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The 'Language of Values' in Politics

by George Lakoff

As part of Tikkun's Spiritual Activism Conference in Berkeley yesterday, UC Berkeley psychology professor George Lakoff spoke to the nearly 1,200 attendees about moral politics, spiritual beliefs, and some of the fundamental differences between right-wing and left-wing politics.

“Lots of people are partial progressives, and those are people that we can talk to,” Lakoff told the conference. He continued:

“The way to talk to them is to find out what they share with you, that is, what the nurturing parts of their lives are. What's particularly interesting is communities. In the red states -- I lived in the midwest for 4 1/2 years -- one of the most striking things to me was Midwestern communities. They were nurturing communities. They were communities where they had leaders who cared about members of those communities, where people cared about each other, where there were projections of the nurturant family on the communities. And that's always a place to start conversations, if you want to talk about values.”

Lakoff went on to talk about progressive Christianity versus conservative Christianity, and how that too is informing not only today's politics, but also many of our past struggles, including the anti-slavery movement, women's suffrage and the fight for civil rights.