

A MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION PRODUCTION

This Land is Our Land

The Fight to Reclaim the Commons

“If you steal \$10 from a man’s wallet you’re likely to get into a fight...But if you steal billions from the commons, co-owned by him and his descendants, he may not even notice.”

- Walter Hickel, Former Interior Secretary

Running Time: 46 minutes

Date Produced: 2010

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David Bollier | david@bollier.org

FILM SYNOPSIS

For more than three decades, transnational corporations have been busy buying up what used to be known as the commons -- everything from our forests and our oceans to our broadcast airwaves and our most important intellectual and cultural works. In *This Land is Our Land*, bestselling author David Bollier, a leading figure in the global movement to reclaim the commons, bucks the rising tide of anti-government extremism and free market ideology to show how commercial interests are undermining our collective interests. Placing the commons squarely within the American tradition of community engagement and the free exchange of ideas and information, Bollier shows how a bold new international movement steeped in democratic principles is trying to reclaim our common wealth by modeling practical alternatives to the restrictive monopoly powers of corporate elites.

ABOUT DAVID BOLLIER

David Bollier is an author, activist, blogger, and consultant who has spent the past ten years exploring the commons as a new paradigm of economics, politics, and culture. He has pursued this work in collaboration with a variety of international and domestic partners and speaks widely about the commons. He recently co-founded a new international organization, Commons Strategies, dedicated to developing and promoting commons-based public policies and initiatives. In 2010, Bollier taught a course on the topic as the Croxton Lecturer at Amherst College.

Bollier's latest book, *Viral Spiral: How the Commoners Built a Digital Republic of Their Own* (2009), describes the rise of free software, free culture, and the commons-based movements seeking to advance open business models, open science, and open educational resources. His first book on the commons, *Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of Our Common Wealth* (2002), is now widely used in colleges around the world. It surveys the many market enclosures of people's shared resources, from public lands and the airwaves to public spaces, plant and animal genes, and knowledge. *Brand Name Bullies: The Quest to Own and Control Culture* (2005) documents the vast expansion of copyright and trademark law over the past generation.

Bollier has worked with American television writer/producer Norman Lear since 1984, and is Senior Fellow at the Norman Lear Center at the USC Annenberg School for Communication. He is also Co-founder and board member of Public Knowledge, a Washington policy advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the information commons. Bollier lives in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Visit David Bollier's website at www.bollier.org

DAVID BOLLIER QUOTATIONS FROM *THIS LAND IS OUR LAND*

“Through the 1980s and 1990s, what was owned and shared by all of us was privatized, commodified, and converted into a total market order. And it’s only gotten worse over the past twenty years.”

“To declare that something is a commons is to declare that we have a moral, personal connection with it. It’s not just a product or an object. It’s a part of me and my community, and it shapes my identity and behavior.”

“Amazingly, the private takeover of what used to belong to all of us is presented as some kind of advance for humanity. Meanwhile, our public infrastructure for water is crumbling.”

“From the clear-cutting of our public forests, to the depletion of our national mineral wealth, when it comes to market enclosures, it seems that *nature* is always the first victim.”

“While the mineral wealth from our national lands is enormous, we in fact have very *little* to show for it. And that’s because corporations have been reaping the benefits of a sweetheart deal that’s been on the books for more than 150 years.”

“It’s been estimated that Americans have lost more than \$245 billion worth of revenues from this law [the General Mining Act of 1872] – while seeing lots of beautiful mountains and rivers ruined from mine tailings and other waste.”

“Now sometimes it’s tough to wrap our minds around this, but the airwaves themselves are a gift of nature, and as such they belong to all of us.”

“Universities are supposed to serve the public good, but increasingly they’re renting themselves out to private interest.”

“The point is that this private grab of natural resources has had consequences . . . The whole market system depends on constantly cannibalizing and trashing the commons in order to produce the abundance we enjoy. And it’s just not sustainable. We can’t keep living on nature’s capital.”

“The irony is that the greatest tragedy is not the tragedy of the commons but the tragedy of *the market*: the anti-social abuses that occur through market enclosure.”

“Far from being a tragedy, the commons is generative. With the proper structures and social norms, commons models often produce and manage things more efficiently than markets.”

“We need a holistic paradigm, in order to protect and preserve our common wealth. We need to imagine a different future for ourselves.”

CREDITS

Directed by: Jeremy Earp & Sut Jhally

Written by: David Bollier & Jeremy Earp

Producers: Jeremy Earp & Andrew Killoy

Executive Producer: Sut Jhally

Story Editor: Scott Morris

Associate Producer: Jason Young

Editor: Andrew Killoy

Media Research: Scott Morris

Motion Graphics: Andrew Killoy

Additional Footage: Andrew Killoy & Jason Young

Sound Mix: Rikk Desgres, Pinehurst Pictures & Sound

Camera: David Rabinovitz

Production Assistants: Thomas Bollier, Kelly Boyle, Sally Lotter, Julie Morris

Subtitling: Jason Young, Kelly Boyle, Sally Lotter, Julie Morris

DVD Authoring: Andrew Killoy & Jason Young

Interns: Elizabeth O. Johnson, Katherine Warren

UNITED STATES • 2010 • 46 mins • Shot on Mini-DV • Color • NTSC • BETA/DVD/DVCAM

Aspect Ratio 4:3 • Stereo • English/English Subtitles

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

JEREMY EARP | Co-Director & Co-Writer

Jeremy Earp is the director of production at The Media Education Foundation (MEF). He wrote and directed *The Mean World Syndrome*, and he co-wrote and co-directed the documentaries *Blood and Oil* (with Scott Morris), *Consuming Kids* (with Adriana Barbaro), *War Made Easy* (with Loretta Alper), and *Hijacking Catastrophe* (with Sut Jhally). Before joining MEF full time in 2003, he taught English and communications at New School University and Parsons School of Design in New York City, The Art Institute of Boston and Northeastern University in Massachusetts, and worked for a number of years as a news and sports reporter for a daily newspaper in Greater Boston. He holds a Master's degree in English from Northeastern University, and is pursuing a doctorate in Communication at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

SUT JHALLY | Executive Producer

Sut Jhally is a Professor of Communication at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, and founder and executive director of the Media Education Foundation (MEF). He first gained national recognition for his film *Dreamworlds: Desire, Sex & Power in Music Video* when MTV threatened him with a lawsuit over copyright infringement. The resulting press storm led to numerous requests for the video, and provided the rationale for MEF's founding in 1991. In the time since, Jhally has been the executive producer and/or director of more than 45 films produced and distributed by the Media Education Foundation, including the critically acclaimed *Peace, Propaganda & The Promised Land* and *Hijacking Catastrophe*. He is the author of *The Codes of Advertising* and *The Spectacle of Accumulation: Essays in Cultural Politics*, co-author of *Social Communication in Advertising* and *Enlightened Racism*, and the co-editor of *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America*. A recipient of the Distinguished Teaching Award at UMass (2000) and the UMass Chancellor's Medal (2005-2006), Jhally is regarded as one of the world's leading scholars in the areas of advertising, media, and consumption.

ANDREW KILLOY | Co-Producer, Co-Editor

Andrew Killoy is MEF's primary editor and coordinates all technical aspects of the video production process. He was editor of *War Made Easy* (2007), *The Mean World Syndrome* (2010), and co-editor of *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (2007), *The Codes of Gender* (2009), and *Killing Us Softly 4* (2010). He graduated from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in 2005 with a Bachelor's degree in Communication and minors in Political Science and Economics.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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The non-profit Media Education Foundation produces and distributes documentary films and other educational resources to inspire critical reflection on the social, political, and cultural impact of American mass media.

www.mediaed.org