

Frame101x - Week 3 - Episode 6

In 2013,

the US Senate is considering a proposal to grant citizenship to 11 million illegal immigrants.

The Republicans are strongly opposed to the proposal,

as are the members of the Tea Party.

To the consternation of many of them,

Marco Rubio,

a Republican senator from Florida,

votes in favor of the proposal.

Many voters are furious.

How can a right-

wing senator vote for such a left-

wing proposal?

In an address,

Rubio defends his decision:

I guess at the heart of my support of this proposal is that I know firsthand that while immigrants have always impacted America,

America changes immigrants even more.

Just a generation ago,

my parents lived in poverty in another country.

But America changed them.

It gave them a chance to improve their lives.

It gave them the opportunity to open doors for me that were closed for them.

And the longer they lived here,
the older their kids got,
the more conservative they became.

The more convinced they became that limited government,
free enterprise and our constitutional liberties made this nation special.

I am a witness to the transformative power of our country.

How it doesn't change people's pocketbooks,
it changes their hearts and minds.

As we have already seen,
the game of framing and reframing is often about values and policy.

In many countries,
the Left is in favor of granting citizenship to illegal immigrants,
on the grounds that they have been contributing to society for many years.

The position on the Right is very different.

Illegal immigrants have broken the law,
and the law must be enforced.

Illegal immigration is illegal.

Marco Rubio supports the Left's position on this issue.

However,

he links it to his own right-

wing,

conservative values – limited government,

free enterprise and constitutional liberties – and the emotions underlying these values,

such as a strong belief in the American dream and the transformative power of America.

Why is this frame so powerful?

As previously noted,

values help you to establish a relationship with people.

They help you reach their hearts and minds.

But that is not the whole the story.

For that,

we have to go to Ronald Reagan.

In 1984,

Reagan is seeking reelection.

At this time,

in the foreign policy arena,

he is known as the hawk,

the hard-

liner with hostile policies toward the Soviet Union.

Reagan embodies masculine values,

which hold that there is a clear distinction between good and evil and that leadership is about decisiveness and power and military strength.

The opposite of this is a feminine value system,

which holds that the distinction between good and evil is not always so clear-cut in real life:

good people can do bad things,

and bad people can do good things.

Leadership is about bridging differences,

establishing relationships and seeking interaction.

Being a leader means being willing to discuss and question your own position.

The usually masculine Reagan explains his policy towards Russia in a short campaign ad:

“There is a bear in the woods.

For some people,

the bear is easy to see.

Others don’t see it at all.

Some people say the bear is tame.

Others say it’s vicious and dangerous.

Since no one can really be sure who’s right,

isn’t it smart to be as strong as the bear?

If there is a bear.” The bear in this story is obviously the Russian bear.

So is this a masculine narrative?

Absolutely not.

It is entirely feminine.

Instead of a clear-

cut distinction between good and evil,

there is doubt all over.

There may or may not be a bear.

It may or may not be dangerous.

The narration is gentle.

The bear is not aggressive and simply roams around.

The ad ends with a question:

“isn’t it smart to be as strong as the bear?” In this example, Reagan embeds his masculine policies in feminine values.

Why is this frame so powerful?

Once again, values help you reach people’s hearts and minds.

In this case, they suggest that Reagan is far less of a masculine hawk than people might think.

But there is more to this frame.

By appealing to a feminine value system, Reagan also manages to capture his opponents’ values.

According to the campaign ad,

you can hold feminine values and reject a black and white view of the United States' relations with Russia and still support Reagan's policies.

So,

what is the takeaway of this episode?

Try to link your policies to your opponents values.

Then you can break their monopoly on those values.