

★ Preface ★

Ten years ago, in 2004, when the first edition of this book appeared, hardly anyone had heard of or thought about, much less discussed, how social and political issues were framed. Framing was an unknown and undiscussed concept, outside of the academic field of frame semantics.

Don't Think of an Elephant! became a best seller and changed all that. Discussions of how issues are framed are now commonplace in the national media. Millions of people hear the word “frame” in a discussion of issues and understand, at least basically, what it means. That is a lot for one small book to have accomplished.

But *Don't Think of an Elephant!* had higher goals. At the time, the Republicans were doing a much better job at framing issues their way than the Democrats were. Republican framing superiority had played a major part in their takeover of Congress in 1994. I and others had hoped that, starting in 2004, a widespread understanding of how framing worked would allow Democrats to reverse the trend.

In the 2008 election, Barack Obama led a Democratic sweep of the White House and Congress, using far superior framing, as well as superior on-the-ground tactics—besides being a far superior candidate. I had hoped that the superior framing would continue.

It didn't. Almost immediately after Obama's inauguration in 2009, the Republicans regained framing superiority in public discourse, and that played a major role in the ascendancy of the Tea Party in Congress and in state houses throughout the nation. Now Republicans are setting their framing sights on the cities as well as the states.

What happened?

This tenth anniversary edition of *Don't Think of An Elephant!* will do more than just recap what framing is and how it works. The goal of this edition is to explain what happened, why the Democrats have gone back to