




BEYOND GOOD & EVIL


CHILDREN, MEDIA & VIOLENT TIMES

"Our children will inherit the world that we have created and they will learn from the models that we have presented. Given the world that we've created, and given the ways in which we have modeled our way of being in the world, what is the future that we can expect for them?"

BETTY BURKES



The belief that "good triumphs over evil" resonates deeply in our psyche through religious, cultural, and political discourses. It is also a common theme in entertainment media where the struggle between good and evil is frequently resolved through violence. The potential negative impact of media violence on children has long been a public concern. It is even more troubling when U.S. military violence, both in the news and in entertainment, is often glorified as heroic and patriotic.



Children's worlds of fantasy and reality collided when our political leaders, in response to the September 11th tragedy, simplified the complex international relationships into a fight between good and evil. The Bush administration used the narrative strategically—and the news media perpetuated it with enthusiasm—pumping up patriotism and generating public support for the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

This video examines how the "good and evil" rhetoric has taught children to dehumanize the enemy, justify their killing and treat the suffering of innocent civilians as necessary sacrifice.

FEATURING INTERVIEWS WITH:

Robert Jensen | Robin Anderson | Diane Levin | Nancy Carlsson-Paige
Merrie Najimy | Brian Wright | Eli Newberger | Betty Burkes | Children

**AVAILABLE NOW ON VHS & DVD FOR \$29.95
AT WWW.MEF.TV**



REMARKS

"Beyond Good & Evil highlights the failure of government and our most powerful media corporations either to protect children from the harm of real and virtual violence or to foster thoughtful, ethical responses to complex social and political issues. The pure-hearted reactions of the children in this film to the horrors of war are moving, while the simplistic thinking of many of the adults is appalling."

JOAN ALMON

Coordinator | U.S. Alliance for Childhood

"Beyond Good & Evil: Children, Media & Violent Times is a truthful and shocking look at how mass communication distorts and manipulates language and visual imagery. The video is a perfect tool in educating students for critical literacy, in aiding students to see the 'who benefits' from stories reported in the news and shown in movies. Beyond Good & Evil graphically shows students how the media's overriding objective of satisfying an audience converts real issues surrounding race, war and violence into nothing more than show business."

JEFF SAPP

Curriculum Specialist/Writer | *Teaching Tolerance Magazine*

"At a time when educators across the U.S. are dealing with how to complicate young people's thinking around the various world issues we as a country are involved in, here is a superb tool for teachers to explore these issues from a deeper perspective than I have ever seen. A wonderful staff development tool to discuss these issues as a staff and get a lively discussion going around some difficult to talk about topics."

LINDA LANTIERI

Founding Director, Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP)
A project of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR)

"How do simplistic 'good versus evil' and 'us versus them' messages influence U.S. culture and policy-making, from classrooms to media to the highest levels of government? This MEF film explores this question."

ROB WILLIAMS

Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME)

CONTACT INFORMATION

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CREDITS

Directed by MIGUEL PICKER

Produced by MIGUEL PICKER & CHYNG F. SUN

Edited by MIGUEL PICKER

Written by CHYNG F. SUN

Filmed, Edited & Graphics by MIGUEL PICKER

Music & Post-Production Audio by MIGUEL PICKER

Associate Producer SAMANTHA FEDER

Filming & Editing Assistant BRYNMORE WILLIAMS & JEFF DALE

Graphic Assistant BRADLEY CHEYNE

Video Cover Consultant LOLLY ROBINSON & SANJA TRPKOVIC

Poem Narration EREN ILLERI & REZAN BENATAR (COACH)

Child Narration MELINA HARRIS

Consultants JANINE JACKSON • ENID LEE • ELIZABETH ELLSWORTH • ALIZA DICHTER • NOLAN BOWIE • KATHY CLUNIS

Research Asistant KEVIN HEALEY (COORDINATOR) • ALPA PATEL • AMANDA PICKER • CAROL • LOCKETT GARZA

ELIZABETH CAMPOS • ISABEL VIGUILLA • BANCHA SRIKACHA • BRADLEY CHEYNE • MARK TYLER • JAMES FOLK

PATIENCE PETOSA • HEATH ALLEN • KENNETH BAISDON • JOLIN

Game Players CHRIS BISHOP & ALEJANDRO PICKER

UNITED STATES • 2003 • 37 mins • Color • BETA/DVD/DVCAM/VHS

1.16:1 aspect ratio • In English/Spanish Subtitles

A MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION PRODUCTION

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BIOGRAPHIES

DR. CHYNG F. SUN | *Co-Producer & Writer*

Born and raised in Taiwan, Dr. Chyng Feng Sun teaches media studies at New York University. Chyng received her Ph.D. in communication at UMass-Amherst, specializing in media literacy. Chyng also has an M.A. in children's literature (Simmons College) and an M.S. in Instructional Design (Syracuse University). Collaborating with Miguel Picker, Chyng also produced *Mickey Mouse Monopoly*, which is also distributed by Media Education Foundation. In addition, Chyng is an award-winning children's book author in Chinese and English.

MIGUEL PICKER | *Director & Co-Producer*

Miguel Picker is a Chilean composer, musician, and award-winning video editor and producer. Often described as a "true Renaissance man", Miguel has held concerts and produced music and story CDs, animated films and videos for children and adults, in English and Spanish. He also collaborated with Chyng Feng Sun on *Mickey Mouse Monopoly*.

FEATURED INTERVIEWS

DR. ROBERT JENSEN Professor of Journalism, University of Texas at Austin

DR. ROBIN ANDERSON Associate Professor and Director of Peace and Justice Studies in the Department of Communication and Media Studies, Fordham University

DR. DIANE LEVIN Child Psychologist | Professor of Education, Wheelock College

DR. NANCY CARLSSON-PAIGE Child Psychologist | Professor of Education, Lesley College

MERRIE NAJIMY Elementary Education, Thoreau Elementary School, Concord, MA | President of the Arab-American Anti-discrimination Committee

BRIAN WRIGHT Elementary Education, Young Achiever Elementary School, Boston, MA

DR. ELI NEWBERGER Professor of Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School

BETTY BURKES Chair of the U.S. section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom | Hague Appeal For Peace

QUOTES FROM THE FILM

"...The American people tend to think that the rest of the world is just too complicated for them to understand and that's very much in the interests of powerful people to continue that belief because if the world is too complex than people are easily led to accept a big story about good and evil, a simple story to take that complexity and make it understandable."

ROBERT JENSEN

"Since September 11, the rhetoric of 'good and evil' has been used to pump up support for U.S. policies and patriotic fervor and prepare the American people for the U.S. government to invade Iraq and Afghanistan."

BETTY BURKES

"The problem with patriotism is that it can get used to pressure people or to move people in a direction of feeling like you have to stand behind what your country does no matter what. It's sort of like 'you're with us or against us.'"

NANCY CARLSSON-PAIGE

"The logic of good and evil is seductive because it makes what is complicated appear simple. We are comforted by the notion that we are good and then we relinquish our authority to those in power who promise to protect us from what is evil. The media plays a crucial role in both serving us misinformation and perpetuating this simplistic logic in its news reports which are often indistinguishable from entertainment."

BETTY BURKES

"From very early on in children's programming, children are encouraged to separate and be alienated from this 'other,' and, in fact, encouraged to hate the other through a series of messages that polarize the world into good and bad..."

NANCY CARLSSON-PAIGE

"Not only are they [children] viewing violence often, but they're in an isolated relationship to their computer and what are they not learning? They're not learning all of the skills and awarenesses for problem solving, communication, working things out with other kids that would come naturally through play experiences where other children were present."

NANCY CARLSSON-PAIGE

"Many of the interactive war games are about past wars. These games also have a way of blurring reality so that the games are promoted as if they are telling the true story, when in fact they are made up stories promoted and presented as facts... These games have a way of blurring the truth. Games are promoted as if they are real. Killings are rewarded and appreciated."

BETTY BURKES

"You need three things to kill: you need the weapon, the skill, and the will to kill. Video games can arguably provide 2 out of 3: the will, the desire, the reflex, and the skill. There is a reason why every law enforcement agency and every military organization practices on man-shaped silhouettes and realistic depictions of human beings—because we had to create a killing simulator. Now we've provided that same mechanism to the kids."

LT. COLONEL DAVE GROSSMAN

"The problem is there are no consequences to a Nintendo war. There aren't people on the other side of the video screen who are getting killed as a result of this kind of fun and games. So when you turn war into a game you lose what the basic essence of war is, and that really is death."

DR. ROBIN ANDERSEN

(continued on next page)

QUOTES FROM THE FILM

"...What they [children] are hearing is a world that sounds very much like the world that they've heard on entertainment media, that there are good guys, us, the Americans, and there are bad guys, bin Laden and his people, and the Taliban, and the Afghans."

DR. DIANE LEVIN

"...There are many sanctions that we have in our culture and society against killing, and when we go to war what the government is doing is asking the population to put aside those sanctions against killing and allow their government essentially to do state sanctioned killing. This is necessary to construct the enemy as horribly vile and inherently evil."

DR. ROBIN ANDERSEN

"What we see in the media is a very human side of our own suffering... We don't hear the humanizing side of the 'other,' the enemy, whoever we're in war with at the time."

MERRIE NAJIMY

"Saddam Hussein's regime was among the most brutal left on the planet. Then in this story you have the hero. The hero is the United States. The benevolent empire going forward to do good for the world. And the American military being the embodiment of that."

DR. ROBERT JENSEN

"Far more children than soldiers die and are wounded in war."

ELI NEWBERGER, M.D.

"The danger of this simplistic thinking about good and evil is that in the process of punishing the evil, one becomes the evil that one deplors."

BETTY BURKES

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FACT SHEET

- » The average American child witnesses 200,000 acts of violence on television by age 18.¹
- » Percentage increase of network news homicide coverage from 1993 and 1996: 721%.²
- » Percent reduction in the American homicide rate between 1993 and 1996: 20%.³
- » Percentage of programs that show the long-term effects of violence: 16%.⁴
- » Percentage of programs that emphasize an anti-violence theme: 4%.⁵
- » Violence (homicide, suicide, and trauma) is a leading cause of death for children, adolescents and young adults, more prevalent than disease, cancer or congenital disorders.⁶
- » In households with children, 67% own a video game system.⁷
- » In a report by the Federal Trade Commission, of 118 “M” rated games, 70% were targeted to children under 17 years of age.⁸
- » Unaccompanied children, ages 13 to 16, were able to buy “M” rated video games 85% of the time.⁹
- » Witnessing repeated violent acts increases general feelings of hostility and can lead to desensitization and a lack of empathy for human suffering.¹⁰
- » More than 80% of the violence portrayed in contemporary music videos is perpetrated by attractive protagonists against a disproportionate number of women and blacks.¹¹
- » Among urban youth, interpersonal violence is the most prevalent cause of injury (33%), and the incidence of gunshot wounds has increased dramatically in the past decade.¹²

1. “Children, Violence, and the Media,” Senate Judiciary Committee Staff Report, 1999. (www.tvturnoff.org)

2. Budd, Craig, and Steinman. *Consuming Environments*. Rutgers University Press, 1999. (www.tvturnoff.org)

3. *ibid*

4. *Mediascope*. National Television Violence Study. Studio City, CA, 1999.

5. *ibid*

6. American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001.

7. Subrahmanyam et al, 2001.

8. Federal Trade Commission, 2000.

9. *Ibid*

10. Policy Statement. *Pediatrics* 2001; 108: 1222-1226.

11. Rich M, Woods ER, Goodman E, Emans SJ, DuRant RH *Aggressors or victims: gender and race in music video violence*. *Pediatrics* 1998; 101:669-674

12. Nance ML, Stafford PW, Schwab CW. *Firearm injury among urban youth during the last decade: an escalation in violence*. *J Pediatr Surg* 1997; 32:949-952

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Children in Brian Wright's classroom, Young Achiever Elementary School, Boston, MA, from *Beyond Good & Evil*.



Children in Merrie Najimy's classroom, Thoreau Elementary School, Concord, MA, from *Beyond Good & Evil*.