

conservatives, who have defended huge tax loopholes, and have even drastically cut funding for the IRS so that there are not enough IRS workers or modern computers for the IRS to monitor tax evasion—mostly by the wealthy. Since the 1970s, the concept of taxation has shifted from the source of needed, and often revered, public resources to the idea that taxation is a burden—an affliction in need of “tax relief.”

The constant talk of taxation as an affliction and a burden has led biconceptuals to “switch” to viewing taxation as a burden rather than something that makes our private lives possible or that creates a base from which corporations prosper. While conservatives drive these frames home, progressives don’t realize that they have to drive their own frames home—and only later realize that the conversation has completely changed. “Suddenly” not just conservatives are talking about the burden of taxes instead of the value of public services, but so are the media, so are moderates, and, eventually, the “tax relief” language works its way into even progressive discourse. The term *Tea Party* was chosen to make it sound patriotic to oppose taxation.

The only progressive who has succeeded in getting across the idea that the private depends on the public is Elizabeth Warren, who has argued it repeatedly, and did so with special success when she was running for the Senate in 2012. At one point in his presidential campaign, President Obama tried the argument, but messed it up when he tried ad-libbing in a public talk and said, “If you’ve got a business, you didn’t build that. Somebody else made that happen.” Conservatives jumped on his remark and attacked him viciously for it. He could have fixed it by making the point correctly the very next day and every day thereafter, getting the idea out into public discourse, and allowing the press to do its job and present the overwhelming evidence for it. But the president was too timid and dropped it, missing a major opportunity to change public discourse.

Can progressives turn this around? Yes, but not without serious conscious commitment. The president and every progressive candidate, office holder, and public figure of any kind can start now: say it right, over and over. Connect the private-depends-on-the-public concept to something that