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TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "CBS NEWS' FACE THE NATION."



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ARIANNA HUFFINGTON
Author, "Third World America"

BOB WOODWARD
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TRANSCRIPT

BOB SCHIEFFER: Today on FACE THE NATION is there anything new under the sun. That's the question on our annual Thanksgiving weekend books and authors broadcast.

Washington is mired in gridlock. The arguments rage over taxes, the size of government and foreign wars. But have we heard it all before. Today, we step back from the headlines and offer perspective from four widely-acclaimed authors--Edmund Morris, whose Colonel Roosevelt, the third of his books on Theodore Roosevelt is just out; Ron Chernow, author of the massive new biography of George Washington; Bob Woodward, who has yet another bestseller with Obama's Wars; and Arianna Huffington, whose provocative new book is Third World America.

Then, I'll have a final thought on Thanksgiving and why it is my favorite holiday.

But first, four authors talk about then and now on FACE THE NATION.

ANNOUNCER: FACE THE NATION with CBS News chief Washington correspondent, Bob Schieffer. And now from CBS News in Washington, Bob Schieffer.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And, good morning again. Edmund Morris, Ron Chernow and Bob Woodward are in the studio with us. Arianna Huffington joins us from Los Angeles. Welcome to all of you. Bob and Arianna write about the President, present. Ron and Edmund write about the past. Bob you write these books so full of inside information that the rest of us in journalism just stand back in awe. And our question that's always--how do you do it, how do you get people to tell you all this stuff? But you talk about in your new book how the President's Afghanistan policy evolved. And I want to talk to you first, because last week after an interview in the Washington Post, in which Afghan President Karzai was highly critical of the United States policy in Afghanistan. Secretary of State Clinton came on this broadcast and said he is now totally on board. Do you take her literally?

BOB WOODWARD (Obama's Wars): Well, for the moment it is-- I-- point out Karzai is a diagnosed manic depressive, somebody who has mood swings. Sometimes it's controlled sometimes it's not. If you just look at what he has said in public and on the record, it-- you know, one moment he's totally embracing us. The next moment he's denouncing the United States. The problem for the United States and this is one of the legacies of Vietnam, when you're in one of these wars you have to go with the leader, the country gives you. You can't try to manage that because too often that has backfired. So Karzai is the elected President of Afghanistan. So they have to deal with him. And this is one of the most unreliable, erratic allies we've ever had.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Arianna Huffington, in your new book Third World America you're-- you're just as-- have said-- has dire things to say about where we are domestically, as Bob Woodward has just talked about on what's going on in Afghanistan. When you say the middle class in America is about to become extinct, do you mean that literally or is that just a book title?

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON (Third World America): No, I chose that title deliberately, because although it's very jarring I wanted to sound the alarm because as an immigrant to this country, as somebody who has lived the American dream, I see dying all around me. When we have two-thirds of Americans right now who expect their children to be worse off than they are, when we have America ranked number ten in upward mobility behind France and Scandinavia countries and Spain, when we have twenty-five percent of young people out of work and twenty-

seven million people unemployed or underemployed, we know there is something fundamentally wrong. And people are sensing that. And that's why we have that sense of collective anxiety and fear about the future that in many profound ways is very un-American, because we are such a deeply-optimistic country at heart.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Ron Chernow, you wrote this massive book about George Washington. It is just-- just a fascinating book.

RON CHERNOW (Washington: A life): Thank you, Bob.

BOB SCHIEFFER: You heard what Arianna said. You heard what Bob Woodward just said. We-- we're into some tough business here right now. And the country is locked in a grid-- gridlock. I have to say in all the time I've been in Washington I've never seen it this bad. But I know there have been other periods. Are we seeing something new here or is this more normal than we'd like to admit?

RON CHERNOW: Well, Americans like to look back on the Founding Era as the golden age. And there are good reasons and bad reasons for doing that. Indeed the Founding Era had these men who were brilliant and erudite and fearless. We had in a country of three million people simultaneously active in American politics, a Benjamin Franklin, a George Washington, a Thomas Jefferson, a James Madison, a John Adams, and Alexander Hamilton and a John Jay. We would all be hard pressed to think of a single individual of the stature of any of those seven people even though the population today is one hundred times greater. On the other hand, because we look at the pictures and the people wore wigs and buckle shoes, people imagine that this was a quaint or a genteel time. And it was ever bit as nasty and partisan as things are today. George Washington, for instance, was accused of everything as President from plotting to restore the monarchy to having been a British double agent during the Revolutionary War.

BOB SCHIEFFER: What would TR have thought about what's going on today, because in his own way, Edmund Morris was something of a revolutionary? I mean, I wouldn't say revolutionary is the word for him. But he left the Republican Party after it re-nominated Taft which led, of course, to the election of Woodrow Wilson, a democrat. What would he think about all this today? Is there any correlation that you see between what he thought about and his vision for the country and, say, the rise of the Tea Party Movement?

EDMUND MORRIS (Colonel Roosevelt): Well, I'm not going to pluck him out of the past because you can't do that. He lived in his time and he represented his time. But I think one can see the present in the past. And, for example, this middle-class Tea Party movement, I guess it's lower middle class but it is sort of middle class, echoes the progressive middle class movement which volcanically erupted in 1910, exactly hundred years ago. And reached its peak in 1912, the campaign where Theodore Roosevelt became the almost third party candidate for the presidency and humiliated the sitting Republican President William Howard Taft and split the Republican vote and elected Woodrow Wilson. But that movement was white, middle class, extremely fervent and what-- the passion that drew them together was rather similar to the passion that links the Tea Party people now. And that is this feeling of exclusion, exclusion from the privileged interplay of a conservative Congress, financial institutions-- could the corporate elite, the middle class feels disenfranchised, angry, overtaxed and perplexed. And this anger is something quite formidable. And I would not be surprised if it doesn't crudest over the next two years and give us real trouble in 2012.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Arianna, do you see any Benjamin Franklins or George Washingtons, or people of that caliber out there in this kind of unrest that we see going on in the country right now?

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON: No. But first of all, let me completely agree with Edmund. That anger that Edmund described so eloquently is exactly what I see around the country. And it's beyond left and right anger. No party can claim-- can claim that it really is going to ultimately benefit them because it's very unpredictable and potentially very dangerous for our political stability. And although, I don't see any political giants out there, I see an incredible outpouring of compassion and creativity all around the country that's using social media to do an enormous amount of good. And what has been missing is the kind of magnifying glass that we in the media can put on all the creative stuff happening out in the country. And also on politicians, especially our President using the bully pulpit to at least put the spotlight on what is working in the country. And there was a very wonderful open letter to the President that Ron wrote recently that I was reading in which Ron asked the President to bring an element of surprise to what he-- he's doing, to go beyond the stale dogmas of left and right, both domestically and internationally.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Bob, do you-- do you think the same kind of people are being attracted to public service today as they were, say, during Washington's time?

BOB WOODWARD: I-- I think so. But I-- and I think the common thread here is with Washington, Roosevelt and Obama, there's such a concentration of power in the presidency and there always has been in this country and who the President is-- is going to answer questions, whether we address the Tea Party Movement, whether we address the anger that we're talking about and so what you scratch for as we try to write about presidents is, who is Barack Obama, who is George Washington, who is Teddy Roosevelt? And what I've done or tried to do is eighteen-months snapshot on Obama and it's a confusing picture. I-- I thought of calling the book the divided man because you-- you look at particularly the war in Afghanistan. He knows he has to lead. He's the commander-in-chief, but at the same time you see in the thousands of words, I quote, "these secret meetings," he realizes intellectually it is a very hard war to win and come out on top. And so there is that division and inconsistency in him which we haven't quite nailed where in the past, you-- you know, we really know.

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): What-- what do you-- what do you think about that, Ron? Do you think the same people are going into public service as did in that time? There were only three million people in the United States in those days.

RON CHERNOW (overlapping): You know, I think what happened during the-- the Founding era, you know, we-- we had a war to fight. We had a Constitution to-- to write. We had a federal government to forge. And intellectual and creative people who are narrowly considered very marginal and subversive and disrupted forces in politics were suddenly drawn into the center of the political arena because we had new doctrines and new institutions to create. So it's very, very hard to replicate that situation. But what worries me today is that there's such a reflexive denigration of Washington and of politicians. In the Eighteenth Century, politics was still an honorable profession. It's become a self-fulfilling prophecy that the more you run down politicians, the more likely you are to get mediocre politicians. And then that further reinforces the disenchantment and we're stuck in that kind of vicious spiral.

BOB SCHIEFFER: What would Teddy Roosevelt think of today's politics, Edmund?

EDMUND MORRIS: You keep asking these President questions, Bob. As the immortal Marisa Tomei said in My Cousin Vinny that's a (EXPLETIVE DELETED) question, because you cannot pluck people out of the past. And expect them to comment on what's happening today. I can only say that what he represented in his time is that what we look for in our presidents now. What we hope for in our presidents now and we're increasingly disappointed. He was somebody who understood foreign cultures. He represented the dignity of the United States. He was forceful, but at the same time civilized. And what I really feel these days is we've become such an insular people. And this-- I'm particularly sensitive to this as I suppose Arianna is as an immigrant because I represent, I come from another culture. I can call myself legitimately an African-American. And I'm aware of the-- the fact that people elsewhere in the world think differently from us. I can sort of see us, us Americans with their eyes. And not all that I see is-- is attractive. I see an insular people who are-- are insensitive to foreign sensibilities, who are lazy, obese, complacent and increasingly perplexed as to why we are losing our place in the world to people who are more dynamic than us and more disciplined.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right.

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON (overlapping): As an immigrant--

BOB SCHIEFFER: That's a good place to take a break.

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON (overlapping): --as a New York--

BOB SCHIEFFER: And we-- let us--

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON (overlapping): And then I can defend-- I can defend my fellow Americans after the break.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. We'll be back and you can do just that, Arianna, when we come back.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: Now we're back. Now with our four distinguished authors and Arianna Huffington as you were about to say--

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON: I just want to defend really, the state in which so many of my fellow Americans, immigrants and not, find themselves. There is a lot of legitimate anger out there. The sense that somehow the game is rigged, that if you are powerful enough, if you are running institutions that are too big to fail, you can get away with anything. And we never had the equivalent of a Ferdinand Pecora in the 1930s, who could actually run an investigation on what happened and how we got to be where we are. How we got to be in a place where millions of homes are being foreclosed and millions of people are losing their jobs without any real sense of recovery around the corner. And that lack of accountability, that lack of identifying what needs to fundamentally change and how we're going to go about turning our lives and our communities around is I think what is perpetuating that anger and putting us in that state that Edmund described which is a very un-American state in very profound ways.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Bob Woodward. Yes.

BOB WOODWARD: Yeah, well, American politics has always had an anger element in it. If you look at the Declaration of Independence, two-thirds of it is a list of angry grievances against King George III. So I-- I think it's a matter of political leaders finding a way to use this in a constructive way. I think that's quite possible. I think the leaders are out there. I wouldn't give up on them just because there are divisions. You and I remember the Nixon era, when the piston driving the Nixon presidency was hate. I think now, we have a lot of conflict, a lot of disagreement. I don't see hate in our politics. And so in a sense there's been an improvement.

BOB SCHIEFFER: You know, Ron, I want to ask you about one of the most fascinating parts of your book. I mean, you make the point that while most of our founders didn't hire-- didn't-- didn't hide under a bushel, I mean, they-- they let everybody know that they thought--

RON CHERNOW: Right.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --they were pretty smart.

RON CHERNOW: Right.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --and made good records of. George Washington though had just the opposite tact. He thought he was more powerful, if people knew less about him. So he tended not to-- tended not to speak unless he just sort of absolutely had to.

RON CHERNOW: That's right. I mean in terms, of the other founders, if Alexander Hamilton was sitting at this table or John Adams, both of them would be in pains to let us know within seconds that they were the smartest people at the table. Adams, in fact, attributed Washington's power to what he called the gift of silence. And, a-- a British diplomat who met Washington once said that Washington was the type of person who at-- at the end of the evening, Washington would know everything about you and you would know nothing about George Washington. I think Washington is different from the other founders because Washington is impressive when you watch what he does over long periods of time. He's not somebody who sparkles or twinkles in the-- in the moment. But he's somebody, when he pursued a goal for-- in the case of the revolutionary war for eight-and-a-half years he manages to hold his ragged army together in the face of shortages of money, men, clothing, shoes, blankets, muskets, gun powder. It was a-- it was a phenomenal achievement. And do you know--

BOB SCHIEFFER: There's one little anecdote I can't let you get away--

RON CHERNOW: Okay.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --without telling us. It may have been another reason you told us that he was silent a lot of the times.

RON CHERNOW: Oh, it was because of his dentures. By the time that Washington became President, he had only one tooth in his mouth. It was a very brave and very lonely lower left bicuspid. And he had this upper and lower dentures anchored on those-- on that one tooth. And the upper and lower dentures were connected in the back by curved metal springs. The only way this he could keep the dentures in his mouth that was-- by keeping his lips firmly compressed. Meant that every time he opened his mouth to speak there was always the possibility that the dentures would--

BOB SCHIEFFER: Fall out--

RON CHERNOW: --come keep flying out of his mouth. And it may or may not be coincidental that Washington gave many speeches at President that lasted one, two or three paragraphs.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Arianna how-- how long do you think a politician would last today if they tried to remain silent instead of trying to speak at every opportunity?

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON: Well, don't forget that now politicians have a lot of other ways to communicate beyond speaking and going on television. Look at Sarah Palin. Her use of Facebook and Twitter, and all the social media, which have made it possible for her to communicate without the filters of the mainstream media. So there's a whole new world out there. And many politicians are able to use as much more powerfully than others.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Edmund, what do you think was the secret of Theodore Roosevelt's success? Why was he a good leader?

EDMUND MORRIS: Well, he certainly had no problem in the teeth department.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Good teeth.

EDMUND MORRIS: He had--

BOB SCHIEFFER: Strong teeth.

EDMUND MORRIS: He had plenty of them. As some at __1812__ he had more teeth than seemed necessary for any practical purpose. And his mouth was never still. He loved to talk. In fact, he was obsessively garrulous. But he was so articulate, he was such a bright man and his vocabulary was so good and his speaking style was so forceful. That in those days he prevailed over audience after audience after audience. I think if he was on television now he would terrify the cameras because he was just so explosively articulate.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Bob Woodward, let me ask you this. What happened to Barack Obama after the campaign? It was one of the most effective campaigns I've ever seen and somehow after that it seems like he can't catch a break, whether it's his fault or not. Somehow he seems to have lost his groove.

BOB WOODWARD: That's true. And I think it's this ambivalence that he has. He-- he understands things. There is-- intellectually, but there is not that slogan from the campaign yes, we can. There is all-- he seems to be holding back. I mean you're talking about silence and the power of silence. In the CIA they often talk about let the silence suck out the truth. And you know as a journalist if you just sit there sometimes and let there become silence, people will fill it up with answers and in many ways you-- you get some of your best answers in that silence. I-- I think Obama, there is an uncertain compass in him that he is communicating to people and the-- the political opposition is taking advantage of it. And the general populous senses it. And so he's going to have to come out and come-- he has to come out with a clear program in statements on all the pressing issues that are on his plate which are many.

EDMUND MORRIS: Of course, he's not writing his own speeches anymore, which I think he did in the campaign. And he doesn't sound like Barack Obama anymore whereas when he was campaigning he sounded really authentic, passionate and extremely articulate.

BOB WOODWARD: I think he gets involved in the speeches but if you look at--

BOB SCHIEFFER: Hm.

EDMUND MORRIS: Presidency.

BOB WOODWARD: --his day. I mean, the day is crazy. And there-- there are so many meetings. There are so many outings. There are so many handshakes. There are so many trips to Ohio and here, you know, the-- as Roosevelt you always point out would read a book or two a day, right?

EDMUND MORRIS: Yeah, but presidents-- presidents have plenty of spare time. They-- they waste a lot of time grouping and grinning. But I know even from when I was in the White House with Ronald Reagan, he said to me, you know, I meet eighty new people every day but he still had plenty of time to write his letters by hand and to compose some of his strongest speeches.

BOB SCHIEFFER: I have to stop us there.

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON (overlapping): But there is something more fundamental.

BOB SCHIEFFER: I give you ten seconds, Arianna.

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON: Okay, very quickly. There is certain reverence for establishment that Barack Obama has demonstrated, whether it's Larry Summers on the economy or the generals when it comes to military policy and that reverence for establishments has made it very hard for him to really lead.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. I'm very sorry. Our clock has struck. Thank you all so much. Be back with some final thoughts in a second.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: Finally today, so another Thanksgiving is come and gone. Five years ago, I wrote a little essay on why Thanksgiving was my favorite holiday. And the other day a viewer said, I wish you would do that one again. So if not by popular demand, at least by special request, here it is and here's why Thanksgiving is my fav. Christmas has its music, the Fourth has fireworks, but we celebrate Thanksgiving by doing what we shouldn't--eating too much, maybe that's why it is so much fun. Thanksgiving is the one holiday that is not about someone or something else. It's just about us, our families and if they include grandchildren, God's preview to heaven--it's all the better. So we gather with no purpose but to be together, say thanks and dive into a great meal. Like an aircraft carrier that leaves port only when surrounded by smaller ships, Thanksgiving arrives surrounded by a flotilla of smaller holidays that are observed with the same discipline and ritual. Wednesday has become Getaway Day, the busiest travel day of the year. Friday is leftover day for the stay at homes and Black Friday for the shoppers. And then there is today--Sunday, when millions sigh and say of their recent visitors, we love them but thank heaven they're finally out of here. Now we can get back to normal. How to celebrate that? Go to the fridge right now. There should be a little something left to nibble on.

Back in a minute.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: That's it for today. We'll see you next week right here on FACE THE NATION.