

MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

60 Masonic St. Northampton, MA 01060 | TEL 800.897.0089 | info@mediaed.org | www.mediaed.org

Independent Media in a Time of War Featuring Amy Goodman

Transcript

INTRODUCTION

[Democracy Now] **MICHAEL MOORE:** I would like tonight to call for a removal, an immediate removal, of all US troops from CBS, ABC, NBC, Fox, CNN, all of them.

[CNN] We are told by General Franks.

[CNN] The embed program, I think, is just superb.

[MSNBC] We have three aircraft carrier battle groups.

[MSNBC] Still a great deal of activity.

[NBC] Just like out of an action movie.

[CNN] **GEN. WESLEY CLARK:** We've hit, we've struck.

[CNN] We can hear this sort of adrenaline pumping.

[MSNBC] **DENNIS MCGINN:** We are coming and you can't do anything about it.

[Music] Don't believe the hype. False media. We don't need it do we?

AMY GOODMAN: We have to fight for an independent media.

RADIO HOST: She is a journalist. She is the host of Democracy Now.

AMY GOODMAN: My name is Amy Goodman.

[News Clip] Who do you represent?

AMY GOODMAN: Democracy Now. What most media outlets did not report.

[Democracy Now] Civilian toll is an afterthought in all of this.

ANI DIFRANCO: You can keep the Pentagon.

MICHAEL FRANTI: People with no voice.

[News Clip] Millions of people out in the streets.

ANI DIFRANCO: You can keep the propaganda.

PROTESTER: And we say it is not in our name.

ANI DIFRANCO: Keep each and every TV that's been trying to convince me to participate in some prep school punk's plan to perpetuate retribution.

AMY GOODMAN: Thank you very much for joining us.

[Music] Don't believe the hype.

AMY GOODMAN: The media are among the most powerful institutions on Earth because they're not only among the wealthiest, but they are the way the whole world views us and we view each other.

THE VIDEO GAME WAR

AMY GOODMAN: The other morning I was invited on a commercial radio station – a little bit of a shock jockey station – for a few minutes, after the statue of Saddam Hussein was pulled down by the US Marines in Baghdad. One of their first questions was, “How do you feel now?” They also asked me about what I think of the torture rooms that were found. In talking about the torture rooms I could only think about how important it was to be aware of what torture is, how horrific it is, whether Saddam Hussein does it, that military tyrant who was shored up by the United States for so long. Or the fact that now there is an actually acceptable debate in this country, in the mainstream media, about whether the US should torture people to get information, and if the US doesn't do it, for example, those at Guantanamo Bay, those at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, is it okay to send them to countries that do engage in torture? I thought those torture chambers of Saddam Hussein are a very important lesson to all of us about what is not acceptable in a civilized society neither here nor there. There was a piece in the Wall Street Journal the other day about the difference between CNN and CNN International, you know, the two different networks owned by the same company, and they talked about the difference on that day, the day that the statue was pulled down. On CNN, all day we watched that statue pulled down then went back up and pulled down again.

[CNN] And now it's pulled.

AMY GOODMAN: On CNN International, they also showed the statue pulled down, but it was split screen and on half the screen they showed the casualties of war and on the other half they showed the statue pulled down. Now I'm not talking about the difference between CNN and Al-Jazeera. I'm talking about the difference between CNN and CNN International. It means that that company knows exactly what it's doing, what they provide for domestic consumption, and what they provide to the rest of the world. Now think about what the rest of the world sees and what we see here in the United States. Some of you may have heard the hour discussion we had with CNN's Aaron Brown. And we're asking him a lot of questions like, “Where are the pictures of casualties in the US media?”

[Democracy Now] AARON BROWN: I think there are actually legitimate questions here about ‘have we over-sanitized this?’

AMY GOODMAN: And he said, “Well, some of them are tasteless,” and we said, “Well, war is tasteless.” I was speaking at St. Mark’s Church in New York, and I talked about how Al-Jazeera shows all these casualty pictures, and a journalist came up to me afterwards from Berlin and said, “It’s not just Al-Jazeera that’s showing these. All over Europe we see them day and night.” It’s just here, in the United States, that you don’t see them. And so we asked Aaron Brown, “Why don’t they show some of the shots?” You know, CNN was kicked out of Baghdad, and he said “Yeah, it’s tough to get those shots.” I said, “You have no trouble taking Al-Jazeera’s footage of the bombs over Baghdad, you know, the kind of fireworks display that we saw, that nightscape. But when it came to taking their pictures of casualties...” Well, he said, “They’re tasteless.” I really do think that if for one week in the United States, we saw the true face of war, we saw people’s limbs sheared off, we saw the kids blown apart, for one week, war would be eradicated. Instead, what we see in the US media, it’s just quite astounding. It’s the video war game – those grey grainy photographs with the target on them, looking down. But you don’t see, we don’t see those people as the targets on the ground.

REPORTER: The administration is very proud of the precision with which they went about yesterday’s attack.

[MSNBC] REPORTER: There had been apparently very few casualties, which is exactly what the United States government wanted, right Colonel?

“GENERAL” NEWS

AMY GOODMAN: A Newsday reporter asked me the other day, “Am I opposed to embedded reporters?” You know, they say it in the mainstream media. I don’t have to say it. They say, “and our reporter embedded with the Marines.”

[CNN] Our Diana Mirrio, who is embedded with British troops in Southern Iraq.

[CNN] We had our first airborne in Najaf.

[MSNBC] HANSON HOSEIN: This is crazy...

AMY GOODMAN: Even Walter Cronkite, the other day, raised some objections with an unfortunate choice of words, he said, and he was critical. You rarely hear that criticism in the mainstream media from a working journalist today, “What kind of critical reporting do we get?”

[CNN] WALTER RODGERS: You might find this interesting that, when the tanks are inspected, it’s not unlike taking your car to a gas station. Uh, they have a dipstick that they put into the engine to check the oil levels.

[Fox News] LT. GEN. TOM MCINERNY: No one does this better in the world than the American GI.

AMY GOODMAN: It's this parade of retired Generals that are on the networks' payrolls.

[MSNBC] I'm back with two of our military analysts who have been with us this morning who are helping us to understand this war.

AMY GOODMAN: You now have people like Wesley Clark, General Wesley Clark, on the payroll of CNN, who is questioning their embedded reporter on the front line. He is questioning the reporter and the reporter is saying, "Yes, sir!" And "No, sir!"

[CNN] GEN. WESLEY CLARK: This is a very special moment in time for the men and the families and for this country.

[CNN] REPORTER: It is, it is often fascinating for me. General Clark and I have spent a good amount of time together today and over the week.

AMY GOODMAN: This is journalism in America today. They have redefined general news, and we have got to challenge that.

UNHEARD VOICES

AMY GOODMAN: Why is it, if they have these retired generals on the payroll, they don't have peace activists and peace leaders also on the payroll? So let's have the same number of reporters embedded with Iraqi families. Let's have reporters embedded in the peace movement all over the world and maybe then we'll get some accurate picture of what's going on. Aaron Brown had some interesting comments. He said, "No, because these generals are analysts." He said, he admits they came late to the peace movement, but once the war started, those voices are irrelevant because then the war is on.

[Democracy Now]

AARON BROWN: It's just not the relevant question right now.

AMY GOODMAN: Why not?

AARON BROWN: Because it's over. It's on. It's being done.

AMY GOODMAN: I asked him, "Well, how would the Vietnam war ever have ended, then? And do you think we would have seen the most famous picture from the Vietnam War – that picture of the little girl with the napalm burning all over her – would we have seen that picture that helped end the war?" And he said, "Well, of course." I said, "how?" We are seeing these romanticized pictures of soldiers against sunsets and the planes on those aircraft carriers that the embedded photographers are getting at the sunrise hour. The Newsday reporter who did this profile today asked about my engaging in advocacy journalism. And I said, "Well, the establishment reporters are my model."

[TV Ad: NBC News] Revolutionary coverage. The power of NBC News.

AMY GOODMAN: Think about Dan Rather, the night that the bombs started falling on Iraq. He said, “Good morning, Baghdad.”

[CBS] **DAN RATHER:** CBS News has been told...

AMY GOODMAN: And Tom Brokaw said, “We don’t want to destroy the infrastructure of Iraq because we’re going to own it in a few days.”

[NBC] Shock and Awe...

AMY GOODMAN: And then Peter Jennings was interviewing Chris Cuomo, who is a reporter for ABC, and he was out on the street, where we were, Times Square, thousands of people in the freezing rain, who had come out to protest the war and they had all sorts of signs that were sopping wet and people were trying to keep the umbrellas up and the police charged a part of the crowd. Jennings said to Cuomo, “What are they doing out there? What are they saying?” And he said, “Well they have these signs that say things like ‘No blood for oil’ but when you ask them what that means, they seem very confused. I don’t think they know why they’re out here. I guess they got caught in a traffic jam.” Well, why not have Peter Jennings, why doesn’t he, instead of asking someone who clearly doesn’t understand why they’re out there, invite one of them into the studio and have a discussion, like he does with the generals.

[ABC] **PETER JENNINGS:** Any change since yesterday?

AMY GOODMAN: Why don’t they also put doctors on the payroll? That way you can have the general talking about the bomb that Lockheed Martin made and the kind of plane that drops it and whether it was precision-guided or not, and then you can have the doctor talking about the effect of the bomb, you know, not for or against the war, just how a cluster bomb enters your skin and what it means when your foot is blown off – if you’re lucky and you’re not killed. So why not have doctors and generals, at least? But this is just to show how low the media has gone.

[Fox News] Stay brave. Stay aware. And stay with Fox.

AMY GOODMAN: I mean you have not only Fox, but MSNBC and NBC, yes, owned by General Electric, one of the major nuclear weapons manufacturers in the world. But MSNBC and NBC, as well as Fox, titling their coverage, taking the name of what the Pentagon calls, the invasion of Iraq.

[NBC] Operation Iraqi Freedom...

AMY GOODMAN: Operation Iraqi Freedom. So that’s what the Pentagon does, and you expect that they research the most effective, propagandistic name to call their operation. But for the media to name their coverage what the Pentagon calls it, everyday seeing “Operation Iraqi Freedom,” you have to ask, if this were state media, how would it be any different?

[Fox News] **GEORGE W. BUSH:** In Iraq, the regime of Saddam Hussein is no more.

[Academy Awards] **MICHAEL MOORE:** We live in a time where we have a man sending us to war for fictitious reasons. We are against this war, Mr. Bush. Shame on you, Mr. Bush. Shame on you. And any time you've got the Pope and the Dixie Chicks against you, your time is up. Thank you very much.

AMY GOODMAN: Even now, the media has had to start reporting a little bit on the protest, but it's not those events that we're talking about. It's the daily drumbeat coverage, who's interviewed on the front pages of the New York Times and the Washington Post, who gets the headline stories in the network newscast, that matters. They are the ones shaping foreign policy. Fair did a study. In the week leading up to General Colin Powell going to the Security Council to make his case for the invasion and the week afterwards, this is the period where more than half the people in this country were opposed to an invasion, they did a study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, ABC Evening News and the News Hour with Jim Lehrer, PBS, the four major newscasts, two weeks. Three hundred ninety three interviews on war. Three were anti-war voices. Three of almost four hundred and that included PBS. This has to be changed. It has to be challenged. We are not the only ones. At Pacifica Radio, NPR stations, we are not the only ones that are using the public airwaves. They are too. And they have to provide the diversity of opinion that fully expresses the debate and the anguish and the discussions that are going on all over this country. That is media serving a democratic society.

CASUALTIES OF WAR

AMY GOODMAN: For a while, in talks before the invasion, I'd been saying, as we see the full-page pictures of the target on Saddam Hussein's forehead, that it would be more accurate to show the target on the forehead of a little Iraqi girl because that's who dies in a war. The overwhelming majority of people who die are innocent civilians. And then what happens on the first night of the invasion – missile strikes a residential area in Baghdad. They say they think they've taken out Saddam Hussein. Independent reporter May Ying Welsh, who stayed there as the bombs fell, who you heard on Democracy Now on a regular basis, went to the hospital right after that first attack. And there was a four-year-old girl critically injured from that missile attack. And her mother critically injured, and her mother's sister. That's who dies. That's who gets injured in war.

Gandhi asking, you know, when he was asked, "What do you think of Western civilization?" He said, "I think it would be a good idea." Here are some of the headlines: "Can you help me get my arms back?" "Do you think the doctors can get me another pair of hands? If I don't get a pair of hands, I'll commit suicide." These were the words of twelve-year-old Ali Ismael Abas, who lost his arms, was orphaned, and received severe burns when a missile hit his home ten days ago. The wounded Iraqi boy has begun eating food and drinking normally, after recovering from initial surgery at a hospital in Kuwait City to place a temporary graft over the deep burns covering his chest, abdomen and groin. He is expected to undergo further surgery that will involve grafting skin from his own body. The badly burned child amputee has become the icon of civilian suffering in the US-led invasion of Iraq. His pregnant mother, father, brother and twelve other

relatives died when a missile obliterated their home. One story. And I think of the woman from the shock jock station who asked, “Now what do you think? Are you really not going to call this a victory?”

DARK DAY FOR JOURNALISM

AMY GOODMAN: I talked earlier about it being such a dark day for journalism in this country. It’s a dark day for journalists around the world with, at this point, we think, fourteen journalists killed. An incredibly high proportion of the foreign deaths. We don’t know the number of Iraqi deaths, thousands of people have been killed, but journalists, mainly unembedded reporters, like those at the Palestine Hotel. Everyone knew where the Palestine hotel was, and it was packed with hundreds of reporters, who are packed in like sardines, when the US military shelled the hotel, killing a Ukrainian cameraman, killing a Spanish cameraman, and then there was Tariq Ayoub, who was the Palestinian-Jordanian reporter who had just come in from Jordan and who was at his office with Al-Jazeera. Al-Jazeera had given the coordinates of the office repeatedly to the Pentagon and maybe that was their first mistake.

[Democracy Now] JIHAD BALLOUT: We gave them the exact location in terms of longitude, latitude, the height of the building from the ground.

AMY GOODMAN: Because the Pentagon dropped a missile on the Al-Jazeera offices and killed the thirty-four-year-old journalist. His wife wailing at the funeral said, “Hate breeds hate. The US said they were doing this to route out terrorism. Who’s engaged in terrorism now?” Abu Dhabi TV, which was right next door, their competitor, the reporters were still broadcasting as the tanks surrounded them, and they knew that they had already bombed the Al-Jazeera offices, pleaded with anyone to help save them, as the tanks surrounded and shelled their offices. In this country, there has hardly been a peep from the establishment mainstream media objecting to what the US military has done. Pentagon spokesperson Victoria Clark, who hails from Hill and Knowlton, she was in charge of the Washington office in the first Gulf War when that fifteen-year-old Kuwaiti girl gave that heart-rending testimony before the Human Rights Caucus about how she watched Iraqi soldiers drag Kuwaiti babies out of incubators. Turned out it was all a hoax. She was never there. She’s the daughter of the Kuwaiti Ambassador. Well, the Pentagon was very impressed and she is now their spokesperson. The two Spanish journalists who died, two, in the Palestine Hotel, Jose Couso from Tele 5, he was a cameraman, and also the Spanish reporter who died, Julio Anguita Parrado, reporter for Spanish newspaper El Mundo. When this happened, Spanish reporters back in Spain said, “No.” And they engaged in a one-day strike. When the Prime Minister of Spain came to the Spanish parliament, they laid down the tools of their trade; they put down their cameras, their pens and their pencils. They laid down the cables and the microphones, and they turned their backs and said “change,” that they would not record the words of the powerful who have condoned these acts. And then they went outside, hundreds of media workers, and these were the elite journalists of Spain, and they stood outside the US embassy, blocked the intersection and they chanted “Murderer, Murderer.” As the press in this country, unfortunately people like Anne Garrels of NPR said that, “Tariq Ayoub should have known better than to be in his office.” The Agence France-Presse reporter in New York was outraged as he listened to this report. They got calls from all over, “How dare you blame the

victim?” And she, a reporter herself, and I watched on CNN as Aaron Brown asked General Wesley Clark why this happened and he said, “Well, this was clearly a mistake.” And Victoria Clark is put on saying, “They should know that Baghdad is dangerous, and they should not be there.” I believe that’s the rule of reporters to go to where the silence is, to bring us the voices of people who are at ground zero. Now it’s one thing if they were killed by others, but they were killed by Victoria Clark’s own troops and she never apologized. The Pentagon has yet to do that. And now fourteen journalists are dead. It is a very strong message that is being sent to the world’s reporters now that this embedding has become such a success. And that is, “You’re in bed with the military or well, think about the Palestine Hotel.”

NO POLITICAL SPEECH ALLOWED

ANI DIFRANCO: And the mighty multinationals have monopolized the oxygen so it’s as easy as breathing for us all to participate.

AMY GOODMAN: On the night that the bombing began, to go over to the Ani DiFranco concert at the New Jersey Performing Arts Centre, and some of you may have heard what happened, you might wonder, “Why go at the moment that the bombs are about to fall,” but two thousand young people were packed into the Fine Arts Centre in Newark, New Jersey, to see Ani, a wonderful artist, perform. And she said I could introduce her and also explain the importance of independent media in a time of war and where people could get alternative information. They were also going to have political tabling. And we raced over to the Performing Arts Centre, and I call the cell phone and Ani answered and I thought she was going on the stage and getting ready and I said, “What are you doing answering this phone?” She said: “I don’t know if the concert’s going to go on. They will probably close down the concert if you go on the stage. They said, ‘no political speech allowed.’ But we are willing to risk this.” They said, “Take the mic, make your statement about democratic media in a time of war, and if they close the mic, which we expect, we have a mic right behind, that’s Ani’s mic, pick it up and just keep on talking.” Now why is this significant? And why does it relate to the rest of the country? ClearChannel is the very Bush-connected company that went from owning forty-seven radio stations to fourteen hundred in no time at all. As the FCC and Michael Powell, the son of General Powell who heads it, are in the process of deregulating the media, and so we have seen this explosion of, I would say, ownership – except it’s this concentration of ownership, owning fourteen hundred radio stations in this country. They are sponsoring pro-war rallies, and they’re saying that music that is critical of war cannot be played, and they are pushing other kinds of songs. And they are saying ‘no political speech allowed.’ Well, we got up and we gave our little speech, and they didn’t close the mic and Ani got up and she said, “That’s one for the people and zero for the knuckleheads.” And then she sang.

ANI DIFRANCO: You’re our next bold move. The next thing you’re gonna need to prove to yourself.

AMY GOODMAN: These are very serious times at every level. Michael Franti, the great hip hop artist, just told his story on Democracy Now of being at a concert on the East Coast, flying home to California, and the FBI knocking on the door – the FBI knocking on the door of one of

the band members' homes and starting to question them and showing them pictures of their performance the night before on the East Coast and starting to question about who everyone is. He described getting his MTV e-mail. These are artists, right, who have got their music videos that said, "We will play no songs that say the word 'war.'" This all has to be challenged.

DISSENT AND DEMOCRACY

AMY GOODMAN: Our mission is to make dissent commonplace in America. So you're not surprised when you're at work and someone walks over to the water cooler and makes a comment. And someone isn't shocked and says, "What's that all about?" But that it comes out of the finest tradition that built this country. People engaged in dissent. We have parallel worlds in this country. For some, it's the greatest democracy on Earth. There is no question about that, but for others, I mean, immigrants now in detention facilities, they have no rights, not even to a lawyer. And we have to be there, and we have to watch, and we have to listen, and we have to tell their stories until they can tell their own. That's why, I think, Democracy Now is a very good model for the rest of the media – as is the Indy Media Centre all over the country and the world. Built on almost nothing, except the goodwill and the curiosity and the interest and the passion of people who are tired of seeing their friends and neighbors through a corporate lens and particularly tired and afraid of the fact that that image is being projected all over the world. That is very dangerous. Dissent is what makes this country healthy, and the media has to fight for that, and we have to fight for an independent media.

[END]