, Schieffer, why, aside from the color of your socks, do you think that the commission came to you for the third time to do these debates? Because you're so damn good looking?

BOB SCHIEFFER: I work cheap.

MARVIN KALB: You work cheap?

BOB SCHIEFFER: I have no idea. Maybe because I'm older, you know? [laughter]

MARVIN KALB: Would you do it again?

BOB SCHIEFFER: I don't think so. No, I think I've served my time here. It was a great honor. I think I'll quit while I'm ahead.

MARVIN KALB: Jim, last time you were here, I asked you this question and you said no on 2012. No, it’s not going to happen, but you did it. So in ten seconds, can you tell me why you're going to say yes again in 2016? [laughter]
JIM LEHRER: The answer is no, I'm not going to do it in 2016. [laughter]

MARVIN KALB: Friends and colleagues, I want you to know that our time’s up. It’s the tyranny of the clock once again. You're all very familiar with the tyranny of the clock. But I want to close with an obvious editorial point. I think these presidential debates are absolutely essential to the democratic process and they have to go on and they should continue. And as far as I'm concerned, a pat on the back to the Commission on Presidential Debates which organizes these debates every four years. And I want to extend my thanks to our wonderful and attentive audience, to our terrific panel of moderators, and to all of you out there who cherish a free, vibrant press as the best guarantor of a free and vibrant society. But that's it for now. I'm Marvin Kalb, and as Ed Murrow used to say many years ago, good night and good luck.

[applause]

Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, what we do now is there are microphones, right back there and right over here, and if you have a question go to the microphone and I will recognize you. But I'm going to recognize you for a question. And if you begin to make a speech, I probably will cut you off. So, don’t do it and don’t make me be a mean guy. If it’s good for you, you could address it to the person you'd like an answer from. So let’s start right back there on the right. And if you don’t mind, give us your name and where you're associated with?

JOSEPH BURRY: I've already got that instruction, it’s very good here. My name is Joseph Burry. I reside about 50 miles south, Springfield, Virginia, of Washington, D. C. I'm an alumnus of the Graduate School of Business at George Washington University. Mr. Kalb, you had a great remark and a great question. You were asking do these debates really promote democracy. Now, in a sense I believe they do. But I've got two problems
with it. One, the people who are up there are just the major party candidates. And I wonder-- first, I'm going to ask two parts of this, what they think about--

**MARVIN KALB:** No, not two part questions. There's one question, and please ask it.

**JOSEPH BURRY:** Okay, my question is other than Mr. Lehrer, who I commend for the great way in which he handled the debates, the other three did not follow the rules, which were pretty simple, as Mr. Schieffer said. And I'd like to know why. Maybe they were to be given one minute apiece, the question was to be given one minute for the question, two minutes for response, two minutes for the re-response and then a follow-up on a facilitation. There was supposed to be just six segments.

**MARVIN KALB:** I hear you, thank you very much.

**JOSEPH BURRY:** The questions went on and on and on.

**MARVIN KALB:** Would somebody on the platform like to answer that question?

**BOB SCHIEFFER:** Well, I think we did follow the rules. I mean, these were 15 minute segments and you posed a question. The other person had a response and then you had a discussion after that.

**MARTHA RADDATZ:** Yeah, those weren't the rules that you've just talked about, those were not the rules.

**BOB SCHIEFFER:** No.

**JIM LEHRER:** That's another debate you're talking about.
MARVIN KALB: Okay, I don’t want to get into a debate here, Jim, let it go.

JIM LEHRER: Okay.

MARVIN KALB: What's the next question, over here?

MICHAEL SWABOTA: Michael Swabota [?], George Washington University. I'd like to ask a question about an issue that I think arguably played a role in the outcome of the election but was never discussed, which is climate change. What would it take for climate change to become one of those issues like national security, education or the economy, that the public expects reporters to automatically ask of any politician who’s addressing the nation’s future?

MARVIN KALB: That's a good question, thank you very much. Jim?

JIM LEHRER: Let me say just one quick thing about that. I had domestic policy the first debate, and I had a list-- I arranged my things by subjects that I thought were the most important and cut with the idea that I would cut from the bottom depending on how the discussions ran, each one of the 15 minutes. And climate change was on my list, I just didn’t get to it. And it’s one of my huge frustrations about the way it did go. Small potatoes frustration because I thought the debate itself was fine. But it was limiting in terms of the number of subjects that could be covered and climate change went by the boards because of that. And I made the decision sitting there. We had to cut, and I cut that, and immigration were some other things that didn’t get in there, either.

MARVIN KALB: Jim, was the fiscal cliff part of the issues that you didn’t get to also?

JIM LEHRER: Well, the fiscal cliff came up and I decided we’d said enough about it.
MARVIN KALB: It’s been done so thoroughly.

JIM LEHRER: And also, well anyhow-- yeah, right.

MARVIN KALB: Okay. Out here, please?

MATTHEW BOYLE: Hi, I'm Matthew Boyle, I'm an investigative journalist with Breitbart News. And I wanted to ask specifically to Miss Raddatz, do you think that-- there was obviously a little bit of a kafuffle ahead of the vice presidential debate about the fact that the President attended your wedding to the FCC Chairman. Do you think that was handled right? And given a second chance, would you have done it a little differently?

MARTHA RADDATZ: I didn’t do anything. I mean, I didn’t have to handle that. And I'm really not going to comment about that. That was something that happened two days before the debate. It had been in the New York Times quite a while before that, I believe. And I just had to put that out of my head. That had nothing to do with what I did at the debate, nothing.

MARVIN KALB: Okay, thank you, Martha. Yes, please?

STEVE: Hi, my name is Steve, I work in the news business and I'm a pal of your brother’s Marvin. To the extent that you guys have all been familiar with the PL or an EP coming to you through the air, share some anecdotes if you could, like if you have some, about plan stage manager in some of these debates and keeping people on time with their cues and not veering too far off the questions. Thanks.

MARVIN KALB: Bob?
BOB SCHIEFFER: Keep your time cues and stuff? Well, I'll tell you a quick anecdote. My first debate, 1988, George H. W. Bush versus Michael Dukakis. Halfway into the debate, George H. W. Bush who was then Vice President was giving an answer. The time cues were lights, very high tech, green light, yellow light, red light. And green light said you could talk, yellow light said start winding up, red light, shut up. And George H. W. Bush is in the middle of an answer. I stopped him and said, “Mr. Vice President, your time is up.” And he pointed, because he had-- the lights were under each of the TV cameras. He said, “No, I've still got some time.” And in my ear I heard the voice of the executive producer saying, “Jim, he’s right.” [laughter] So, in front of everybody I've ever known in my whole life, I said, “Oh Mr. Vice President, I'm sorry, you're right. Go ahead.” He looked at me. This is here, again, in front of everybody. He said, “I forgot what I was going to say. Go ahead.” [laughter] I wanted the biggest hole in the world to drop in and never been seen again. I still don’t know, and I'm not color blind, and I still don’t know what happened. I still don’t know how I got it wrong.

MARVIN KALB: That's beautiful. Yes, please?

BOB WEINER: Hi, Bob Weiner, and I'm a National Columnist Club member and Main Street Radio reporter. Question: would Gingrich have won after his debate in South Carolina if he had repeated that performance with his strong sound bites in Florida instead of falling asleep and won the primary, to go to the primary debates? And likewise, would Obama have lost the election after the polls flipped and showed that Romney was ahead after the first debate if he had repeated that performance in the next two debates? And doesn't that point make the case that style is more important and forceful sound bites are more important than substance? And what's your reaction to that?

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, I mean, these are questions we’ll never know the answer to. But, you know, I think where Governor Romney made a mistake, I think Governor Romney, this is my sense of it and the way he reacted to the questions I asked, I think
Governor Romney thought he was ahead going into the third debate. Now, there were not many polls that suggested that. But, I mean, based on some reporting, I believe of my own, I believe he thought he was ahead when he went into that debate. And basically, he sort of went into what a football team does when they're ahead in a game. He kind of went into a prevent defense, as it were.

And I think that probably hurt him because I don't think by that time, he was-- I don't think he was ahead. And one of the things I base this on, like Martha, I started out that debate asking him a pretty pointed question about Benghazi. Republicans were really criticizing the President for this. This was a place where if Governor Romney really wanted to take on the President, he could have done it. He didn’t. He didn’t. He sort of just sort of skipped by that question and went on to something else.

I think he was afraid that he didn’t want to appear overly aggressive and I think that was probably a mistake on his part. I think that's the mistake that he made.

**JIM LEHRER:** And the reverse was true with Obama-- for the first debate. In other words, Obama was the one who thought he was ahead, and he thought he could coast and he paid a price for it.

**MARVIN KALB:** Yes, please?

**EVAN:** Hello, my name is Evan. I'm a Washington, D. C. resident. My question is primarily for Mr. Lehrer and Mr. Schieffer regarding their earlier statements that they should approach the debates not really as journalists there to challenge the candidates but as moderators there to facilitate. Considering what you discussed about how most Americans now are watching news that's kind of tailored to their political views and candidates are going on those news shows and only Democrats on MSNBC and Republicans on Fox, this was one of the only opportunities for those 60 million
Americans to see a more neutral candidate that's willing to challenge them. Do you think that changes the role of how the moderator should approach these debates?

**BOB SCHIEFFER:** Well, I was not one who said that I didn’t approach this as a journalist, I do. But I do think this is a place where you're there to give these candidates a chance, and an opportunity, to show who they are and like Jim, I do believe that when one candidate says something, it is the responsibility of the other candidate that if there's an inaccuracy there, if there's a different point of view there, I think the other candidate should have the first opportunity to make that correction.

**MARVIN KALB:** What about the second opportunity?

**BOB SCHIEFFER:** Well, I tried at times where I thought it wasn't being addressed to address that. But no, I think you're trying to get-- you're trying to find out who these people are and what they're about and what they would do if they're confronted with these situations that are going to come up in the presidency. But like Jim, you're not electing a moderator, you're electing a president. And I think everybody who moderates one of these debates has to keep that in mind. But to your point, you're absolutely right. We are not all getting the same stuff anymore and the only way you can be truly informed is to consult a variety of sources before you make up your own mind.

**JIM LEHRER:** Let me edit a little bit to what I said. When I said I'm not functioning as a journalist, obviously you're functioning as a journalist, but not in a way that I would be if I were doing something on The News Hour or Bob was doing on CBS or Martha was doing on ABC. It’s a different forum with a different purpose. And yes, the skills involved that I use, Bob used, Martha used, whoever does it, moderates, are basic journalism skills because you got to know that the hell things-- what's going on. And you got to know how to ask a question, you got to know how to listen. Those are journalism
skills, and I didn’t say that very well. So anyhow, thank you for the opportunity to correct myself.

MARVIN KALB: Yes, please?

IAN WILSON: Hi, my name is Ian Wilson. I go to George Washington University, I'm an engineering student. One of the things I love about the debates is that they kind of serve to detach the candidates from these big campaign machines and let you see them for who they are as people. Where do you think the right line is between gotcha questions and kind of questions that don’t hit the points in terms of getting candidates to be real humans and what can be done to further that?

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, let me just-- and I'll answer this very shortly and then you'll hear from the others. I think what you're trying to do here is get people to say what they mean, not to say something that they didn’t mean. We're trying to find out what it is they believe. And that's why I don't think some sneak up gotcha thing, that doesn’t work because there are a lot of things. I mean, if somebody asked me who the president of some country, I mean, there are a whole lot of countries, I wouldn’t know what the answer to that was. And I don't think that would have anything to do with whether I'm an informed person. It’s just not something that I've thought of, or it’s not my specialty or something.

I think that's where the line is. You're trying to get people to say who they are and what they mean and why they have taken the positions they’ve taken. Not to try to mix them up. I mean, you'll find out soon enough if they know what they're talking about and if they know more than two paragraphs.

MARVIN KALB: You know, there's a suggestion-- I'm sorry, Martha, go ahead.
MARTHA RADDATZ: No, and one of the things you're trying to do is be relief air. I mean, you really are and let them-- let them talk about what they want to talk about. I think the difference here between intervening is that if I ask a question and I want an answer to that question, yes I agree, if they don’t answer my question, I might try to press that question. But if someone else is challenging them on accuracy from the way they see it, that's very different. So, I think-- you know, there's a point of view sometimes when people-- if people intervene and say, “But wait a minute, sir, that's not the way that happened,” there's not always an absolute truth to those things. So I think if there's a question that there's a clear answer to, you do have to say, “But wait a minute. It was 4:00, not 3:00, and whatever.” But if it’s anything with a lot of nuance, then I do think you let the other candidates challenge one another.

MARVIN KALB: You know, there is a suggestion in what you said a moment ago, Bob, that the American people for two years prior to the time that you have these presidential debates, were listening but not learning anything. And that it was up to you guys to come in with that moment of epiphany where you ask the question and 60 million people watch and suddenly we really understand what it is that they're saying. Why should we believe that the candidate trying for two years and probably 20 before that to be President of the United States, say something different to you, more meaningful and honest, than he’s been trying to say for two years? Why?

JIM LEHRER: It's not going to happen. If you're looking for somebody, a candidate, to say something different, then forget it. That's not what these debates are about. In fact, it’s just the opposite. As Bob says, you want to know what these people believe. And if they haven't--

MARVIN KALB: But don’t you think you know that after two years?

BOB SCHIEFFER: I'm not sure you do, Marvin.
JIM LEHRER: No, not everybody.

BOB SCHIEFFER: I mean, maybe those of us that it’s our business to follow the campaigns minute by minute and read the paper every day. Most people are not doing that. And that's nothing wrong with that, they don’t have time.

MARTHA RADDATZ: And that's the forum where you do have to choose what questions, what topics.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And finally, people are focused on this and sometimes they're going to hear somebody say-- he may have said it a hundred times-- but it may be the first time--

MARVIN KALB: That you heard it?

BOB SCHIEFFER: That potential person has heard it. And I think that's what makes it so important.

JIM LEHRER: And heard it in a comparative way. That'll be the only time that--

BOB SCHIEFFER: Yes, and comparative. “Well, that's different than what he thinks.”

JIM LEHRER: I know, exactly.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And I think that's--

JIM LEHRER: “Oh yeah, that's right. I read that somewhere.” I mean, it’s all part of an overall process.
MARVIN KALB: Yes, please?

JOE ZIMMERING: Hi, I'm Joe Zimmering [?], I'm a young professional here in D.C. My question is for Mr. Schieffer. Earlier this evening, you said that all presidential elections come down to the economy. The argument can be made that President Obama centered his candidacy more on social issues. My question is what impact do you think that plays today with the fiscal environment that the United States is facing? Would we have been served better if the discussions during these debates centered more on the economy?

BOB SCHIEFFER: I do think in the end this one did come down to the economy. I think the President may be basing his second term on social issues. I mean, if you take his inauguration speech as sort of a guidepost to where he wants to go from here, but I didn’t hear him talk a lot about during the campaign. He seemed to be talking about jobs and getting people back to work. And I think the economy began to get better. But I didn’t see him spending a lot of time talking about gay rights during the election. I didn’t hear him talk very much about gun control. I think it was mentioned once in one of the debates. I think they thought that his people thought that they had to get-- I mean, what they concentrated on-- in some ways, this was not so much an election about issues as it was about identifying their voters and getting their voters to the polls and recognizing that the demographics in this country were changing dramatically. And they figured that out and figured out how to get their people to the polls and the Republicans didn’t do as well on that. But I still think the core of the President’s message was the economy.

MARVIN KALB: I think the last question, please, because we're running out of time.

KERRY PICKET: Yes, this question is for Martha Raddatz. My name is Kerry Picket, I'm with Breitbart News. You seem to have gotten a lot of criticism during the vice
presidential debate and allowing Joe Biden to just run all over you on the constant laughing, the interrupting of Paul Ryan, particularly when he was talking about an armed Iran, green energy. How is that you can say that you had any kind of control over that debate whatsoever?

BOB SCHIEFFER: Tweet, Tweet, Tweet, Tweet.

MARTHA RADDATZ: Listen, I want to answer you fairly, I do. You're up there and you're as fair as you can possibly be. I think when we came out of that debate that Joe Biden had 45 seconds or something more than Congressman Ryan. I think Congressman Ryan felt it was fair, and that's what I can say. I think Congressman Ryan afterwards could not have been nicer, both of them were, and both of them thought it was fair.

[applause]

MARVIN KALB: Absolutely. Ladies and gentlemen, we have run out of time, even in this sequence of the program. And I think in the distinction that has been made tonight between moderator and reporter, and everybody being a reporter but serving a function as moderator in these presidential debates, we have a rich pool of journalists in this country because it is a free country and you got awfully good reporters.

And I just want to make the point that this weekend, we lost one of the really great reporters, Stanley Karnow, who died, and the kind of reporting that Stanley did in Vietnam, the 13 part series he did on PBS, his book on Vietnam, a history, are going to leave students and all of us as citizens enriched by the spirit and the energy and the diligence that Stanley put into that work. So we are all diminished by his departure. But in a way, enriched by the knowledge that good journalism, as I keep saying in these programs, good journalism is the essence, really, at the heart of a free and open society.
And so long as we have good journalists, we will continue to have a free and open society. And thank you all so very much for joining us tonight. Thank you. [applause]

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