

# MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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## *Writing About Media*

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## ***THE AMERICAN DREAM MACHINE***

**NARRATOR:** While the working class is missing from the public discourse, it has always had a place in the world of entertainment TV. In fact, in the early days, working class and immigrant families were a regular part of the television repertoire on shows like *I Remember Mama*, *The Goldbergs*, and *Life With Luigi*, which featured Norwegian, Jewish and Italian families.

[**TV show: *I Remember Mama***]: *I remember this album on our parlor table at home. I remember the old pictures from Norway that Mama and Papa brought with them when they came to this country.*

**NARRATOR:** As TV evolved as a commercially sponsored medium, advertisers began to play an increasingly important role in creating programs. Their impact went far beyond on screen sponsorship to having a hand in the actual production, including script writing and hiring of talent. Due to their power and influence advertisers were able to redefine the meaning of the American Dream, from the search for a better life to the pursuit of a consumer lifestyle.

**BAMBI HAGGINS:** In the late 40's and the early 1950's there is a very specific instruction on consumerism that takes place within narratives. That if we have these products then we can move into this different place on this socio-economic hierarchy. *The Goldbergs* is an excellent example of the ethnicom that starts out in urban America that moves to the suburbs. And in that movement you get a very specific idea of the things you need to have in order to gain access to the suburban American dream. Even in a show like *Amos 'n Andy*, which is problematic for a lot of reasons, you have Sapphire wanting to buy a new dining room table because that table is going to afford her access to a higher social and intellectual strata.

[**TV show: *Amos n' Andy***]: *I was ashamed of that old set. Man: Yeah, anybody worthwhile don't have to come to dinner, they can afford to buy their own. Woman: I'm talking about intellectual people, authors, musicians, artists, scientists.*

**PEPI LEISTYNA:** Unlike on radio, where many of the earlier shows got their start, on television you can really see what this assimilation process is supposed to look like according to the advertising-driven media. It's the acquisition of consumer goods, becoming less ethnic and looking more like these aspirational middle-class American families.

**NARRATOR:** Working together, producers and advertisers understood that associating products with middle and upper class lifestyles would increase both ratings and sales. The stark contrast between the gritty image of working class life and the shiny sanitized world of consumer advertising proved to be irreconcilable. As television became more consolidated in the late 50's and the early 60's the working class and immigrant families would gradually disappear.

**SUSAN DOUGLAS:** If you want people to be thinking that they need to keep buying products that will identify them, will mark them as being members of the middle-class and not the working-class or the lower-classes, you need to provide them with a setting that makes those products seem like they are absolutely tied to success and happiness.

[TV show: *I Love Lucy*]: *I'm going shopping. Is there anything I can get for you? They are having a sale at Saks.*

**SUSAN DOUGLAS:** I think it's important to remember that because the moment of television coincides with the birth of Levittown, of ranch house suburbia.

[Commercial]: *For workers anywhere else in the world, this would be a miracle in itself.*

**SUSAN DOUGLAS:** This idea, this promise that home ownership, having things, moving to suburbia, all of this is going to enable you to have, what for better for worse, became known as the American Dream for that time period.

[Commercial]: *Basic freedom of the American people, which is the freedom of individual choice.*

**SUSAN DOUGLAS:** We began to see *Leave it to Beaver*, *Father Knows Best*, the white nuclear family, upper-middle class living in houses that most of us couldn't possibly afford. And class was really erased.

**PEPI LEISTYNA:** Part of the reason why the working class seems to disappear is because there was a real economic boom going on at the time. Where many workers, particularly white workers did achieve a better standard of living. And that was due to organizing and collective bargaining. And to government programs that provided a real safety net. But there is also an ideological reason for the disappearance of class from the public eye. Now we should remember that we are moving into the cold war, the McCarthy era. And what's ironic is unions, the very organizations that enabled workers to achieve that better standard of living, are seen as a real threat now. And so any effort to further democratize industry, technology, economic and social relations, gets branded as communist and has to be crushed.

[Film Industry Representative testifies before House Un-American Affairs Committee] *The communists are a disruptive force in American industry and labor. And that their constant undercover movements are designed to create chaos and conflict and cripple our productive system in every way that they can.*

**MICHAEL ZWEIG:** So what we had was this presentation of living standards as the measure of class because the old notion of class as power was being wiped out, was being crushed. That was the left that was the communist, oh you are a communist. Let's not talk about class that way. What we really want to talk about is that you are doing better than you ever have before. Workers in this country are all middle class now. And even union leaders talk about how their members, we made our members middle class. Well they didn't make their members middle class. They made their working class members have a better standard of living. That's a very different thing.

**ROBIN D.G. KELLEY:** It's very hard for people who see themselves as middle class to reconceive themselves as working class. Because somehow, in this culture, being working class is a failure.

**HERMAN GRAY:** It's much more commonsensical that we think of ourselves as individual members of an imaginary middle class rather than collective members of a working class. And to that extent, I don't want to just put it on television and on images, but I think that part of the larger cultural memory, part of the larger cultural discourse in which class itself has taken a fairly strong beating.

## ***NO CHOICE – BRAND BOMBING***

**NAOMI KLEIN:** People often say about advertising, “well why don’t you just turn it off?” But in many of these cases the point is that you don’t have the choice whether or not to turn it off.

### ***[Media montage]***

**NAOMI KLEIN:** The point is that you don’t have the choice whether or not to turn it off because it is in the streets, it’s right in front of your face, on the subway or even in the bathroom, in a public bathroom. The point is to take choice out of the equation because choice, even when you can click with your converter, that is seen as the enemy in the world of marketing, that’s why you need to get your ad woven into the content of television shows, so choice is taken out of the equation.

### ***[TV: Law and Order]***

-- Jodie tends to get carried away.

-- What, I saw them at Starbucks together, didn’t I?”

### ***[TV: Friends]*** You’re out of Diet Coke?

***[TV: Half & Half]*** I can’t believe we skipped the staff meeting this morning to go to Starbucks.

***[TV: Dawson’s Creek]*** (Picking up Trojan condoms) Very nice.

***[TV: Will & Grace]*** What about that cutie that you met at Banana Republic?

### ***[TV: Gilmore Girls]***

-- This is business; it needs to be done properly and legally!

-- It’s a standard lease form, Taylor, I bought it at Office Depot.

### ***[TV: Dawson’s Creek]***

-- You can do anything in a K-Mart, you can fill up on sugary snacks, you can catch up on your dental hygiene, in fact I’m starting to like this idea so much I may never leave.

-- Because this store is perfect just the way it is – don’t change a thing.

**NAOMI KLEIN:** Because the power of marketing is always the power of getting someone’s attention. Let’s face it, it’s hard to get our attention, we are literally bombarded with images and with interruptions in our daily lives so the ante is constantly being raised, the advertisers constantly have to come up with new and more creative ways to get our attention.

***[CBS News]*** Patrick Dory has invented a machine that creates a beach blanket of advertising right in the sand, in this case for Skippy Peanut Butter.

***Interview:*** Right now approximately on this one half-mile stretch are approximately five thousand impressions of Skippy Peanut Butter jars.

*[CNN News] This marks the beginning of the commercial development of the Moon, and we suspect that we know where it'll end as well.*

**NAOMI KLEIN:** There is now no aspect of our lives that is not open to being used in this kind of theater of the brand.

*[NBC News]*

*Interview: Mike Miles, Pizza Hut: Re-launching our logo here on the side of the spaceship is the perfect metaphor for what we're really trying to accomplish with the brand.*

*Newscaster: Today's Pizza Hut rocket was actually the company's second choice. Their preference? Just imagine, the Moon: a nighttime billboard.*

**NAOMI KLEIN:** As companies try to feed off of meaning and feed off of space everything is a potential prop.

*[NBC News] Auto wraps, one California firm paying consumers \$400 a month to become driving billboards. A day at the beach brought to you by a big name sponsor. Even a town selling its own name to an Internet company for \$75,000. Welcome to Half.com, Oregon.*

**NAOMI KLEIN:** All of it, any idea, political activism, all of it gets pulled into these brands telling their story as they say. Even in capitalist cultures, there are still places where the rules of the market do not apply. We have lived with rules where there are public spaces that are cordoned off and protected because we understand that they are important for our democracies. When you lose the commons, when you lose the very idea of the public, when the schools start to look like malls, when libraries start to look like Barnes & Noble bookstores, and Barnes & Noble bookstores start to look like libraries, you lose the very idea of there being any place that is outside of the market. And I think that in terms of democracy this has drastically weakened our democracy because we have fewer and fewer places where we can relate to each other as non-consumers, as citizens. Probably the best example of that is the shopping mall because the shopping mall is designed to mimic the town square. And often designers of malls will use this language overtly – they'll talk about creating a town square type atmosphere. You'll have fountains, you'll have benches, and you'll have pseudo-streetlights and it sort of looks like an old style town hall or town square but it isn't. And you can find that out pretty quickly if, for instance, you try to pass out a political pamphlet of any kind or if you're an employee at a clothing store, say, you and your friends decide to form a union and you might have picket line in the mall, well you can't do that, you can do that in the street but this a privatized public sphere and the private rules around private property apply. So protestors, anyone who is exercising free speech that is seen as not being conducive to the goal of the mall, which is buying and selling. Any message that is not come to this store because we have a sale on, you'll immediately find yourself in the parking lot, escorted out by private security.

*[Mall footage]*

*-- Excuse me, you can't do that in the mall.*

*-- I can't do what, what do you mean?*

*-- There's no filming in here, turn the camera off.*

-- Don't worry, I'm not filming

-- Who are you with? What are you filming? This is private property; I'm going to confiscate your camera.

-- Chill out, I'm not even filming!

-- The door's right there, I've got a man there. I'm going to have to escort you out, sir.

**NAOMI KLEIN:** We're not talking about a new idea when we talk about corporate censorship, but what has changed is the scale. Wal-Mart owns so much of the book and music market that their brand image often comes into conflict with artistic expression.

*[TV interview: Jay Allen Wal-Mart Stores Inc] We want products in our stores that a family would be proud to have in their home.*

**NAOMI KLEIN:** Wal-Mart, in addition to being at the top of the Fortune 500 list, the largest employer in the United States, they are also a very powerful brand and their brand identity, is, surprise, surprise, is a family brand, it's like Disney, it's a very similar kind of identity and they pride themselves on creating a family store. Now this doesn't have to do with the values of the company, it has to do with a marketing strategy where by identifying themselves as a family store they are able to attract the entire family. Dad can go buy power drills and guns, and mom can shop for clothes, and the kids can buy video games and magazines. So their strategy to be a family store obviously is what has contributed to their incredible profitability. But part of what that means is that their brand identity as a family outlet clashes over and over and over again with artistic expression. There have been many cases where they have decided that the lyrics in a rap CD or the art on the cover or the image on the cover of a magazine doesn't fit the Wal-Mart image. Now, on one level you can say that's their right, it's a private company, they've got a right to decide what is on their shelves. But the difference is this incredible difference in scale because what that means to the record company or the magazine is that they've just written 30% of their sales and they're not going to accept that. So they reissue the CD and they also internalize Wal-Mart's aesthetic and Wal-Mart's brand values when they think about which artists to sign and when they think about what culture they're gonna put out there in the first place. So there's kind of a preemptive censorship that we never even hear about, I mean, we'll hear about something if it gets yanked off the shelves but what we don't hear about is the censorship behind the scenes and the preemptive and second guessing censorship that takes place, that is silent censorship.

## **COMMERCIALIZING CHILDREN'S CULTURE**

**MARGARET MOODY:** I think that commercialization is probably the most appalling thing about the Disney movies. Some of the movies even if I don't like the whole show, very often I think the show is overly produced, at least it is interesting and there's something I like children to learn from the movie. But I see no reason why I have to go to Toys-R-Us and buy t-shirts that have the movies advertised on it, why they have to have a back-pack that says Lion King. It offends me that I am doing Disney's advertisement and paying for the privilege.

**DIANE LEVIN:** Disney and Disney products and movies, this having a big influence on children's play. It's part of the whole move in media, to market toys to children through movies, TV shows, video games. The problem with marketing to children, and having toys that are highly realistic replicas of what children have seen on the screen, is that in many ways it affects how they play.

**MARISA PERALTA:** Play is natural for children, comes natural. And through play, children get to know themselves, get to know the world around them, it's their chance to explore, to create their own means of exploring the world. They develop imagination, language, skills, social skills. If you tell the child how to play, you are depriving the child of what's maybe necessary for that child's development.

**DIANE LEVIN:** When children see a movie, and then try to replicate the script, and there are toys that help them do that--a whole line of toys that are exact replicas of what they've seen on the screen, the message they're getting is: kids when you play, you're supposed to play the movie and here are toys to help you do it. And because children focus on the salient, dramatic, the toy keeps them focused on that narrow plot. When I hear lot of my research has had, been teachers describing play all over the world looking exactly the same. And it can stay the same and fixated, and not evolve and change. When that happens, children learn the lessons they see in the media much more than they otherwise would when their play is just a replica of what they've seen on the screen.

**MARISA PERALTA:** As a teacher, I get to see the impact magnified. It is very clear when you are going to school and there's a movie about to be released. And slowly but surely, all children start coming in with all the products that are advertising this movie.

**DIANE LEVIN:** The marketing to children is not just done through the ads that they see, it's also the program itself, or the movie itself. The *whole* production is used to as a way to sell products, where it reached a new peak in a movie like Hercules. The urns with Hercules symbols, and mugs, and sneakers and it's a total anachronism in that it doesn't relate to the times of Hercules at all but it's showing children shopping and getting all the products and all the excitement of getting the products so it kind of makes this kind of seamless marketing between the show and the ad, totally undistinguishable for children.

**MARISA PERALTA:** It's extremely powerful. And no, you can't escape it as a parent. I think that, you would have to, I can't imagine, lock your child in the house and don't let them go out? It's impossible. It's everywhere. It's everywhere.

**HENRY GIROUX:** You can't get away, anywhere you go, from the products that are being sold and they all overlap so that if Disney produces a bad film, it doesn't have to worry because, you see it, owns a television station, or it owns a television network in which you can run that film over and over again to massive audiences. Or, it can use its retailers to in fact transform it into a video and sell it in its video store, or it can market it abroad, or create a whole new toy line. Or, if we missed the point, it can begin to advertise it over and over in its newspapers, in its magazines, in its journals, so that eventually it will seem as if that really is such a wonderful product. How can it be in so many places? How could you miss it? I mean, so it seems to me it has the power to place that product, it has the power to turn every element of communication and information in to an advertisement.

*[ABC News Channel 5] Despite below-freezing temperatures, onlookers stood four-deep for the seventy-fourth annual parade. The big news was the return of Mickey Mouse after an eighteen-year absence.*

**GAIL DINES:** But this also links to a much bigger issue. And that bigger issue is what kind of society do we want to live in? Do we want to live in a society where seven global corporations control our culture? At the moment, the only people at the table are the holders of corporate power, that's not a democracy.

**NARRATOR:** “We have no obligation to make history. We have no obligation to make art. We have no obligation to make a statement. To make money is our only objective.”  
(Internal Memo, Michael Eisner, CEO, The Walt Disney Co.)

**MARGARET MOODY:** Are they teachers or are they entertainers? If they have so much power, I think it's time for them to feel some responsibility, to educate the world they really live in. I really believe that as an entertainer, you have the responsibility to be a teacher as well, because you have someone's attention.

## **ADVERTISING INVADES THE CLASSROOM**

### **[Text on Screen]**

#### *Youth Market*

*Last year teens spent \$172 billion of their own money.*

*Children 12 years & under will spend an estimated \$40 billion this year and influence over \$600 billion of household spending.*

*Children will be 60% of the US population by 2005. They will spend 20% of their time in school*

**NARRATOR:** Although public schools have never been completely off limits to commercial interests, until recently the thinking has been that schools belong to the taxpayers who support them and the millions of children who attend them. Given the size and spending power of the youth market, all that has begun to change. Marketers can no longer wait for the end of the school day to target children with commercial messages.

**NAOMI KLEIN:** Young people are target marketed by advertising from the minute they wake up in the morning and turn on the television to watch cartoons, on the streets, at music festivals. This is the most desirable market niche in the world. This is where companies build their brand loyalty for the rest of this person's life. So they target market to young people in many different ways.

**[TV ad: Pepsi]** *Pepsi drinker, for life. Pepsi – Generation Next.*

**ALEX MOLNAR:** It's very difficult to aggregate children in one place and market to them. Schools are where you can find children. You can find them there every day, you can find them there most of the year, and that's where the money is for advertisers.

**HENRY GIROUX:** Advertisers want to get into schools because kids buy things. Kids are a source of great profits. Classrooms in a sense represent the last frontier, another market place that hasn't been captured.

**STEVEN EDWARDS:** It's something that I think vendors have always wanted to do, is to get into the schools, but we left the door open a crack a few years ago. And we began to let them in and now you've got a, well it's a flood that has occurred as a result of just leaving that door open a little crack, the door is wide open now. And it's like having a tiger by the tail; it can get out of control very quickly.

**CHRIS GERZON:** So now if you bring commercialism into the schools, which before this were commercial free zones, once you bring it in, that's the final step. Now there's not a minute of the day, except when children are sleeping, that they are not exposed to commercial messages.

**ALEX MOLNAR:** Essentially what's happening here is children are being described as objects whose primary purpose is to be manipulated, for some benefit, to an adult. Not necessarily an

adult who cares about them, it might be a shareholder, it might be a product manager, but not necessarily an adult who has their best interests at heart.

**BECKI MCCOY:** In commercialism in the schools, it's just making the parents job that much harder. They are surrounded by the advertising and the commercialism in the world outside of school. And it would be nice to think of the

**NAOMI KLEIN:** Once ads start coming into the schools it's hard, I think for a lot of young people and even for parents and teachers to draw a line, precisely because corporatization is so omnipresent in all aspects of young peoples lives.

**RANDALL TAYLOR:** When you see advertising placed on a wall of a schoolstudents are liable to think that that is the correct way to go, that this is a good product for them, not realizing the district is simply, you know, making some money. And I think that a school district has a bigger responsibility than just making money, that we also have to be an example to young people.

**NAOMI KLEIN:** The values and goals of education are very different than the values and goals of advertising. One is asking students to look deeper to find their own answers, one is providing constant easy answers and solutions, and usually that solution involves buying something.

**WILLIAM HOYNES:** Schools should be a kind of oasis from the fast paced commercial lifestyle that surrounds teens everywhere they go. It seems to me that it's rather cynical to suggest that teens are sold products everywhere, so why not it school? Teens may be sold products everywhere, they might even enjoy being sold products everywhere, but schools are not about pitching to kids.

## **PRODUCT PLACEMENT**

**[Interview: John Schwartzman, DP Armageddon]** *BMW gave us a lot of money if we put their car in the movie, so we did.*

**[Interview: Michael Bay, Director Armageddon]** *We used a TagHeuer clock and I put that little TAG logo there and it saved me \$75,000.*

**SUSAN DOUGLAS:** You know, movie producers used to look to investors when they were trying to get a movie off the ground but now they look to advertisers, too. Pampers paid \$50,000 to appear in *Three Men and a Baby*. Huggies, \$100,000 for *Baby Boom*. Cuervo Gold, \$150,000 for *Tequila Sunrise*. Exxon, \$300,000 for *Days of Thunder* and Larks Cigarettes, \$350,000 for *License to Kill*. You know, this can get very competitive. Forbes and Fortune were duking it out with each other over which of the magazines was going to appear in Wall Street.

**[Movie: Wall Street]** *Well, it's in the Bible.*

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** Since it is now so expensive to promote a movie, tremendously costly, producers are often looking for ways to get some money back and some promotions as well. This can be a matter of putting a product in the background of a scene. It can be a matter of actually writing a dialogue into the script.

**[Movie: For Love of the Game]** *What is it with single men and V-8 Juice?*

**[Movie: Demolition Man]** *You do not realize that Taco Bell was the only restaurant to survive the franchise wars.*

**[Movie: Back to the Future]** *All I want is a Pepsi.*

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** Or it can involve, what I like to call “plug deluxe” which is a shot of the star actually using and enjoying a product, which is I suppose, worth its weight in gold to the advertiser. Product placement, to put it very simply, is a practice that turns movies into outright commercials.

**[Movie: Ghostbusters]** *It's Miller Time!*

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** There's the moment in *Good Will Hunting* where we see Matt Damon and Ben Affleck carrying their Dunkin' Donuts tumblers to the car, which is fine, Dunkin' Donuts is a Boston institution. But the fact that they hold the tumblers so that those logos are faced directly into the camera, that makes it a plug and therefore not realistic. You've got a very good thriller called *Internal Affairs*. And all of the sudden there are these logos staring at me like a couple of big eyes and at that point the movie just kind of stops for a second. Same thing happens in *Summer of Sam*. You've got all these guys sitting around in a diner drinking their Pepsi's and Spike Lee, the director of many a TV commercial, has the logos facing the cameras and there again suddenly that's what we see, that's what we notice. It upstages everybody.

There is a particularly rich example of concentrated placement from the mid-Eighties when Columbia Pictures was purchased by Coca-Cola and they started writing whole scenes into movies that were about Coke. For example, there's the John Candy comedy, *Who's Harry Crumb?*

**[Movie: *Who's Harry Crumb?*]**

-- *Cherry?*

-- *No fruit, thank you.*

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** Really pointless but striking as an example of utterly gratuitous product placement.

**[Movie: *Who's Harry Crumb?*]**

-- *Coke?*

-- *No, thank you.*

-- *Mix them together, you get a Cherry Coke!*

**SUSAN DOUGLAS:** We see the cola wars coming to the movies in a film called *Missing*, which is produced by Columbia, which was owned by Coca-Cola. *Missing* is a film about an American student who was murdered and in the film we see repeatedly images of Pepsi and the Pepsi logo associated with the Pinochet Regime and the soldiers and the bad guys and Coca-Cola associated with the Americans, the good guys.

**[Movie: *Missing*]**

-- *I love you, Dad.*

-- *I love you.*

-- *To life.*

-- *To life.*

**SUSAN DOUGLAS:** We all know through the strategic placement of products that advertisers colonize space, all kinds of space. But we don't necessarily think about the way in which advertisers colonize time. And by time I mean history. Our notions of the past, our notions of the future. So that we see a product in a film that's allegedly about the 1950s and it gives that product an inevitability as if it was always there.

**[Movie: *Pleasantville*]** *I guess I'll have a salad and an Evian water.*

**SUSAN DOUGLAS:** Or we see the same product in the future in a futuristic movie as if it's always going to be there.

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** There is a kind of tradition of mocking product placement.

**[Movie: *Wayne's World*]** *Contract or no, I will not bow to any sponsor.*

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** Interestingly enough, none of the advertisers take an offense. Nobody is really hurt by this satire. It's toothless satire.

**SUSAN DOUGLAS:** Even in a film like *The Truman Show*, which has various spoof placements put throughout the film...

**[Movie: *The Truman Show*]**

-- *Why don't you let me fix you some of this new Mo-Cocoa drink? All natural cocoa beans from the upper slopes of Mt. Nicaragua, no artificial sweeteners.*

-- *What the hell are you talking about?*

**SUSAN DOUGLAS:** They kind of serve as a smoke screen because there actually is a paid placement in the film for Ford Taurus. So, these spoof placements kind of take away from people's awareness that there are real placements in the film.

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** Defenders of the practice say over and over and over again that it's more realistic to have products placed in the frame than not. There is a very big difference between a world of products that looks like the world we live in and the world of products that's based on placement. Placement is very, very unrealistic because it is a way for the products to look as glamorous and as heavenly as they do in a TV commercial and that's not the way life is. A movie like *Armageddon*, for example, has a love scene between Liv Tyler and Ben Affleck in which the setting sun shares the frame with this lustrous new BMW and we also see him cutely walking animal crackers over her luscious body. That something you see in advertising all the time. The sexual allure is kind of deflected onto a thing you eat or drink. That's a pure advertising moment because it's so reductive.

**SUSAN DOUGLAS:** What advertising suggests is that products, commodities are the agents of love, happiness, success.

**[TV ad: Jif]** *Big or small, you give your all – moms like you choose Jif.*

**SUSAN DOUGLAS:** Now when the movies start taking over this function, advertising and products move to center stage in these very powerful narratives.

An early example of this is *Mac and Me*, in which the space aliens are revived by Coke. A more recent example is *Bowfinger* that ends with FedEx delivering the contract a live time to Steve Martin's character.

And it's not just scenes; products now actually provide the emotional core of films. In *At First Sight*, for example, about the life of a blind man, the first thing he sees is a can of Coke.

**[Movie: *At First Sight*]** *It's a can.*

**SUSAN DOUGLAS:** This kind of corporate investment is illustrated really well in a film like *Happy Gilmore* in which Subway actually becomes the agent, the protector, the provider who helps the Adam Sandler character save his grandmother's house.

**[Movie: *Happy Gilmore*]**

-- (ad in movie) Talk about a hole in one! Subway sandwiches will drive away your hunger.  
 -- That commercial put us up to \$275,000 – let's go get your house back!

**SUSAN DOUGLAS:** You can see how this is changing the way movies are conceived by looking at films from different time periods.

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** *You've Got Mail* is at the end of a long tradition of really great movies from Hollywood. A lot of their Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn comedies, movies like *The Awful Truth*, *His Girl Friday*, they're generally witty and they are about something, they are about a kind of romantic tug of war. *You've Got Mail* is a different thing. It takes that general situation, it feeds it into this advertising mill. All that *You've Got Mail* is really about is AOL.com and Starbucks.

*[Movie: You've Got Mail] The whole purpose of places like Starbucks is for people with no decision making ability whatsoever to make six decisions just to buy one cup of coffee: short/tall, light/dark, café decaf, low fat/non-fat...*

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** The movie, in other words, is not really about this love affair. It is about this cool service and its leading corporate provider. Imagine, now, think ahead and try to picture yourself say forty years from now when maybe there is no more Starbucks and AOL has been long since replaced by some other service. Imagine what you'd make of a movie like this. It will be like some artifact from a distant era. I mean, who cares? If the drama, if the dialogue, the pacing, if these things aren't enough then there's nothing there.

## ***MUSIC, ADVERTISING AND MARKETING***

**NARRATOR:** Of course, the music industry has always been part of the larger business world and the goal of record companies has always been to maximize profits. But there's also something that's radically new today. The record companies are now owned by much larger corporations that also control movie studios, theme parks, radio stations, television networks and Internet companies, making "cross media marketing", or Synergy, standard practice.

**REEBEE GARAFOLO:** In terms of the music industry's conception of music as a series of revenue streams cross-media marketing has now become the rule of the road. You can trace the beginnings of this all the way back to Robert Stigwood – this is the man who went on to found RSO Records, which was home to the Bee Gees. And what he did with the *Saturday Night Fever* record was really a master stroke of, what was called at the time, cross-media marketing. If you followed the release plan for that record, they released the first single two months before the movie hit the theatres to create a buzz for the movie. As soon as the movie hit, they released the title song for the record, and so the movie helped to promote the record, etc. And so, they very consciously played the media, in tandem, to create a synergy between the movie and the record. This is now commonplace.

**SHIRLEY HALPERIN:** Another example of this kind of synergy is the recent onslaught of reality-based TV shows which have a music theme. You might have heard of *Pop Stars*, which aired on the WB.

*[TV clip] I wanna be a Pop Star because it's been my childhood dream since I was a little girl...*

*[TV announcer] As we take off on a nationwide search to create the next all-girl super group. The group will be chosen from thousands of hopefuls. Over the next thirteen weeks you'll witness their transformation to pop-stardom.*

**SHIRLEY HALPERIN:** With *Pop Stars*, you have synergy through all of the AOL Time Warner machine. The show is on WB, which is obviously part of Warner Bros. Their album came out on Sire London, which is an affiliate of the Warner Music Group, which is also owned by Warner Bros. After they did all of that, and after the show aired, their strategic alliances really came into play when they offered the single exclusively on AOL, prior to its release. When that single was offered, it brought it 66,000 downloads in one day. They also launched a "win an Eden's Crush makeover contest" which was offered exclusively on AOL. In addition, they plugged stories in all of AOL Time Warner's magazines, which include *Teen People*, *Entertainment Weekly* and *Time*. So you really see the synergy in play with a show like *Pop Stars*, where it's fabricated but in the end, it becomes the real deal.

*[CNN News Interview Jamie Kellner, CEO Turner Broadcasting] An example of cross-company benefit is what we did with a show called Pop Stars on the WB recently. We've launched a new recording act that's going to get a lot of buzz, and seems to be a very popular act and Warner Records is putting the records out on. I just think there's hundreds of places that we can find where the company can work together and leverage its assets for the shareholders.*

**NARRATOR:** What's new about the success of Eden's Crush is not simply that bands are created out of nothing, but that the standard relationship between production and marketing has been turned on its head. Now the marketing comes first before there's even a band. Martin Kirkup who works for the company who developed the show is quoted as saying, "We started with the marketing, picking the songs and the preproduction and only then plugged in the artist." Synergy doesn't just happen within one massive company, it can also happen between companies – when individual artists can become the linking point that brings them together, so that every exposure in whatever setting is beneficial to them all.

**SHIRLEY HALPERIN:** Teen pop has really perfected the art of synergy by using a variety of elements within respective companies to promote other elements of business in a way that makes money for everybody. Take for example, Mandy Moore.

*[TV Interview: David McPherson, Senior VP for Epic Records]: Her voice was just very commercial to me. I mean, some artists have different talents, or different things that make them special. Mandy just has a really commercial tone to her voice.*

**SHIRLEY HALPERIN:** Here's an artist that signed to Epic Records, which is part of Sony music, who's also a VJ with a three year contract on MTV, who can plug her own videos.

*[MTV: Mandy Moore] Check out the world premiere of my new video from my new single "Walk Me Home" on TRL.*

**SHIRLEY HALPERIN:** Not only that, but she's also signed on with Neutrogena, whose ads get aired on MTV while she's plugging her own videos. Record companies are no longer looking just for artists, they're looking for artists that can be spokespeople. They're looking for tie-ins, they're looking for demographic reach, they're looking to push their products. And if they do this, they have a higher chance of success in what has become today's commercialized environment.

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** One of the great trends in popular music that follows with what we've been talking about with the hyper-commercialization of culture, has been the sort of point where music is used in commercials, popular music, so much so its almost a given now it's a natural when your breaking an act now at a music label, one of these big companies, your almost planning what commercial can we get this music into to help promote the band to help make money as well.

**SHIRLEY HALPERIN:** The clearest example of the direct tie-in between the music and the broader commercial context is probably that of Moby. He's an artist who generated 800 licensing deals from the eighteen tracks off of his album *Play* for use in everything from ads for credit cards, sneakers, department stores, not to mention several movie soundtracks. Moby essentially went from an underground sensation to a pop super-star. And his success is now a model for how to utilize advertising to break new bands.

**CHUCK D:** Having your songs in ads these days, you say well look I have my song in an ad as opposed to being just signed with Sony. If I'm gonna be signed with Sony, I, I might as well be commercial all the way. So, it was a hypocrisy when artists said well I don't wanna be actually be, have a brand carry my song into the public marketplace. But they would be signed to a company like EMI, you know, which is thoroughly a public music company. So, I think Moby's people got smart enough to say, hey, if our toe is in the water, what's wrong with our whole leg being in the water. And anyway, we are not gonna get played on conventional outlets so, we're gonna actually find alternative outlets to get the music out and bottom line is like, what gets the music out?

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** I think that for people who are in their twenties or in college who are young it might surprise them to hear that as recently as fifteen, twenty, twenty-five years ago this was an outrageous practice and certainly thirty or thirty-five years ago, the idea that music could be used to sell products in this way, they would take popular music and just associate it with something like a product, was considered a real affront to people's sense of the sanctity of music, of culture.

*[TV ad: Sears] (song) Our house, is a very, very, very fine house.*

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** Now it's just simply a given, it's just the natural way things are done. Which I think is a real reflection of the hyper-commercialization of our culture and the bankruptcy of our culture.

**CHUCK D:** But then, somebody might bring up the fact that, okay artists make songs, shouldn't make songs for themselves, they should make them for the public. So that's another train of thought that also figures into that and so you might not go deal with the clown which is McDonald's but, you know, you might say, people wanna hear your music because people also deal with the clown so your song goes with the clown so.

*[TV ad: Nike] (Beatle's song) They say you want a revolution, well you know – we all want to change the world...*

**DAVE MARSH:** The artistic community, people who thought rock was art, were up in arms when Nike bought the Beatle's *Revolution* to use it, and to defile by the way, the whole idea of revolution, if it comes down to what sneaker you choose to wear, my God, you know, what sweatshop you choose to abuse.

**NARRATOR:** Today, advertising's power is so great that it can now break new music as well as take older music, and expose it to a whole new audience.

*[TV ad: Volkswagon]*

**SHIRLEY HALPERIN:** A good example of this is an artist named Nick Drake who recorded in the seventies and was never popular. He had a small legion of loyal fans that stuck around until today. But in 2000, when Volkswagon used his song *Pink Moon* in an ad, his sales went from 100 units a week to almost 3000 a week overnight, just

after the ad debuted. But really it's all about the numbers. And when you total them all up, an ad can actually reach more people than MTV. And it can give exposure to an artist – it can bring them into people's homes – in a way that they never would have been able to do before.

**MICHAEL FRANTI:** Popular music is amazing because you think of the times when you are a kid and you think of, you hear a song and it flashes you back to when you were twelve years old and having a great time in the park and eating ice-cream and you remember those songs...

*[TV ad: Burger King] (song) Ain't nothing like the real thing baby, ain't nothing like the real thing...*

**MICHAEL FRANTI:** And that power has been now harnessed and is being used by corporations to do the same thing in attaching those songs to their products. So when you hear one of your favorite songs come on, instead of thinking about when you were twelve years old having a fun time in the park you're thinking of god I really want to go get a Big Mac, or something from Burger King, or I'd really like to be driving that car, and for me it really pisses me off because I have had a few of my favorite songs been ruined by the fact that I don't have the association with them because they are using it in a burger commercial.

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** It's a very different type of logic, and this is the way these music companies work. They're not interested in the ideas behind the music, they're not interested in the spirit that moves the music, the passion. They're just interested in making money and they have no regard for the music otherwise. And with that, it mocks the music, it demeans it, and it demeans the culture.

**ADI DIFRANCO:** So I mean, you have this corporate infusion into every avenue of culture, and a control, which I think is very damaging to culture. And it's my desire to not participate in all of that, that leads me to my independence. And I think it's with this consolidation of power in the industry, it's more and more important to devise new ways to counteract that.

## **BRANDING DRUGS**

**[ad]** *With Celebrex, I will play the long version.  
-Ask your doctor if Celebrex is right for you.*

**ELIZABETH PRESTON:** As these pharmaceutical companies move prescription drugs into the consumer arena, as they become consumer products, they advertise them quite differently. And what they do is rely on all the same practices of conventional product advertising.

**[ad]** *-It's so good to have my enthusiasm back.  
-I'm enjoying things again.  
-And it's because of Enbrel.*

**ELIZABETH PRESTON:** They began trying to create brand identities for these products. And what branding is about is trying to create an emotional bond between a consumer and a product – which is a very different kind of relationship than we've ever had to our medications before.

**BOB GOODMAN:** Any doctor can tell you about patients that come in with a list of medications that they want that clearly all came from advertising that they see on TV. And if you watch the evening news, for example, it's all advertisements for prescription drugs.

**[ad]** *What does the weekend hold in store for you? Ask your doctor if a free sample of prescription Cialis is right for you.*

**BOB GOODMAN:** And patients come in asking for things, they don't even know what it's for – women who are coming in asking for Cialis or Viagra, other things, and they don't even know what they're for.

**ELIZABETH PRESTON:** So this becomes not a rational reason for taking the medication – this is not so much about the efficacy of the drug, but about our emotional response to the kinds of social meanings they have attached to that product.

**[ad]** *Join the millions of people with asthma who have discovered Singulair.  
-I just want to play!  
-Play!  
-Play!*

**KATHERINE GREIDER:** So you have these ads that are sort of ephemeral images unfolding before you. And to me they seem like perfume ads, they are something that's all about image, that's all about emotional impact.

**ELIZABETH PRESTON:** Most of what you get in these ads are these incredibly compelling lifestyle portraits of people who are living healthy, vibrant lives, thanks to pharmaceuticals. You don't really ever see the medical condition represented. You don't ever see people suffering

from the ailment that they supposedly suffer from. You see them restored to health after they've taken the chemical.

**NARRATOR:** The pleasing tones and images of these ads are often at odds with the less pleasurable list of side effects that companies, by law, are required to recite.

**[ad]** *Side effects include itching, rash, diarrhea and bruising.*

**[ad]** *...dry mouth, sweating, nausea...*

**[ad]** *...headache, flu, runny nose and ear infection.*

**[ad]** *If you take Wellbutrin-XL, there is a risk you may have a seizure.*

**[ad]** *Erections lasting longer than four hours, though rare, require immediate medical help.*

**ELIZABETH PRESTON:** So I think one of the things that gets misrepresented by these ads is the safety of the drugs. While you get the major statement about risks, you get an incomplete picture of the drugs. These drugs are not as safe or effective as the ads suggest they are.

**[CBS News]** *According to Otis Lee Elliot's cardiologist, it's not his high cholesterol that put him in the hospital, it's the medicine he took to lower it.*

**ELIZABETH PRESTON:** Adverse drug reactions, reactions that happen even though the medication has been properly prescribed, are the fifth leading cause of death in the United States.

**NARRATOR:** In fact, each year in the United States, adverse drug reactions cause an estimated 100,000 deaths and approximately 1.5 million hospitalizations. The withdrawal of the popular painkiller Vioxx from the market is a salient example of the magnitude of this problem.

**[ABC News]** *Merck said today that data from a clinical trial found it increased risk of heart attack and stroke.*

**[CBS News]** *The arthritis drug may have caused 160,000 heart attacks and strokes...*

**[NBC News]** *-Twenty million Americans took Vioxx,*

*-Vioxx relieves arthritis pain...*

*-Often some say, unnecessarily, in response to advertising.*

**BOB GOODMAN:** Vioxx is a superb example of what happens when you overpromote a drug, when doctors especially overprescribe a drug as a consequence of promotion, and they give it to people who it's not indicated for, who they could have been giving very cheap, older drugs, which would have worked just as well and then because the drug's only out for a few years, you then discover when it's used in lots and lots of people that it has side effects, some of which are fatal, that you didn't know about.

**[ads]** *Ask your doctor, or pharmacist about Vioxx.*

**BOB GOODMAN:** And in 2000, more money was spent promoting Vioxx than Anheiser-Busch spent promoting Budweiser, than Pepsi-Cola spent promoting Pepsi, I mean that's a lot of money.

**[CBS News]** *The industry group PhRMA defends direct-to-consumer drug ads, saying they educate the public and get patients to doctors for treatment.*

**KATHERINE GREIDER:** I almost feel sorry for the people who try to defend the advertising as education because it's so preposterous, I mean come on. Is it education when Nike advertises its shoes? "Now you know how to cover up you feet and get from point A to point B."

**MARCIA ANGELL:** That is not what a thirty second television ad of beautiful people playing in the flowers does. Also, it's self evidently absurd to look to a company for impartial, critical, education about a product it sells.

**BOB GOODMAN:** The thing is we're not talking about whether a patient is drinking one cola versus the other. And I think very few people would care if their grandmother drank Pepsi because she was being deluded by the advertising, or they just had better commercials. And I think because we're talking about patients' health, it's a very, very important issue.

## ***THE VISIBLE LIFESTYLE***

**JULIET SCHOR:** If you're going to have a consumption competition, the people who are involved in it need to know what others have, and the easiest way for them to know what others have is to see it. There are problems when you compete around things that people can't see, like the size of your bank balance, because it's easy to lie about it, it's easy to brag that you have something that you don't. With a conspicuous consumption model – that is with products that are socially visible – you either have the Lexus or you don't. It's pretty clear. People can see pretty instantly the size of the rock on your finger. They can see how big your house is and so forth. So what has happened is that the kinds of goods that we compete about over time have gravitated to the goods that are socially visible. I think a lot about what I call the big three: the car you drive, the house you live in, the clothes you put on your body. And as the competitive consumption system spread to a wider and wider group of people, those socially visible items become increasingly important as a part of a competitive consumer system. The commodity where you see this in its most destructive form, of course is the SUV, Sport Utility Vehicle. And you have large numbers of consumers moving to these vehicles not because they need to use them off-road, not because they fill them up necessarily, but because they are the trendy vehicle of the moment, and they're dangerous to other drivers on the road, they're extremely detrimental to the environment, they have very low gas mileage and contribute disproportionately to global warming, but you've had a mad rush to them by consumers because of their extraordinary prestige and status volume. Housing's been another area of dramatic escalation and upscaling. The average American house has doubled in size since the 1970's, despite the fact that there are declining numbers of people living in the houses so square footage per person has increased dramatically. Luxury sub-divisions have been springing up all over the country. With only oversized executive style and other fancy homes.

**[ABC News]** Four five and six-thousand square foot McMansions are going up in subdivisions with pools and tennis courts all over the country. As American play a new game, no longer keeping up with Joneses' now, it's the Gates'.

**JULIET SCHOR:** Houses have also gotten much more luxurious, with remodeled kitchens, granite countertops. Bathrooms have gotten much fancier with Jacuzzis and steam showers. We've shifted to building three-car garages, two for the cars, one for all the stuff that you can't fit in all the rest of the house. Eventually, however, people have acquired the houses, the cars, the jewelry, the wardrobe, the watches and so forth, and the continual pressures of advertising and marketing and to keep up as incomes grow and wealth increased, new products get drawn in to the system of competitive consumption and things which were previously not really socially visible get drawn in and marketers and consumers make them visible. So, it used to be that water was an unbranded good, there was no status value to water. People took it out of the tap. But water comes to be branded, and you get a whole range of statuses of water, the foreign waters become the most valuable, and people start walking around out on the street and in other public places with their water bottles with labels. Coffee's another one. A couple of decades ago, if you bought coffee at a coffee shop it would come in a generic cup. All the coffee shops bought the same cup. Now all those cups are branded and you can tell whether you bought it at Starbucks, or whether you just bought it at the old fashioned neighborhood coffee shop that still uses that generic cup. Athletic footwear is another example of a product, which was previously sort of

back-grounded, unbranded. People used athletic footwear for sports. It didn't have the status value that your dress shoes did, for example. But once Converse, Nike, Reebok came along, they turned these footwear items into extraordinary examples of status goods in which the name became absolutely everything. These are products that are produced, you know most of the athletic footwear is produced with the same materials, in the same factories, according to very similar designs, and yet people will pay a hundred dollars more just to have that Michael Jordan logo on it. What's happened in the era of new consumerism is that branding has become all-important.

**[On the Street Interviews]** -- Favorite brands? Krispy Kreme... -- Abercrombie and Fitch... -- Clinique... -- Victoria's Secret... -- Ikea Furniture... -- TiVo... -- J. Crew, I like J. Crew... -- Coca-Cola -- Jaguar... -- Gap... -- Gap Jeans... -- One of those Minis... -- Airwalks... Vanns... -- Kmart. -- Mini Coopers... -- Wal-Mart... -- Imax...

**JULIET SCHOR:** More and more products are branded the importance of consuming the right brands has become much greater. Back in the 1950's and 60's, there were no labels on the outside of clothes. Designer labels were only on the inside. Beginning in the seventies, starting with t-shirts and then increasingly many, many types of apparel, footwear, and accessories, designers started putting their logos on the outside of goods, so that people can broadcast very clearly that they paid the status premium and they bought the prestige, the product. There are wonderful studies showing that you can take the same piece of apparel and sew three different labels in it, ask the consumer to rank these three identical items and they will rank them in quality according to the labels on the inside, not even realizing the three items they've been given are exactly the same item. What this means is that people increasingly are willing to pay money to get the right brand name. One of the surprising things I've found in doing the research is that the willingness to pay for status is not something that you find mostly among uneducated people, people who are duped into paying more for a branded good than something they could get as a cheap generic, for example. But that willingness to pay for status premium is more likely among highly educated individuals. I don't think you can understand the phenomenon of overspending in America without understanding the role that denial plays. Most American consumers live in a fog when it comes to their spending. And that fog is very important in reproducing the spending life. For example, the vast majority of Americans don't know where their money goes. They don't have budgets, and even those who do have budgets don't pay attention to them. If you ask American consumers how much credit card debt they're holding, the average answer is less than half of their real debt.

**[On the Street Interviews]** -- My credit card debt is probably about \$3,000.... -- \$15-18,000 I bet... -- Probably about \$1,500... -- It would definitely be under \$5,000... -- Uh, \$1,000. -- \$4000 -- \$20,000... -- I have like \$1,000 worth of debt -- about \$40,000...

**JULIET SCHOR:** And this process has really accelerated among youth. Credit card companies have aggressively targeted students in recent years offering them free air tickets home for Thanksgiving if they sign up for a card, offering students no money, and even students without jobs credit cards, and you have an increasing number of college students today, graduating with sizable credit card balances. There's a dramatic social irrationality at the core of the competitive consumption system. What people are seeking, is to do better than the other guy. But if the other

guy is also increasing his or her consumption at the same time, everyone's just staying in the same place. But in today's world, we're having to work longer hours, take on more debt, erode our savings, in order to keep up with this dramatically escalating consumption standard. And yet, we're not getting anywhere.

## ***HIDDEN – A GENDER***

*[News] There is more details and a profile developing of kids who kill kids.*

**JACKSON KATZ:** One of the things that happens in typical discussions about social problems is that the very way we talk about the problems, tends to obscure some of the root causes. For example, violence is not typically talked about as a gender issue, but the fact is that one gender, men, perpetrate approximately 90% of the violence. Now part of the reason for this is because men are the dominant group. And one of the ways dominance functions is through being unexamined. This is true for other areas as well. For example, when we hear the word race in the United States we tend to immediately think African American, Latino, Asian American, Native American, etc. When we hear the term sexual orientation, we tend to think gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender. When we hear the term *gender*, we tend to think women. In each case the dominant group, white people, heterosexual people, men, don't get examined. As if men don't have a gender. As if white people don't belong to some racial grouping. As if heterosexual people don't have some sort of sexual orientation. In other words we focus always on the subordinated group and not on the dominant group. And that's one of the ways that the power of dominant groups isn't questioned – by remaining invisible. There's a number of ways that this happens. For example, the linguist Julia Penelope talks about how the use of the passive voice when we talk about crimes against women, tends to shift our focus off of male perpetrators and on to female victims and survivors. For example we talk about how many girls *were raped* last year. How many women *were* assaulted? Or how many women *were* slain. As opposed to saying, how many men raped women or girls or how many boys or men assaulted and murdered women. Another way in which we can see this idea about the invisibility of masculinity being played out is in the discussion about so-called “youth violence” You read headlines in newspapers all around the country about this problem of kids killing kids.

*[News] But after ten school shootings in three years, there is more detail and a profile developing of kids who kill kids.*

**JACKSON KATZ:** But this isn't kids killing kids. Overwhelmingly it's *boys* killing boys and *boys* killing girls. An example of the way the media de-genders discussion of violence can be seen in the coverage of the Jonesboro, Arkansas massacre in the Spring of 1998. There were all these headlines about kids killing kids and children killing children and what's going on with our kids, etc. In fact, one article in the *New York Times*, a think piece that was a step back piece to try to discuss the whole issue of this range of school shootings, in one parentheses said, "All these shootings were done by boys" and then what was in the parentheses wasn't discussed in the rest of the article. So you have a whole article trying to pull together all the 7 different factors that are causing these shootings and the one most important, in my opinion, is in the parentheses and not discussed. Some people will say, "Well, it's obvious that boys are doing these shootings." The reason why we don't say it, the reason why we say it's kids killing kids, everybody knows that boys are the one's doing the vast majority of the violence. You don't need to say it. But the fact is, if you don't say it, then in the subsequent discussion about the causes of the violence then you're going to leave out one of the key elements. Another example: road rage. People don't typically think of road rage as a gendered phenomenon but one recent study showed that out of ten thousand cases of aggressive driving or road rage, over 95% were males, but you read the

editorials in the newspapers throughout the country about road rage and the articles, essays, and opinion columns, and it's rarely talked about as a masculine or a male phenomenon. It's just a phenomenon on our roadways. If women were doing it, if 95% of the people doing it were women, you can bet that the single issue that would be talked about is, why are women, what is going on in the gender construction of women that cause them to act in that way? When girls commit violence, that's always the subject. The gendered nature of the crime is always part of the discussion.

*[CBS News] A sensational case goes on trial in Virginia tomorrow, involving a man who was sexually mutilated by his wife.*

**JACKSON KATZ:** Now Lorena Bobbitt, her crime was brutal admittedly, and I understand believe me, as a man understand why people would be, especially men, would be very uncomfortable about that, but every day men are murdering and mutilating women and it doesn't cause as a great a national outcry. One of the reasons why the film, *Thelma and Louise*, caused such a stir back in the early nineties was that women were the ones who were acting violently.

*[Movie: Thelma and Louise]*

*Oh my god, oh my god.*

*-- Get in the car.*

*Oh Jesus Christ. Louise, you shot him.*

**JACKSON KATZ:** In other words you have films all the time, go into any video store and walk down the aisles and look at all the films that feature violence against women including sexualized violence against women by men, and there's little outcry and little commentary by the movie critics for example, when they are reviewing these films. They don't talk about the fact that we have this huge epidemic of men assaulting women and we're making yet *another* film about an assault against women? Look at the recent remake of *Psycho*. That was not part of the discussion when *Psycho* re-released. We're yet again, going to show a sexualized image of a woman being assaulted and that's going to be considered great art? And people are going to go see it? Yet *Thelma and Louise* you had debates going on in the newspapers of the United States, "is this a bad trend?" It was similar to the outcry about Lorena Bobbitt. What's happened is because violence has been gendered *masculine* we think it's unusual only when *women* do it. When men do it, it is so normal that its masculine character is unremarkable. In fact, it's invisible. So one of the things we have to do is to make it visible. Feminist scholars and activists have been trying to do this for years, but they've been largely ignored. Making masculinity visible is the first step to understanding how it operates in the culture and how definitions of manhood have been linked to dominance and control.

## UPPING THE ANTE

**JACKSON KATZ:** Many cultural analysts would argue that if you want to understand the meaning of something in society, look at its representation in the media – what stories are being told about it in the popular culture. And if we look at images of men and masculinity over the last fifty years we'd see that there've been some dramatic and really interesting changes in what is considered to be masculine, especially in terms of the size of men's bodies. These changes tell us a story about what's going on in the culture. For example if you compare the Superman of the 1950s with what we now think of as the Man of Steel you'll see a fairly dramatic difference. If you think of Batman, and Adam West as Batman in the 1960s and look at his body and compare it to the Batman of the movies of the nineties there's a fairly dramatic difference. How about pro wrestling? Pro wrestlers' bodies in the 1960s were more flabby if you will. If you look at them in the eighties and nineties they've become much bigger and stronger and more rippled. If you look at the Star Wars toy figurines that kids played with in the 1970s and contrast them with the Star Wars toy figurines that are being marketed to kids in the 1990s you see a dramatic shift. There really is something happening here. Something's going on. Look at the way that the body of GI Joe, the doll that millions of boys play with, has changed over the last twenty years. Researchers had calculated in fact that the size of his biceps in real life equivalence has increased from 12.2 inches in 1964, to 15.2 inches in 1974, to 16.4 inches in 1994 and up to 26.8 inches by 1998. If you wanted a comparison to a real person, Mark McGwire's biceps are only 20.0 inches. As I said something is really going on. One of the interesting things is that if you compare this with the image of the female body, you'll see the reverse thing happening. Whereas full-figured women as Marilyn Monroe or Jayne Mansfield were the representation of ideal female beauty in the 1950s, by the eighties and nineties the ideal has become much thinner, more waifish, more girlish – so that today its Kate Moss or Tyra Banks and Calista Flockhart who reflect the beauty norm. One of the ways to explain these shifts is that in an era when women have been challenging male power in business, the professions, education, and other areas of economic and social life, the images of women that have flooded the culture show women as less threatening. They're literally taking up less symbolic space. At the same time, images of men have gotten bigger, stronger, more muscular and more violent. In other words, one of the ways that men have responded to women's challenges is by overcompensating and placing greater value on size, strength and muscularity – and in terms of media images this means big beefy men have been taking up even more symbolic space. We can see the same pattern if we look at the way gun imagery has changed over the last fifty years. If you look at images of Humphrey Bogart in the 1930s and the 1940s the way he's posed as a masculine figure and look at the size of the gun that he's holding, it's a very small gun and it's a very non-imposing pose, by contemporary standards. If you move to the 1960s with Sean Connery as 007 the gun gets bigger, right, then if you move into the 1970s with Clint Eastwood as Dirty Harry for example the pose gets more menacing and the gun gets bigger. And if you move into the early eighties you have Sylvester Stallone as Rambo, not only is he holding big guns and presenting himself as really tough, his *body* is now a spectacle, his body is not one of the sites of his projection of power. The epitome of this historical progression is Arnold Schwarzenegger as The Terminator, so its not just that his holding a big gun or has a big body but rather his whole *body* is literally a killing machine. There has been a ratcheting up of what it takes to be considered menacing and hyper masculine in the 1980s and nineties. It's really important to remember that there is nothing natural about images – they don't just come about by accident. They're made by *someone*, and mostly in our culture it's

been men that have been in charge when it comes to being the authors and creators of popular culture, so if these images are changing, they're reflecting what's going on in the psyches of these men. Actually what we're seeing in part, is their pathologies or anxieties being played out on the screen. But this isn't just happening inside the heads of some advertising gurus or Hollywood screenwriters. There's a historical context for all of this.

## **MAKING MEN: GLAMORIZING BULLYING**

**SUT JHALLY:** One of the things we know is that we are not born with our ideas of how we should behave as men or women. They are not already in our heads. We know that those things are learned. That our family influences us, that our friends influence us, that the culture in general provides models, for example to young boys, of what a man should be. And perhaps the most important story that professional wrestling spins for its audience is that all the violence and confrontation that we see is connected to manhood.

*[WWE wrestler: Shane McMahon] And I lost to the better man.*

*[WWE wrestler: Kurt Angle] So why don't you come out here and face me like a man?*

*[WWE wrestler: The Undertaker] We're gonna see what kind of man you are.*

*[WWE wrestler: Triple H] I thought you were a man.*

**JACKSON KATZ:** So what does it take to be a man in professional wrestling? Well, we know there are a number of ways of defining manhood outside of professional wrestling. For example, the strength to support women and respect women and other men, the strength to confront bullying and defend those who are being bullied. But in the world of the WWE all of these things are the polar opposite of manhood. Instead we get a very traditional and very conservative version of masculinity represented as an ideal of physical strength, the ability to control and scare other people, to intimidate, and especially to not back away from confrontation. In fact real men of the WWE invite confrontation and conflict.

*[WWE wrestler: Triple H] Angle, get your Olympic ass in this ring and get it kicked right now!*

**JACKSON KATZ:** Now this may seem like innocent bravado, but what's being modeled here for young boys and men, is a way to be a man. In this world arguments aren't solved by talking, or by understanding and negotiation, but always by physical violence.

*[WWE announcer] Holly's been waiting for this. Hardcore Holly just...*

**JACKSON KATZ:** Now you might say, what else do you expect? Wrestling is about violence. And we know violence works at least to make Vince McMahon a wealthy man, right? But we need to ask a broader question, which is what effect does this modeling of behavior have on boys and young men in the real world.

Boys and young men are learning that to strike out in anger is justified and even expected of a real man. Obviously the WWE doesn't cause this type of behavior. It's much more complicated than that. But we would be naive in the extreme to think that something that's watched so much by so many young people, especially young men, doesn't cultivate, legitimate, and glorify the attitudes that lead to so much damage in the real world.

*[WWE wrestler] C'mon C'mon C'mon, Taz.*

**SUT JHALLY:** Physical domination is one ideal that's stressed but just as important is a

modeling of mental and psychic humiliation. Every wrestler knows that they have to have this trash talking as part of their act and the best wrestlers are the ones who can perform this in the most convincing way.

*[WWE wrestler: Stone Cold] Look at me. You know anytime I want you, BAM, you're mine.*

**SUT JHALLY:** In fact WWE telecasts are filled with actions who's major aim is to mentally subjugate your opponent, verbally taunting him after you have physically defeated them but it can take a lot of other forms as well. Whether it's shoving someone's head down the toilet, or having Stone Cold Steve Austin urinate over them, or watching The Undertaker forcing someone clearly weaker than him to first drink his tobacco spit, and then pouring vomit all over him. The aim of it is all the same, to mentally humiliate someone and reinforce their weakness. The same is true of Rikishi's stink face, or X-pac's Bronco Buster. Perhaps the clearest example of this was demonstrated by the character played by Vince McMahon himself.

*[WWE Mr. McMahon] Go ahead and kiss my ass.*

**SUT JHALLY:** This physical and mental humiliation can also be inflicted by a group on one person. This is the essence of course of bullying behavior. Where the weakest is picked out to be publicly humiliated.

*[WWE wrestler: Stone Cold] You gotta learn about respect from Stone Cold Steve Austin and the Alliance!*

**SUT JHALLY:** When we look at the real world we know that bullying in schools is at epidemic levels. That hundreds of thousands of kids are getting picked on and beaten up every single day and life is a living hell for them and some of them even commit suicide because they can't take it. If lots of boys are bullying others in this way then there must be something in the culture that is suggesting to them that a real man is also a bully. Someone who scares and intimidates other people.

*[WWE wrestler: The Undertaker] What's wrong, Cole, I sense fear, do you fear me? 'Cause I like that. You know fear and respect, they go hand in hand.*

**SUT JHALLY:** While a lot of wrestlers take on this role the most powerful bully in professional wrestling is also one of the most popular characters that wrestling has ever seen. Stone Cold Steve Austin.

*[WWE wrestler: Stone Cold] He's gonna get your little boyfriend's ass whooped tonight, do I make myself clear?*

*[WWE wrestler: Lita] Look, look Steve I think it was just-*

*[WWE wrestler: Stone Cold] WHO?*

*[WWE wrestler: Lita] Stone Cold*

*[WWE wrestler: Stone Cold] That's right.*

**JACKSON KATZ:** In one of the story lines he brutally assaults one of the ringside announcers,

Michael Cole. Stone Cold is nothing if not the ultimate bully. He mixes psychological humiliation with physical domination.

*[WWE wrestler: Stone Cold] Shut up! When I put this microphone in your mouth, you say “Yes sir Stone Cold.”*

**JACKSON KATZ:** So what’s absolutely crucial to remember is that for many years Austin has been one of the most popular characters in the WWF. Maybe the most popular character. In essence what he’s doing is glorifying a culture of bullying, literally defining a real man as a bully and being embraced like none other for doing it.

**SUT JHALLY:** Stone Cold is in many ways the key figure of modern professional wrestling. Its’ contemporary popularity stems from his emergence in the early to mid 1990’s as a major star. Now in his early career Austin was a baby face and a glamour boy. He became the biggest star of professional wrestling by transforming himself into a “heel”-a bad guy, and anti-authority rebel who drank, didn’t care about anyone else, beat up anyone who disagreed with him. Now before this “heels” were not supposed to be popular. The audience was supposed to root against them. What’s unusual about Austin the “heel” is that the crowd cheered him and turned him into one of the most popular wrestlers in history. Whether he is controlling his wife or humiliating the boss’s daughter, or especially humiliating the boss himself, Austin the bully came to be seen as a sort of everyman.

**FAN:** Cause Austin is like the most, he is like normal, you know. He’s like every, like your everyday man, you know. He goes to work, you know, kicks some ass, you know, that’s what he does. He ain’t trying to be flamboyant or nothing. He comes, he says what he’s gonna do. He does it. Boom.

**FAN:** He was the first one to defy authority, you know. He was the first one to tell people that it’s ok to not go with what’s normal.

**FAN:** Everybody likes him. It’s like it’s what they want to do in real life but they really can’t.

**FAN:** Cause he’s like what every American male wants to be, you know, he doesn’t take crap from anybody, he drinks the beer, he’s loving it. Livin the life, everybody would love to be like him. That’s the way I wish I could be.

**FAN:** He doesn’t care about nothing, he does what he wants to do and he’s proud of it and he doesn’t have any regrets. That’s the thing to do.

**SUT JHALLY:** While individual audience members would say that they were obviously against bullying what happens with Austin is that because it’s part of his overall character, who is very popular, people end up identifying with the bully not the bullying victim. The obvious question that we need to ask is what’s the effect on the culture when bullying is glamorized in this way.

**FAN:** I love Stone Cold. Stone Cold is the man. He’s the man. He kicks people’s asses, you know, so he’s my favorite guy.

***BITCH NIGGAZ***

You know what I think is deep?  
 Just the fact that you hear so many brothers calling other brothers bitches,  
 bitch ass niggas, hoes.  
 You know, all these things that you hear all of the time in hip-hop.  
 You hear it all the time, and it goes unrecognized and unchecked because it is so normalized.  
 It's amazing that we haven't really talked about it more,  
 because to me that's just as pervasive as the misogyny.  
 At this Summer Jam concert, 50 Cent questioned Ja Rule's manhood in front of thousands.  
 When one looks at the contemporary landscape of hip-hop,  
 one sees the feminizing assault on masculinity by other men  
 so that the greatest insult that a man might imagine for another man  
 is to assume that he is less than a man and to assign him the very derogatory terms  
 that one usually associates with women.  
 In the rest of our culture,  
 when men want to call other men something that is really going to degrade them,  
 they call them a sissy.  
 They call them a punk.  
 They call them all these kinds of names.  
 That's outside of hip-hop. That's everywhere.  
 And to those critics who are so pessimistic about our economy,  
 I say don't be economic girly men.  
 The insult is double.  
 It's both an assault on women, but it's also a reinforcement of a negative and vicious form,  
 a malicious form if you will, of masculine identity.  
 Man, unfortunately I was one of those cats that used to do that to brothers.  
 You know what I mean? I'll just be real with you.  
 It was a false sense of power, and it was a way of making someone else feel powerless.  
 It's calling your manhood into question.  
 It's calling your sexuality into question, saying if you're not this, you must therefore be gay.  
 You must be a faggot, you know.  
 You must be a bitch nigga. It's all those things.  
 What does that mean? What does that say about us?  
 Could it really be saying that we may be insecure about our masculinity?  
 I ran into these three hip-hop heads back in Daytona Beach.  
 Now let me just ask a question.  
 This is out of curiosity and probably naivety and ignorance.  
 What do you classify yourself as?  
 Are you women? Are you men?  
 On a regular day to day, I'm just a regular guy,  
 but every now and then I do dress up in women's clothes.  
 I like to wear women's clothes, and besides I look good in them.  
 How do you feel about homophobia in rap lyrics?  
 Does that bother you at all?  
 You said it turns you on. Why does it turn you on?

They shouldn't be doing that.  
 We are some of the people who support their music,  
 buy their music, go to the concerts and everything. We do.  
 I'm dealing with homophobia in hip-hop, homophobic lyrics and things like that.  
 I can't partake in that conversation, homes.  
 That homo shit?  
 Is that what you're talking about?  
 I can't even talk to you about that.  
 Why not?  
 I mean with all do respect, I'm not trying to offend nobody.  
 It's my cultural, what I represent culturally doesn't condone it whatsoever.  
 Let me just ask you this, Busta.  
 Do you think that a gay rapper would ever be accepted in hip-hop culture?  
 (singing)  
 Say the word and we're gone.  
 I've never even seen straight black men in large numbers  
 even try to have conversation with gay brothers.  
 I know folks have done it one on one. I've done it one on one.  
 But I don't really see that happening, man.  
 Because I think part of the illness falls on straight men to really one,  
 begin the process of how we define manhood.  
 I started rhyiming, and I came out like right around the same time.  
 And it was in that situation that I became so much more aware of  
 how homophobic hip-hop was.  
 Here I am a black man trying to love myself,  
 in spite of the fact that I've accepted myself as gay,  
 or along with the fact that I've accepted myself as gay.  
 And when you do that, there's not a lot of love for gays in hip-hop.  
 I mean, we know that, from the beginning through now.  
 Tim'm talked about the irony between homophobia and a rarely discussed issue in hip-hop.  
 It's real ironic for the thing in hip-hop that it is such a homophobic culture oftentimes  
 and yet it's so completely homoerotic.  
 You know, when LL Cool J has got his shirt off and he's licking his lips,  
 it's not just women looking at that.  
 You know, it's guys too.  
 I'm looking for my 50 Cent picture.  
 There is some awareness of the homoeroticism, but people aren't really willing to confront it.  
 I'm on my way to Vibe magazine to interview the editor of Vibe,  
 and I'm gonna talk to him about homoeroticism in rap music and hip-hop culture.  
 Not too many brothers talk about homoeroticism in rap music, so we'll see how it goes.  
 Could you just elaborate a little bit about exactly what homoeroticism looks like?  
 Homoeroticism in media looks like LL Cool J with no shirt on in his music video  
 with a Big 10 belt buckle standing there flexing all greased up staring at you.  
 It is showing black men strong, naked, greased up, and as these really godlike objects.  
 And they're everywhere.  
 They're on magazine covers.

You see Nelly on the cover of Vibe with no shirt.  
You see 50 Cent on the cover of Vibe with no shirt.  
And a lot of it is taken from the cultures in prison where everyone is tatted up.  
They don't have belts, so their pants are falling down.  
These are all the types of things that are very homoerotic,  
but they are also very masculine and considered very thug in our culture.  
Whether exaggerated or not, men speak about their sexual conquests.  
Me and my boy hit it. Me and my boy did her. Me and my boy did this.  
So there's a lot of "me and my boy" up in there.  
Not much about the woman, but me and my boy.  
Now they would deny, that is these heterosexual rappers,  
that there is any intent to form a union erotically,  
but one can't help but conclude that in the passionate pursuit of these women,  
only if my boys can have them,  
it ain't no fun if the homies can't have none, Snoop said.  
All of that is directed toward an erotic intensity that bonds men  
at the expense of their heterosexual allegiances with females.  
So to me, all those ways prove that there is deep  
and profound homoeroticism in hip-hop culture.  
Now do you get a lot of attention from guys?  
Yes, everyday.  
How much attention from guys?  
A lot.  
You've been getting a lot of attention?  
Oh yeah.  
We stepped out of the car, he was like, whoa.  
You have guys that come and they be like,  
meet me around the corner and do it on the DL, and I love it.  
Yo, faggots, man!  
It's like a lot of hardcore thugged-out cats.  
Those are the types of dudes?  
That's all we messed with.  
It's just a big front in front of their boys.  
That needs to be known worldwide.  
Hey, get that shit off me, yo!  
Yo, we ain't with that gay shit.

## ***MASCULINITY AND CONTROL***

Another female artist who reflects this sexual imperative is Janet Jackson who, in the 1990's went from relative obscurity to superstardom when she abandoned her somewhat tame image for a hyper-sexualized one that met the requirements of the pornographic imagination more fully. This journey to objectification was completed during the 2004 Super Bowl half-time show when she literally became defined to the world by one part of her body.

However, Janet Jackson was just half the story of that event and almost no mention was made of the moments leading up to it, where she plays the role of a tease and Justin Timberlake plays the role of a man who wants to control her and her body. The dramatic conclusion of the incident is in a microcosm the essence of the dreamworld played out in front of the whole world— she has become nothing more than a body part and he has demonstrated his sexual control over her.

In fact, Justin Timberlake had already explored this theme in a previous video, based on the end of his real-life relationship with Britney Spears, which shows him breaking into her house and surreptitiously watching as she undresses and takes a shower. This behavior, glamorized in this instance, mimics precisely the structures of real-life stalking and domestic abuse where a man cannot accept a woman's rejection of him and attempts to assert control of her life.

In fact, just as music video tells us a story of female passivity, it tells an equally powerful story of masculinity as being tied to power, intimidation and force. And in this story of a powerful and out of control masculinity, women play a key role. They are shown repeatedly in cages, exhibiting themselves for watching males. They are shown tied up and writhing seductively on beds, waiting for a man's attention.

Chased and pursued by men, they are carried away and handled like children. Their bodies explored and used as men please, this sense of male entitlement has an unmistakable aggressive edge. Women are pushed aside, slammed against walls and held on the floor, spanked and slapped, water and alcohol pored over them and on them, and finally spread out on a pool table.

In the pornographic imagination, even a woman's apparent refusal to male advances ends in their acquiesce to his desire. Even when men unexpectedly attack them, women's arousal wins out over their fear. In the dreamworld women never say "no" and passionately welcome masculine aggression. They even enjoy being forcibly kidnapped in a dark garage, blindfolded and made to perform for their attacker. In these ways men's violence against women takes on an erotic quality.

Perhaps the clearest and most aggressive articulation of this sense of male control of female bodies is reflected in this video where Fred Durst of Limp Bizkit kidnaps a woman he is obsessed with, and forces her to watch as he both expresses his anger at her for rejecting his advances, and demonstrates his ability to control her in line with his desires.

As these ideas of male entitlement and power have become glamorized and normalized in the culture, we have to ask what effect do they have on the real life behavior of men and women?

--Central Park

During the 2000 Puerto Rican Pride Parade in New York City the public space of Central Park turned in to a literal war zone for scores of women who were doused, sexually assaulted and stripped of their clothes by groups of men who felt they had an entitlement to enact their desires on any female body. This footage, used by the police to identify and prosecute the assailants, shocked and outraged the country when it was broadcast. But when virtually identical images have been played over and over again on our television screens with virtually no comment why should be shocked. In fact what was most striking about these images was how familiar they were. While there are chilling similarities between the popular culture images and the real-life attacks in Central Park, there is a major difference. The women in the real-world were not enjoying it. They weren't smiling. This wasn't their Dreamworld. It was someone else's, which had turned into their nightmare.

A similar sexual assault took place during the 2001 Mardi Gras festival in Seattle, captured in this award-winning photograph, when a mob of men violently stripped and indecently assaulted a woman in full public view. One of the interesting questions to ask is, what is going on in the minds of these normal looking men that they think that they have an entitlement to enact their desires on any female body that happens to be around, even when it is clearly against her will. What stories from the culture are they drawing upon to legitimate their assault?

Webbie – give me that pussy

There are always two sides to the sexual objectification of the female body. On the one hand adoration and desire. On the other loathing and contempt, which is reflected in the language that some men use to describe women and sexuality.

“If you see a woman or you know a woman a bunch of guys know a female who they perceive to be what they call a bitch you know. They'll say is you know, what she needs is a good fuck to put her in line. Like a fuck will straighten her out it will be punishment for her. Or it will tame her like she is some type of wild horse or something and a good fuck will you know just tame her.”

“You know you'll see a group of guys in bars and maybe some, a real pretty little girls will kind of wave her nose in the air a little bit and will trot by and somebody will say you know she really needs a dick in the ass or somebody should fuck her and leave her something like that. You know she really needs to be left out in the cold like to be taught a lesson.”

“I don't know if you guys have heard of hate fucking or whatever but like when ahh you're out and a girl will walk in with this big attitude and your like man I would like to fuck the hell out of her I would just like to pound her I would nail her to the wall or something. Like on campus there might be a girl that you know in a class or something like that and she just gets a reputation for being like what you would consider a bitch or something like that and your just like man I would just like to fuck her.”

“This one guy I used to know we used to call him HTB it stood for hurt the bitch because every time he said he got one he said he hurt the bitch so we called him HTB. Ya know thrashin a woman doin her until she’s sore you know that’s something that’s bragged about you know all the time. The day after a guy goes to bed with a woman he’ll come back and say man, I thrashed her man I did her until she was crying.”

What these attitudes reveal is that the danger and violence is inside our relationships, not outside and that when you objectify women and use them as props for male power and prestige, then violent language (and violence itself) will not be far behind. While disembodied and fragmented images of women cannot directly cause sexual and violent assault, they do rob women of their humanity and create an environment where attacks against them are not treated seriously. They cultivate attitudes and values that legitimate and justify the assaults as self-deserving and provoked by the victims. The stories of our commercial culture then lead us to blaming the victim.

If your understanding of female sexuality is mediated by the stories of music video, then these are precisely the types of attitudes that one would expect that dreamworld to cultivate in its male watchers. Further, all behavior is based upon certain assumptions, attitudes and values. These stories of the pornographic imagination then do not directly cause sexual assault, but they create understandings in our cultural environment that might encourage certain violent behaviors, influenced by many other things of course, by some men towards women.

Fantasies are fun, but sometimes the line between fantasy and reality is blurred. The images of the dreamworld in that respect are not innocent, they are not just “images.” The stories they tell are firmly implicated in the gender and sexual power relations of our society.

## ***IT'S ONLY ENTERTAINMENT***

**JACKSON KATZ:** In the real world, girls and boys, men and women are working together as peers and partners in unprecedented ways, in school, in the workplace, in other areas of social life. As a matter of fact, that's one of the best things that's happened in the culture in the past generation to girls *and* boys.

But in the cartoon world that Vince McMahon has created, it's as if the women's movement never even happened.

**SUT JHALLY:** A typical response from someone who may be a fan of wrestling to the type of analysis we've been talking about there, is to say "just lighten up, stop taking everything so seriously. This is just fun, this is just entertainment."

**FAN:** All in all, its just for fun, its just for fun. That's all its for.

**FAN:** It's all part of the show, it's all entertainment.

**FAN:** There's ain't nothing wrong with it's all entertainment. Ain't nothing wrong with it.

*[CNN Interview: The Rock] C'mon, grow up, what we do is entertainment. We are tame compared to what you see on network television.*

**JACKSON KATZ:** Let's grant that this is just entertainment, that's fine. But if we do that, we have to ask some other questions. What does it mean, then, that we're entertained by men beating up women? By scenes showing men being bullied and humiliated? By stereotypical depictions of gays? What does it mean when we find that funny? Well, one effect may be that when we come across those things in the real world we don't take them seriously, we don't see the tragedy involved, the pain and suffering that real human beings are facing.

**SUT JHALLY:** Many wrestling fans may say: "Look, I enjoy watching this as entertainment, but I don't go home and beat up my wife or girlfriend. I don't go around beating up gay people." But that's not the only issue. The real question that we need to ask ourselves seriously is: "What does it mean that millions of boys and men choose to watch entertainment that is abusive, degrading, and disrespectful to women?"

*[WWE announcer] Oh no! Bischoff set these two women up! He's laying these women on top of each other.*

**SUT JHALLY:** When violence against women in the real world is out of control, what does it mean to laugh at images of women being abused?

*[WWE announcer] These women have been annihilated.*

**SUT JHALLY:** Actually, the use of humor gets men off the hook from having to take responsibility for the violence that is so prevalent in the real world.

**[HBO Interviewer]** *Any of those things in retrospect grate against the sensibilities of a fair-minded person, do you think?*

**[HBO Interview: Vince McMahon]** *I would hope that they do. Uh, uh, I would suggest that, uh, you know, they were intended to do some of that. Uh, a, uh, fair-minded individual, but hopefully it's a fair-minded individual with a sense of humor.*

**SUT JHALLY:** It's a standard technique for keeping people passive. For instance, the Berlin nightclub in the 1930's were full of comedians making anti-Semitic jokes, and the people laughing at them were not loading Jews onto death trains, but they were the German citizens who stood by and did nothing, that took no action as their neighbors were being herded away. Although we're not talking about a holocaust here, there is a similar pattern that we can identify. You can't be standing up against homophobia, against sexism if, at the same time, you're laughing at them. Likewise, to have any impact on changing the culture, first we need to confront the jokes that are at the basis of abuse and violence.

**FAN:** There's a right and a wrong, you know, you shouldn't be beating up women but then again, it was TV, she's the boss's daughter, she obviously wanted it done to her, so, I mean, it is his girlfriend. How many people wouldn't want to do that to their girlfriend? (laughs) But, I'm only kidding by the way.

**SUT JHALLY:** That's why this idea that the WWE is rebellious is so ridiculous. In fact, the opposite is true, they're the most conservative and traditional game in town. If Stone Cold was a real rebel he'd be organizing the union against the boss, not beating him up. If Triple H were a real rebel he'd be partnering with women to fight domestic abuse, instead of glorifying it. If the Rock was a real rebel, do you think he'd be at the Republican Party Convention at a time when the Republican Party is the most conservative it's ever been, dominated by the Christian right? But that's the trick that Vince McMahon has pulled off – he's taken a conservative 1950s version of the world and sold it to American men as rebellious, as cutting edge, as different, as individualistic. So millions of boys and men (and some women) are being dragged back into the values of the past under the guise of modern rebellion. You really have to hand it to Vince. He's pulled off a great trick, and made the people he's manipulated into paying him millions of dollars for the privilege.

**[WWE Mr. McMahon]** *I know it's important for you to get your mind off of the daily grind you endure, and I accept that responsibility and the way that we get your mind off of those things is by entertaining you. Entertaining you (cheering crowd). Entertaining you (cheering crowd). Entertaining you. Entertaining you. Entertaining you... (Trish Stratus making dog barking/weeping sounds)*

**[TV interview: Vince McMahon]** *As long as the audience likes what we do then we're going to be in business forever.*

## ***MEDIA PRESSURES***

**MARY PIPHER:** There's a lot of messages that girls get, and again, some of them are almost on a level of osmosis. In other words, they're not real direct messages. The most important thing is that girls are seeing, really from the time they are much younger than teenagers, they're seeing over and over, the same kinds of images of women that are considered beautiful. Those women tend to be thin, they tend to be very unnatural looking, they tend to often be very sexualized images of women. So that image is internalized, and what happens when that image is internalized, is virtually all girls and women end up feeling inadequate. They end up feeling, I'm not pretty enough, I'm not thin enough, my skin isn't clear enough and so on and so on. Another thing they feel about that is that this stuff is very important. I mean it's not a sort of irrelevant thing. It's very important. So for example, one sex difference I noticed years ago as a therapist before I was even thinking about this stuff, is if you ask a man how he feels about his body, he might be realistic about it, he might go, well I'm not that good looking a guy, but he's not likely to have real intense reactions to that question. Women often have very intense reactions. Girls often have very intense, almost like a repulsion or a self-loathing. And that comes I think from internalizing pictures of women as beautiful, that are so different from what they actually are. Over the last twenty years, models have gotten thinner and thinner and thinner, and so the average height of a model is 5'10", 5'11", their weight's about a 110 pounds. They will get no thinner; the height/weight of models has leveled out. Not for any positive reason, but because if they get any thinner they can't be healthy enough to show up for photo shoots and work. So they have gotten thinner and thinner, meanwhile the weight of real women has increased. So the disparity between how our culture defines beautiful, and how real women look, has gotten greater. When we define beauty in such an unnatural way, young girls do very unnatural things to be thin. There's a real correlation by now in this country between young women's desires to be thin and to be beautiful and the fact that so many young women really become victims of eating disorders. TV Guide asked me to do an article about all the shows with adolescent girls, and what I found was first of all, there was one look. All the stars looked essentially, totally interchangeable. About 5'10", 5'11", thin, maybe 110, 115 pounds, they all wore designer clothes, perfect teeth, perfect hair – long straight blond hair. And these girls were all big consumers; they were all very interested in boys. And sexualized in a way that most girls that age are not.

*[TV: Buffy the Vampire Slayer] Alone at last. C'mon, it's your party. Aren't you gonna open your present?*

**MARY PIPHER:** There's a kind of fashion trend to use adult women, dressed in young girls' clothes, to have children dressed in adult sexy clothes. I think this is very dangerous. It blurs the boundaries between children and adults. It educates all of us to see children in a more sexualized way than at least I think most of us would naturally. And it also infantilizes women, and makes women less powerful than they would naturally be. It trains us to see women as younger, as more girl like.

*[Unlabeled TV clip] Because of her baby doll image and precocious attitude, Emma is also known as Baby Spice, but there's more to her than just innocence. -- (Music video) "The last time that we had this conversation --"*

**MARY PIPHER:** Where do we get these notions about how girls should look? In my experience the two worst companies, or kinds of companies, are jeans and perfumes. I think the reason for that is designer jeans are expensive, and what they're about is status. So what they do to sell is be sexy and offer some sort of specially attractive sexy status to girls. So a lot of times they have very sexualized images.

*[TV ad] Sometimes you just want to put on a pair of jeans, go out, and get dirty.*

**MARY PIPHER:** The other set of ads that I think is very bad, is perfume ads. Perfume ads often times have a hint of sadomasochism, or they have women that, when I see the pictures, I think, this doesn't look like an emotionally healthy woman. Or is this the face of a self-actualizing person? So you see a lot of ads where women look disoriented, where their faces are vacant, and absolutely reflect no intelligence or interest in the world. They're traumatized, they're victims. One of the things that's very common right now, rather than have a whole person, only a part of a person will be depicted. Their breasts, their behind, their torso, whatever. I think this is a very dangerous trend. First of all, I think all of the important information about people, their personhood, is carried in their face. When you think of it, your face carries your intelligence, your compassion, your character, your sense of humor, your investment, your interest, and so on and so on. If you cut off the head, you don't have a real person, you have an object. Objects are hard to respect, you don't vote for an object for president. And it's also easier to hurt an object, so it has implications for things like domestic violence. One thing I encourage is when you see products that advertise by showing, say, a woman's behind, write that company and say I will not buy your product. If you want to use women to advertise, show a whole person, with a face. I think that's very important.

## ***CONSTRUCTING FEMININITY***

Our ideas of what it means to be a socially acceptable man or woman have not been genetically encoded in our biological genes – they come from the stories the culture tell us about what is normal and what is not. And music videos make clear that the most important aspect of a woman is her sexuality – in fact women are presented as ravenous creatures who desire sex at all times, and it seems with any man that happens to be around. Sometimes this can happen in a mechanics garage where a simple sip of whiskey conjures forth a fantasy image. Given the role that cars play in the lifestyles depicted in music videos it should be no surprise to see them as the venue for some of this activity. In the same way public bathrooms are a frequent location where these figments of the male imagination, these nymphomaniacs, operate.

No place is out of bounds. Even a therapist in her office obsesses only about one thing. And as they care only about one thing the movement towards sex is quick and instant and women are presented as aggressors who won't take no for an answer,

But one of the strange aspects of the world depicted in music videos is that often women far outnumber men, which means that many times these women have to share the men. This visual strategy, multiple women draped over a man, has become one of the most enduring techniques in music videos, something that directors and artists can go to in the absence of creativity. Told over and over and over again however, this cliché helps to construct an understanding of femininity always being defined in terms of a powerful man. And sometimes the man can just be a boy.

At times even just seeing men on TV is enough to arouse the women of music video. Whether projected on large screens, or even small ones, the sexual response it elicits from the females, often lounging around in lingerie on beds, is powerful and unmistakable.

These women are so desperate and dependent and need men so badly that when men are absent, acceptable substitutes have to be found. And being sex-crazed nymphomaniacs, almost anything will suffice as a replacement. From pieces of fruit, to their own fingers, to ice cream cones, to hood ornaments the effect of this cliché is to further sexualize women's behavior, even without the presence of men.

And when men are truly absent, this becomes a really bleak world for women. They fall apart emotionally, not being able to cope, disintegrating in bathrooms, moping around endlessly on beds, lamenting their loneliness and isolation, until a man returns to catch a falling tear and make the world right again with his presence.

Apart from telling us that women are in a constant state of sexual arousal dependent on men for their emotional stability, what other stories do the makers of music video tell us about these fictional creations. For example what activities do these women engage in? Given their perpetually aroused state in music video, it should be no surprise that the women of this male dreamworld spend a lot of time undressing, to first capture men's attention, and also to make sure that when an opportunity presents itself they are ready, stripped for action.

If we ask what is the major thing that these women do the answer does not exactly need a rocket scientist – they PARTY, endlessly it seems in every conceivable venue. On yachts or boats, swimsuit and bikini clad women dance, sunbath and frolic carefree. At the beach they party enthusiastically. In hot tubs they invite men to join them, By the sides of swimming pools they sway seductively, at house parties they hang out in their underwear, in clubs they can't resist stripping down and dancing on tables.

When not partying the women of the dreamworld are very diligent and helpful to men. They spend quite a lot of time (appropriately dressed of course) playfully washing cars and motorbikes. Sometimes the duties of airline stewardesses even extend to washing airplanes. And of course for exercise there is always mudwrestling.

All this energetic activity obviously takes a lot of effort, because after it is all done they also spend a lot time just relaxing by the sides of swimming pools, and even more time in the shower and bath cleaning up. And music videos show us these grooming activities in a great deal of detail, with the camera exploring the female bodies on view.

This eroticization of water in music video should surprise no-one as wet female bodies are one of the cornerstones of adolescent male sexual fantasy, as reflected in the wet T-short contest, which here takes on varied forms. Whether it is Beyonce, Christina Aguilera or Britney Spears, the fantasy is the same.

When the women of this fantasy world do get around to wearing clothes, the choices, given everything else we know about them are quite predictable. Low cut skimpy tops, stockings, and lingerie of various kinds seems to be pretty standard fare. Bands even joke about the type of woman and clothing associated with videos. There is not much doubt however about the most famous type of clothing connected to this genre, although this not limited to one video. .

But what do these women (when they are not cavorting or frolicking at parties or the beach) actually do?. What roles are they show in? Given the fantasy nature of this dreamworld, some of these roles should come as no surprise – from the inevitable cheerleaders, airline stewardesses partying on planes, hotel maids in short skirts, repressed librarians just bursting to discover their inner sexy babe, school teachers in lust with their male students, sorority girls just having a great time pillow fighting with each other, authority figures like policewomen or S&M chicks with whips, or schoolgirls in uniform in lust with ...anyone, these characters are drawn straight from adolescent sexual fantasy.

The condensation of this is found in this video where a peep show runs us through the gamut of these stereotypical characters – a nurse, policewomen, a dominatrix, and of course the schoolgirl.

In fact peep shows and strip clubs are the main hangout for one of the major female characters who populate the dreamworld – the stripper. From playing a small part in the early history of music videos they have evolved to one of its major components. Sometimes shown as lap dancers, most of the time they are wrapped in various ways around a strippers pole which now seems to be a standard prop in the dreamworld. The compliant stripper is of course the ultimate

heterosexual male fantasy and her ubiquitous presence should tell us something about the imagination that propels this part of popular culture.

And whereas in the past bisexuality was sometimes hinted at now girl on girl action, is highly visible across the landscape of music videos and there is nothing at all subtle about it. Indeed some videos are entirely based on wild parties involving only women.

But looking closer at why so many women now appear in this way in music videos (as opposed to for example gay men who are literally invisible) will give an answer as to the source of the imaginations from which the cultures stories of normal masculinity and femininity are told.

## ***OUT OF UNIFORM – THE MEDIA BACKLASH AGAINST FEMALE ATHLETES***

**MICHAEL MESSNER:** If you just watch the sports news, and you just watched ESPN, and if you just picked up *Sports Illustrated Magazine* for your main print source of information about what's going on in the sports world, it would be easy to continue to conclude that there is no women's sports happening.

**MARY JO KANE:** Women are significantly underrepresented with respect to amount of coverage, even though women represent 40% of participants nationwide in terms of sport and physical activity. What all the studies indicate is they represent about 3-5% of all the coverage. So we give viewers a very false impression if you just rely on the media, that women simply aren't participating in sports in the numbers that they are.

**MICHAEL MESSNER:** Over the course of a decade that we were doing research on the coverage of women's and men's sports, our dominant finding was how much the coverage of women's sports had not changed. About 5% of the airtime was given to women's sports. In our most recent study, ten years later that had gone up to about 8%, which is still miniscule. I mean it's really a tiny increase in over ten year period in coverage of women.

*[NBC News] They are very excited. The NBA playoffs have arrived and while the Knicks are dominating...*

**MICHAEL MESSNER:** You set the tone and make a statement about what's most important and what the key happenings of the day were with your lead story.

*[NBC News] a big night coming up in sports as the Islanders...*

**MICHAEL MESSNER:** What we found is almost always the lead stories were about men's sports. They put a lot more production value into the men's coverage. There's tape, there's graphics, there's interviews and so forth.

*[ESPN promo] June heats up on ESPN.*

**MICHAEL MESSNER:** When women do kind of peak into the frame, though, it's usually in ways that are mostly dismissive or disrespectful.

*[ABC News Channel 7] Finally, a hearty erin go bra to my countrymen and women out there, and in your honor we have a little Erin Go Bra-less.*

**MICHAEL MESSNER:** In our study, one of the longest stories that was done on the sports news for instance was on a female nude bungee jumper on St. Patrick's Day who had painted her body green and jumped off of a bridge and they did a very long story on this – on the sports – meanwhile ignoring all the sports women had been playing that day: a major golf tournament and so forth.

*[ABC News Channel 7]*

--*That's wonderful; do we have to slow that down?*

--*That was amazing, I'll remember it forever.*

--*...And so will we.*

**MICHAEL MESSNER:** Well we all know that news isn't totally objective, but it's supposed to be a picture of what happened today in the world.

**MARY JO KANE:** What we know in terms of the data is that women athletes are significantly more likely than male athletes to be portrayed off the court, out of uniform, and in these hyper feminized roles. The thing that we infrequently see is images of women athletes as athletes. I think we need to talk about why that is and who benefits from *not* seeing women athletes as athletes.

**PAT GRIFFIN:** Who's controlling the images that we see in the media, and I think particularly if you look at sports media, by and large, the decisions about what images are portrayed, what images are used, who gets coverage, are still made by men. They're part of a culture that sees women in a particular way. And so I think they prefer to see women athletes portrayed in a more feminine way, it's more comfortable.

**MICHAEL MESSNER:** When television does cover women's sports, they're most likely going to cover women's tennis, and during certain seasons and certainly during the Olympics, women's figure skating. There's a traditional equation of femininity with tennis and figure skating that makes some sports commentators more comfortable with covering them – they fit more in their own ideological frame about what women are supposed to look like and how they're supposed to act. There's still a tendency, we found, in the play-by-play coverage of tennis to call women athletes more often by their first names, as though there's some sort of familiarity that the commentator has with them.

*[Tennis commentator] ... to counter Jennifer's return.*

*[Tennis commentator] ... you just never know which Amelie's going to show up.*

*[Tennis commentator] ... Monica, trying to hang on, but Serena's serve...*

**MICHAEL MESSNER:** And to call men athletes by their last name or by their last and first name.

*[Tennis commentator] ...and Ruzesky takes the game...*

*[Tennis commentator] ... Agassi, through to the semis, and coming off his French Open win.*

**MICHAEL MESSNER:** People who work in an office, the boss will call the secretary by her – or his, if it's a male secretary – first name, and the referent the other way is always “Mr.” or “Mrs.” or some title.

**PAT GRIFFIN:** I think what's going on is we still have a lot of cultural anxiety about strong women and what that means about them as women. And until we can sort of move much further, as a culture in opening up the boundaries for what we consider to be OK for girls and women in sport, we're always going to have that ambivalence there.

**MARY JO KANE:** As we went into the women’s World Cup soccer, nobody knew who Brandi Chastain was. We knew who Mia Hamm was, but we didn’t know who Brandi Chastain was. We know who she is now.

*[Newscaster]* World Cup hero Brandi Chastain, throws the first pitch – tank top, no sports bra.  
*[ABC News Channel 7]* And uh, Brandi did keep her shirt on, but did take a sweater off, during warm-ups.

*[ABC News Channel 7]* It was announced Nike will exploit Brandi Chastain’s strip tease by attaching her to a line of sports bras.

**MARY JO KANE:** It immediately got turned into “Brandi Chastain took her shirt off,” rather than “what fabulous athletes these women are!”

**MICHAEL MESSNER:** How many times did we see images of Jenny Thompson actually swimming in *Sports Illustrated*? But when she posed for *Sports Illustrated* in that way, we saw her and now we know who she is.

**MARY JO KANE:** What got taken up in the press and the public discourse wasn’t who Jenny Thompson was and what she’d accomplished as a great swimmer, an Olympic swimmer, but what did it mean to have Jenny Thompson take her shirt off?

*[Montage of images of female athletes and non-athlete models]*

**MARY JO KANE:** And the images that you see of women being physically powerful and strong and contrast that to the images of women athletes as little sex kittens, it’s an enormous difference. And it is such a powerful contrast that I would argue that is exactly why those images are suppressed. Because sport is all about physical, emotional, and mental empowerment. And so what do you do with all these women who are becoming great athletes and learning the lessons of empowerment and self respect and pride that you get from participating in sport? How are you going to keep that force at bay? And one way that you do that is to do a very time honored and tested mechanism of keeping women’s power at bay and that is to sexualize them, trivialize them, and marginalize them. There are more and more images of women athletes that bear alarming resemblances to soft pornography. What you see is an emphasis, not on their athleticism and their athletic achievements, or their mental courage and toughness, but on their sexuality, their femininity, and their heterosexuality. So what better way to reinforce all of the social stereotypes about femininity and masculinity than to pick up *Sports Illustrated* or *Rolling Stone* or *Maxim* or *Gear* and see an image of a female athlete, not as strong and powerful but as somebody that you can sexualize and feel power over.

I don’t think that there’s a more overt example of that these days than in the world of professional tennis in the image of Anna Kournikova. She has the most corporate sponsorship of any professional female athlete and it is not because of her athletic competence because she is as of this date, still has never won any singles tournament, let alone a Major.

**PAT GRIFFIN:** What it says to me is that an athlete’s sexual appeal quotient is much more important than her athletic ability quotient and her athletic accomplishment quotient. And it’s very difficult to imagine the same kind of thing happening in men’s tennis – a player who has

never won a major tournament getting the kind of attention – media attention and endorsement in terms of money that Anna Kournikova gets. And I think that as long as that's possible, it really gives us a pretty good gauge of what are the important things in women's sports.

**MICHAEL MESSNER:** One of the new things over the last several years is there definitely is more media sexualization of men and men athletes in particular. Men are being viewed as sexy, mostly because of what they do. Of course they have to look good, but they're viewed as sexy primarily for what they're doing on the court or on the field, how good an athlete they are, how powerful they are, how they move when they play. Women are being viewed as sexy not for what they're doing on the court or for what they're doing on the field, but for how they look and what they wear off the field and how they pose off the field, and that's the key difference.

*[ESPN: World's Sexiest Athlete] The world's sexiest athlete? Anna Kournikova, hands down. Have you seen the billboard of it? That explains enough.*

*Kournikova: All athletes are entertainers. As long as people like what they're seeing, they're going to keep coming back, so I think that's good.*

## **FOLLOW THE LEADER**

### ***[Montage of ads]***

- *New Neutrogena Skin Clearing make up*
- *New Express make-up three in one.*
- *New Clean and Clear, oil absorbing sheets.*
- *Its beautiful, its beneficial, its cool, its refreshing.*

**ANALISE, 13:** Jennifer Love Hewitt is the um, spokesperson for Neutrogena. She's a very pretty girl, and she has perfect skin and very skinny, beautiful hair.

***[Student, LeMessa Jr. High School]*** I like Christina Aguilera's make up. I try to follow the latest fashion, um, and I like the kind of lipstick she uses because its not very bright but its like normal sort of. Kind of shiny...

***[Interviewer, LeMessa Jr. High School]*** Kinda like the lipstick you're wearing right now?

***[Student, LeMessa Jr. High School]*** Yeah.

### ***[TV: MTV Fanatic with Sarah Michelle Gellar]***

*I've really like wanted to meet you since like I saw you in Buffy for the first time, the past four years I've wanted to meet you so badly. I've adored you since the first time I saw you and I just wish I could stop crying so I could talk to you right now...I just keep on crying.*

-- *Let's hear it for the waterproof Maybelline mascara.*

### ***[TV ad: Maybelline]***

*Mascara, love the look, hate the stiff brittle lashes that can come with it.*

-- *Maybe she's born with it, maybe its Maybelline.*

**AUTUMN, 12:** It's kinda like saying follow the leader, the message from the leader.

**ANALISE, 13:** Well I wear foundation, and powder because I don't have a lot of zits, but I have blemishes, like, like skin different color in certain places, its really weird. So then I'll put a little bit of blush on, and I use a little bit of mascara and I use lipstick, and then to make my lips like they match my eye shadow, I use lipstick and I put it on my eyes also, and it's a good tool!

***[Interviewer]*** You put lipstick on your eyes?

**ANALISE, 13:** I learned that on TV.

## ***FEMINITY, APPEARANCE AND SLIMNESS***

**JEAN KILBOURNE:** For women the emphasis is always, first and foremost, on how we look. No matter what else we do. “He said the first thing he noticed was your great personality. He lied.” So the message girls get early on is that it is never going to be your great personality that is going to be most important. A body that is statistically five percent of what American women have is the only one we ever see as desirable or acceptable. This is genetic. You can’t diet yourself into this body type. Not for long anyway. Anymore than you can make yourself taller. The models are very tall, genetically thin, although they often starve themselves anyway, broad shouldered, narrowed hiped, long legged, and usually small breasted. So when the models have large breasts almost always they have had implants. This is a body type that basically doesn’t exist, but again it is the only one we ever see. So no wonder there is such terrible stress on women and girls. The Body Shop made this point wonderfully with their recent ad: “There are three billion women who don’t look like supermodels and only eight who do.” And that is just about the truth.

Basically we are told that women are acceptable only if we are young, thin, white, beautiful, carefully groomed and polished and any deviation from that ideal is met with a lot of contempt and hostility. “You’d never though you’d lose your looks either.” Look at the kind of contempt that there is for this woman who is portrayed as completely valueless now. These days the greatest contempt is for women who are considered in the least bit overweight. As in this classic, “I probably would never be married now if I hadn’t lost 40 pounds.” Which one woman told it was the best advertisement for fat she had ever seen. The primary message that women and girls get in our culture today is the message in this add, in the top it says, “The more you subtract, the more you add.” What a horrible message. The more you subtract, the more you add. Now this is a fashion add. They are talking about simplicity in fashion, but she is also very thin. They are obviously talking about girls staying very thin. In general, as girls reach adolescence, they get the message that they should not be too powerful, should not take up too much more space. “Soon you’ll both be taking up less space.” Not to be too full of themselves. Not to throw their weight around. Not to be too powerful. So no wonder, given this, at least 1 in 5 woman in America today has an eating disorder. The most common of which are anorexia and bulimia. If you think of eating disorder of any kind of disordered attitude towards eating and ones appetite it’s probably closer to 4 out of 5. Now where else could this image of thinness come from? If not at least in part from the media images that surround us and that tell us in order to be successful we need to be painfully, unnaturally thin.

## ***CUTTING GIRLS DOWN TO SIZE***

**JEAN KILBOURNE:** The obsession with thinness. I think, is really about cutting girls down to size. Silencing them. So not only do we have their images of very thin girls and women, we also have many, many images of girls in ads with their hands over their mouths or worse with her lips sewn together or silenced in many other ways. Sometimes it's a visual image. Here the woman's head is in a bubble. Sometimes there is copy. "Say what?" But her mouth is covered. "Score high with nonverbal skills." And women of color in particular are supposed to shut up and to be barely there. "Just smiling the bothers away." "Let your fingers do the talking." It's endless. Message after message.

### **[Clip]**

*Soft colors. Let your eyes be heard without making a sound.*

**JK:** And the body language of girls and young women is usually passive, vulnerable, "get used" and very different from the body language of boys and men. So we have women typically posed like this and men like this. A woman like this, a man like this. And this starts so early. Look at this double-page spread from Calvin Klein. The incredible difference: the girl again with her hand over her mouth. All of the ads in the March 1999 issues of two progressive parenting magazines featured active boys and passive girls, all of them. An ad featuring a boy... An ad featuring a girl... A boy, active, exploring the world... A girl, trying on lipstick... This ad always makes me sad. I look at it and I see the boy is already learning to look tough and have that look of contempt. The girl has already got the smile down pat. Now I score of these ads too and they're always the same. The boy is taller. The boy is looking down at the girl. The girl is looking up. The girl is smiling. Always the same unless race enters the picture. Then it is reversed, which makes it very clear that this is about power. When girls are shown as powerful in advertising it's always a very masculine definition of power. "For girls with plenty of balls." Very masculine indeed. This is an ad for body lotion. Other times the power that women are offered is silly and trivial. "Live outside the lines." But what that means here is that she is able to use the men's room. What a great revolution. This reminds me of an ad from my original film, an ad from the 70s that told women to relax and enjoy the revolution. This ad was for flavored douches. It is completely ridiculous. It was then. It is now. This trivialization of freedom and power for women and this co-optation of feminism continues. "Got a problem? Solve it." And the way we can solve our problems is with beauty organizers. "Make your mark." And we can do that with out cosmetic kits. So the ultimate message that women and girls get remains. "You have the right to remain sexy." Which according to this ad really means, the right to be a sex object. The right to be passive. The right to have our sexuality defined in a rigid, shallow, extremely limited and clichéd way.

## ***CONTESTING STEREOTYPES***

**STUART HALL:** If you think of an area in which an enormous amount of work has been done in media studies, which is the area of stereotyping – gender stereotypes, class stereotypes, racial and ethnic stereotypes – you will see the way in which stereotyping is exactly an attempt to fix. Every time you see this kind of image, these are the limited range of characteristics, which one assumes is going to be implicated in the image. It's how a stereotype functions. People have assumed that therefore what this is doing is a powerful way of circulating in the world a very limited range of definitions of who people can be, of what they can do, what are the possibilities in life, what are the natures of the constraints on them. I mean, the image is producing not only identification, which I talked about before, it's actually producing knowledge; what we know about the world is how we see it represented. So the struggle to open up stereotypes is often a struggle to increase the diversity of things which subjects can be of – the possibilities of identities which people have not seen represented before – it is very important; that is “the politics of the image.” Now, as you may know, there have been a number of different strategies with respect to this. The most common strategy is what is sometimes called “positive representation,” where you have a negative field of stereotypes, and you try to intervene in it to represent the negative group in a more positive way; you try to reverse the stereotypes. But I want to say to you that there is a problem in attempts to reverse stereotypes in this way because it's as if you could guarantee that, having put positive images of Black men and women in the place where negative images existed before, you could somehow maintain a positive regime of representation in the place of the stereotyped representation that you had before. But the actual practice suggests to us that, just as unfortunately, you can't fix, I mean, just as impossible for them to fix bad representation, so it's almost impossible for us to fix good ones.

## ***INDIANS, CHIHUAHUAS AND HYENAS***

**[Movie: Peter Pan]** Indians! Quite savage, you know.

**ALVIN POUSSAINT:** I worked in media and often I was surprised. Sometimes very intelligent, mostly white writers, college graduates, held stereotypes about a lot of people. When they wrote them into stories they would write it in a stereotypic point of view. It's like they didn't know any other way to write it. Because frequently they were not involved in a social personal way with Blacks, Latinos or Asian-Americans. And so when they had to write something about them, they had to draw on what they knew and frequently what they knew was what they picked up from the media and frequently that was stereotypical.

**GAIL DINES:** When I start to decode Disney's images in class, one of the first thing students say to me is, "is this intentional – this racism, this sexism?" And of course, the answer to that has to be, well first of all, we do know the vast majority of people in Hollywood, who are in power and who have creative power, and ownership power, basically the vast majority of them are white men, we know that. But the real answer to that is, it doesn't really matter if they are intentional or unintentional because the effect is ultimately the same. And also, what's the most important thing is that Mickey Mouse doesn't write these scripts, these scripts are written by real people, who themselves have been socialized in this society. And they are going to internalize those norms and those values and so when they produce work, it's bound to come out in some way, unless of course, they make a really conscious decision to operate within an alternative ideology.

**MARISA PERALTA:** Latino characters in Disney movies? Oh, well, one comes to mind, the Chihuahua--and that's about it.

**[Movie: Lady and the Tramp]** Even tramp has his Achilles heel. -- Pardon me, amigo, but what is this "chili heel"?

**MARISA PERALTA:** It's almost expected. The character that's playing the Latino will end up doing things that they shouldn't do. In this case, Alonzo is stealing a car.

**[Movie: Lady and the Tramp]** Hey, check it out man. Beep, beep. Hey, let's take this baby to Atlantic City.

**MARISA PERALTA:** At this point in my life, I can look at one of these movies and if it wasn't so tragic it would be comical.

**[Movie: Lady and the Tramp]** Allow me to introduce myself, I am Ignacio Alonzo Julio Federico de Tito. -- Get away from me you little bug-eyed creep.

**MARISA PERALTA:** She insults him, she tells him that he is like the bottom, the least thing she would ever get near. He still sticks his tongue out in "the more you insult me, the more I want you" attitude.

**[Movie: Lady and the Tramp]** Alonzo, darling, could I see you for a moment, privately? -- Privately? Oooh... Coming, Alonzo? -- Yeah, yeah, yeah. You guys beat it. My baby and I, we gotta talk.

**MARISA PERALTA:** Taco Bell, Disney, why can't they not represent us as Chihuahua? What's this thing with Latinos being dogs?

**JACQUELINE MALONEY:** The crows, I mean it's either the crows, the monkeys, the orangutans. They're always the ones that are sort of doing the jive dancing, or the hip-hop dancing, or the break dancing, or have this kind of slow, slurred speech patterns.

**[Movie: Dumbo]** Well this is most irregular. -- Well, I just can't believe my eyes. He's dead isn't he? -- No...dead people don't snore.

**JACQUELINE MALONEY:** In Jungle Book, it's that same, you know--the jive, the hustle, the dance, you know, these gorillas and orangutans that sound like black people that want to be like men, but will never be men. The baboons.

**[Movie: The Jungle Book]** (Gorilla) I want to be a man, man cub, and stroll right into town and be just like the other man – I'm tired of walking around. I want to be like you. I want to talk like you, walk like you.

**ELIZABETH HADLEY:** We have dealt with decades of Tarzan movies, where the white man comes in to the jungle and he tames the animals and he also tames the natives. And he knows the jungle better than the native people do. [clips from "Tarzan the Ape Man"]

**HENRY GIROUX:** If somebody is going to show a film that in its original version was enormously racist, I guess the first question would be, why would you want to show that anyway? I guess the second question was, if you appropriate it, do you have a responsibility, particularly if it's a children's film, to take those constructions and make them problematic so that kids have an opportunity to hold them up against some kind of critical vocabulary?

**[TV: Disney program]** Disney animator Glenn Keane was given a difficult task of coming up with a new take on Tarzan. -- I've been watching my son do his skateboarding and snowboarding and started thinking about Tarzan as kind of having this attitude of a surfer kind of guy.

**ELIZABETH HADLEY:** And then you have the film, that Walt Disney comes along in this day and time produces a Tarzan film ...without black people at all. So not only that they eliminated the black people in Africa but they also eliminated black people's presence.

**ALVIN POUSSAINT:** Kids in Africa see it. They see a white man in African who is superior, swinging from trees to trees, they see no Africans. They see gorillas being the ones they relate to. What does it mean to an African child? Is it promoting white supremacy to these Black African children who watch Tarzan in a movie theater in Africa? Of course it will, and it might be promoting it around the world.

**NAOMI, age 7:** I've never seen any black people in Disney's movies.

**ABIGAIL, age 9:** I can't think of any Disney movies that have black people that are good or bad.

**HENRY GIROUX:** When you produce a discourse as public as that, and you have that kind of power, the kind of power that allows you to distribute those messages to thousands, if not millions, of children then you have a responsibility.

**ALVIN POUSSAINT:** The Lion King, the hyenas, clearly spoke in kind of street, inner city, African American dialect and they were considered the bad guys.

**[Movie: The Lion King]** I thought things were better with Mufasa. -- What did you say? I said -- I said, que pasa?

**ALVIN POUSSAINT:** They made an identification with them with inner-city minority people, particularly blacks. And so they were sending a message to the audience, to kids watching the film that was not so subtle.

**[Movie: The Lion King]** (Hyenas) Hey -- there he goes. There he goes. -- So go get him. There ain't no way I'm going in there. What -- you want me to come out looking like you, cactus-butt?

**JACQUELINE MALONEY:** I have a girlfriend who, she's a white woman and her son is about three, and she came to me one day really disturbed and said that she had been coming back from shopping and that her son said, "Mommy, Mommy, the hyenas, the hyenas," and she looked up and she said there was a group of black children on the carousel and playing. And she said but when you had your back turned to them, they did, they sounded just like, the sound, the voicing, the laughing of the hyenas. And she could not move her son away from the attachment of the sound to the image of hyenas in The Lion King. And she said, and further, he had made the association that they were bad. Then she started to shift in her assessment of what I was saying to her, but also what kinds of images she was allowing her son to see without having conversation.

**[Movie: Lady and the Tramp]** We are Siamese if you please.

**CHYNG FENG SUN:** Disney has very, very few Asian or Asian American characters in their children's films. And that's probably why the Siamese Cats really stand out for me. If you look at those cats very carefully, they clearly have those stereotypical Asian features: they have slanted eyes, buckteeth and very heavy accents. They are also depicted as sinister, cunning and manipulative.

**[Movie: Lady and the Tramp]** Are you seeing that thing swimming around and around? -- Yes. Maybe we be reaching in and make it drown.

**CHYNG FENG SUN:** If we compared the Siamese cats with Mulan, I must say that Disney has made very significant improvement in the visual portrayal of Chinese. However, in order to create this model feminist figure, China is portrayed as probably the most sexist and oppressive

society in all Disney's children's films. We see a little boy bully a little girl. We hear people saying that women have no value at all if they don't get married. And, the interesting thing is, this match-making interviews in the movie actually did not really exist in China.

**[Movie: Mulan]** Too skinny. Not good for bearing sons.

**CHYNG FENG SUN:** And it has been made very clear that women should just follow men's orders instead of speaking up their minds in that society.

**[Movie: Mulan]** You will do well to teach your daughter to hold her tongue in a man's presence. -- Mulan, you dishonor me. -- So you'll die for honor? -- I will die doing what's right. -- But if... -- I know my place. It is time you learned yours.

**CHYNG FENG SUN:** The issue for me, is not really about whether Disney should or should not appropriate other cultures' stories or whether ancient China was less or more oppressive than Disney's portrayal. The question is: what type of stories get invented, circulated, perpetuated in public imagination and why?

**[Movie: Aladdin]** Oh I come from a land, from a far away place, where the caravan camels roam...

**NARRATOR:** The lyrics of Aladdin's opening song "Arabian Nights" were written by Howard Ashman. He actually submitted two versions of the lyrics and Disney chose the version, which was considered racist by members of the Arab American community.

**JACK SHAHEEN:** The song, it goes, "I come from a land from a very far place, where the caravan camels roam. Where they cut off your ear if they don't like your face. It's barbaric, but hey it's home." That song sets up the kind of people that live in Agrabah.

**[Movie: Aladdin]** Oh, you must be hungry. Here you go. -- You'd better be able to pay for that. Pay? -- No one steals from my cart. I'm sorry sir, I don't have any money. -- Thief! Please, if you let me go to the palace, I can get some from the Sultan. -- Do you know what the penalty is for stealing? No, no, please!

**JACK SHAHEEN:** The merchants are unfriendly, they're mischievous and brutal. One merchant tries to chop the hand of the princess because she takes an apple. Which goes against Islam. In Islam, you are obliged to feed someone when they are hungry, over and over again. And that's what devout Muslims do. And that's what devout good merchants do. And only in Saudi Arabia, if you are a thief, a real thief, and after 3 warnings and 3 convictions, if you steal something, is the hand removed. In one country, with a population of a few million. And yet they opted to use that scene. It took us six months to get a meeting, just to talk about the film.

**NARRATOR:** When Arab Americans protested against the derogatory stereotypes in Aladdin, their concerns were first met with silence. Disney responded after the issue had received widespread negative press coverage.

**JACK SHAHEEN:** So we go to the corporate office in Burbank. And we sit there and maybe fifteen minutes into the meeting, I won't mention the gentleman's name, but he accused us, the three of us, of drumming up negative publicity against the film. And it was only months after that meeting that they changed part of the lyrics.

**NARRATOR:** But Disney still kept the line "It's barbaric but hey it's home" which prompted the New York Times to write an op-ed piece saying, "It's Racist but Hey, it's Disney."

**NANCY ELDREDGE:** A lot of children come to Plimouth Plantation and visit our Wampanog home site. And the children think that all Indian people hit their faces and go "Woo, Woo, Woo." The other is that all Indian people ride on a horse, and have head dresses on with a lot of feathers, and that they all live in Teepees. Also there's the sitting crossed legged with your arms folded and you have to look like this and very often, Native people are portrayed as saying 'UGH!'

**[Peter Pan clips]**

**NANCY ELDREDGE:** And when young children prepare to dance and sing the way they see Native people do, they'll jump all around and kick their feet and flail their arms and have no idea what they are doing. What they are doing, without realizing it, is making fun of us.

**[TV ad: Disney/Pocahontas CD-Rom]** By the age of six, she's already canoed a wild river, searched for gold, discovered a new world, explored a Native American village, learned new words, hunted for stowaways, stopped a war, and never even had to leave her room.

**HENRY GIROUX:** What you often find in Disney texts, is not only a rewriting of history in ways that eliminate some of its most controversial political moments and free it of particular conflicts, or eliminate particular kinds of conflicts, or in many ways make it appear as if certain social events have nothing to do with power. For instance I mean when you look at a film like Pocahontas, which is really about colonialism, it's about Native Americans being killed in terms that can be adequately described as genocide. That isn't what is shown in Disney films. [Movie: Pocahontas] Alright, let's go talk to your father.

**NARRATOR:** Disney has been criticized for trivializing Pocahontas's important political and diplomatic role in history. When Pocahontas first met John Smith, she was still a young girl. In reality, there was never a romance between them. Pocahontas did eventually marry an Englishman years later, but it wasn't John Smith.

**DEIRDRE ALMEIDA:** I could see the romance between John Smith and Pocahontas serving mainstream America because it's similar to Thanksgiving, okay, we want to deny our history of genocide. You know, we want to deny that, you know, Europeans came to North America and practically eliminated a race of people. We committed our own American holocaust. So we better find points in history where we can show Europeans, and later European-Americans, getting along with the Indians, where we were all one happy family sitting down together having a dinner and then we have people falling in love, a native woman and a European man to bring two communities together in peace. So I could see it serving a political purpose from propaganda

standpoint. Disney is putting forth this attitude of, “We can change your history, we can portray you look any way we want. We can put little plastic figurines of your historical figures in your child's Happy Meal or Kids' Meal at Burger King. We can put you on the sheets, on the lunch boxes. We can have your little non-native kids dressing up as you at Halloween. You can't do anything about it.”

**[Movie: Pocahontas]** Savages! Savages! Barely even human! Savages! Savages! Drive them from our shore! They're not like you and me, which means they must be evil. We must sound the drums of war!

**GAIL DINES:** Savages? This is what's all about? Whites thinking that Native Americans were savages? Native Americans thinking whites are savages? And that the problem was there were these two groups who couldn't understand each other?

**[Movie: Pocahontas]** Different from us, which means they can't be trusted, we must sound the drums of war! They're savages, savages, first we deal with this one, then we sound the drums of war!

**GAIL DINES:** Where are children going to get any sense of the history of this culture, and this country and what happened, in terms of whose blood was spilled, whose resources was stolen, whose lives were taken?

**ALEXANDER, age 8:** I like Pocahontas kind of because the person who made the movie made a real story about Pocahontas. Pocahontas is true, Pocahontas was real. John Smith is real. Plimouth is real and the Indians are real.

**MELINA, age 9:** Pocahontas tries to save the day because she ran up on a ledge and she covered John Smith from being killed and then she made this big speech, and then everyone was like “Oh, Yeah” and everybody felt really bad so they just became friends.

**ABIGAIL, age 9:** I think that at the end the Pilgrims traveled back to England because they understand that it's their land and they shouldn't be taking it over.

## ***STORIES OF RACE***

**MICHAEL MORGAN:** The last issue we'll explore here is one of the most explosive issues in America and that's the subject of race. Television tells us stories about people of other races, and those stories are a major source of our most common cultural images about other people. African Americans have made significant strides in recent years. They now represent about 11% of the characters on television, which is close to their real world numbers. But Latinos who make up 9% of the US population represent only 1% of the characters on TV. And Asian and Native American are practically invisible. There are almost too few to count. To be invisible on television means to have less power in society. But even when a minority group is visible, even when a group has as many characters on television as they should, there can still be serious questions about the nature of their representation.

**GEORGE GERBNER:** The case of African Americans on American television is a very peculiar case. They are healthier, wealthier, they are more successful, they are more middle-class than characters in general. So, in drama and fiction they are presented as a fairly glowing image giving the impression that there is no problem, that problems have been solved, that they are very successful. On the other hand, when African Americans appear in the news they have twice the chance of any other character to appear in connection with crime, with violence, with drugs, with all the negative and vulnerable characteristics that television characters encounter. The bifurcated image of black people gives the impression that the black problem doesn't exist any more. It makes it difficult in terms of legislation that attacks the root causes of inner city, predominantly black poverty and unemployment, and despair in inner cities in any other way except for in the way in which it has been addressed. Considering our inner cities as an occupied area, virtual concentration camp, ringed by police, turned into a jail out of which there is no escape.

**MICHAEL MORGAN:** Gerbner's research on race points to two main implications. First, because blacks and whites on television are usually shown separately, heavy viewers tend to support segregation. They are more likely to think that blacks and whites should live in separate neighborhoods, and blacks and whites should not be allowed to get married. Second, because television exaggerates the extent to which blacks have made it in society, heavy viewers believe that racism is something that we once had, but it's now over, and that we no longer need programs such as Affirmative Action that address racial inequality.

**NO CLASS**

**NARRATOR:** Outside of the comic frame there is a different and more threatening image of the working class on cop shows and reality TV. Because these shows do not use class as a lens to view criminal behavior, deviance is most often framed in racial or cultural terms.

**ROBIN D.G. KELLEY:** Something happens in the 70s and 80s where all these cop shows really put a lot of emphasis on working in ghetto communities. There are they most dangerous places to work. And it coincides again, with this image that the black poor, or black criminal behavior is a result of a lack of guidance, the lack of strong father figures, a matriarchy that explains crime and violence because these mothers are not able who can control their youth. And in a criminal culture, it also reinforces, I think, white, and black fears in some ways, that youth, particularly young males in inner city communities, are dangerous. They are all suspect. They deserve to go to jail.

**HERMAN GRAY:** There is a certain kind of criminalization of the black body so that black masculinity is seen as a place of fear. It's a way of trying to use race as a substitute to talk about class since so much of our tradition is about individual mobility and sort of making it through the American dream.

Some of what I think cop shows do is to reinforce this universe about not only who is criminal in the kind of collective imagination, but the inevitability and the naturalness about it. Even the attempts to mediate it by having black authority figures like black lieutenants and black judges, doesn't necessarily change the logic by which these two forms of meaning come together that is to say, blackness and criminality.

We have to also think about the role of whiteness and the contrast that you don't see or hear the evocation of white poverty as the proxy for class. It doesn't carry the same sort of symbolic weight. Nor does it evoke the same kind of policy responses.

**PEPI LEISTYNA:** Cop shows also do important ideological work. They justify the growing prison system that now has a record 2.1 million people behind bars. 70% of who are non-white.

**ROBIN D.G. KELLEY:** And this explains why there's continued persistent poverty. The black poor are poor because of their own behavior, not because of structural dimensions of capitalism, not because of the continuance of white supremacy and racism, none of these things. Now no one is willing to sit up there and say that the black working class, or the black poor should take no responsibility at all for their circumstances, but every responsibility that they take, you have to understand, that what ever they do is under circumstances not of their own choosing.

**HERMAN GRAY:** There's a whole host of indicators that require not simply solving the problem of arriving in the black middle class by more initiative and more responsibility, but the ways in which people are really up against very complicated and powerful structuring forces in their lives.

**NARRATOR:** The largest group of poor people in the United States is white. Yet we have a very limited understanding of who they are because their images historically have been so few and far between. And because whiteness is associated with a dominant culture, poor and working class whites are usually portrayed as cultural outcasts or a subculture. And while TV mocks their condition, it gladly uses their image to entertain us.

**PEPI LEISTYNA:** The rural working class is nearly invisible in mainstream culture. What we find on television are these twisted comedic images, which like the ghetto sitcoms, really pastoralize poverty. The early images were of hillbilly characters popularized on shows like *Ma & Pa Kettle*, *The Real McCoys*, and *The Beverly Hillbillies*. And these are followed by the idiot sitcom era, with country bumpkin shows like *Andy Griffith* and *Gomer Pyle*, which featured characters who were simple-minded, nonthreatening, and really easy to laugh at.

[TV show: *The Andy Griffith Show*] *What are you doing in here?*

[TV show: *Green Acres*] *Should I take this?*

*No, that belongs to the new owners.*

*We was just cleanin' out the place.*

**PEPI LEISTYNA:** The guy who resurrected the hillbilly image and gave it new life as redneck pride was Jeff Foxworthy.

[TV show: *The Jeff Foxworthy Show*] *Sophisticated people invest their money in stock portfolios. Rednecks invest our money in commemorative plates. Yeah, that's the legends of NASCAR series right there.*

**PEPI LEISTYNA:** From comedy tours to films to a cable show, *Blue Collar TV*, being a redneck seems like a lifestyle with NASCAR and country music. So what Foxworthy has done, is to take what in reality is an economic position and make it look like a lifestyle choice.

Co-opting redneck pride is also a way that the Republican party has tried to brand itself as a friend of working people and to develop its political clout in the so-called red states.

[NBC News: **George W. Bush**] *This is more than an event; it's a way of life for a lot of people.*

[NBC News: **Lindsay Taylor**] *This is the first time that we have done this. We recognize that this is a happy hunting ground for new Republican voters.*

**PEPI LEISTYNA:** Now, not that the Democrats have done much for the working class lately, but the Republican agenda has always been a war against the working class.

**MICHAEL ZWEIG:** The whole conservative political agenda for the last 30-40 years has been to attack the poor. Which is really to attack the workers, because most people who are poor are workers. They work for a living, but they have low wages or they have experience of unemployment. So if we talk about the poor as something that is separate from workers, we are making a big mistake.

**PEPI LEISTYNA:** As the effects of the economic downturn become more visible, so is this more threatening image of the white poor who're being popularized as white trash. All these types, the hillbilly, the redneck, and white trash are racially-coded terms to describe a genetic subset of white people—lowlifes. So Jerry Springer, who introduces his show with a television in the trashcan is where all the qualities associated with white trash are on display.

[**TV show: *Jerry Springer***] *You ain't got a job do you?  
You don't have a job either!*

It's interesting because this is a multiracial world. It's a sort of equal opportunity spectacle. Because the common link here is social class.

**SUSAN DOUGLAS:** And behind the scenes of course, by the producers, these people are referred to as trailer trash. So they are condescended to behind the scenes and they are sought out and coached to behave in a particular way.

[**TV show: *The Maury Show***] *Whatever you skanky <beeeep>!  
You watch your mouth.*

And what images of the working class do we see there? These people are out of control. They have no discipline. Their sex lives are all over the place.

[**TV show: *Jerry Springer***] *What do you do?  
Man: I sleep with homeless women.  
Audience: Ahhhhhhhhhhh.*

They fight with each other. They are violent. They are aggressive. They are fat and sloppy. They do completely weird taboo things.

[**TV show: *Jerry Springer***] *Clown: I want sex!  
Woman: Had my first lesbian experience...  
Man: Yeah?  
Woman: ...and it was with my cousin.  
Audience: Ahhhhhhh, ohhhhhh.*

**LISA HENDERSON:** Guests on tabloid talk shows have been very successful in playing the trash roles assigned to them by producers. And that's what they are, roles. I think that it's important to recognize that all those so-called deviant practices, airing dirty laundry, fighting, cheating, are things that middle class people do too, but when they do them, they are screwed up. When working class people do them, especially on television, well, that's just the way they are. They're trash.

So a class standard gets articulated, but it doesn't get spoken. And I think that that's very common on TV and off about how class difference is recognized especially in the domain of

comportment like how we behave, in the domain of taste. So part of the ways in which class exercise its force and sometimes its cruel force is precisely by not being named.

## ***MANHOOD IN A BOTTLE***

Black manhood, by the structures and powers at be, the corporations,  
 they've found a way that they think they can put soul in a bottle.  
 If they can put soul in a bottle, then they could put manhood in a bottle.  
 And then show the bottle in advertising.  
 And we'll follow the crumbs to the big bad wolf.  
 I decided to follow the crumbs and ended up here  
 at this hip-hop Power summit held in New York City.  
 The summit was hosted by Power 105.1 FM,  
 a radio station owned by media powerhouse Clear Channel Communications.  
 There were hundreds of young black men and women here seeking pointers from hip-hop  
 moguls  
 like Russell Simmons, Irv Gotti, and BET executive Stephen Hill.  
 Outside were dozens of aspiring rap artists handing out CD's and demos,  
 hoping to get attention from anyone who would listen.  
 Everywhere I go, and I've been shooting this documentary for two years now,  
 every time I have kids spit for me, it's all about the same thing.  
 It's all about how you're gonna kill somebody, how you gonna rape somebody.  
 I could walk up to you right now and say  
 That's nice, but nobody wants to hear that right now.  
 They don't accept that shit.  
 Who is they?  
 The industry.  
 They usually don't give us deals when we speak righteously and things of that nature.  
 They think we don't want to hear that.  
 How many cats just stood here in front of me right now  
 and started talking about how much drugs they sold, know what I'm saying?  
 How did we kill you?  
 Why did we shoot you?  
 They said that, but how many MC's do you see in the industry or on TV now  
 talking something positive? How many?  
 None.  
 They're doing it because they say, I want to get there.  
 They're going to do whatever we can do to get there. That's what it is.  
 I think that when you talk to a lot of these young rappers,  
 the most important thing is for them to get a record deal.  
 They want to hear from the record companies that there are only  
 certain examples of blackness that we're gonna let flow through this space.  
 And when it comes to hip-hop, there are certain conventions in which we want to see.  
 We want to see the hardcore thug performing hip-hop.  
 We want to see booty shaking in the background.  
 And when hip-hop videos don't fit into those conventions, they don't get played.  
 What I think about what we call the Golden Era, from '87 to '92,  
 you had LL Cool J, you had NWA, you had Public Enemy,  
 but you had De La Soul, you had Kwame. You know what I'm saying?

So you had a diversity of black male expression.  
 So if you wasn't with Chuck D, you could get with De La Soul if you were bohemian.  
 If it wasn't with them, you could get with Kwame.  
 You can get with Tribe Called Quest. You could get with Jungle Brothers.  
 There were so many different types.  
 The current images out there of black and Latino men in hip-hop,  
 do you feel like you want your sons to be like that?  
 No.  
 I mean, maybe some aspects, like the business.  
 You don't see that aspect on TV.  
 They don't see 50 Cent working out a deal with a person at a company.  
 They see 50 Cent on TV with his vest on.  
 They see him with his gat on his waste. That's what they see.  
 The media doesn't want to portray us, I mean minority people,  
 they don't want you to see that we good fathers.  
 They don't want you to see that we good businessmen.  
 We don't just sell drugs.  
 I sold water last summer. Holla!  
 So you see the kind of schizophrenia that emerges among these young men,  
 and you get this kind of notion of keep it real,  
 and of course they have to keep it real to sell records.  
 But at the same time, when somebody actually pulls their coat and is like,  
 this isn't really you. What's this about?  
 It's an admission that that's a performance.  
 When "Self-Destruction" by KRS-One came out, we was all pumping it and loving it.  
 You know what I'm saying? Loving it, loving it.  
 But now you can't go to a label with "Self-Destruction."  
 Why? Because you're gonna self destruct. The label is not going to put you out there.  
 They not gonna do it.  
 (singing) Self-destruction, you're headed for self-destruction.  
 Nobody want to hear that shit no more.  
 It's only 50, come ten, he's killing and shit.  
 He's selling out the roof.  
 He's not got one kind of soothing, educational song. None of that.  
 All of that, that's violence.  
 It's good music, but it's got a lot of violent content,  
 and it's selling like motherfucking hot flowers.  
 The misery that was beginning to really accelerate itself in the Reagan-Bush era in the 80s  
 has been manipulated and commodified by this white male power structure  
 that controls the record labels, that control urban radio.  
 Because every city you go to in American there's a Power this,  
 a Jam'n that, or a Hot something playing the same 10 to 12 songs over and over again.  
 So what it does is perpetuate the mindset that the only way you can be a man,  
 a black man, a Latino man,  
 is to be hard, to denigrate women, to denigrate homosexuals,  
 to denigrate each other, to kill each other.

There's something wrong with that.  
 I talked to some young up and coming cats.  
 Cats that are trying to make it as a rapper.  
 And they say that they're not really thugs, but they know that in order  
 for them to be successful in this game, that they got to be thuggish.  
 What do you think about that?  
 Those are the same cats who are just listening to the radio and just watching TV.  
 They're confused.  
 They don't know.  
 We have trusted the media and the corporations to define what hip-hop is.  
 Back in the days when it first came out, and ABC did a story on rap,  
 you'd be like, I know that's bullshit. I know it's not true.  
 But now you see it on the news. You see it on BET.  
 Because they call themselves hip-hop now.  
 Now Hot 97 is the station where hip-hop lives, so we hear that,  
 but we don't understand that it's some corporation owned by people  
 who have nothing to do with hip-hop. They're just trying to cash in.  
 It's like, hip-hop lives there. So they must know.  
 That must be what rap is.  
 No, we had never let the media define us, so why are we doing that now?  
 I went to talk to former Def Jam president Carmen Ashurst-Watson  
 about the shift in lyrical content in rap music.  
 The time when we switched to gangster music  
 was the same time that majors bought up all the labels.  
 And I don't think that's a coincidence.  
 At the time that we were able to get a bigger place in the record stores  
 and a bigger presence because of this major marketing capacity,  
 the music became less and less conscience.  
 We went to Columbia, and then the next thing I know,  
 our producers of Public Enemy were over producing an Ice Cube album,  
 and then the next thing I know we're pushing a group called Bitches With Problems, BWP.  
 Once that perpetuated into one thing and corporations get involved,  
 yes you'll sell two million NWA's as opposed to one million PE.  
 You're gonna go from "Fight the Power" to "Gin and Juice."  
 Now once the market forces have helped that shift come along,  
 that's when you get sixty, seventy percent of the buying community now is a white community.  
 After 700,000 it's all white people.  
 After you scan past the 700,000 it's all white people, and he's well past 700,000.  
 The white people want to hear that killing and everything.  
 I was on the Daytona strip when I saw this white guy in his SUV  
 blasting Fabulous' "Keepin' it Gangsta."  
 How you doing, man?  
 Pretty good.  
 Hey listen, man. Where are you from?  
 I'm from Columbus, Ohio.  
 Born and raised?

Hell yeah.  
 Is this your car?  
 I wish it was.  
 I'm fronting like it's my car, but no it's my dad's.  
 How long you been listening to hip-hop, man?  
 Seven or eight years, since it started to come out in '91 and '92, ever since then.  
 What is it that draws you to hip-hop?  
 Just the pure emotion in the beats.  
 I love the beats. I love every lyric that they spit.  
 Everything about it is my style.  
 You guys, colored people, could say that it's their music,  
 but I can get down to it just as much as they can.  
 Did you just say colored people?  
 I don't know, what term do you want me to use?  
 I'm not a racist at all.  
 That's why I feel like I can come down here and just role in and I can have no problem.  
 No one is going to try to do anything.  
 I'm just trying to have a good time down here.  
 I hear you, man.  
 It is something that is as put on as baggy jeans for white boys.  
 It is as put on as a fitted baseball cap and a doorag.  
 That's all they gonna be able to get and identify with, and I know you.  
 I know you white boys. I seen you.  
 You are the guys who ask me why I am the way I am,  
 and if you don't understand, there ain't way I can tell you.  
 It comes with this.  
 I have never been to the hood. I've never been to a ghetto.  
 I grew up in upper middle class white suburbia.  
 We had a very small minority in our town, and that was it.  
 And to listen to stuff like that is a way of us to see a completely different culture.  
 It's something that most of us have never had the opportunity to experience.  
 I've never had to worry about drive-by shootings and the stuff in the music.  
 It appeals to our sense of learning about other cultures and wanting to know more  
 about something that we'll never probably experience.  
 Does it reinforce stereotypes?  
 Yes, it does.  
 Especially if they talk about growing up poor and never having all this money,  
 and then they comes on MTV or VH1 with their large chains and their nice cars,  
 and they sing a song about busting caps in people.  
 If you really want to know where this kind of predatory black man comes from,  
 look back at films like Birth of a Nation.  
 Birth of a Nation is heiled by critics as a cinematic breakthrough and a great American movie,  
 but D.W. Griffith's blockbuster, made in 1915,  
 spread fear and paranoia about black masculinity with its mean-spirited stereotypes  
 of black men as lazy, untrustworthy, oversexed, and dangerous,  
 particularly to white women and gave rise to the Ku Klux Klan.

If the KKK was smart enough, they would have created gangsta rap because it's such a caricature of black masculinity, yet young people of color are being presented with this idea that somehow these people represent us.

They're cool, and they're gonna stand in for us against the white power structure.

While they're completely subservient to that white power structure.

It's really an ironic, sad reality.

I asked BET executive Stephen Hill about reinforcing stereotypes, but he just passed a buck.

Probably what should happen is you should look at the people who are actually making the videos.

He just walked away without answering my question.

BET is the cancer of black manhood in the world.

They have one-dimensionalized us and commodified us into being a one-trick image.

We're throwing money at the camera.

We're flashing jewelry that can actually give a town in Africa water.

We got 160 million dollar contracts because we got happy niggas.

What do you think about that as artists, the ones who participate,

do you feel like you're reinforcing any stereotypes? Do you all talk about that?

They couldn't even look you in the eye.

Fuck that.

We can really get to the nuts and nails of this.

They couldn't even look you in the eye.

Number one, cats can't even look a man in the eye.

If they look a man in the eye, they think it's confrontation.

Why? Because they can't answer.

They can't answer to it.

And it's almost like now, and it ain't their fault.

This is all systematic.

It's all part of genocidally breaking things down to the point where people are gonna follow a program that gets played out for them.

This is the play. This is the playbook. Y'all gonna follow through.

Crank robots up, they gonna do what robots do, what you told them to do.

Do you ever feel as an artist that you're doing what they want you to do?

I'm doing what I want to do.

They compensating me for it, and by me doing that, I'm gonna help my people out.

You know what I'm saying?

I'm gonna help my people out.

Niggas that's eating the most off me and 50 and all them, you're never gonna see.

They're in Kalamazoo somewhere with a bent-up hat on.

You know what I'm saying?

Like who?

Everybody.

The real people that's eating out of the industry.

You talking about the corporate guy?

Yeah, the corporate guy. The big man that at the end of the day stamps the check.

So white or black?

All scratch white.  
There's nothing black about the head niggas that's running the industry.  
They're not even niggas.  
So the question becomes, who's making the decisions about what people see?  
Who's making the decisions about what gets the multi-million dollar contracts?  
And overwhelmingly, and this is no great secret,  
it is white men in suits who are making those decisions.  
And their deciding, this makes money. I'm gonna sell it.  
I don't care if it's hurting people. It's a business decision, right?  
If that's the case then, of course white record executives are not going to want to hear  
social critiques of white patriarchy or white supremacy and the like.  
And it may be the job of these black record executives to speak up articulately.  
It's only at the end of the day, it's only entertainment.  
Nobody's going out and shooting up shit, so be it.  
Dice Clay, all of them niggas get up there and say incredible shit.  
The Jerky Boys, they making millions.  
I'm just trying to feed my daughter.  
The only thing that can turn the tide is black men.  
Before anybody says, I'm a rapper, I tell them first of all, I'm a man.  
A man tells his business situation, we can't do that.  
We won't go there. We can't.  
It's a slap in the face to me and my constituency, my family, where I come from and all.  
That's a man.  
And that's what has been lacking in the music business and film business.  
We haven't had men represent black people.

## ***NARROW VISION – RACE IN VIDEO GAMES***

**NARRATOR:** In the debates around stereotyping in the media, many people of color feel that they're experiences are not being represented. That someone from outside the community is telling their stories. So in the case of movies for example, it's felt that the stories of the Black and Latino experience are being told by white scriptwriters. To the extent that Black and Latino *video* game producers are few and far between, the same thing is happening, but perhaps at an even more extreme and disturbing level.

**NINA HUNTEMANN:** You know there's an interesting irony about color and video games. Hardware manufacturers and video game designers pride themselves on the rich textural display but what I find so ironic about this is that the range of colors that may be available in the technology aren't used very much by the game designers and by this I mean that most video games feature white characters. Of the top selling action genre video games, eight out of ten of those games featured white characters. So we're not only seeing the video game world through male eyes, we're seeing it through white male eyes.

**EUGENE PROVENZO:** I think its very interesting for example if you look at most of the first person shooters which only show you the hand on the gun, or the weapon, its generally white rather than brown or black.

**NINA HUNTEMANN:** When we do see race we see it in a very particular moment. Racial stereotypes are evoked to show non-whiteness and that's when race becomes visible. Otherwise its invisible, its normal, but when racialized characters are introduced it becomes quite significant and quite poignant that they're there.

***[Video Game: Turok] I am Turok!***

An example of this is in the game Turok, the main character, Turok is Native American, and the way that you sort of know that he's Native American is that he wears feathers in his hair, he carries a bow and arrow and he shoots at deer. Throughout the game his adventures are serenaded by tribal drumbeats. So his Native American-ness is made quite obvious through these sort of tried stereotypically notions of what it means to be Native American. I think an even more blatant example of stereotypical representations of people of color we can see with black characters. In the game King Pin, we see a lot of black characters which is unusual compared to most games overall, most games have white characters overwhelmingly. But King Pin, it takes place in an environment full of black characters. But there's a particular reason *why* there are a lot of black characters. King Pin takes place in an inner city urban ghetto. Violence and crime is the way in which you get ahead in this environment. You steal, you mug, you're part of a gang, so there's nothing about the environment of the inner city that really challenges the stereotypical notion of the inner city already. Violence and crime goes right along with that. What's ironic about this, is that even though you're in a mostly black-charactered environment, you as the main character are a white guy. So what this conveys beyond just the stereotypes of the inner city being full of black criminals, is that this is abnormal, this is something that needs to be contained, that you as the protagonist and the lead character, need to somehow beat this back into some sort of normalcy.

And what you do in this game as the main white character is you try to get to the leadership position of the gang, you try to become the kingpin. This idea that whiteness is normal and that blackness is exotic, foreign, bizarre, we can see particularly in games like *Akuji* and *Shadow Man*.

*[Video Game: Shadow Man] I had a dream, Shadow Man, a real bad dream. A dead-side dream. The five are here – the heralds of the apocalypse.*

**NINA HUNTEMANN:** In these games we see the representation of Haitian culture, which equates blackness with the supernatural. The character *Akuji* is different than most male characters. He has a cat-like physique. He moves in animal movements, he's painted in tiger stripes. He looks unusual to most male white characters in video games. And again this becomes significant because the game is saying something different about this black racialized character than other white characters in most other games. We see the same thing occurring with *Mike Leroy* in *Shadow Man*, also another game connected with Haitian culture. *Mike Leroy* uses voodoo as does *Akuji*, so again this just sort of emphasizes the difference between the non-white characters and the white characters in video games. And it re-inscribes certain ideas about Haitian culture, about voodoo, about the super natural.

**NARRATOR:** Video games sell themselves as being able to take us to fantastic worlds beyond our mundane everyday lives. Places where we can have extreme experiences, and there's no doubt that there's a tremendous potential to expand our consciousness. But many people have suggested that we keep a number of questions foremost in our minds as we journey to these new worlds. Who will be our guides, who's eyes will we see the world through? Whose fears and nightmares will we experience? Whose imaginations will we be trapped inside?

## **ORIENTALISM TODAY**

*[MTV Video Awards 1998: MCA Beastie Boys] That's another thing America really needs to think about is our racism. Racism that comes from the United States towards Muslim people and towards Arabic people and that's something that has to stop and the United States has to start respecting people from the Middle East in order to find a solution to the problem that's been building up over many years. I thank everyone for your patience in letting me speak my mind on that.*

**SUT JHALLY:** Many people believe the way that Americans understand the Muslim world is very problematic. Indeed anti-Arab racism seems to be almost officially sanctioned. You can make generalized and racist statements about Arab peoples that would not be tolerated for any other group. At the heart of how this new American Orientalism operates is a threatening and demonized figure of the Islamic terrorist that is emphasized by journalists and Hollywood. Now Said recognizes that terrorism exists, as a result of the violent, political situation in the Middle East. But he argues that there is a lot more going on there that is misunderstood or not seen by the peoples of the West. The result of the media's focus on one negative aspect alone means that all the peoples of the Islamic world come to be understood in the same negative and paranoid way, that is, as a threat. So that when we think of people who look like that and come from that part of the world we think fanatic, extreme, violent. Said argues that understanding a vast and complex region like the Middle East in this narrow way takes away from the humanity and diversity of millions of ordinary people living decent and humane lives there.

*[CBS News] We asked, "Would he plant a bomb to blow up the American's if the Islamic underground asked him too? The answer was yet."*

**EDWARD SAID:** After I'd written *Orientalism* and a book called *The Question of Palestine*, in the late 70's and the beginning of the 80's, I wrote a third book, which is called *Covering Islam* and I thought of them as a kind of trilogy. And *Covering Islam* was an account of the coverage of Islam in the popular media. Immediately occasioned by the Iranian Revolution, which described itself as you recall, as an Islamic revolution.

What I discovered was a huge arsenal of images employed by the media, large masses of people waving their fists, black banners, the stern-faced Khomeini, all of them giving the impression of the utmost negative, sort of evil emanation. So the impression you got of Islam was that it was a frightening mysterious, above all threatening, as if the main business of Muslims was to threaten and try to kill Americans. As recently as last year, 1996, that is almost sixteen or seventeen years after I wrote *Covering Islam*, I did an update of the book, and I wrote a new introduction. I found quite to my horror and surprise, that during those sixteen or seventeen years with a large number of events in the Islamic world taking place, which you would think would allow for more familiarity, with a more refined sense of what was taking place as reflected on television and print journalism, in fact was the opposite. I think the situation got worse. And that what you had instead now was a much more threatening picture of Islam, represented for example by television film called *Jihad in America*, based on the bombing of the World Trade Center.

*[TV: Jihad in America] I've reported on international terrorism for the past ten years. And since the World Trade Center bombing I've been investigating the networks of Islamic extremists committed to Jihad in America. For these militants, Jihad is a Holy War, an armed struggle to defeat nonbelievers or infidels. And their ultimate goal is to establish and Islamic empire.*

*...But this gathering did not take place in the Middle East. It happened in the heartland of America, Kansas City, Missouri.*

*...Combating these groups within the boundaries of the Constitution will be the greatest challenge to law enforcement since the war on organized crime.*

**EDWARD SAID:** But never the same generalizations were made, let's say, about the Oklahoma City bombing, that this was a Christian fundamentalist, etc, etc. But the Islamic Jihad had come to America and you had these scenes of the most irresponsible journalism, where you'd see people talking in Arabic and then a voice over, saying they are discussing the destruction of America. Whereas if you picked up a little of what was being said, if you knew the language, had nothing to do with that. And that Islam and the teachings of Islam became synonymous with terror and the demonization of Islam allowed for very little distinction between piety, let's say, and violence. The so called independent media in a liberal society like this, in effect are so lazy and are controlled by interests that are commercial and political at the same time, that there is no investigative reporting, it's just basically repeating the line of the government.

*[TV: Nightline] Only eight days ago I concluded a broadcast on the World Trade Center bombing by telling you what senior law enforcement officials were telling us, that the threat of Muslim extremists operating within the United States is an ongoing danger, something we'll have to live with from now on.*

**EDWARD SAID:** And repeating the lines of the people who have the most influence, for whom Islam is a useful foreign demon, to turn attention away from the inequities and problems in our own society. So, as a result, the *human* side of the Islamic and especially Arabic world, are rarely to be found and the net result is this vacancy on the one hand and these easy, almost automatic images of terror and violence. There is a handy set of images and clichés, you know, not just from the newspapers and the television, but from movies.

*[Movie: Aladdin opening song] I come from a land, from a faraway place where a caravan camels roam, where it's flat and immense and the heat is intense, it's barbaric but hey, it's home. When the winds from the east and the suns from the west and sand in the glass is right, come on down, stop on by, hop a carpet and fly to another Arabian night.*

**EDWARD SAID:** I mean, I myself, growing up in the Middle East in Palestine, in Cairo used to delight in films on the Arabian Nights, you know done by Hollywood producers, you know with Jon Hall and Maria Montez and Sabu. I mean they were talking about part of the world that I lived in but it had this kind of exotic, magical quality which was what we call today Hollywood. So there was that whole repertory of the sheiks in the desert and galloping around and the scimitars and the dancing girls and all of that, that's really the material. It's the situation in the

popular media is that basically Muslims are really two things, one, they are villains and fanatics.

*[Unlabeled movie clip] I will dispatch the American people to the hell they deserve.*

**EDWARD SAID:** And B, many films end up with huge numbers of bodies, Muslim bodies strewn all over the place, the result of Arnold Schwarzenegger or Chuck Norris, lot's of films about guerrillas going into kill Muslim terrorists. So the idea of Islam is something to be stamped out.

*[Movie: True Lies] (fighting sounds, swords clashing, grunting)*

**EDWARD SAID:** The whole history of these Orientalist representations, which portrayed the Muslim and the Oriental in effect a lesser breed, in other words, the only thing they understand is the language of force. This is the principle here, unless you give them a bloody nose they won't understand. We can't talk reason with them.

*[Unlabeled movie clip] (Fighting scenes – screaming)*

**EDWARD SAID:** Is the Arab world full of terrorists? Well, I mean, all you have to do is break down the question into common sense and say, there are terrorists as there are everywhere, but you know, there's a lot more going on there, I mean we're talking about 250 to 300 million people and one of the great problems with Orientalism to begin with is these vast generalizations about Islam and the nature of Islam. There is very little in common that you can talk about as Islam, let's say, between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia, I mean they are both Muslim countries but, you know, the difference is in history and language and traditions and so on. It's so vast that the word Islam has, at best, a tenuous meaning. The same is true within the Arab world. I mean Morocco is very different from Saudi Arabia. Algeria is very different from Egypt. And I would argue and in fact have argued, that the predominant mood of the Arab world is very secular. It's easy to attract attention and certainly the media's attention for some of the political reasons that are obvious. I mean, to discredit the Arabs to make them seem like a threat to the West, to keep the idea around at the end of the Cold War, that, you know, there are foreign devils. Otherwise what are we doing this gigantic military? You know, this huge military budget that is twice as much as an entire world's military budget combined.

So you have to have threat. And the result is it's very hard to find words that are sympathetic to the Arabs and Islam. Islam is seen as the enemy of Christianity and the United States sees itself as a Christian or a Judeo-Christian country, in affiliation with Israel and that Islam is the great enemy. The competitor. There's a history of that. And I give the example of Dodi Fayad, you know, the erstwhile suitor of Princess Dianna.

Well a few days before he died I read through the English press and it was full of the racist clichés of Orientalist discourse, I mean, that this is, *The Sunday Times*, one of the leading newspapers in England, had a head line to a 15,000 word story entitled, *A Match Made in Mecca*. And the idea of Muslim conspiracy as trying to infect, you know, taking over this white woman by these dark people, with Mohammad, the prophet Mohammad who is a historical personage of the seventh century somehow stage-managing the whole thing. That's the power of the discourse

you see, if you're thinking about people and Islam and about that part of the world those are the words you constantly have to use.

*[Movie] ... and you won't get hurt, I give you my word.*

*-- No way, you wacko.*

**EDWARD SAID:** So discourse is a regulated system of producing knowledge within certain constraints whereby certain rules have to be observed.

*[TV: The Simpsons]*

*OK, Libya, exports?*

*-- Yes, sir, you American pig.*

*Ha, ha, ha, nice touch.*

**EDWARD SAID:** To think past it, to go beyond it, not to use it, is virtually impossible because there's no knowledge that isn't codified in this way about that part of the world.

*[Movie]*

*May I help you?*

*-- Listen to the sound ...*

**EDWARD SAID:** And there's a certain sense in which in not really mounting a serious critique of it, the Arabs have participated and continue to allow themselves to be represented as Orientals in this Orientalist way. There is no, for example, information policy of the twenty Arab countries, twenty-two Arab countries, to try to give a different picture of what their worlds are like. Because most of them are dictatorships. All of them are dictatorships without democracy, who are in desperate need of U.S. patronage, government patronage, to support them, so they are not about to criticize the United States. Not about to engage in a real dialogue and in that respect I think the Arabs keep themselves collectively in a way that is subordinate to and inferior to the West. And in fact fulfills the kinds of representations that most Westerners have in their minds about the Arabs.

## GETTING REAL

**Jack:** When we think of Arabs, what do we see? What images come to mind? Do we see actual people? People who despite real cultural or geographical differences do pretty much the same things that we do. When we think of Arab women, what images come to mind? Do we see women who laugh and play and who adore their children? Women who work in the home as well as outside? Would it come as a surprise to know that in many Arab countries, a majority of college students are actually women. Arab men? What's our media image? Do we see loving fathers, men who want to provide for their families? What about Arab teenagers? Do we see them the way you would think about teenagers in other parts of the world? Then there's religion in the Arab world. Do we see it as all encompassing dominating everything else? Do we know that even though faith plays a huge role in the Arab world, just as it does here in the United States, that it's also true that much of the Arab world is quite secular? When we think of Arabs and religion, does Christianity come to mind? Do we remember that there are over twenty million Christians in the region, who have lived side by side in harmony with Muslims for centuries? To their credit, some filmmakers have shown Arabs and American-Arabs in all their complexities. An excellent way to shatter a stereotype is through laughter, through comedy. So we have comedians. Comedians have done this historically. Black comedians, Jewish comedians. So we see Arab comedians doing this, and this is one way to release the tension.

**[Clip]** "True story, guy behind the counter picked up my credit card, sees the Allah part, looks at me all weird and is like, 'hey buddy, what kind of name is that?' (laughter) It's an Arabic name. He goes, 'what does this mean?' So I'm like, translated to English, it means peaceful, friendly Arab?" (laughter) But he's not happy. He goes, "what Arab country is your family from?" So I try to think of the most peaceful, proper one that he would like, so I'm like, 'we're from the same Arab country that Aladdin is from.'  
(laughter)

**Jack:** To his credit, Michael Moore in Fahrenheit 9/11 in the DVD includes a scene with this comedy.

**[Clip]** "My name really is Ahmed Ahmed, and I can't fly anywhere. All you white people have it easy. You guys get to the airport like an hour, two hours before your flight. It takes me a month and a half. Security's gotten so bad now I just show up to the airport in a G-string, and I'm like 'how you guys doing?'"

**[Clip]** "The character I read for was terrorist number 4. Not number 1, not number 2, number 4. And I was already well into my comedy career at this point so I didn't take it that serious, and I read my lines way over the top. I was like "Saddan, you will obey or I will kill you in the name of Allah." And the director went nuts and he was like "that was brilliant, Ahmed. Let me see you do it again. This time with more Arab, you know how your people are very," you know he's trying to say the word angry, and I was just like okay angry, is that what you want? "yes, yes." So I did it one more time, and I got a call the next morning that they want to use me in this movie. And I started laughing on the phone because I was making fun of the role. I wasn't trying to be like, that's what they want though.

**Jack:** Once we begin to humanize Arabs and Muslims, to project them as we project other people. No better, no worse, then the stereotype gradually diminishes. In movies such as “A Perfect Murder,” we see an Arab-American detective befriend the heroine.

**[Clip – Perfect Murder]**

**Jack:** Then there is “Three Kings,” a movie I served as a consultant on. The action occurs during the first Gulf War in 1991. The film is notable for revealing the complexities of the Iraqi people, focusing on decent Iraqis that Saddam Hussein wants to kill.

**[Clip]** Voice 1: “How’s your little girl?”

Voice 2: “She’s safe for now.”

Voice 1: “Outstanding. Excellent. How can we help you?”

**Jack:** There’s mutual respect in this film, and there’s also Iraqis who are loyal to Saddam Hussein. It’s not a sugarcoated film. It’s a very realistic film. It’s an outstanding film in my opinion. “Kingdom of Heaven,” which focuses on the Crusades, was a tremendous hit overseas; not here in the United States. And when the film was shown in Beirut, particularly at the end when Saladin takes over Jerusalem, there’s peace between Muslim and Christian. He enters a church, and there is an icon on the floor. Saladin sees the icon, respectfully picks it up and places it back on the altar. When audiences in Beirut saw that, they rose to their feet and applauded. We’re talking about Muslims, as well as Christians, applauding the act of a Muslim who embraces religious tolerance. There is this need of Arab audiences to embrace American films that show them in a respectful, honest, fair manner. And with the release of George Clooney’s “Syriana,” I have hope that Hollywood may be listening. The film has some unflattering, yet honest, depictions of Arabs, but it also presents an Arab prince as one of the film’s few decent human beings. The British educated prince wants to bring democracy to his country, and his ideals get him and his family murdered.

**[Clip]** Voice 1: “I want to create a Parliament. I want to give women the right to vote. I want an independent judiciary. I want to start a petroleum exchange in the Middle East, cut the speculators out of the business. Why are the major oil exchanges in London and New York anyway? I’ll put all of our energy up for competitive bidding. Our own pipe through Iran to Europe, like you proposed. I’ll ship to China. Anything that achieves efficiency and maximizes profit, profit which I will then use to rebuild my country.” Voice 2: “Great. That’s exactly what you should do.”

Voice 1: “Exactly. Except your president rings my father and says, ‘I’ve got unemployment in Texas, Kansas, Washington State.’ One phone call later, we’re stealing out of our social programs in order to buy overpriced airplanes.”

**Jack:** Another example of this kind of humanity and respect is found in “Hideous Kinky,” a film about an English woman played by Kate Winslet and her two daughters in Morocco. Winslet’s relationship with her Moroccan lover is beautifully and lovingly displayed. And when she doesn’t have the money to return home to England with her daughters, he makes hard sacrifices to make it happen. There is a tender and moving scene at the end. The Moroccan catches up with the train they’re on to say goodbye, to wish them well. We see the warmth and love that exists between them.

**[Music]**

**Jack:** And nowhere is this kind of humanity more visible than in the film “Paradise Now,” written and directed by Hany Abu-Assad. Two Palestinian friends get recruited to carry out a suicide bombing on Tel Aviv. At first they accept their mission solemnly, but they’re intercepted at the Israeli border and separated from their handlers. Then a young woman realizes their plan and forces them to question their actions.

**[Clip – Paradise Now]**

**Jack:** These three young Palestinians are different from each other. They’re not just crazed terrorists. And they’re not just freedom fighters. They’re human beings, with all the faults, successes, ideals, and pain of human being.

**[Clip – Paradise Now]**

**Jack:** I’m an optimist, and I believe in the future, particularly in young filmmakers. The stereotype will change. It will change because young men and women who are entering the profession will see that there has been a grave injustice committed, and they’ll make attempts to correct it. It’s only a matter of time as to when this will happen. But it will take place. Look, we’ve unlearned many of our prejudices against blacks, Native Americans, Jews, other groups. Why can’t we unlearn our prejudices against Arabs and Muslims? What matters is not to remain silent. I think whenever we see anyone being vilified on a regular basis, we have to speak up, whether we’re image-makers or not. We have to take a stand and say this is morally and ethically wrong to demonize a people.

## ***WHAT HAPPENED TO THE NEWS?***

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** The corporations that now own our news media, that have increasingly brought them into their massive empires, realize that giving journalists the autonomy to make professional decisions is bad business. It's much better business to hold your news division to a fierce accounting, to make it generate the same sort of profit as your movie division, as your TV division, as your music division. And that means basically fewer resources, less investigative work, less controversial work, more puff pieces, more trivia, more entertainment, more celebrity coverage. And that's exactly what we've gotten.

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** This has to do with the fact that there's a certain formula for success that they all use in order to keep their stock prices high. And that is, a very simple one – it is on the one hand to show stuff that is as titillating as possible, to keep those ratings up night after night. While at the same time, slashing budgets, cutting costs. Eventually you have Barbara Walters become a kind of pillar of the news establishment, but what she's really, basically, is a celebrity interviewer. You have a kind of alternative universe with shows like *Entertainment Tonight!*, which use the format of the CBS news to cover the day's celebrity gossip. So what this does it, it creates a kind of ready market, full-time, for stories that are high on sensationalism and low on information.

*[Fox News] Monica Lewinsky, the once and future punch line, and her trip to the movies!*

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** That's the most economical kind of thing you can have. And its especially valuable when you've got these voracious, twenty-four hour cable news operations – CNN, Fox, MSNBC – they've got to fill that up, they've got to keep the plankton coming into the maw of the whale.

*[Fox News] ...and finally Christopher Walken is rocking to a new beat...*

*[CNN News] ...there's a lot happening in show-biz today...*

*[Fox News] ... Hannibal Lector's lining up for thirds now.*

*[NBC News] ...Wynona Ryder is back in court for her shoplifting trial...*

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** And so what we get is a much weaker journalism, a journalism that tends towards kind of the easy stories about celebrities and royal families, whose idea of balanced political reporting is simply to put a mic in front of a Republican and then get a Democratic opinion, but almost never means going out and then figuring out who's telling the truth, actually doing the journalism of investigating the various claims and telling us what's actually going on. This leads to very serious problems when you get into a situation, for example, like the war we're currently in – the War on Terrorism. Because claims that are given about the success of this war are no longer challenged.

*[CBS News] The fight against terrorism has begun...*

*[CNN News: John Ashcroft] We will bring them to justice or if that's impossible, we will take justice to them.*

*[ABC News] President Bush says the country is gearing up to fight a new kind of war.*

*[ABC News: ] A small group of elite forces, part of a CIA operation...*

*[ABC News] US missiles ripping into Taliban barracks overnight...*

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** And one of the things we see is when you look at the journalism in other countries, there's a whole range of issues that are being asked, that are being addressed, that we're not getting in our news media.

Because journalists simply don't have the resources, or the commitment from their corporate bosses to do that type of journalism. That type of journalism would get the media in hot water with people in Washington.

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** You read *The Times of India*, you read the British newspapers – *The Guardian*, *The Observer* – you read the French papers, you get a sense of what was going on. You read *The New York Times*, you read *The Washington Post*, you watch TV, it's as if the Pentagon was in charge of the news divisions.

*[FOX News] A Muslim community activist accused of trying to help Osama's terror mongers, set up a training camp right here in America.*

*[CBS News] The US introduces a new weapon in the war against terrorists.*

*[CBS News] American jets are dropping cluster bombs designed to wipe out as many troops as possible.*

*[CBS News] The Pentagon says these pictures were not authorized and it is trying to find out who took them.*

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** So knowing that, what we would expect from good journalism is when a president comes along and says, "hey, I've got another war for you," the first thing you do is you feel for your wallet – the first thing you do is say let's check these guys' claims out, we've been hoodwinked enough here. And good journalism would do that. Our journalism unfortunately is worse than ever at that, it has not challenged claims whatsoever. It basically regurgitates what those in power have been telling us. So on issues of war and peace we would have a vastly more critical journalism demanding hard evidence before it would start pushing the buttons to get war hysteria building.

*[CNN News] With the drumbeat for an attack on Iraq increasing, the Bush administration may finally have the ammunition they've been looking for.*

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** The type of war coverage we see in the United States is exactly what you'd expect with a system dominated by a handful of very wealthy corporations that

benefit by having a world run by the United States to make the world profitable for them. To expect those sorts of firms to foster journalism is to be critical of a US War on Terrorism, a US role in the world, is illogical. And we've gotten the sort of journalism accordingly, that basically reflects the values of the owners.

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** Now even if the people at the top of this system were the most civic-minded, decent, rational, humane people in the world, who would never think of interfering with the news operations, even if that were the case, this ongoing concentration of the media would still pose a grave danger to democracy because it would make serious news unlikely.

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** It also means that people in power don't get covered as rigorously – corporate power. We've had in the past two years enormous scandals with companies like Enron and WorldCom where the management for years has been ripping off the government, its been ripping off its workers, consumers...

*[ABC News] WorldCom began laying off thousands of its workers today...*

*[CBS News] Six Enron Board members are resigning...*

*[ABC News] The Enron energy company laid off four thousand workers...*

*[ABC News: Woman at hearing] I trusted the management of Enron with my life's savings. They betrayed that trust.*

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** Yet until really, the last second, our news media was extolling these companies as sort of the exemplars of the new economy. A healthy journalism could have nipped them in the bud in the mid nineties and could have addressed them. Instead what we get is a journalism that comes at them very late and what we're seeing is a journalism that's very hesitant about getting to the roots of these problems, a journalism that's unwilling to look at the real cause, which is the corruption in our political system, which made these scandals possible. But instead wants to isolate it as a couple of "bad apples" – an accountant that pulled some funny business or a CEO who got greedy.

*[ABC News] Mr. Cheney says Enron's failure is a business scandal, not a political one.*

*[ABC News: Interview with Cheney] The fact is, Enron didn't get any special deals, Enron's been treated appropriately by this administration. Enron's all about is a corporate collapse, maybe malfeasance in office, and that will be dealt with.*

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** When in fact all of the evidence suggests that the crimes of these corporations were corporate policies, agreed upon by the entirety of the corporation, taking advantage of deregulations they had pushed through, to rip off workers, consumers, taxpayers, the government. But that sense doesn't emerge whatsoever in our coverage. And when you compare it to how traditional blue-collar crime is covered, where some poor person goes and holds up a convenience store, graphic language is used to convey what a terrible thing this was, how threatening it is to the community, its quite striking.

*[NBC News Channel 4] Coming up, cabbies under attack in the suburbs...*

*[NBC News Channel 4] Police have arrested one of the so-called Bonnie and Clyde robbers...*

*[NBC News Channel 4] The next knock at your door could be a dangerous utility imposter. I'll show you how to spot them.*

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** One of the ways in which the pro-corporate bias that's built into the sort of new corporate model in news is manifest itself has been in the coverage of issues like the World Trade Organization and these global trade deals.

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** The whole question of Free Trade has been covered in a way that's exemplary, it tells us a great deal about how objective this new system can be. When it's parent company all have a certain vested interest in one position over another. *The New York Times*, the TV networks, all have been little more than propaganda organs on behalf of so-called Free Trade.

*[NBC News] But why should Americans care when our own economy is already booming? Because trade with other countries is one reason why it's booming. Twelve million American jobs, fully 10% of our work force, a direct result of exports. We also love to buy all those low-priced imports. Economist Steven Roach.*

*[NBC News Interview: Economist Roach] It's a win-win situation.*

*[ABC News] Which is why so many people here are on the side of President Clinton and the WTO, and not on the side of all the protestors in the streets.*

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** It just so happens this might be the worst area of coverage in the news media of the past decade. Where the protestors who oppose these movements, a heterogeneous group of citizens from a wide variety of backgrounds, have received very little coverage and the coverage they have received has been extraordinarily distorted, emphasizing a handful of people who might be throwing a rock at a window. Rather than the deeply felt, well thought out convictions of religious people, of labor, of farmers, coming from a wide variety of backgrounds.

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** Inevitably, the mainstream media have focused on the theatrics of street violence rather than on the substance of the protest, or the meaning of the protest, or the reason why protestors have to be out in the streets protesting in the first place.

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** Now why is that? Why is the coverage here so terrible? Well this is where you have to go back and look at all the factors built into the corporate news system that work against having an accurate and faithful accounting of debates over a global economic governance. These corporations themselves – Viacom, News Corporation, Disney,

AOL Time Warner, Sony – are the main beneficiaries of these global trade deals. They're the industries that are best poised to profit by being able to travel the world, hiring cheap labor, selling their products. Secondly, if you look at the nature of who's covering these stories for the news media, it's almost entirely a business story. It's not a political story, it's covered by business reporters.

*[NBC News] Well, NBC chief financial correspondent Mike Jensen explains tonight how these talks could trickle down to every family in America.*

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** When the business reporters go to their sources, they're all business sources, and to the business sources, these trade deals make perfect sense. It's illogical to oppose these trade deals.

*[NBC News] No matter what comes out of this four day meeting, and a lot of analysts don't think it will be much, world trade has such momentum almost nothing can get in it's way.*

**ROBERT MCCHESENEY:** And the bottom line here, quite literally, is that we have a conflict in the owner's interest in making money and the public's need for a vibrant journalism. And the evidence is quite clear – unless we change the system, unless we take that power out of the hands of the Viacom and the General Electrics, it won't change. Because they're doing what makes perfect sense for them. Regrettably it has dreadful consequences for the rest of us.

## ***MEDIA COVERAGE***

**JUSTIN LEWIS:** So, how do we explain this contradiction between the myth that politicians reflect the public and the reality that on most economic issues, they actually ignore public opinion? Well let's look at how the news media covers public opinion. When the media report on polls, what they're actually doing is telling a story about what public opinion is, rather than just reflecting it. They're constructing how we understand public opinion. And the news media have a lot of power here, because they choose what questions to ask and what questions not to ask. Ordinary people's opinions usually only count in as much as they respond to that conversation. When Washington was focused on alleged scandals in the Clinton White House then that's what many pollsters asked questions about, even though many people stated in those polls that they were actually much more concerned about other things. One of the issues that in recent years people have said they're most concerned about is education. Now if you read the polling data on this issue, you'll find that more people tend to think that more money should be spent on public education. But when the networks do their own reports on education, they often ignore the issue of spending. So for example, ABC began a report on education by saying that people cared about it.

*[ABC News] As we said at the beginning of this week in virtually every poll that tries to measure the state of public opinion, the public says that education is one of the country's most important issues.*

**JUSTIN LEWIS:** But the story they tell us is about a school that has done well without increased spending.

*[ABC News] Tonight a closer look at one school that is turning itself around without having a lot of money.*

**JUSTIN LEWIS:** We then here the various improvements the principal of this school has inspired. The implicit sentiment here is directly opposed to what public opinion tells us. People say they want more money spent on education. ABC is telling us that money isn't the answer. The next question we should ask is: Does the media coverage of public opinion recognize the gap between a public that on economic issues tends to be pretty liberal and mainstream politicians, whether they're Democrats or Republicans, who hold conservative views on those issues? And the answer's a very clear No. Because when you closely examine the way the media report on public opinion, you find that the left wing or liberal side of it more or less disappears. This makes the public appear to be more conservative than it really is. Now there's lots of reasons for this. The major one being what we call the elite oriented nature of reporting. Not everyone has the same access to newsmakers. The people with the most access to the media are powerful political figures because the news media tend to define politics in terms of the words and deeds of politicians, not on public opinion. I call politicians *elite* in as much as they have a lot more power and control and money than the average citizen because they set the stage for what we talk about and how. Now since politicians are much more conservative than the public, and the media take their lead from these conservative politicians, the poll reporting by the media, tends to replicate elite agendas. As we've seen, this agenda places corporate financial interests above citizen preferences. The most prominent way that

happens is through media coverage of what we might call “horse race politics,” trying to figure out which politician is going to win an election, who’s popular and who’s not. Now when responding to polls like these, people can only reply with simple, brief answers. There’s no room to give complex answers. No way to shift the terms of the debate, to say how neither politician really reflects the person’s views. The problem with candidate-centered polls is that people are steered into giving an opinion about a mainstream politician. And this implies that they are endorsing not only one or other of the main politicians on offer, but the policies those politicians are supporting. In fact because the media spend very little time actually telling us what those policies are, most people are really expressing little more than an opinion about a loosely constructed image rather than a well-understood political program. So these horse race polls actually tell us very little about what people want, but their prominence in media discourse makes it appear that people are more or less in line with their political representatives. This perception would be much more difficult to sustain if the media looked closely at public opinion on policy preferences. Examining an issue like health care would make it explicit that public opinion is really at odds with the opinions of the main presidential candidates. Instead of rocking the boat, the media force people to side with those candidates by the questions it asks. So when an NBC report shows a brief glimpse into public unhappiness with the current health care system, the popular alternative – a single payer health care system – which is a non-for-profit system with universal coverage – is never discussed.

*[NBC News] Seventy-nine year old Eleanor Chapin belongs to a different HMO in Kentucky, which recently tripled her premiums. She sees these questionable expenses as a waste of her tax dollars.*

**JUSTIN LEWIS:** We only hear what political elites have to say.

*[CNN News] Gore’s solution, a more modest plan to provide health insurance for children.*

**JUSTIN LEWIS:** The single payer option is so completely excluded from discussion that when the news media do discuss solutions, they’re always in the context of existing, private insurance, market-based systems that leave millions of Americans without health coverage. And this is how the media coverage leaves the current profit based corporations and the politicians who back them at center stage. Another implication of this focus on candidates and not issues is that the media create the impression that the American public has a real choice. You can choose Bush, or you could choose Gore, the implication being that they’re both very different. But on substantive budgetary, or economic issues, the differences between them are really on the margins. Both leading Democrats and Republicans support a privatized health care system, they support corporate-backed global trade agreements, they support maintaining a Cold War defense budget, and they generally favor the interests of Big Business. That the media give the impression that Democrats and Republicans represent a broad range of opinion by focusing on civil liberty, non-monetary issues, like gay rights or abortion. Where Democrats and Republicans really do differ. And this masks the degree of the lead consensus.

The other way in which public opinion is narrowed to fit elite agendas is much more subtle. Polls frequently ask people which issues they care about, and when these get reported on, the media don’t really explore any further. They don’t ask, why do people care about this issue? Or what policies do they support? CBS reported a poll on traffic congestion.

*[CBS News] Crime has been replaced by traffic congestion as the most important local issue according to a poll out this week.*

**JUSTIN LEWIS:** One reason for so much traffic congestion in US cities is that many mass transit rail systems since the 1950s have been either ripped up or left to wither away. And this happened despite high levels of public support for public transit and rail systems. Now polls suggests people want the choice of rail and roads, not just roads. Public opinion in other words leads us towards a longterm solution to traffic congestion. But the CBS report ignores this long term and popular solution because serious investment in public transportation is not on Washington's agenda. Instead they focus on new tracking devices, which might at some unspecified date in the future, give people information about traffic jams.

*[CBS News] His invention uses monitors atop already existing cell phone towers. When drivers talk on their phones, the device tracks the signal, which shows how fast the traffic is flowing.*

**JUSTIN LEWIS:** Again, Washington, spurred on by big interests like the auto industry, have only one response to traffic congestion and that's to build more roads, so public support for rapid urban transit is simply not discussed. Instead, the only polls we do get are about how much people love their cars.

*[NBC News] According to a recent Gallup poll, 42% of Americans say they would consider buying an SUV, and those who own them now, love them. 73% of people who already own SUVs, say their next car will be another SUV.*

## ***THE PR INDUSTRY***

**JOHN STAUBER:** The public relations industry is a multi-billion dollar business owned by the advertising industry and its job is to manipulate public opinion, news information, and public policy on behalf of its clients. No wealthy individual, corporation or politician makes a move without PR consultants. The tobacco industry, the chemical industry, the petroleum industry, the logging industry, the mining industry, the drug industry – these are the industries that fund most of the propaganda campaigns.

**ERIC SPARLING:** Most of the money that's being spent in public relations is being spent by large corporations, large government organizations, government bodies. So what that means obviously, as in everything in culture, whatever has the largest influx in cash is going to have more power. So that means that some voices are going to be louder than others.

**MARK CRISPIN MILLER:** Big business has the connections, the money, the time, and the skill to feed their propaganda messages through the great echo chamber of the media. And this is what gives them a tremendous advantage.

**STUART EWEN:** Part of the role of a corporation in a democracy, part of the job of a corporation in a democracy, is continually to massage reality in which ordinary people will see an identity between their own interests and the interests of a corporate enterprise system.

**ERIC SPARLING:** Its about using every kind of technology, using every media outlet, using every outlet period, available in the society to convince people that what *you* what them to believe is good for them.

**JOHN STAUBER:** And not all public relations is bad. Some of the public relations techniques that early practitioners like Ivy Lee developed, such as news releases and news conferences, are fairly benign. And libraries, bookstores, hospitals, non-profit organizations use various public relations techniques. But what we should really be concerned about are the nefarious, deceptive, powerful, hidden public relations strategies and tactics that are used by industry.

## ***AMERICAN MEDIA – OCCUPIED TERRITORY***

Americans rely on the news media for information about events occurring around the world. News, especially television news, exerts a powerful influence on our perceptions. Telling us which events are important and shaping our understanding of the issues. Given the central role played by the United States in Middle East conflict and thus the vital role played by American voters, influencing U.S. media coverage of the conflict was crucial. Controlling the images and words used to explain the conflict has become an important extension of the struggle.

Israel is really fighting a war on two fronts. The first is a military campaign being waged in the occupying territories against the Palestinian people and the second is a PR campaign being waged here in the U.S. through the American Media to ensure continued support for Israel's occupation. Alon Pinkus, Counsel General for Israel in New York, coordinator for Israel's PR efforts, was recently quoted as saying, "We are currently in a conflict with the Palestinians. Engaging in a successful PR campaign is part of winning the conflict." So you could say that in addition to the military occupation of the West Bank in Gaza, Israel is also involved in an attempt to ideologically occupy the American media.

[Clip}  
Explosions.

The roots of Israel's PR campaign go back to the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon that earned it worldwide criticism. In particular the massacre of Palestinian civilians at the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila. To the Israeli government the problem was not the deaths of thousands of civilians. Rather it was the damage to Israel's public image. A public relations disaster in need of damage control.

They surrounded Beirut. In three months 17,500 people, almost all of them were civilians, were killed. I saw many thousands of their bodies. Then came the massacre of Sabra and Shatila by Israel's own allies as the camp was surrounded by Israeli troops and they desperately said what went wrong? It was concluded that the problem was, it wasn't good enough public relations.

After the public relations disaster of Lebanon, Israel decided to set up permanent institutional structures to control how Americans would think about the Middle East. In 1983 Israel launched the Hazburah project. The aim of which was to secure good press in the U.S. media. The goal was to train Israel diplomats in Communications and Public Relations. For example they trained press officers and Israeli consulates in the U.S. to ensure American journalists would write stories favorable to Israel. As one of these press officers said in the 1980s, he had breakfast lunch and dinner with journalists and a typical day would involve conversations with producers at leading news and TV talk shows about the content of the program. He described it as in fact, "A joint formulation of ideas." This targeting of the American media goes on in the present day.

The Israeli Press Office is spitting out press releases, statements information all the time. So you could sit in a bureau in Jerusalem and file source information without really having to have much imagination or have much energy or have much drive. Palestine authority press offices are

almost useless and they're certainly not providing you with readymade stories the way the Israeli press offices.

Because of lack of access to the Palestinian officials in the West Bank and the sophistication of Israel's PR techniques inside Israel, a lot of times the stories are already tilted in Israel's favor before they ever leave American journalists sitting in the area.

When you're talking about how the stories covered from the US, the propaganda machine is even more effective

American news coverage is influenced by a complex set of institutional relationships. These influences can be thought of as a series of filters through which the news must travel before it emerges in the voices of news anchors. To understand how American news media report on the Middle East conflict we need to understand how these filters operate. Among the most important of these filters are the business interests of the corporations who own the mass media, interests that extend beyond the United States and across the globe to the Middle East.

The economic interests of media owners are shared by political elites politicians and policy makers who form a second filter. These political elites have the power to access and influence mainstream media and are themselves part of a system dominated by corporate money and interests.

The strategic importance of the Middle East to these two groups is reflected in media coverage of the region and the Israeli – Palestinian conflict.

A third filter, Israel's own public relations efforts, further effects the coverage. The government of Israel employs one of the greatest American public relations firms as image consultants to coordinate it's political and media campaigns. Nine Israeli consulates help implement these PR campaigns by developing relationships with journalists and monitoring media outlets.

Scores of private American organizations, both Christian and Jewish reiterate the official line and organize grassroots opposition to any coverage deemed unfavorable to Israel. The most important of these is APAC, the American Public Affairs Committee widely regarded as the most foreign lobby in Washington. This institutional framework of American business and political interests in combination with Israeli public relations shapes media coverage of the Middle East. At the same time these progressive organizations opposing Israeli government policy such as *Jews Against the Occupation* and *Americans for Peace Now* rarely make it through these filters. Finally, if any news stories, critical of Israeli policy do surface they're host of media watchdog groups that monitor and pressure journalists and media outlets. The most important of which is CAMERA.

You have activists organizations from the Israeli right that very effectively, they would say monitor, I would say harass journalists and their editors and try to make sure that the coverage is objective, by which they mean pro Israel.

You can see all of the pressure groups to right campaigns of letters to the editors, you know, news outlets and ask or demand that stories be changed or that reporters be fired.

The abuse against the Journalists is something you just have to take into account, both literally and metaphorically. If you work in the Middle East you have to take the sticks and stones. What I object to is that my American colleagues don't seem prepared to do that.

And even in Israel itself, you know, you can find the main Israeli newspapers like *Haaretz* for example, provides coverage on the ground and analysis, some of which has views on the conflict that would be almost beyond the pale, for an American journalist say the *New York Times*, to write

The main major television news networks and newspapers in the United States have long ago got their fear to be supreme over their duties as journalists. They're not monitoring the centers of power when it comes to the relationship between America and the Middle East, Israel and America and America and the Arabs, and the Palestinians. They will not ask the right questions, they will not reporting using the right words, they will not confront reality and they've given up. And I think that once you acquire fear it's very difficult to get rid of it.

## ***A SIMPLE STORY***

**[ABC News]** The President has taken to referring that the enemy in this war as the Evil Doers. It captures the essence of how most of us feel about them, and nicely finesses the question of who they actually are. [George Bush] We're too great a nation, to allow the evil-doers to affect our soul and our spirit.

**[ABC News]**

-- (Interviewer) Is President Bush wrong to refer to these people as the evil ones?

-- I don't think he is because I think that by doing this it takes the use of the term evil out of the comic book and into reality.

-- (Interviewer) Do the events of September 11 make it easier for us as a society now to deal with the notion of evil?

-- I think it does and that this is a teachable moment, this is an opportunity to teach children about right and wrong and good and evil.

**BETTY BURKES:** Since September 11, the rhetoric of good and evil has been used to pump up support for US policies and patriotic fervor and preparing the American people for the US government to invade Iraq and Afghanistan.

**[Unidentified voice over]** There comes a defining moment in the life of a nation that cries out for support, with hope towards tomorrow it is our traditions and values that are the flames that will burn forever in this nations soul. American...

**[Classroom students]** I pledge allegiance to the flag of United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

**BRIAN WRIGHT:** Following the events of September 11, there was a great awakening in the way of patriotism, it was very powerful and rang true for even my students. What do you think of American is, Claire, what do you think that means?

**[Student]** Someone who's born in America, lives in America and is loyal to America.

**[Brian]** That's a very interesting word, what do you think being loyal, what does that mean?

**[Student]** Trusting America, if someone says something bad about it, say we don't like that and that's not very nice.

**[Student]** It means if somebody says something bad don't believe it because that's not true, America's very good.

**[Student]** America believes in itself.

**NANCY CARLSSON-PAIGE:** The problem with patriotism is that it can get used to pressure people or to move people in a direction of feeling like you have to stand behind what your

country does or what your government does no matter what. Its sort of like you're with us or your against us.

**[TV Interview Colin Powell]** Nations around the world know that this is the time to choose, you're either for freedom or you're for terrorism.

**[TV World Wrestling Federation]** Just like our armed forces in the Middle East fighting took it Saddam Hussein. Hulk Hogan is gonna come down here in front of hundreds of people...

**[Bush speech]** The way you fight evil is with millions of acts of good.

**ROBIN ANDERSEN:** Harold Laswell, writing about WWI propaganda, pointed out that if you really want to persuade a population that the enemy is evil, don't put any complicated international economic relations, don't put the failed diplomacy, you don't understand history, you don't emulate with other cultures.

**ROBERT JENSEN:** For instance we know that the CIA had a direct role in helping train, fund and support, the radical fundamentalist Islamic terrorist groups that were at work in Afghanistan in the 1980's when the goal was to undermine the Soviet Union. Well that kind of history is again crucial if the American public is going to understand the forces at work in the Middle East and the Muslim world more generally.

**[FOX News]** The new book revealed shocking details about the CIA secret operation to arm the Afghan Mujahadin against the Soviet invasion in the 1980's. But the aftermath of the largest secret war in US history, may have lead to the rise of Osama Bin Laden, and Al Qaeda.

**ROBERT JENSEN:** In the run up to the Iraq war there was one fundamental question. What is really motivating the Bush administration's desire to go to war with Iraq. That was the fundamental question what's this war about?

**[Bush speech]** If Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm for the safety of our people, and for the peace of the world we will lead a coalition to disarm him.

**[CNN News]** Earlier protests such as New York's showing of more than a hundred thousand people who oppose the war with Iraq, French protesters made clear that they support their government's opposition to an American invasion of Iraq and a half million British protesters targeted Prime Minister Tony Blair for his backing of President Bush.

**[TV: The Daily Show]** Traditional allies like France and Germany have balked at the prospect of war, much of the world remains unconvinced. Clearly, its time for President Bush to make his most charismatic, forceful case yet, sir? [President Bush] Ah Saddam Hussein is a... gassed his own people, Saddam Hussein has got weapons of mass destruction, Saddam Hussein has made uh... has defied the United Nations, Saddam Hussein has a providing links to terrorist, Saddam

Hussein is a threat to America and we will deal with him. [John Stewart] Ok sold.

**ROBIN ANDERSEN:** The problem with the good versus evil dichotomy is that it loses all of the historical background.

**ROBERT JENSEN:** Throughout the 1980's the government of Saddam Hussein was supported by the United States in Iraq's war against Iran. We know that some of the very weapons that we are now told we should fear came from the US and Europe.

**[TV Azteca (Mexico)]** On December 20, 1983 Rumsfeld, who had been the Defense Secretary for President Ford, was now traveling to Baghdad as a personal envoy for Reagan.

**ROBIN ANDERSEN:** They supply him with the weapons, they supplied him with dual fuel cells, which could lead to the use of nuclear weapons, they supply him the Sarin and the other kinds of chemical components, of actually what he actually did use to, in the war between Iraq and Iran.

**ROBERT JENSEN:** The United States provided critical diplomatic support for Iraq at the time that it used chemical weapons against its own citizens and Halabja in 1988.

**[TV Azteca (Mexico)]** Neither the United States nor the United Nations reacted to Hussein's crime. On the contrary the US sold Iraq helicopters in exchange for intelligence about Iran.

**ROBIN ANDERSEN:** If we're going to demonize somebody for those kinds of actions the United States would also have to be put within that category as well.

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

**[TV ad]**

The evil is rising...

-- There is no way I'm going down there...

The terror is spreading and now chance for survival is running out.

**NANCY CARLSSON-PAIGE:** It's a dichotomist way of viewing the world that is really a dominant perspective in the US that saturates all of the media for every age group and it gets people to think that there is an evil Other out there that you have to exterminate.

**DIANE LEVIN:** The dichotomy between good and evil is a very popular theme in entertainment media, since good guys are always fighting with evil; it gives filmmakers a great excuse to use violence. There are good guys who are all good, they can do whatever they want because they are all good, including really awful things.

**[Movie: Death Before Dishonor]** Stop it, I don't know where are your people,  
 (shooting) Stop it!  
 -- Where's my men, Ahmed?

**NANCY CARLSSON-PAIGE:** From very early on in children's programming, children are encouraged to separate and be alienated from this Other. And in fact encouraged to hate the Other through a series of messages that polarize the world into good and bad and in order to solve your problems with the enemies you have to fight with them and the enemy is always depicted in some kind of dehumanized way. Often the faces are covered, the voices are distorted or there are accents, foreign accents.

**[Unlabeled movie clip]** How many freedom fighters you grieve now Marine!

**NANCY CARLSSON-PAIGE:** Its very clear that there's an image of the Other that's not the white European and often male image of the good guy that children are socialized into identifying with in the United States. If you analyze Hollywood movies its always the American person who's the central character. The person in being a good guy goes into another country and does something violent, its described in terms of having to do it, or helping the people there are rescuing the people there, so that people can keep on feeling we're a good country and we're good people.

**[Movie: The Transporter]** There are four hundred people dying in a container on a ship. My father, my sisters, the ship arrives today, they will make my father a slave. You were a soldier, your job was to save people.

***WAR MADE EASY***

**PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH:** We cannot wait for the final proof, the smoking gun, that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** As Americans, we like to think that we're not subjected to propaganda from our own government, certainly that we're not subjected to propaganda that's trying to drag the country into war, as in the case of setting the stage for the invasion of Iraq.

**PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH:** Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa.

**VICE PRESIDENT DICK CHENEY:** There is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction.

**DONALD RUMSFELD:** Weapons of mass destruction.

**ARI FLEISCHER:** Botulin, VX, Sarin, nerve agent.

**PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH:** Iraq and al-Qaeda.

**RICHARD ARMITAGE:** Al-Qaeda.

**PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH:** Iraq and al-Qaeda.

**UNIDENTIFIED:** Terrorism.

**DONALD RUMSFELD:** Cyber-attacks.

**ARI FLEISCHER:** Nuclear program.

**COLIN POWELL:** Biological weapons.

**DONALD RUMSFELD:** Cruise missiles, ballistic missiles.

**ARI FLEISCHER:** Chemical and biological weapons.

**DONALD RUMSFELD:** Iraq has weapons of mass destruction.

**ARI FLEISCHER:** President Bush has said Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. Tony Blair has said Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. Donald Rumsfeld has said Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. Richard Butler has said they do. The United Nations has said they do. The experts have said they do. Iraq says they don't. You can choose who you want to believe.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** The war propaganda function in the United States is finely tuned, it's sophisticated, and most of all, it blends into the media terrain.

**SHEPARD SMITH:** The White House says it can prove that Saddam Hussein does have weapons of mass destruction, claiming it has solid evidence.

**DAN RATHER:** The White House insisted again today it does have solid evidence that Saddam Hussein is hiding an arsenal of prohibited weapons.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** It's necessary to provide a drumbeat media echo effect.

**JOHN GIBSON:** They might fight dirty, using weapons of mass destruction -- chemical, biological or radioactive.

**WILLIAM SCHNEIDER:** There are ties between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda --

**BILL O'REILLY:** Anthrax, smallpox.

**TOM BROKAW:** Dirty bomb.

**BRIAN WILLIAMS:** Dirty bomb.

**BRIT HUME:** Iraq-al-Qaeda connection.

**WILLIAM SCHNEIDER:** Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda share the same goal: they want to see -- both of them -- both of them want to see Americans dead.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** And I was very struck by the acceptance, the tone of most of the media coverage, as the sabers was rattled, as the invasion of Iraq gradually went from possible to probable to almost certain.

**DAVID LEE MILLER:** The President essentially giving Saddam forty-eight hours to get out of Dodge. War now seems all but inevitable.

**GREGG JARRETT:** Short of a bullet to the back of his head or he leaves the country, war is inexorable.

**UNIDENTIFIED:** Well, I think that's exactly right. War is inevitable, and it is approaching inexorably.

**WOLF BLITZER:** Is war with Iraq inevitable right now?

**LAWRENCE EAGLEBURGER:** I think it's 95% inevitable.

**CHRIS BURY:** You, at this point, right now tonight, don't see any other option but war.

**RICHARD HOLBROOKE:** Do you?

**CHRIS BURY:** I'm asking you, Ambassador.

**WESLEY CLARK:** I agree. I don't think there's a viable option for the administration at this point. We're way too far out front in this.

**MAJOR BOB BEVELACQUA:** You sent us over there, guys. Let's get on with it. Let's get it over with.

**MSNBC AD:** Showdown Iraq. If America goes to war, turn to MSNBC and "The Experts."

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** And in many ways, the US news media were equal partners with the officials in Washington and on Capitol Hill in setting the agenda for war.

**MSNBC AD:** We'll take you there.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** And although it's called the liberal media, one has a great deal of difficulty finding an example of major media outlets, in their reporting, challenging the way in which the agenda setting for war is well underway. And when that reporting is so much a hostage of official sources, that's when you have a problem.

**CNN:** US officials tell CNN --

**CNN REPORTER:** Bush official says --

**CNN REPORTER:** Analysts say --

**AARON BROWN:** Pentagon officials tell us --

**DAVID MARTIN:** According to US intelligence --

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** Often, we're encouraged to believe that officials are the ones who make news.

**JOHN KING:** US officials say --

US officials say that --

US officials here say --

Officials here at the White House tell us --

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** They are the ones who should be consulted to understand the situation.

**COLIN POWELL:** I just pull these two things out -- I've laundered them, so you can't really tell what I'm talking about, because I don't want the Iraqis to know what I'm talking about, but

trust me. Trust me.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** If history is any guide, the opposite is the case: the officials blow smoke and cloud reality, rather than clarify.

**VICE PRESIDENT DICK CHENEY:** We will, in fact, be greeted as liberators.

**PAUL WOLFOWITZ:** The notion that it will take several hundred thousand US troops to provide stability in post-Saddam Iraq are wildly off the mark.

**DONALD RUMSFELD:** So the money's going to come from Iraqi oil revenue, as everyone has said. They think it's going to be something like \$2 billion this year. They think it might be something like \$15, \$12 [billion] next year.

**PAUL WOLFOWITZ:** A country that can really finance its own reconstruction and relatively soon.

**TOM BROKAW:** National Security Advisors Ken Adelman and Richard Perle, early advocates of the war, said the war would be a cakewalk.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** The sources that have deceived us so constantly don't deserve our trust, and to the extent that we give them our trust, we set ourselves up to be scammed again and again.

**REPORTER:** There are reports that there is no evidence of a direct link between Baghdad and some of these terrorist organizations.

**DONALD RUMSFELD:** There are known knowns. There are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns. That is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns, the ones we don't know we don't know.

**REPORTER:** Excuse me, but is this an "unknown unknown"?

**DONALD RUMSFELD:** I'm not --

**REPORTER:** Just several unknowns, and I'm wondering if this is an unknown unknown.

**DONALD RUMSFELD:** I'm not going to say which it is.

**REPORTER:** But, Mr. Secretary, do you believe --

**DONALD RUMSFELD:** I'm right here. I'm right here.

**REPORTER:** If you believe something --

**SEAN PENN:** In the run-up to the war in Iraq, the failure of mainstream news organizations to

raise legitimate questions about the government's rush to war was compounded by the networks' deliberate decision to stress military perspectives before any fighting had even begun.

**AARON BROWN:** We've got generals and, if you ask them about the prospects for war with Iraq, they think it is almost certain.

**SEAN PENN:** CNN's use of retired generals as supposedly independent experts reinforced a decidedly military mindset, even as serious questions remained about the wisdom and necessity of going to war.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** Often journalists blame the government for the failure of the journalists themselves to do independent reporting. But nobody forced the major networks like CNN to do so much commentary from retired generals and admirals and all the rest of it. You had a top CNN official named Eason Jordan going on the air of his network and boasting that he had visited the Pentagon with a list of possible military commentators, and he asked officials at the Defense Department whether that was a good list of people to hire.

**EASON JORDAN:** Oh, I think it's important to have experts explain the war and to describe the military hardware, describe the tactics, talk about the strategy behind the conflict. I went to the Pentagon myself several times before the war started and met with important people there and said, for instance, at CNN, here are the generals we're thinking of retaining to advise us on the air and off about the war, and we got a big thumbs up on all of them. That was important.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** It wasn't even something to hide, ultimately. It was something to say to the American people on its own network, "See, we're team players. We may be the news media, but we're on the same side and the same page as the Pentagon." And that really runs directly counter to the idea of an independent press, and that suggests that we have some deep patterns of media avoidance when the US is involved in a war based on lies.

**PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON:** My fellow Americans --

**SEAN PENN:** In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson falsely claimed that an attack on US gun ships by North Vietnamese forces in the Gulf of Tonkin gave him no choice but to escalate the war in Vietnam.

**PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON:** ...that renewed hostile actions against United States ships on the high seas in the Gulf of Tonkin have today required me to order the military forces of the United States to take action and reply.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** Routinely, the official story is a lie or a deception or a partial bit of information that leaves out key facts.

**US NAVY FILM, 1964:** In international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin, destroyers of the United States Navy are assigned routine patrols from time to time. Sunday, August the 2nd, 1964, the destroyer Maddox was on such a patrol. Shortly after noon, the calm of the day is broken as general quarters sound. In a deliberate and unprovoked action, three North Vietnam PT boats

unleash a torpedo attack against the Maddox.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** The official story about the Gulf of Tonkin was a lie.

**DEFENSE SECRETARY ROBERT MCNAMARA:** The destroyer was carrying out a mission of patrol in those waters, in international waters, when it was attacked.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** But it quickly became accepted as the absolute truth by the news media, and because of the press's refusal to challenge that story, it was much easier for Congress to quickly pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which was pivotal, because it opened the floodgates to the Vietnam War.

**SEN. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT:** I think it's a very clear demonstration of the unity of the country behind the policies that are being followed by the President in South Vietnam and, more specifically, of the action that was taken in response to the attack upon our destroyers.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** At that point, the facts were secondary. In the case of the Washington Post reporting, I asked more than three decades later whether there had ever been a Post retraction of its reporting on the Gulf of Tonkin events, and I called the newspaper and eventually reached the man who had been the chief diplomatic correspondent for the paper at the time, Murrey Marder, and I said, "Mr. Marder, has there ever been a retraction by the Washington Post of its fallacious reporting on the Gulf of Tonkin?" And he said, "I can assure you it never happened. There was never any retraction." And I asked why. And he said, "Well, if the news media were going to retract its reporting on the Gulf of Tonkin, it would have to retract its reporting on virtually the entire Vietnam War."

Fast forward a few decades, you have President George W. Bush saying that to an absolute certainty there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and that intelligence sources told him that clearly, which was not at all the case.

**PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH:** Secretary of State Powell will present information and intelligence about Iraq's illegal weapons programs, its attempts to hide those weapons from inspectors and its links to terrorist groups.

**SEAN PENN:** The failure of American news media to check government distortion reached new heights when, on the eve of war, the highly respected Secretary of State Colin Powell appeared before the United Nations to make the case that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

**COLIN POWELL:** Saddam Hussein's intentions have never changed. He is not developing the missiles for self-defense. These are missiles that Iraq wants in order to project power, to threaten and to deliver chemical, biological and, if we let him, nuclear warheads.

**AARON BROWN:** Today, Secretary of State Powell brought the United Nations Security Council, the administration's best evidence so far.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** After Colin Powell's speech to the UN, immediately the US press

applauded with great enthusiasm.

**AARON BROWN:** Did Colin Powell close the deal today, in your mind, for anyone who has yet objectively to make up their mind?

**HENRY KISSINGER:** I think for anybody who analyzes the situation, he has closed the deal.

**SEAN HANNITY (MONTAGE):** This irrefutable, undeniable, incontrovertible evidence today ...

Colin Powell brilliantly delivered that smoking gun today ...

Colin Powell was outstanding today ...

I mean, it was lockstep -- it was so compelling, I don't see how anybody, at this point, cannot support this effort.

**ALAN COLMES:** He made a wonderful presentation. I thought he made a great case for the purpose of disarmament.

**MORT KONDRACKE (MONTAGE):** It was devastating, I mean, and overwhelming ...

Overwhelming abundance of the evidence. Point after point after point with -- he just flooded the terrain with data.

**CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER:** It's the end of the argument phase. America has made its case.

**BRIT HUME:** The Powell speech has moved the ball.

**CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER:** I think the case is closed.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** But at the time, it was quite possible to analyze and debunk what he was saying.

**SEAN PENN:** Whereas the British press and other international news sources immediately raised legitimate questions about the accuracy of Powell's presentation, the major US news media were virtually silent about the factual basis of his claims and near unanimous in their praise.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** Even the purportedly antiwar New York Times editorialized the next day that Colin Powell had made a sober case, a factual case. One of the great myths and part of the war propaganda cycle is, way after the fact, to claim that it couldn't have been known at the time that US officials were lying us into war. And in point of fact, it was known at the time and said by many people who were not allowed on the networks, by and large.

**SEAN PENN:** One such critical voice belonged to MSNBC's Phil Donahue, one of the few

mainstream media commentators who consistently challenged the official storyline coming out of Washington.

**PHIL DONAHUE:** And, you know, we're all now -- everybody's righteous, what a terrible Hitler this is. We were mute when he was doing that. He was our SOB, and now we're sending our sons and daughters to war to fix that mistake. It doesn't seem fair to me.

**SEAN PENN:** Despite being the highest-rated program on MSNBC, Donahue's show was abruptly cancelled by the network just three weeks before the start of the war.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** Phil Donahue was an antiwar voice on MSNBC, one of the cable news channels, and a memo that was leaked as the Donahue show was cancelled is very explicit. It said, we don't want this to be a face of NBC as the United States goes into war. This guy puts antiwar voices on our network.

**JIM JENNINGS:** The American people need to know there is no just cause for this war.

**PHYLLIS BENNIS:** But there's no evidence that there is even a weapon that exists in that country yet.

**JEFF COHEN:** Journalists, too many of them -- some quite explicitly -- have said that they see their mission as helping the war effort. And if you define your mission that way, you'll end up suppressing news that might be important, accurate, but maybe isn't helpful to the war effort.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** We don't want to have that kind of public persona, when then we'd be vulnerable to charges that we're unpatriotic. It will make it more difficult to keep pace with the flag wavers at FOX or CNN, or whatever. And more broadly, news media are very worried, not only government pressure, but advertiser pressure, criticism from readers, listeners and viewers. "Gee, our soldiers are in the field. You got to support them. Don't raise these tough questions."

**PAT BUCHANAN:** It seems to me that the right thing to do for patriots when American lives are at risk and Americans are dying is to unite behind the troops until victory is won. Now, on this show, Buchanan and Press, we've had a good debate for eight months on this conflict, but now it seems when the war comes, the debate ends. I think unity, Bill, is essential at this time, or at least when the guns begin to fire.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** It's a very effective tactic, at least in the short run, to a large extent, to say, look, you've got to support the troops.

**PRO-WAR COUNTER-PROTESTER:** You're killing the troops! You're killing the troops!

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** And that's an effort to conflate supporting the troops with supporting the President's policies.

**BILL O'REILLY:** Once the war against Saddam begins, we expect every American to support our military, and if they can't do that, to shut up.

**SEAN PENN:** In addition to Phil Donahue, many other journalists have been silenced for crossing the mythical line known as objectivity.

**BRIT HUME:** Today, NBC fired journalist Peter Arnett this morning for participating in an interview on Iraqi state-controlled television.

**PETER JENNINGS:** Arnett criticized American war planning and said his reports about civilian casualties in the Iraqi resistance were encouraging to antiwar protesters in America.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** If you're pro-war, you're objective. But if you're antiwar, you're biased. And often, a news anchor will get no flak at all for making statements that are supportive of a war and wouldn't dream of making a statement that's against a war.

**TED KOPPEL:** I must say, I was trying to think of -- I was trying to think of something that would be appropriate to say on an occasion like this, and as is often the case, the best you can come up with is something that Shakespeare wrote for Henry V, "Wreak havoc and unleash the dogs of war."

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** And that is a tip-off to just how skewed the media terrain is. We should keep in mind that CNN, which many believe to be a liberal network, had a memo from their top news executive, Walter Isaacson, in the fall of 2001, as the missiles were falling in Afghanistan, telling the anchors and the reporters, "You need to remind people, any time you show images on the screen of the people who are dying in Afghanistan, you've got to remind the American viewers that it's in the context of what happened on 9/11," as though people could forget 9/11.

**NIC ROBERTSON:** We talked to several people who told us that various friends and relatives had died in the bombing there in that collateral damage. Nic Robertson, CNN, Kandahar, Afghanistan.

**JUDY WOODRUFF, CNN:** And we would just remind you, as we always do now with these reports from inside the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, that you're seeing only one side of the story, that these US military actions that Nic Robertson was talking about are in response to a terrorist attack that killed 5,000 and more innocent people inside the United States.

**BILL HEMMER, CNN:** And we juxtapose what we're hearing from the Taliban with a live picture of the clean-up that continues in Lower Manhattan, Ground Zero, again, a twenty-four-hour operation that has not ebbed. 5,000 killed that day back on Tuesday, September 11, their biggest crime, as civilians, going to work that day.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** And yet, we know statistically -- the best estimates tell us -- that more civilians were killed by that bombing in Afghanistan than those who died in the Twin Towers in New York. And the moral objections that could be raised to slaughtering civilians in the name of retaliation against 9/11, those objections were muted by the phrase "war on terror," by the way in which it was used by the White House and Congress and also by the news media.

**SEAN PENN:** Free flows of information have been further blocked by a more general atmosphere of contempt for antiwar voices.

**MICHELLE MALKIN:** Among them are a group called CODEPINK, which is headed by Medea Benjamin, who's a terrorist sympathizer, dictator-worshiping propagandist.

**BILL O'REILLY:** The far-left element in America is a destructive force that must be confronted.

**RUSH LIMBAUGH:** Some Americans, sadly, not interested in victory, and yet they want us to believe that their behavior is patriotic. Well, it's not.

**STEVE MALZBERG:** To call the president stupid, he doesn't know much about anything, that's just great. Go with Danny Glover and Susan Sarandon. You fit in perfect.

**NEWT GINGRICH:** To in any way be defending a torturer, a killer, a dictator -- he used chemical weapons against his own people -- is pretty remarkable, but it's a very long tradition in the Democratic Party.

**JOE SCARBOROUGH:** Pay no heed to the peaceniks and the left-wing rock stars. They've had their fifteen minutes of fame.

**JONAH GOLDBERG:** These people are essentially useless. They are reflexively opposed to war. It's a principled position, but it's the wrong position, and you can't take them seriously as a strategic voice.

**WOLF BLITZER:** Millions and millions of useful people out there?

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** If you want to have democracy, you've got to have the free flow of information through the body politic. You can't have these blockages. You can't have the manipulation.

**SEAN PENN:** While mainstream journalists have rarely called attention in real time to failure of news media to provide necessary information and real debate, they have repeatedly pointed to their own failures well after wars have been launched.

**CHRIS MATTHEWS:** During the course of this war, there was a lot of snap-to in press coverage: we're at war, the world's changed, we have to root for the country to some extent. And yet, it seems something missing from this debate was a critical analysis of where it was taking us.

**JIM LEHRER:** Those of us in journalism never even looked at the issue of occupation.

**CHRIS MATTHEWS:** Because?

**JIM LEHRER:** Because it just didn't occur to us. We weren't smart enough. You'd have had to gone against the grain.

**CHRIS MATTHEWS:** Right. You'd also come off as kind of a pointy head trying to figure out some obscure issue here --

**JIM LEHRER:** Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

**CHRIS MATTHEWS:** -- when it's good guys and bad guys.

**JIM LEHRER:** Yeah, negative. Negativism.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** News media, down the road, will point out that there were lies about the Gulf of Tonkin or about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

**CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:** I'm sorry to say, but certainly television, and perhaps to an extent my station, was intimidated by the administration and its foot soldiers at FOX News.

**WOLF BLITZER:** We should have been more skeptical.

**NORMAN SOLOMON:** But that doesn't bring back any of the people who have died, who were killed in their own country or sent over by the President of the United States to kill in that country. So, after the fact, it's all well and good to say, "Well, the system worked" or "The truth comes out." But when it comes to life and death, the truth comes out too late.

**EMPIRE**

**DICK CHENEY** [Fox News Report]: America and the coalition took down the regime in a matter of weeks because of our superior technology, the unmatched skill of our armed forces. Above all, because we came as conquerors not as—because we came not as conquerors but as liberators.

**NORMON MAILER**: And I think the whole business with Iraq is a terribly sour comedy, abstracted down to its smallest motives. But what was there was the sense that Iraq had to be invaded because it was the first step in going toward American empire.

**ROBERT JENSEN**: There's no doubt that Saddam Hussein was a tyrant, a thug, a butcher. It's true. It was as true in 2003 as it was in 1983-84 when Donald Rumsfeld visited Iraq and met with Saddam Hussein and other top officials as an emissary of the Reagan administration to improve ties to Iraq. It was true in 1988 when Saddam gassed the Kurdish people in the north of Iraq with the implicit support of the United States. The United States was unconcerned with the fate of the Shiite in the South of Iraq in 1991 when after the Gulf War ended the U.S. allowed Saddam Hussein to very brutally put down the uprising that the United States had encouraged. In other words, the United States has consistently supported Saddam Hussein throughout the worst of his crimes when his policy was consistent with U.S. interests in the area. The moment that those interests changed, then Saddam Hussein became the center of evil in the world.

**GEORGE W. BUSH**: Saddam Hussein's regime is a grave, and gathering danger.

**ROBERT JENSEN**: This is the way propaganda is used. To motivate a public to support a war that is really not about liberating anyone, but about extending and deepening American control.

**JODY WILLIAMS**: We support democracy when it's convenient to the interests of the United States of America. And maybe I am an idealist when I believe that there should be some sort of standard for determining how we conduct our foreign policy, but I believe there should be a standard. We are seen in the world as hypocrites, we're seen as liars, we're seen as an imperialist power.

**LT. COL. KAREN KWIATKOWSKI**: What they're trying to do is, have an Iraq that is a friend to us, not an Iraq that is liberated. That is totally bogus. We never intended to liberate Iraqi people, we intended to liberate Iraq from Saddam, and have a footprint, a military footprint there. We'd have done that now. We have Kuwait, we have fifth fleet in Bahrain, we have a nice base in Qatar, but it's a little too far south. And what do we have, we have four bases in Iraq, beautiful bases. We can hit Syria, we can hit Iran, we can keep tabs on Afghanistan. There's all kinds of things we can do from those bases.

**STAN GOFF**: The larger picture is being driven by the fact that we are about to hit peak oil worldwide. That there is this sort of emerging global competition between us and China. There's the ongoing economic rivalries between us and Europe, so southwest Asia becomes geopolitically a linchpin.

**MICHAEL KLARE:** I think they're much more interested in overall domination, in playing the world policeman, of using force when they see it necessary, and behind that I think there is a strategy of predation, that the world has to be made safe for the procurement of resources that are needed by the United States, especially oil, wherever they are.

**MAX WOLFF:** I mean, the idea is, if you want to have real leverage, or control in the future of global economy; if you can sit back and control the tap for natural gas mostly, and oil secondly, but very importantly, that will give you enormous strategic power in the world.

**MICHAEL KLARE:** One way you see this interconnection between anti-terrorism and oil is the increasing focus on the protection of pipeline. It's maybe not something that Americans think about so much, but more and more oil is coming from inaccessible places and they have to flow from pipelines. Pipelines are a natural target for saboteurs and terrorists, and so more and more American Military policy is going to be focused on the protection of these very vulnerable facilities.

**VANDANA SHIVA:** The war in Iraq was very, very clearly about oil as well as the invasion in Afghanistan also. The oil pipeline that was planned, the best security for that was an occupation of Afghanistan.

**LT. COL. KAREN KWIATKOWSKI:** If you map the pipeline, the proposed pipeline route across Afghanistan, and you look at our bases, it matches perfectly. Our bases are there to solve a problem that Taliban could not solve. Taliban couldn't provide security in that part of Afghanistan, well now that's where our bases are. So does that have anything to do with Osama Bin Laden? It has nothing to do with Osama Bin Laden. It has everything to do with a longer plan and in this case, a strategy, which I wouldn't necessarily call "neo-conservative", however it fits perfectly in with the neo-conservative ideology, which says, if you have military force, and you need something from a weaker country, then you need to deploy that force and take what you need, because you country's needs are paramount. It's the whole idea of unilateralism, of about using force to achieve your aims.

**MICHAEL KLARE:** All of this on one hand describes as part of an anti-terrorist strategy, but underlying it is this blueprint, this Cheney blueprint for increasing the American's access to and control over the rest of the world's oil.

**ROBERT JENSEN:** The context is the desire of the United States to control these strategically crucial regions. The pre-text, that is the excuse for going in, in Afghanistan, was about terrorism and Osama Bin Laden. In Iraq, it's about weapons of mass destruction and Saddam Hussein. But in the end, neither one of those wars was really about those people or those regimes. It was about securing and solidifying American control over these incredibly important regions of the world.

**SOLDIER [to a reporter]:** We just pulled out here yesterday, just to come out and help protect the oil line. In a tank? In a tank.

**IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN:** So yeah, they're interested in oil, but that's a middle-run interest. Their immediate goal is intimidation. So when people say, for example, which is very frequent, it's all about oil. Of course oil is important, and of course we want control of oil, but oil isn't enough to explain a war on Iraq.

**TARIQ ALI:** The major reason to take Iraq was a display of imperial power. It was to show both the Arab world, but not just them, but to show Europe and the far eastern block, China and the Koreans, who was master.

**COL. GERRY CROWDER** [news clip]: To make it so apparent, and so overwhelming at the very outset of potential military operations, that the adversary quickly realizes that there is no real alternative here other than to fight and die, or to give up.

**DONALD RUMSFELD** [news clip]: What will follow will not be a repeat of any other conflict, it will be of a force, and scope and scale that has been beyond what has been seen before.

Shock & Awe montage over news commentary:

**REPORTER:** It had been planned for months. And now, one day after that first air strike, the Pentagon's "Shock and Awe" campaign is under way. The idea, to blitz the capital with bombs, to stun the Iraqis into a quick surrender.

This is the beginning of the "Shock and Awe" campaign according to one official. This is going to be the entire nine yards.

It was a breathtaking display of firepower.

And the Pentagon says, "We 'ain't seen nothing yet."

**REPORTER:** What we keep talking about this overwhelming force that we are prepared to use, I'm wondering are you concerned at all that we will be seen as a bully?

**JULIAN BOND:** While it may have appeared to American TV viewers that "Shock and Awe" was merely a catchy media label for the U.S. bombing campaign in Iraq, its actual origins, and a whole theory of warfare, are found in a 1996 advisory report published by the National Defense University. Authored by Harlan Ullman of the National War College, it argues that the aim of modern warfare is not merely to achieve military victory, but also, by means of sheer intimidation to inflict a deep psychological injury, to scare and terrorize potential rivals into submission. It is, in effect, the practical application of the Wolfowitz Doctrine of global domination through force. Describing shock and awe as "massively destructive strikes directly at the public will", Ullman writes, "intimidation and compliance are the outputs we seek to obtain. The intent here is to impose a regime of shock and awe through delivery of instant, nearly incomprehensible, levels of massive destruction directed at influencing society writ large." "Through very selective, utterly brutal and ruthless and rapid application of force to intimidate," Ullman continues, "The aim is to affect the will, perception, and understanding of the adversary. Without senses, the adversary becomes impotent and entirely vulnerable."

**NOAM CHOMSKY:** The reasons for the extreme hostility and fear that quickly rose all over the world were not just the invasion of Iraq, but the fact that the invasion was understood to be an action taken to demonstrate that this program of global domination by force, and crushing of any potential challenge, was meant extremely seriously.

[END]