#ReGENERATION

The Politics of Apathy and Activism

[Transcript]

TITLE SCREEN: "We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people."-Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

NARRATOR: The vast and complicated issues facing today's generation can leave many with the uncertainty and fear that nothing can be done. Yet by exploring how the influence of our media, education and parenting have shaped us, we can begin to understand what we must change – Both as a generation and as a culture.

JOHN BELLAMY FOSTER: There's a lot of talk about the "great generation" of the World War II Generation, and all generations that came after are supposed to be in some way lesser than that. They do not have the world historic role that the great generation had. Then there's the sixties generation, which in some way had had a purpose, had a world historical role of a kind. And then Generation X and Generation Y and so on are seen mainly in marketing terms: as generations with no purpose, no world or historical role.

[MEDIA – NEWS CLIP]: We interrupt our regularly scheduled program to bring you the following special report. / [Jimmy Carter] Good evening. I accepted...

ANDREW BACEVICH: There was a moment in the 1970s when a not very successful president, nonetheless, tried very hard to say, "Hold up. We may be heading down the wrong path."

[MEDIA – JIMMY CARTER]: In a nation that was proud of hard work, strong families, close-knit communities and our faith in God, too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does but by what one owns.

ANDREW BACEVICH: We may be embracing a false definition of freedom and Carter's effort to bring us back to a truer definition of freedom was one which required us, in the near term, to sacrifice. The vast majority of the American people didn't want to hear anything like that and, in short order, came to see Ronald Reagan as offering a much preferable message. And Reagan's message was that it's morning in America, you can always have more and that the American way of life is not up for negotiation.

[MEDIA – RONALD REAGAN]: They tell us that the future will be one of sacrifice and few opportunities. My fellow citizens, I utterly reject that view.

ANDREW BACEVICH: Of course the problem is, if we want to preserve the American way of life, or at least if we want to preserve those aspects of the American way of life that are worth preserving, then we are going to have to change.

[MONTAGE]: Human nature usually leads us to not change things until we are forced to change things. Then that's the paradigm that has to be broken. / With a series of other problems in the world and an economy that leaves people feeling enormously uneasy. / You just become numb. I wish we had more of a solution though. / Protesters vowed to keep up their demonstrations despite this state of emergency. / Why is the level of depression so high? Why are levels of anxiety so high? Is this really where you want to be? / A woman in Long Island, New York, was trampled to death by a stampede of shoppers. / I don't buy into this idea that we are ok. I don't think we are ok, but I think that many of us are just putting on a show. / So I'm afraid to say we need this change, and I know we need something but I'm not sure what. / So, if we lose our principles, we get lost, we need to reform and revitalize and incorporate that back into society. / I think it's a spirit too that we are not damned. In order for a revolution to happen, it has to change on every level. / We need to change the way we live in some respects in order to preserve that which we value most. / It's a time to regenerate, it's a time to look at lessons, look at important things that have happened that need to be defined as a culture.

Text on Screen: Eagan High School; Eagan, Minnesota. Suburb of Minneapolis/St. Paul. Student Population: 2300.

CAROLINE SNOWDEN: You know, I'm so young still and I think about all the opportunities I have, that I could do something and make a difference. And every time I think "that's wrong", "that shouldn't be like that", I wish I could change it or whatever. But then I'm just like, you know, who am I? I am just one junior in high school, seventeen years old. What is that going to do?

Text on Screen: Dustin and Nicole Artwohl. Ages 26 and 27; Married 4 years Expecting 2nd child in 4 days.

NICOLE ARTWOHL: There's not one thing out there that everyone is trying to fight right now. There's hundreds of things that you hear about every day and it does probably kind of numb you, because you hear so many of them.

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: Absolutely. AIDS in Africa can concerns me, war concerns me. You don't really know where to begin. Are there things that we could be doing differently? Most definitely. Is there more help that we could be providing fellow man? Absolutely. But time, money. . . There's things that are standing in the way of making that happen.

Text on Screen: STS9: Sound Tribe Sector 9. Musicians and Artists. Touring for 10 years. Own and operate independent record label/1320 Records.

HUNTER BROWN [Guitarist/STS9]: I think it is important to realize that there are so many people who morally disagree with what's going on. You know, poverty, war,

everything. All of us care, but we just don't know what to do about it. We don't want to sound stupid or we don't want to sound like we are "un-American", or that "we're not supporting our troops" - people who are our friends.

JEFFREE LERNER [Percussionist/STS9]: You know, understanding that we look to the institutions and the government to answer a lot of these things when really, where things get done is people. You have to care and if you don't care, then, I don't know man... I don't know.

Text on Screen: Eagan High School; Eagan, Minnesota. 7 days before graduation.

JONI ANKER: On the bigger issues – the war in Iraq, global warming, you know, the big worldwide issues – I see less activism. Some of that, I think, is they've just been overexposed. They know it's important but it seems so big and so, "What can I do? I'm just one person".

MICHAEL ALBERT: Leo Durocher was a baseball manager decades ago. Famous guy, very cantankerous and clever and witty. And he used to say nice guys finish last. And everybody thought it was so cute and so accurate. If you think about it a little, it's a gigantic condemnation of a social structure – that being nice should consign you to failure. But that's exactly the world that we live in. We live in a world whose institutions are structured in such a way that you have to be nasty to get ahead. The culture communicates, "Nice guys finish last, garbage rises. Learn that lesson and you'll be okay."

[MEDIA – NEWS CLIP]: In bailout news, top managers continue to offer multi-million dollar pay outs to senior employees.

MICHAEL ALBERT: The culture communicates, "injustice is forever", "poverty is forever", "violence is forever." Eek out a niche, do the best you can – but it's all forever.

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: If some of these negative things were happening on my street, you'd better be out there trying to fix it. But today it's not, it's not happening in front of me. The word that you've used throughout this whole deal is 'apathy,' and I'd say that we're very apathetic.

MICHAEL ALBERT: It's not that people think that poverty is fine or war is fine, or degradation and cynicism and violence is all over. . . that all that and all that we know is fine. Nobody thinks it's fine. It's just that everybody thinks there's no alternative. Everybody thinks that's the way it is. Like gravity, or like aging. In other words, "What are you talking about? There's no point in a social movement against aging. There's no point in a social movement against gravity."

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: In our reality, nothing will change. Unless, I don't know, unless some more college students stand on street corners and picket. Maybe that'll help.

MICHAEL ALBERT: And so, when you say, "Come be an activist, oppose that stuff," it's an actual belief that it's a fool's errand. That's the problem.

Text on Screen: New York Senator, 1965 – 1968.

[MEDIA CLIP – ROBERT F. KENNEDY]: This is the violence of institutions, indifference, inaction and decay, and only a cleansing of our whole society can remove this sickness from our souls.

DAVID MURPHY [Bassist/STS9]: We live in a 'Me' Generation. Therein lies the conflict. And the conflict is how do we live in a 'Me' Generation?

INTERVIEWER: What is the 'Me' Generation?

DAVID MURPHY: What is the 'Me' Generation?

[MEDIA MONTAGE]: On a Volleyball game, you're a team. And then in this it's just me. / Teenagers who gossip are actually more popular. / People have come to expect global climate change. / Breaking entertainment stories you need to hear. / The first thing I'm unpacking is a box of condoms. / Poor and unemployed...

DEEPA KUMAR: I think the notion of individualism has a long history in the United States. And things that are good for the community – such as preserving the environment or having decent wages for everyone, or have looked at the world and said, "I want to change this and I am going to make the time" – those sort of societal values get thrown by the wayside.

DAVID BELLAMY FOSTER: It's a generation that has no sense of the future, no sense of civic responsibility. I don't mean this as a criticism; I believe the media and the society are generating this.

MEGHAN KREIDLER: It also has to do with how we're just selfish. It's always about, "Me, me, me," and we kind of take all the things that we have for granted.

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: Most definitely it has become a 'Me' Generation, and I think that we all are taught self confidence and . . .

DAVID BELLAMY FOSTER: . . . People have a sense of entitlement.

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: We're the most important person in the world and that transfers over into adulthood.

JEAN TWENGE: There'd been a movement for a while about individualism that really began in the '70s, but that wasn't applied to kids until the early '80s, when the self-esteem programs hit the schools. And if you look in the media as well – and in popular culture –

they we're taught things like, "believe in yourself", "you can be anything you want to be" and putting yourself first.

TUCKER CARLSON: It's a total lie, it's a total lie. There are two lies in the self-esteem movement: The first is "you can be whatever you want to be", which is just demonstrably untrue. And the second is that your value is innate. In other words, you're a wonderful person no matter what you do, you're a great person.

TALIB KWELI: I tell my children every day that they're special. I tell them that I love them, I tell them that they can do anything. But I also am realistic with them. I tell them that they can do anything if they prepare themselves, if they become a certain type of person and have an understanding of history. We live in a society that prizes politeness over righteousness. If you don't take the time to tell them in the house what their outside behavior should be, then it's your fault when they're outside acting a fool. And then they grow up to be assholes.

JONI ANKER: There are a lot of enabling parents. The thing about parent and kids today is that they're much closer and the communication is much more open than it has been in the past. So they're almost kind of like friends. We have had many situations where parents come in and they do not want their kids to have the consequences of what has happened, and they enable them and they come in and they fight with the principal. And, you know, I just think what a disservice that is to the kid. What a disservice to think that whatever you do is fine, and I will fight for you and you do not have to pay the consequences of your failure.

JOHN BELLAMY FOSTER: They're told that they are 'Me' Generation, but they're encouraged to relate to the world in that way: To basically be narcissistic in their relation to the world.

JOHN WARD: I don't like liberals. I'm going to be honest. I just think it's hard to label the entire generation something. . .

JAY WALKER: ... that all of us are the same, which is definitely not true.

NOAM CHOMSKY: In the late eighteenth century, when working people around Boston were running around newspapers, they complained bitterly about the industrial system that was being imposed on them. I'm quoting now, what they called "the new spirit of the age - gain wealth, forgetting all but self". That's supposed to be the 'Me' Generation, but this was a hundred and fifty years ago. Coming from a business point of view, from the point of view of any rulers, independence is the last thing that the managers want and attempt to crush this independence and to shape people into malleable, obedient, apathetic, separated, atomized individuals. The ideal social unit is a pair: you and a television set.

[MEDIA CLIP]: Just about the only thing that can make a ten year old sit still long enough for you to catch your breath.

NOAM CHOMSKY: If you can impose a society constructed of such units, then you've got the country pretty much under control, even without force.

JONI ANKER: Kids do not evaluate things. They do not really dig into stuff the way that they need to in order to analyze it, and that's part of the multi-task generation. They're watching the television, they've got their computer on, they're on their cell-phone all at the same time.

CAROLINE SNOWDEN: And I'm guilty of it. A ton of kids are walking around, all tuned into their iPods and, you know, texting and stuff like that. They're literally sheltering themselves away from everything else out there.

CLAIRE FRIEDMAN: We may not demonstrate and aren't as active as generations of the '60s and '70s, but a big part of that is because we haven't gone outside for our entire lives. We've been inside, on the Internet. It's true.

HUNTER BROWN: It has everything to do with our alienation from nature. Absolutely. The means of how we sustain ourselves, how we survive.

TALIB KWELI: The man who doesn't know how to fish, who doesn't know how to hunt, who doesn't know how to farm, who's completely dependent upon a government or some sort of system that's in place for him to eat, breathe, survive.

KALLE LASN: For thirty thousand generations of human history we grew up within nature, and we got our cues and our learning experiences by checking out the wind and learning how to negotiate rivers. And then all of a sudden, three generations ago, the lessons that we're learning from nature diminished down to damn close to zero for many people, and the electronic environment is a much colder environment compared to the natural one.

High School Teacher: You are more than welcome, when you're done, to quietly listen to your mp3 player. If I, or the people around you, have to hear what your favorite song is, I take it. Ok? If I see your cell phone, same thing. That means that all weekend you'd have to go without it, which I understand is just like probably removing your right leg or both legs for some of you guys. I've seen tears, people crying, "You can't do this to me!" Yes, I can.

JONI ANKER: The research shows that you can't really multi-task. What it is, is it's time-splicing so their attention is switching from one thing to the next. And the research is showing that the brain is actually changing in young children to allow them to do that. So what we've got is this big ADD generation. And you come into a classroom where you want to take a poem or a piece of literature and you want to dig into it for a half hour, forty-five minutes, and really get into the depth of it – they don't have the patience for that. They just don't have the patience for that deep thought and analysis, and that bothers me because you need those skills.

KALLE LASN: But if you grow up in an electronic environment, then you may have a kind of an empathy deficit of some kind. You won't be able to make rich, intense human contacts. You won't be able to love somebody totally, you won't be able to feel deep, deep sorrow when somebody dies.

JONI ANKER: And we need empathy to prevent wars in Iraq. I am outraged that this generation of kids was not more concerned and outraged at that war. I don't understand why they didn't react like we did. I mean, when we were in Vietnam, I was expelled from school for walking out in protest when Nixon invaded Cambodia. The kids today, it's just like, "Oh yeah, the war in Iraq." You know, I sat here in my classroom on that television and we watched 9/11 happen. Teacher ran down and said, "Turn on your TV, something horrible is happening." I turned on the television: we watched that airplane. We watched that airplane crash into the tower and kid in the back is going, "Cool!" I said, "This isn't a movie, you guys. This is real. This just really happened. You know, that's not a special effect."

SUT JHALLY: The current generation of kids are literally saturated with media, with some kind of mass media communication. You know, sometimes ten, twelve hours a day. And when you're surrounded by an environment in that way, you have to be shaped by it. That's how culture works. Culture shapes identity, culture shapes how we understand the world.

NARRATOR: Nielsen Media Research shows that the average man, woman and child watch as much as four hours of television a day. This does not include time spent on the Internet or playing video games. So with this much time spent sitting in front of a screen, what exactly are we staring at? What is shaping us?

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: A soldier calling home to check in with the world at large, to be connected as to what's happening, would most likely get a response of something to do with Lindsay Lohan is back in rehab, or Paris Hilton went back to jail. That's the news of the day. Do you know anything else that's going on right now?

NICOLE ARTWOHL: That's important?

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: Yeah. **NICOLE ARTWOHL:** No.

[MEDIA MONTAGE]: First in news at 8:03, Paris Hilton out of jail this morning. / Was she given special treatment? Who cares? Reporters wanted to know how did she look so good.

TUCKER CARLSON: The media are aggressively dumb. They pander. Of course, I mean, we pander. We're dumb, I'll admit it.

[MEDIA – NEWS CLIP]: Welcome back, we know you're jonesing for it – today's Britney Spears' disaster update.

Text on Screen: Media and Propaganda Conference; University of Windsor, Canada.

NOAM CHOMSKY: Mass media are mostly for diversion. Take a look at the tabloids. They may have a quarter of a page on their national affairs. But that's what the mass media are, they are to divert the public, get them out of their hair. That's pretty explicit. It's explicit among public intellectuals, media leaders and others. Now, the public just... they're called, 'Ignorant, meddlesome outsiders. We've got to get rid of them so we, the responsible men, can do things properly.'

DEEPA KUMAR: Political apathy is a rational choice in many ways for most people because that's the fare that's fell up to most of us. Think more about Anna Nicole Smith than about 655,000 Iraqis who have been killed in the war.

AMY GOODMAN: When the city of New Orleans drowned, the corporate media in that case did the right thing. They raced to New Orleans. Now, the Bush administration did respond quickly on one issue - they said, "You are not to film the bodies." See, a side effect of the Bush administration not responding to the catastrophe in New Orleans is that when the network reporters went down, they shocked our country, they galvanized the nation. Could you imagine if, for just one week, we had seen those images on the ground in Iraq? We saw the babies dead, we saw the women with their legs blown off, the cluster bombs from Iraq to Lebanon. We saw the soldiers dead and dying. There was a poll done in the United States just recently that asked Americans, "How many Iragis do you think have died?" They said somewhere under ten thousand. Well, the British Medical Journal *The* Lancet published a Johns Hopkins University study that says more than 655,000 Iragis have died. And a more recent study says more than a million Iragis have died. But in the United States, most people don't think that. And it's not because people are stupid: people are good media consumers. They take in, they absorb what they watch and read. Could you imagine if, for one week, we saw those real images on the ground? The dead and dying on all sides? Americans are a compassionate people. They would say, "No. War is not the answer to conflict in the 21st century."

INTERVIEWER: How do you see – just being a media personality – do you see the media affecting the youth culture at all? Particularly news media?

TUCKER CARLSON: I mean, we do our best to affect youth culture because that's where the ad dollars are.

TALIB KWELI: TV shows, news programs, variety programs, soap operas were created to sell soap. That's what they were created for. But it doesn't surprise me when people criticize, you know, CNN, Fox News, the celebrity shows... It's like people really don't understand what TV and media is for: It's to sell you things, that's what it's for. You'd be lucky if you get some entertainment out of it.

Text on Screen: Vancouver, Canada

KALLE LASN: Bit by bit, I found out how the Vietnam war started and that probably was the beginning of my politicization of my life. And then after that, of course, travelling around the world and then finding out about how most of the world lives. Then I immigrated to Canada and I actually wanted to be a filmmaker, I wanted to make documentary films and show people some of the stuff that I'd seen all over the place. And, so, I started a film-making commune, right here in this house actually. And we've been making all kinds of experimental films and, so, why don't we package some of our really powerful messages into thirty and sixty second packets and try to raise a little bit of money, and actually air them on television?

[MEDIA CLIP]: *In your living room is the factory. The product being manufactured is you.*

KALLE LASN: Over the last ten years here at *Adbusters* we have produced dozens of thirtysecond social messages that tackle all the big issues of our time, from obesity to media concentration to climate change. And when we approached ABC and NBC and CBS and MTV and Fox, and tried to buy 30 seconds of airtime to air some of these messages of ours, they all said no. So, what does that tell you? It tells you that our public airwaves aren't public anymore. That we, the people, own those public airwaves. They legally belong to you and me, and the FCC leases those airwaves out to the broadcasters who are then supposed to act in, of course in their own business interest, but also in the public interest and they do not. These guys have six million dollars to spend. We are not going to sell you a lousy twenty-five thousand dollars of airtime for your spot and then piss of these multimillion dollar sponsors that we have. That was a big shock for me at that time. I was a guy who was born in Estonia, and in my country for fifty years you weren't allowed to speak back against the government. You weren't... and if you did speak back against the government, they'd put you in a mental asylum or you'd suffer in some other way. You'd never get a decent job or whatever. And here I was, many years later in this cradle of democracy – the land of the free here – and all of a sudden I discover that, here, you are not allowed to speak back against the sponsor.

[MEDIA MONTAGE]: They spend more time watching television... everybody believes that when you're spending more time with the media than you are in the classroom, the media have a profound impact upon your life as well.

[MEDIA CLIP – United States Senate Committee Hearing]: [Chairman] *Dr. Kunkel, thank you very much for joining us today and I look forward to your testimony. /* [Dr. Kunkel] *Thank you. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman. With the help of a number of fine colleagues, including several who are here with us today, I've conducted extensive research on media content and effects over the years.*

DALE KUNKEL: Well, advertisers claim that kids today are more savvy than they've ever been in the past, but when you really get down to it in terms of children's cognitive abilities, an eight year old today doesn't understand the persuasive intent of advertisements any better than an eight year old in the past did – say, when I was a child.

[MEDIA CLIP – COMMERCIAL]: And a magic box turns the TV into a safe and happy haven. Simply what matters.

SUT JHALLY: And, in fact, what the evidence shows is that the more the kids are immersed in the consumer culture, the more they're exposed to these messages, the more unhealthy they are, the more they're depressed, the more they're anxious, the more they have problems with their parents. It is a form of systematic child abuse and I think it is absolutely crazy.

NORMAN ORNSTEIN: There is a lot of truth to the notion that kids are bombarded with advertising for things that are not particularly healthy for them. No question that large numbers of young children have televisions in their own rooms. Who's to blame here? The parents!

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: Let me tell you my schedule, ok? I get up in the morning at six o'clock. I am out of the door by seven o'clock. It takes me an hour to get to work. So I get there at eight o'clock, and I'm there until five. I drive an hour back home, I get home at six. We cook dinner, we give him a bath, we clean up the house a bit. It's now about seven thirty by the time everything's done. He goes to bed at eight o'clock. We don't have the time to sit there and calculate what they're watching, and when and where and how. You can't be there every minute of the day, you can't.

NORMAN ORNSTEIN: The media industries, of course, always tell us, "Isn't it just the parents' responsibility?" And then they spend hundreds of billions of dollars to influence the child to influence the parent.

[COMMERCIAL MONTAGE]: Mom, I need one minute. One teensy-weensy minute to make your day, 'cause I've got with me the toy that could change the way you look at toys. / I'm sold.

NORMAN ORNSTEIN: And if the parents would say 'no' billions and billions of times based on the billions of requests that are based on billions of influence attempts that come from all the commercials, all would be well. But surprise! Parents like to please their children.

JEFFREE LERNER: When you have a culture of people who spend four to five hours a day watching television, and every seven minutes there's two minutes of commercials, over and over, we've become familiar. And when we go into the store and see that thing, subconsciously, when we pick that up and buy it, there's a certain amount of comfort that comes with that. Certain amount of safety.

CAROLINE SNOWDEN: I know I learned in class that – when we learned about advertising in Health class or somewhere – that it influences you, even if you don't think it does. But, I am not a materialistic person at all, I don't care about... Shush! I'm not! I'm not like, "Oh my god, I have to have the shiny car and I have to have this." I'm just really happy with whatever I have. I don't ask for a lot, and I don't get influenced by billboards saying...

CLAIRE FRIEDMAN: Where is your iPod right now?

CAROLINE SNOWDEN: Shhh, you know what...

CLAIRE FRIEDMAN: The one that you have plugged into your ear all day?

CAROLINE SNOWDEN: I like it because of the music, not because it's shiny or expensive.

CLAIRE FRIEDMAN: Like it's never advertised, ever.

KALLE LASN: I don't think that it's possible to grow up in a culture where, from the moment you were a little baby crawling around the TV set in your living room, you've been told a certain kind of a message and you've been told that certain brands are really cool. And then when you're a teenager or in your early twenties, you can suddenly sit back and say, "No, no, this hasn't had any effect on me." Bullshit! It's had a profound effect on you.

DEEPA KUMAR: When I talk about consumer culture and I talk about how consumerism tries to define who we are, I raised this question in one of my classes and I said, "Why do you think Americans buy diamond rings when they want to get engaged to someone and is that natural?" And people did not know the answer to that. And, of course, we know this is a fairly recent phenomenon: It's the diamond industry that makes this move through advertising to associate a diamond ring. And so the student raises her hand and says, "Yeah, okay, I get that. It's all very well, but I still feel if my fiancé doesn't give me a two karat diamond ring, if he gives me anything less than that, I'll throw it back in his face." Now, the good thing about that comment is that everybody else in that class went, "What?" and it was a great learning moment because then we could explore: Why do you think that way? Where do you get these ideas from? And, why do you feel that you need to judge the most intimate relationship between two human beings on the basis of how much money has been spent on this?

JOHN WARD: I've seen a kid with a CD player be ostracized because he has a CD player.

HUNTER BROWN: It just creates this wall in between you and someone who can't have that.

NOAM CHOMSKY: We have to create wants. We have to direct people to what were called the more superficial things of life, like fashionable consumption. And if we can do this, then we can control them.

ANDREW BACEVICH: The government has tried to respond to our demands for more.

TALIB KWELI: That's why, as soon as 9/11 happened, they said, "Hey, go out and buy stuff". You know, because that's what it's based on. That's what is really going to make this society go round.

[MEDIA CLIP – GEORGE W. BUSH]: Too many people have the wrong idea of Americans as shallow, materialistic consumerists. / . . . And I encourage you all to go shopping more.

ANDREW BACEVICH: And that's what we did. We followed orders.

JAY WALKER: The ads that I see everyday are trying to make an effort, so it's really easy to just buy the green Samsung Razor that donates fifty cents to global warming. Like, "Oh, I did my job. I feel morally ok with myself now."

SUT JHALLY: Now, the consumer culture or consumer message doesn't talk about the world. The consumer message talks about me. In that sense, the movement of advertising into every nook and cranny of culture shouldn't surprise anyone. And over the course of the 20th century, and now into the 21st century, advertising has colonized more and more of the spaces within which we live.

NARRATOR: With an age group ranging from 18 to 29 as their key demographic, advertisers feed on the lust of our generation's desire for material goods, resulting in more products to be made and the necessity for more products to be advertised, consumed and disposed of. Never mind the effects this may have on our planet. But with this excess of consumerism, how too can this affect the identity of our generation?

HUNTER BROWN: I think what we are all subconsciously deciding is the 'Me' Generation, is the stuff that's readily available and out there. The homogeny.

Text on Screen: Homogeny

NARRATOR: Homogeny is defined as a correspondence in form or structure owing to a common origin. And in the case of today's generation, this means a world where everything looks the same.

TALIB KWELI: The homogeny that happens in America creates a cultural ignorance. "I want it now, I want it fast." You know, the convenience store is where I spend all my time. It destroys the beauty of the country. When I was in college, I knew I wanted to do music for a living. So I knew that I had to get a job that was going to allow me the freedom creatively and physically to do music. Working in a bookstore or a record store was the only thing that made sense, so I went to every bookstore and every record store in my neighborhood until I got a job. And then I moved on to a black-owned bookstore Nkiru Books. Mos Def helped me out with a lot of different events we were doing there. Me and him ended up purchasing the store, running it for a couple of years. We made it more of a community thing and we developed a program in the high schools that was based on poetry readings we used to do. But we weren't prepared to handle skyrocketing rents of Flatbush Ave, Brooklyn. You know, independent bookstores have the same problems. You have a major company like a Barnes & Noble that will come up. The only thing the independent bookstores had was this home feel where you could come in and you would

know the person who'd worked at the counter, you could come and see your favorite author. At some point the majors started to figure out how to do that. Put in cafes, start bringing authors in, putting couches in and making them feel more like an independent store. Brand new hardcover – you can get it at Barnes & Noble for ten dollars, fifteen dollars. At an independent bookstore, you got to pay the thirty, or else the guy ain't gonna make no money and they'll go bankrupt. So the consumer is just going to keep on going to the bigger bookstore all the time.

HUNTER BROWN: We saw our community go from two-lane dirt roads, trees and forests and lakes, to Lowe's and Kroger's and miles and miles and miles of shops. And that's something that we just were always so surrounded with and just couldn't understand. What is destroying the beauty of our community? And when we started the band that was something that just really influenced us.

ZACH VELMER [Drummer/ STS9]: We drive all night coming back from Alabama or North Carolina or Florida, in my dad's Mercury Villager van.

STS9 Band Members: We'd literally play three or four places in each town. We'd go to this place and then work and play that two or three times, and then you finally sold it out so now we're gonna put you in this place.

ZACH VELMER: People were catching on. We had a particularly hard decision to make of how were we going to release the record that we're working on. We were working on it for a very long time. So we wanted to just really make sure that we looked at all of our options. And on the outside, the perception of going with the label looks really cool because they're giving you money and what they say that they're going to do is they're going to put it in all the music stores – you're going to be in Best Buy, you're going to do it all. That's what they claim that they're going to do.

HUNTER BROWN: We flirted around with different companies for a little bit and I tried to make something happen. But it always came down to just our gut feeling telling us that we could... We'd be better off in the long run if we just did it ourselves. So we just kept at it. It meant more to us to know that we had the freedom, to know that we still could do what we wanted even though we had to work a little harder to do it and didn't make as much money, and didn't have as much attention out there. Because that's not what we were going for. Eventually, what became important to us was this do-it-yourself culture, without having to sell our souls, if you will. Or join the corporate system or get into these things that we were kind of trying to escape from. Because we grew up in this suburban structure – everything looked the same. And when we started touring, it was, "Wow, everywhere looks the same!" It's not just the South, it's not just Georgia, it's not just Stone Mountain, it's really everywhere.

NARRATOR: From advertising to consumerism, the media has played a dominant role in shaping today's culture. Add to that the education of our generation – what we are taught and who's teaching us – and the media has all but overshadowed another vital institution.

DAVID MURPHY: How did I know what I wanted out of my life? It may sound weird – it is not necessarily about the experience but talking about what you learn. And I knew what I wanted out of life by watching TV, not by going to school.

DR. POLLY REIKOWSKI: It's sad to say, I think a lot of them are learning more from the media. They're more excited about it, they're more interested in it. And so we're constantly challenged to make education more interesting, more exciting, attention-grabbing.

STS9 Band Member: Is there anything remotely real about the real world? I mean, seriously.

DAVID MURPHY: Do you think what's really real is what they teach you in an American history class?

INTERVIEWER: Why? Why do you say that?

DAVID MURPHY: Why do I say that? Because what I believe that I was taught in History class in high school is false information about what actually happened in history.

ANDREW BACEVICH: I think the real problem is that we use history as a way to comfort ourselves. To tell uplifting stories, even to the extent that the story of America is the story of struggle, it's basically a struggle that always comes out about right in the end. We embrace a mythic notion of history, rather than one in which we are really willing to look at the past in the eye and come to terms with it.

HOWARD ZINN: The loss of history is always important, because if you don't have history then you're stuck with the present. And you're also stuck with the word of authorities. This loss of history in the United States today has created a possibility, in fact the inevitability, of a whole population being bewitched by television, by the political leaders, by the media leaders. And without history to give some basis for judging what is being thrown at them, the population becomes a victim of whatever the authorities decide needs to be done.

[MEDIA MONTAGE – Presidential Speeches]:

Franklin D. Roosevelt: The world still walks in the shadow of another world war.

Ronald Reagan: *Nations could defend themselves against missile attack.*

Bill Clinton: *Our allies concur that now is the time to strike.*

George W. Bush: *Our country is still the target of terrorists who want to kill many.*

Barack Obama: We have a goal to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

HOWARD ZINN: The result is we get into war after war after war. The loss of history is a matter of life and death.

[MEDIA CLIP - Martin Luther King Jr.]: Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

HUNTER BROWN: We grew up in the South and we never were taught about the civil rights movement, other than the 'I Have a Dream' speech.

[MEDIA CLIP - Martin Luther King Jr.]: Let freedom ring! If America is to be a great nation, this must become true. Let freedom ring from the Stone Mountain of Georgia!

HUNTER BROWN: I lived in Stone Mountain. I'm from Stone Mountain and barely anybody read the whole speech to pick it out and ask, why is Stone Mountain mentioned in this speech?

HOWARD ZINN: Young people did not grow up learning that this is a society which is driven by class. They grow up with the idea that this is like one family. Starts with the words of the Constitution, "We the people of the United States," and that's the impression we get. That we're all together, we all got together and fought the revolution against England. We all got together and formed the Constitution. The Constitution was formed by fifty-five rich, white men. Excluded were 20% of the population – black slaves. Excluded were working people; excluded were Indians, excluded were women. But you don't learn about this in school.

MEGHAN KREIDLER: We were just talking about this in my history class, because we're not really learning lessons of life in school and it's just a bunch of busy work.

TALIB KWELI: I remember being able to pass a history exam because I was able to recite the words to *Blackman in Effect* by KRS-One, and he was talking about the Byzantine Empire and Mesopotamia – and these were things that I wasn't learning about in school.

HUNTER BROWN: Stone Mountain was owned by the KKK: the carvings on the mountain are the three most prominent confederacy leaders. If we were told that and given the history of our own community, and to see at a younger age how wrong. . . You know what I mean? If we could be inspired by our teachers about our own histories . . . Class would have been much more interesting.

HOWARD ZINN: It's not that the teacher consciously deceives the student, it's that the teacher conforms to what has been taught before and the textbooks conform to whatever the textbooks were before. Because if you step out of line, if you start to do something different, if for the first time in generations that have been taught that Columbus is a hero, the school teacher says, "You know kids, Columbus is not a hero."

Text on Screen: 16th Century Priest, Bartoleme de Las Casas, sailed with Columbus and estimates nearly 3 million Native Americans were killed at the hands of Columbus and the Europeans.

HOWARD ZINN: Columbus killed, mutilated, kidnapped and enslaved Indians for gold.

Text on Screen: The United States continues to observe Columbus's arrival as a national holiday.

HOWARD ZINN: I mean, if a teacher starts talking that way, that teacher will be singled out.

DR. POLLY REIKOWSKI: And we shouldn't just pick on history. You can have the same belief if your language arts teacher doesn't look at your essays critically enough and does this rubber-stamp, 'Oh very good, here's a smiley face. You did a really good job.' That would also be a crime. In another way, it's kind of a lie.

JON WARD: I think it really depends on what class, what teacher. There are plenty of teachers who teach because they thought it would be a good idea and I can tell they don't like teaching, they don't care about teaching that much – those are the ones who will give you the busy work.

CLAIRE FRIEDMAN: I think that's what's really the difference: I really think it's the teachers and how much they care.

NARRATOR: The loss of history and the cynical views of today's education system by both students and educators is met with further challenge by increasing class sizes, and a series of governmental policies whose systemic underfunding often times does the opposite of what it says it will.

[MEDIA CLIP – Barack Obama]: The goals of No Child Left Behind were admirable and President Bush deserves credit for that.

NARRATOR: But beyond high school, a recent survey conducted by the U.S. Education Department shows over 80% of tenth graders still expect to move on to a four year college or university. But, at what cost does this post-high school education come?

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: We've had to talk about what we're going to do with him, what we're going to pay for and what we're not – and right now I can say that we're willing to help and chip in, but we're not going to have \$80,000 to pay for college.

CAROLINE SNOWDEN: There's so much pressure to get the perfect grades and everything so you can get the scholarships that are out there, like my mom who was putting all this pressure on me all these last three years I've been in high school to get top, top grades

because we can't afford to pay for me to go to college. So the only way I'm going to get anywhere in life is to have a scholarship to pay for it, so I'm not in debt.

NORMAN ORNSTEIN: Now you have huge amounts in loans at market, and even above, market rates. So for kids coming through this process, you start at a point where you are thinking about having a springboard to your career.

NOAM CHOMSKY: You're going to have to dedicate yourself to paying off those debts. You can't make your own choices. Like maybe you graduate law school and you'd like to be a public interest lawyer, you don't have that choice if you have a big debt. You have to go into a corporate law firm. And pretty soon, it's values get internalized. You may think you can hold them off and 'I'll do what I want to do,' but life doesn't work like that.

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: When I went to go pick a career, I wanted to pick a career that would pay me a lot of money. It's as simple as that. I wanted to be financially stable the rest of my life. So even if I had the goals and hopes and dreams to be a civil servant, I wouldn't because it wouldn't pay me enough.

SUT JHALLY: What that is, its actually indentured servitude. It's brilliant what capitalism has done. It gets people into debt very young, and then for the rest of their lives they're paying off the debt that they have gotten themselves into. And so, in fact, the more debt you're in, the less freedom you have. What if you took a fraction of the military budget that we spend on these insane weapons and what if you used that instead of having student loans, you had student grants? At that point you have invested in the future of young people. You can leave university and you will have freedom to do what you really want. Your individual freedom actually has been enhanced by the fact that you have taken public money and you've invested it in this way.

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: When the second baby is born, we will be spending \$16,640 a year on childcare.

NICOLE ARTWOHL: And that's after tax money.

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: Well, you know Nicole is having a C-section so well be in the hospital for the first four days. After that Nicole is home for the 6 weeks maternity leave, we get these days.

INTERVIEWER: Only six weeks?

NICOLE ARTWOHL: Doctor says eight. We'll take six.

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: That's a wild deal, taking your six-week-old baby to day care.

NICOLE ARTWOHL: Very, very scary.

DEEPA KUMAR: And yet, if we actually look at the condition of the bottom 80% of Americans, studies have shown that the bottom 80% have either seen their wages decline or stagnate. So today it takes two wage earners in a family to make the same wage that one wage earner did in the 1970s. The average family is working six and a half weeks more today then they were in 1989, and making the same amount of money. So people are working harder and yet you get these ideas which says if you work hard you will succeed, if you buy these commodities you will be happy, and there is a point at which these ideas come into contradiction with the reality of people's lives.

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: Our cable TV bill, our cable modem, you know \$150 dollars a month. Cell phone bill, \$120 dollars a month. If we didn't have those things... Do we need them? No, I don't think we do.

NICOLE ARTWOHL: But we want them

DEEPA KUMAR: Of course consumerism makes people buy things that they don't necessarily need, but beyond that what are the other economic factors that are driving it? And that has to do with the fact that if your wages go down and you need things, you need to buy food, you need to buy health care – you're going to do it with your credit card. And that explains a large part of the debt that Americans have today.

DAVID PHIPPS [Keyboardist/STS9]: If everyone took that one chance of going for their dream, they might fail but at least they tried. And the institutionalized education, institutionalized jobs are still going to be there – they're institutions. Senior year of college, with career path this way in front of me, just getting a job and working and paying off those student loans? Or career path with the band in front of me? It took courage and as one person and one example, I can say nine years later, that there is no job that would compare with the happiness and what I've gained from being my own person for the last ten years, surrounded by people that share that same desire to not be owned, or to not buy into some other version of what a happy life is.

Eagan AM – Eagan High School's News Report: Okay, Is everyone in here ready? I want to see the graphic and hear the music in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1...

NARRATOR: We watch and are influenced by more TV than ever. We're more globally connected, we're more aware of the world around us. Meanwhile our schools and the cost of living has skyrocketed over inflation, while starting salaries have hardly changed. We're a credit card generation, mass consumers. And because of it, homogeny has made us a little less unique. Yet we are told in the self-esteem movement, that we are special and can be whatever we want to be. Yet with little direction, we find ourselves lost with in our absolution of faith with the education, parenting and media that has helped shape who we are. Yet today's issues are not so clearly defined. Civil rights and the struggle of class still hangs over us like a dark cloud. There is no draft, instead we volunteer to fight. But with 18 to 29 year olds maintaining the lowest registration and voting rate, is it any wonder that those elected into office put 18 to 29 year olds in harms way? Meanwhile, we want to save

our earth, but we're so intrinsically connected to some form of a screen, we hardly have enough time to look up and see what the earth is saying. And with all the problems of the world, what is left of the hearts and the minds of today's generation to deal with today's issues? Will we even try?

Eagan AM: Roll it and take it. Claire, start your intro. Good morning Eagan High School and welcome to a very special edition of Eagan AM, I am Claire Freidman. Today we will be departing from our normal format to focus on the issue of the War in Iraq.

MEGAN KREIDLER: We see so many images of war and after a while we kind of just brush it off, and we say, "Oh there's another bombing, what can I do about it?"

MICHAEL ALBERT: In 1965, the population on the United States believed that the U.S. was out to help the world. And I mean they really believed it. Deep down inside, that's what people believed. They believed that lawyers were out for justice, that doctors cared only about the health of patients. That companies were trying to make people's lives better. On and on and on. Nowadays, the reality is nobody believes any of it. Deep down inside, everybody knows the war was for oil. Everybody knows the war was for power. Everybody knows that corporations seek profits and will do anything to get them, and don't give a damn about their employees, and don't care about the consumers either. They just care about the bottom line. Everybody knows this stuff. So then why isn't everybody as aroused as we were in the 60s?

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: I mentioned that I don't really care much about what's going on, outside of my reality, but its not that we don't care about the world at large, its that we want to know where to begin.

TALIB KWELI: It's got to relate to you. If you can paint a picture for how something, a world issue, Iraq, or whatever is going on in the world relates to this child's life – then you have something there.

CLAIRE FRIEDMAN: Last month we had one of our own Eagan graduates, Daniel Olsen of the class of 2005, pass away. To end this show this week we present you with 52 servicemen and women from Minnesota who have given their lives over seas so that others may experience the freedoms we enjoy. Thank you for joining us today.

ANDREW BACEVICH: It's time for us to look at ourselves in the mirror. I think that were going to have to have another cultural revolution of a magnitude of the cultural revolution that we experienced in the 1960s, but one which is going to return to a more modest or a more disciplined or... No, a more sustainable definition of what freedom is.

HUNTER BROWN: Sustainability is to be made by each of us. From recycling, to the clothes you buy, to where you shop, to eat locally. To being aware of where your dollar goes and how its used. It takes everybody putting in a little effort, and you might not see the effort that you put in pay off, but it will in fact pay off someday down the road, because

it always has. The big major issues of humanity have always been overcome throughout time through small words of mouth and through small ideas that became bigger ones because they touched principles and values that we all share.

[MEDIA CLIP – John F. Kennedy]: A year ago in assuming the task of the Presidency, I said that few generations in all history had been granted the role of being the great defender of freedom in its hour of maximum danger. This is our good fortune.

KALLE LASN: Cultural revolutions have always been driven by some sort of a rage the wells up in people. And now, in this information age of ours, we have to find a new kind of rage and a new kind of movement. The ecological crisis, the psychological crisis, and the political crisis: The three biggest crises that exist within this human experiment of ours on planet earth right now, these are problems that we, the rich people, have largely created. We have to face that unflinchingly and once we've faced that unflinchingly, that will change us.

[MEDIA CLIP – Talib Kweli & Mos Def]: We can't talk about addressing the corruption in people and in the world, if we ain't addressing the corruption in ourselves. You see what I'm saying? Don't pay attention to these stupid MCs talking about they're players. The real players got smart bombs. You see? And when they wanna play, its no more game. That's the real deal. So if we're gonna do this or were gonna be doing this, it ain't worth it if were gonna be up here talking about how good we are because none of us is important unless we're doing something that's vital. Everybody got the same amount of energy in this room. But who you gonna give it to? You gonna give it to BET or MTV or Nike, or whoever the hell else is vying for it? And I say this because nobody else says it, because we think that we're doing something, we're revolutionary. We're suckers, we're suckers, for real. We gotta get off of that man. We come here to these places and its good to feel good, but we gotta know that we gotta do more. We ain't doing nothing. It's young people like you, all over the world, dying. Catching a bullet, Tiananmen-Square-dudes. How many of us could have said that we would have stood in front of that tank if it was us? For real, think about that. I hope I didn't blow anybody's vibe or high, but I had to say it.

DUSTIN ARTWOHL: It was the most overwhelming feeling in the world. You're overwhelmed with joy and fear – all those emotions all at once are circling through your head. Having a kid is amazing because everything that you didn't do or you didn't do well in life, you hope that you can teach your kid to do things just a bit differently.

JEFFREE LERNER: As a young person who feels disempowered, who feels what difference can I make? We're all making a difference, regardless.

ANDREW BACEVICH: Celebrate the fact that we live in a country where freedom does exist. What we need to do is to create an environment, through education, in which a greater proportion of the population uses its freedom wisely. But it's not for me to tell you how you should define freedom. But I guess I am enough of a scrooge to say that if all you think freedom is, is going out on a Saturday night and drinking Budweiser and watching

professional football games. And then heading down to the mall to buy yet another pair of athletic shoes, that somehow you're missing out on something. We can do better than that.

HUNTER BROWN: No matter how lead you've been, or you consider yourself to have been, or how indoctrinated or how trained you are. Given your moral strength and your own truth, and your own inspiration, I think you can make a lot out of this world, and help some people along the way. The information is there and that's coming from someone who didn't think it was there, and through just a little bit of scratching the surface come to become more confortable with my understanding of the world and the things in the world, and if I can do that I feel like anybody can because I was one of the more cynical, apathetic people.

TALIB KWELI: I think it is a problem that people are willing to accept things, but I don't think to chastise or challenge the people on it is the answer. So the key is to get the information out there, and hold the truth up against the lie.

DEEPA KUMAR: It's the history of ordinary people fighting back against sometimes-insurmountable odds to win progressive change. And knowing that history, knowing that we can make a difference, I think will motivate that 15 year old not to simply buy things, but want to think of themselves as a socially conscious individual that wants to change the world in a way that's not just better for them but better for everyone.

NOAM CHOMSKY: A famous physicist taught at MIT, and he'd be asked at the begging of the course, "What are you going to cover this semester?" And his standard answer was, "It doesn't matter what we cover, it matters what we discover." Discover. Find out who you are, find your own path. In fact, its what plenty of people do. We've been talking about what the external system tries to impose, but it doesn't necessarily succeed.

JEFFREE LERNER: We are a collective and we have to work together. You want to talk about people who are activists like Martin Luther King – he was not one voice. You don't hear about all the people that were around him, helping that movement.

HUNTER BROWN: I guess it was eight months after Katrina, we came down here and saw the destruction first hand and wanted, like a lot of people in the world, wanted to know if there was anything we could do. How could we help? And to donate in a way that helps rebuild the lower ninth ward was one choice for us to do something that helped. I think the whole world was touched by what happened here. People like you coming back to rebuild a community on their own.

ROBERT GREEN, SR. [Lower 9th War Resident]: One of the great things about it is, I want to make a correction, is we're not doing it on our own. We're doing it off of the sweat of volunteers. It's people from all over the country, all over the world. Coming down here to see what's happening and it's going to make a change for us. So you just step back and see that y'all are doing a good job. You all are doing a good job.

HOWARD ZINN: Look for people in your neighborhood or in your school, who are doing something about the injustices of the world, who are involved in some movement to save the environment or to stop war, or to help people who are in need. Look for people like that and consider that, when you get out of your own shell, if you leave your living room and television set and go and join other people who are doing something to make life better. Life becomes more interesting to you and more fulfilling. Tell them about the people who, in the south during the civil rights movement, who were working to end racial segregation and who went through all sorts of hell, and many of them were beaten and put in jail an so on. But when they got together years later, they would look back on those years and they would say, "Those were terrible times we went through, and those were the best years of my life."

MICHAEL ALBERT: Don't let anybody call you immature or naive because you're hopeful. Don't let anybody call you immature or naive because you talk about attaining justice. And don't pay any attention to somebody who says that, because their agenda is to stifle real change.

AMY GOODMAN: Frederick Douglas said it, "Power concedes nothing without a demand and there is no more important time than now." And the question is, do you want to be a part of it? Do you want to determine it? And there are so many issues that we have to deal with now: global warring, global warming, the global economic meltdown, the lack of health care in this country, the way that our country deals with, vilifies, discriminates against immigrants. There are so many issues that are life and death issues right now. How are you weighing in? Or are you weighing in?

[MEDIA CLIP – Amy Goodman, Democracy Now]: This is Democracy Now! The War and Peace Report. I'm Amy Goodman and we're at Liberty Plaza, what was Zuccotti Park. Talk about how this whole encampment began.

[DEMOCRACY NOW – Occupy Wall Street Organizer]: So the original idea was put out by Adbusters, a culture-jamming magazine, to amass in lower Manhattan - 20,000 people. The rallying cry was occupy Wall Street. To come down here to make your voices heard about the injustices about Wall Street, the financial system and the idea just spread like wild fire.

[DEMOCRACY NOW – Occupy Wall Street Protesters]: [Chanting] *Show me what democracy looks like! This is what democracy looks like!*

JAY WALKER: It all comes down to effort. If we see an issue, I think if we want to leave anything to future generations, if that's what we mean by 'a footprint' – than it needs to be the fact that we tried.

StudentVote.org Organizer: 71 million people did not register to vote. If you're not registered to vote, we will help register you. Don't let the media or advertising hold you back. Your voice is the voice of change.

CLAIRE FRIEDMAN: If you want to save a life, if you want to do what you believe is right, than act on it and don't just sit on your ass and watch T.V. and find out what celebrities are doing, because that's not going to help anyone.

Eagan High Graduation Ceremony: This year as their student graduate speaker, Ms. Claire Friedman. Claire the podium is yours.

CLAIRE FRIEDMAN: Everyone just sits around hoping that things are going to happen, nothing's going to happen if you just sit on the couch and go "Ugh, global warming is so bad. I hope someone does something about that." Nothing is going to happen, that doesn't do anything. Recently, I was asked if there is any hope for the future? The future of the country, the future of the world, the future of the next generation, I responded, --The only way you get hope is through action. -- that there is only hope with action. No one changed the world by sitting on their couch and wishing that someone would do something. Be that someone. Stop hoping for action and be action. I honor this class with respect, admiration, pride and hope.

[MEDIA CLIP – Dr. Martin Luther King]: We have come to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time.

Text on Screen: COMMUNITY. SUSTANABILITY. ACTIVISM. EDUCATION. #ReGeneration. Learn More, text "FOLLOW REGENMOVEMENT" to 40404

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