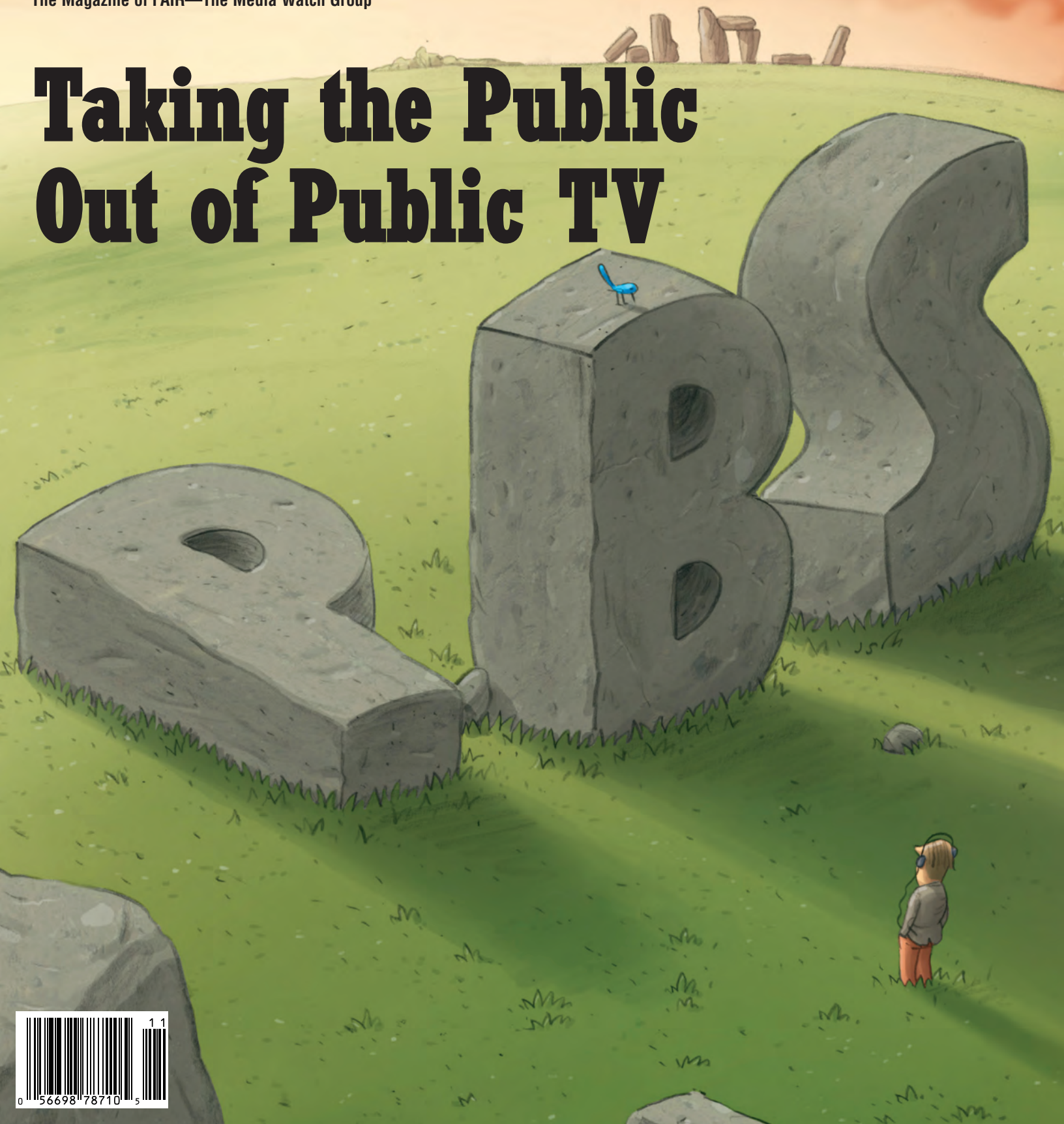


Extra!

The Magazine of FAIR—The Media Watch Group

***Can Need to Know Replace Now?
Who Owns NewsHour?
Charlie Rose's Insiders
Inside-the-Beltway Week***

Taking the Public Out of Public TV



Extra!

The Magazine of FAIR—The Media Watch Group

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FAIR, the national media watch group, has been offering well-documented criticism of media bias and censorship since 1986. We work to invigorate the First Amendment by advocating for greater diversity in the press and by scrutinizing media practices that marginalize public interest, minority and dissenting viewpoints. As an anti-censorship organization, we expose neglected news stories and defend working journalists when they are muzzled. As a progressive group, FAIR believes that structural reform is ultimately needed to break up the dominant media conglomerates, establish independent public broadcasting and promote strong non-profit sources of information.

Public's Longstanding Opposition to Roads and Bridges

Matt Bai wrote of the Obama administration in the **New York Times** (9/9/10), "Little was achieved by way of investing in 21st-century infrastructure, largely because the public never seemed open to the idea of huge new spending." Really? When **Bloomberg** (12/10/09) polled on this last year, its write-up began: "Americans want their government to create jobs through spending on public works, investments in alternative energy or skills training for the jobless.... Two-thirds of Americans back boosting spending on infrastructure. Six of 10 also support more spending on alternative energy to stimulate job growth." But maybe Bai knows about a national referendum that was conducted that we somehow didn't hear about.

Pundits Were Depressing Then, Too

To read the newspapers just now is to see Bedlam let loose. Every person in the country of super asinine propensities, everyone who hates social progress and loves deflation, feels that his hour has come, and triumphantly announces how, by refraining from every form of economic activity, we can become prosperous again. —John Maynard Keynes (9/14/31; quoted in **Fabius Maximus**, 6/21/10)

Depends What You Mean by 'Small'

To illustrate Republican claims that allowing the Bush tax cuts to expire for the wealthiest taxpayers would hurt small businesses, **ABC World News** reporter Jonathan Karl (9/8/10) introduced two small business owners: One said he'd lose \$20,000 to \$40,000 if his taxes went up, the other said he'd be out \$120,000. Karl didn't point out that if this was true, his guests had astronomical take-

home salaries: somewhere between \$700,000 and \$1.1 million dollars for the first one, and almost \$3 million for the second.

'Divisive' Is Mediaspeak for 'Overwhelmingly Popular'

"As the first full week of the 2010 general election season opens across the country on Monday, Washington is scheduled once again to debate immigration and gay men, lesbians and bisexuals in the military, two deeply divisive social issues that threaten to polarize the conversation on the campaign trail," the **New York Times'** Michael Shear reported (9/20/10). The most recent national poll (**CBS**, 8/20–24/10) found 75 percent support for repealing Don't Ask Don't Tell—deeply dividing the vast majority from the 19 percent who oppose it. Immigration is a more actually polarizing issue, but when people are polled on the currently pending legislative proposal for immigration reform, 70 percent support it (**Texas Tribune**, 6/30/10).

Violence 'Spills Over'—From North to South

U.S. corporate media often treat Mexican drug violence as a phenomenon that threatens to "spill over" into the U.S. (**Extra!**, 6/09)—as in **New York Times** headlines like "Drug

Cartel Violence Spills Over From Mexico, Alarming U.S." (3/23/09) and "Wave of Drug Violence Is Creeping Into Arizona From Mexico, Officials Say" (2/24/09). A report from Mayors Against Illegal Guns (9/10) underscores how this "spill over" metaphor distorts reality, noting that

"90 percent of guns recovered and traced from Mexican crime scenes originated from gun dealers in the United States." An imaginary crime wave supposedly caused by unauthorized immigration from Mexico has been frequently offered by pundits as a rationalization for Arizona's dracon-



When Haters Are Best Ignored

Back in the 1980s, I went down to the state capitol steps in Montgomery, Alabama, to cover for my newspaper an event that was billed by the press release as a "rally and press conference." It turned out to be a one-man show by an out-of-town Ku Kluxer who was trying to get publicity for his newly published racist hate screed. No one showed up except me, two radio reporters and one local TV news crew. When it became clear how we were being played, I caucused with my colleagues and asked them if any of them thought this was a news event worth covering. Nope. Then why would we cover this non-event, letting this racist jerk hurt the feelings of many of our good local folk and offending everyone except like-minded racists? No reason, we all agreed. As the s.o.b. began to spout, the TV guys folded up their gear, the radio folks hit the off button and I pocketed my notebook. We all turned on our heels and walked away, hearing the desperate pleas of the ignored racist, first pleading for us to come back and then calling us the usual names. We laughed and returned empty-handed to our news outlets. Not one of our editors disagreed with our call.

—reporter Tom Gardner (**FAIR Blog** comment, 9/12/10)

ian anti-immigrant law (**Extra!**, 7/10), yet the actual assistance U.S. gun dealers are providing to violent criminals on the other side of the border is seldom noted in media accounts.

Vanishing Palestinians

The Brookings Institution's Martin Indyk wrote a **New York Times** op-ed (8/27/10) suggesting reasons to be hopeful about peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority—starting with, "First, violence is down considerably in the region." He pointed out that while 452 Israelis were killed in the violence during the Intifada back in 2002, only eight Israelis have been killed since 2009, and just two so far this year.

Completely unmentioned were the roughly 1,500 Palestinians that have been killed since the Israeli assault on Gaza in December 2008—the vast majority of whom were minors or noncombatant adults, according to the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem.

A similar disappearing trick was performed by the **Washington Post** editorial page (9/8/10), which described shooting attacks that killed four Israelis on the West Bank as "interrupting what had been nearly three years of peace in the territory."

Over the past three years, that peace has killed 92 West Bank Palestinians, according to B'Tselem figures.

Publishers, Not E-Books, Are Pinching Authors

"The digital revolution that is disrupting the economic model of the book industry is having an outsize impact on the careers of literary writers," the **Wall Street Journal's** Jeffrey Trachtenberg (9/28/10) reported in "Authors Feel Pinch in Age of E-Books." "Priced much lower than hardcovers, many e-books generate less income for publishers.... As a result, the publishers who nurtured generations of America's top literary-fiction writers are approving fewer book deals and signing fewer new writers. Most of those getting published are receiving smaller advances." Trachtenberg is engaging in sleight-of-hand here: While e-books generate less income for publishers, they produce more profits, since their per-copy costs are dramatically lower (**Extra!**, 8/10). If publishers lowered their e-book profits to what they make on a hardcover, there'd be enough money left over to ensure that authors went unpinched. ■

Letters to the Editor



September 2010

Education Needs Structural Change

The reforms I hear bandied about today are reheated versions of those I observed during my 50-year teaching career. For all their good intentions, reformers do not have a clue on how to bring about substantive fundamental change. This includes Randi Weingarten and Arne Duncan—two sincere individuals. Jonathan Kozol [“A Deeper Truth Than Newspapers and Networks Are Likely to Provide,” 9/10] graphically reveals the flaws in education, but he has not laid out a road map for changing education at its core.

No reform has fundamentally changed education for the better because all reforms have focused on the actors: teachers, students, parents, unions. The problems of education lie in its structure. Structure is in the realm of sociology. It lies outside the understanding of most reformers and it lies outside the purview of educational psychology, much of which is pseudo-educational psychology. Unless reformers grasp the meaning and implications of changing the structure of education, we will waste billions of dollars in the next decade just to come to the realization that charter schools and blaming the actors were all for naught.

To grasp structural change is

to learn a new way of thinking. No, I can’t explain structure within the confines of a paragraph. I hope my comment opens the door on new debate by simply saying, “We have been looking all these years over here (at actors and pseudo-psych) when we should have looking over there (structural change).”

Robert Leski
Former President, Wyandotte
Federation of Teachers
Monroe, Mich.

Thanks for the article about teacher-bashing [“First, Bash the Teachers,” 9/10]. It is a really scary time to be a teacher. The masses are getting stirred up by Duncan and the media. The truth is rarely seen, so thanks a million. I doubt any teacher will vote for Obama again.

Terrified in California,
Melody Priceman
Novato, Calif.

Why Only Negative Quotes on Social Forum?

I am such a great fan of the work that you do at FAIR that I was stunned that, particularly considering the thrust of the article [“Tea Party vs. U.S. Social Forum,” 9/10], the following could slip through unnoticed or uncorrected by the author or editors!

Your article is dead on regarding the outrageous lack of coverage for the USSF, particularly proportional to the Tea Party coverage. There was also no coverage of the people who *walked* to the USSF over three weeks from New Orleans, stopping along the way at locations of historical importance to the Civil Rights Movement. But that is not my complaint with the article.

In mentioning the news sources that *did* give coverage to the USSF, you provided three

quotations. *The only quotations you listed were ones derogatory of the USSF! How could that go unnoticed?* Considering the nature of your work, I find this totally unacceptable. For people who log onto this article (who may very well have not heard of the Social Forum because of lack of coverage), these quotes are the ones they are going to carry away from that? And I wouldn’t be surprised if Glenn Beck picks up on that and makes note of what FAIR considered comments worth including. Shame.

A correction (and, I think, apology) need to be made for this failure to follow your own standards. As I said, I’m such a big fan of your site on most occasions that this was a real disappointment. At very least you can provide some links to additional sources of coverage and history of the Social Forum. A few balancing quotations wouldn’t hurt, either.

Thanks for your attention to this.

Carolyn Caffrey
via Internet

The editors reply:

As you note, the report was on the lack of coverage of the U.S. Social Forum; it was not intended to serve as alternative coverage of the gathering. The disparaging quotes were chosen to illustrate the dismissive tone of what little coverage there was.

Media Ignore Urgent Issues

Why aren’t these urgent issues being addressed in political debates or the media?

1) Why do we have more than 700 military bases in 38 nations? What percentage of our budget is dedicated to the military-industrial complex?

2) Some 46,000 of our citizens die annually, because they don’t have access to healthcare.

Hundreds of thousands go bankrupt because of excessive costs. For starters, how about repealing “Newt’s Law,” which forbids Medicare from negotiating volume discounts with pharmaceutical companies?

3) A radical branch of the Islamic religion in Mecca inspired the 9/11 attack. Bin Laden’s followers were funded by the Saudi royal family under the guise of charity. Why did we let them off the hook after the 9/11 attack?

4) Bush and his cronies lied about Iraq having weapons of mass destruction. Why aren’t they being held accountable for the murders of 100,000-plus innocent civilians and millions of refugees who have been driven from their homes?

5) Mussolini defined fascism as an agreement between corporations and government for their mutual benefit. Some 36,000 corporate lobbyists in our nation’s capitol spent more than \$3.6 billion to influence politicians and elections in 2009. They have upped the ante this year.

Bob Fisher
Encinitas, Calif.

CounterSpin

The News Behind the Headlines

Recently on
FAIR’s
weekly radio show:

- Jodi Jacobson on Tea Party & social issues, T. Christian Miller on military contractor deaths
- Rick Ayers on Waiting for Superman, Vivian Stockman on Appalachia Rising

To visit our archives,
to find a station near you,
or to listen online,
please go to fair.org

But the system is stacked against fulfilling PBS's mandate

Public TV? It Would Be a Good Idea

by Jim Naureckas

When asked by a reporter what he thought of Western civilization, Gandhi is said to have replied, "I think it would be a good idea." The same could be said about U.S. public television.

Public TV was born 40 years ago of an understanding of the limitations that advertiser funding and the profit motive put on commercial broadcasting. Only a system freed from these strictures, the pioneers of public broadcasting understood, would be able to air corporate-unfriendly viewpoints and include the full spectrum of society, not just advertisers' preferred targets, in its audience—and in so doing, radically transform the entire structure of U.S. media.

Unfortunately, the transformative potential of an independent public broadcasting system was neutralized early on. The funding structure was arranged so that most shows needed to rely on corporate underwriting, allowing big business to play much the same gatekeeping role that they do in for-profit media (*Extra!*, 9–10/93). Rules against funders having a direct interest in the shows they bankrolled have not been enforced when the donors are powerful members of the establishment (FAIR Press Release, 4/3/02; Activism Update, 7/20/10). Conservative threats to choke off public funding left PBS management leery of any sign of progressive content (*Extra!*, 3–4/95). The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which was supposed to be a "heat shield" protecting public broadcasting from political influence, instead became a tool to police programming for signs of ideological unorthodoxy (*Extra!*, 9–10/05).

These sorts of pressures have been effective in leaving little to distinguish most PBS public affairs programming from for-profit offerings, as FAIR has documented for years. As an early indication of how far short the network fell from providing a forum for the voiceless, a 1993 FAIR study

of PBS public affairs shows found that three times as many corporate spokespeople appeared as guests as citizen activists (*Extra!*, 9–10/93).

Despite the stacking of the deck, there have always been people at PBS producing work that genuinely strives to fulfill public television's mandate. In recent years, two of PBS's most reliable outlets for hard-hitting journalism and underrepresented perspectives ended their runs, with the host of *Bill Moyers Journal* retiring and *Now* being cancelled. To help fill the public affairs gap, PBS announced the launch of *Need to Know*—with co-host Jon Meacham, a for-profit media fixture whose selection raised serious doubts about how much the program intended to continue in its predecessors' footsteps (FAIR Action Alert, 3/10/10).

FAIR decided that the Friday night change offered a good opportunity to take a look at how public affairs were faring on

PBS—examining not just *Need to Know*, but also the system's flagship news program, the *NewsHour*, as well as public TV warhorses *Washington Week* and *Charlie Rose*. Taken together, do these shows provide viewers with the alternative to commercial programming that public TV was born to broadcast? Or do they merely duplicate the same establishment guestlists that can be found on the commercial end of the dial?

The findings from four new source studies of public TV programming are laid out in the pages that follow. They reveal a system that is named "public" and gets funding from the public—but where the same elite voices dominate the conversation, and the same white male biases squeeze out diversity, as on corporate TV. No doubt there are still people working at PBS who want it to carry out its original mission, but at this point the dream of a network that truly serves the public seems further away than ever. ■

'A Bleak Future for Truly Public Television'?

A leaked resignation letter (5/21/10) from longtime WLIW/WNET writer/producer Sam Toperoff included this observation:

The most galling offense and the saddest part of the story is how bleak the future looks for truly "public" television in this city. On my commutes to work on the E and F lines and occasionally on the Number 7 train, I'd ask people if they watched PBS. Almost no one does. They said there was very little on the air that spoke to their lives. The New York public is not merely the "Upper" East and West sides. It is these "others" too, millions of them. And during those rare times we do program for this other New York, we do it embarrassingly, in stilted, patronizing "other" fashion.

In spite of my left-wing *bona fides* and my high falutin' doctoral degree, I see our general programming for the wider public as elitist and offensive in the extreme. (Not many of us, you realize, can afford those good seats at "The Home of Champions.") But of course, when stations run on very rich people's and corporate money, how could it be otherwise? And when the Corporation [for Public Broadcasting] is directed by those very clever and very ambitious fellows whose careers will float them to good places no matter what, what else could we reasonably expect?

What PBS Thinks You Need to Know

by Julie Hollar

When Bill Moyers announced last November that he would be stepping down from **Bill Moyers Journal**, and PBS decided to cancel its other Friday night news show, **Now**, the network lost two hard-hitting independent programs from its lineup. To fill the hole, New York PBS station WNET—which had produced the two Friday shows—announced the launch of a new one-hour program, **Need to Know**, hosted by **Newsweek** editor Jon Meacham (who has since left the magazine) and former NPR, MSNBC and MTV host Alison Stewart. The show rolled out on more than 90 percent of PBS stations in May (**Broadcasting & Cable**, 3/22/10).

FAIR (3/9/10) issued a statement expressing concern that Meacham's hire "sends a clear and troubling message about PBS's priorities," given that the then-editor of **Newsweek** was a fixture on commercial TV pundit shows and a consummate purveyor of middle-of-the-road conventional wisdom with a conservative slant—not exactly a face or a perspective that needed yet another media platform, particularly not on public television.

Meacham's approach to journalism seemed to be antithetical to the hard-hitting approach of Moyers and **Now**; he had called on journalists to "cover other institutions as you would want to be covered," with "charity and dignity and respect" (**Meet the Press**, 1/1/06). This Golden Rule approach to news was illustrated when he intervened in a **Newsweek** online story about Joe Scarborough, a personal friend who often invites Meacham onto his cable show, to remove from the lead the fact that Scarborough had served as the defense attorney for the murderer of an abortion provider (**FAIR Blog**, 6/11/09).

WNET president and chief executive Neil Shapiro defended the choice of Meacham and Stewart. "They are both incredibly smart," he told **Broadcasting & Cable** (3/17/10). "And I think, given their

intellect, neither are people you can pigeon-hole left or right." By Shapiro's logic, of course, anyone who is actually on the left or right can't be very bright, an insult to PBS's progressive and conservative viewers.

Shapiro later told the **New York Times** (5/2/10) that while "there's no replacing Bill Moyers...the issues that Bill raises" would be among the show's topics. Stewart similarly told the **L.A. Times** blog **Show Tracker** (8/5/10): "Obviously, you can't replace Bill Moyers. That's just a ridiculous notion.... We're just doing what he set out to do: seek out the truth."

Of course, Moyers leaves big shoes to fill, but he actually *was* replaced once—by David Brancaccio and Maria Hinojosa, who took over **Now** when Moyers left to relaunch **Bill Moyers Journal**. Both shows featured subjects and voices often missing from corporate media. In recent years, for example, Moyers interviewed Jim Hightower and Howard Zinn on people's movements and struggles against powerful interests; single-payer advocates Dr. Marcia Angell and Wendell Potter; and Cornel West, Serene Jones and Gary Dorrien on faith and social justice.

Such subjects and sources admirably fulfilled PBS's purpose as set forth by the Carnegie Commission of 1967: to "provide a voice for groups in the community that may otherwise be unheard," to serve as "a forum for controversy and debate," and to broadcast programs that "help us see America whole, in all its diversity." Meacham actually expressed a similar understanding of PBS's role (**Globe and Mail**, 8/8/10), explaining that it's meant "to fill the spaces created by network and cable news." How well is **Need to Know** fulfilling that purpose?

To find out, **Extra!** studied **Need to Know** from the program's debut on May 7 through July 30, 2010, a total of 13 one-hour shows with 297 sources. Sources

were coded by gender, nationality, ethnicity, occupation and, in the case of political professionals, partisan affiliation.

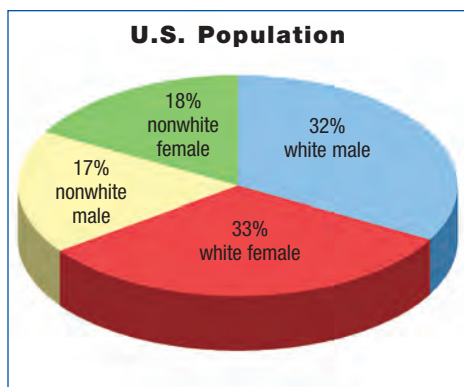
Need to Know's website describes the program as "not a television broadcast with a secondary online presence. Rather, the site and the TV program work together to complement each other." However, as of November 2009, the show's Web audience was only around 3 percent the size of its broadcast audience on New York's WNET (**Current**, 4/5/10)—which itself makes up only a fraction of the show's audience on PBS stations around the country. This more influential on-air content was the focus of **Extra!**'s research.

Need to Know's U.S. sources in the period studied were 78 percent white (196 of 250). With seven appearances, Latinos made up only 3 percent of all U.S. guests, though they account for 15 percent of the U.S. population. Only three Asian-Americans (1 percent) and no Native Americans or Americans of Mideastern descent were featured on **Need to Know**.

African-Americans made up 12 percent of U.S. sources (29 sources), on par with their representation in the population. Two segments during the study period focused on race, one interview with **Root** journalist Terence Samuel (7/23/10) and one with Harvard law professor Charles Ogletree (7/30/10). However, more than half of African-American sources appeared in segments on prisons and on drug abuse. Three of the seven Latino sources appeared on a segment about the U.S./Mexico drug war.

That one of the show's hosts is an African-American woman is certainly a step in the right direction, but women of color were particularly underrepresented as sources, at only nine total (4 percent). They were outnumbered by men of color more than 3 to 1.

Seventy percent of the show's sources were male. That male bias was more heavily skewed on stories about foreign affairs, at



80 percent, versus 65 percent male sources on domestic stories.

Need to Know featured several segments on hot-button subjects like birth control, gun control and medical marijuana, but it couldn't break out of the narrow commercial media box with its guest lists. The marijuana segment (on the "runaway beast" of medical marijuana clinics in California) featured exclusively white men, seven of the eight gun control segment guests were white men and seven of the eight birth control segment guests were white women.

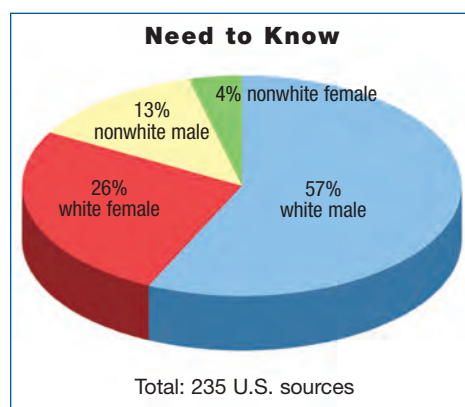
Need to Know's source list drew frequently from U.S. government officials (15 percent) and journalists (9 percent), though it also featured a number of "person on the street" interviews (10 percent), which were typically very brief and often anonymous opinion or reaction soundbites. Every U.S. journalist source but one (Terence Samuel) was white; aside from Barack Obama's four appearances in file footage, only two of the 40 other U.S. government sources were people of color.

Corporate representatives outnumbered public interest activists 20 to 12. Activists represented perspectives ranging from gun rights advocates and the anti-immigration group Federation for American Immigration Reform to advocates for the environment and reproductive rights. Only two think tank representatives appeared during the period studied—Charles Stimson of the conservative Heritage Foundation and Brett McGurk of the centrist Council on Foreign Relations.

Need to Know featured relatively few professional politicians, but of those who appeared, Democrats outnumbered Republicans 18 to 12. However, all but three of the Democratic sources were shorter taped clips, while six of the Republicans were live guests. Five of the Democratic sources were brief historical clips featuring former presidents and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. Most of the Democrats were federal elected officials

or judges, while half of the Republicans were local officials. One independent—New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg—was featured, and one guest, McGurk, served under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

Need to Know typically features one or two lengthier in-studio interviews, followed by produced segments with taped sources. The sources in these extended interviews were slightly more skewed toward white men than sources overall: Among the 31 people given the show's higher-profile platform, only eight (26 percent) were women, and of the 27 U.S. sources, only four (15 percent) were people of color—all African-American men. No women of color were featured. At 12 sources, journalists were the most represented group in these extended interviews, followed by government officials with four sources.



The most frequently discussed topics were Afghanistan and Iraq (12 segments, including four in-studio interviews) and the BP oil spill (seven segments, including seven in-studio interviews). The war segments featured 43 sources, nearly half of whom were associated with the military: 14 were current or former military and seven were family of military. Another nine were government sources, including those with military backgrounds like John McCain.

Unlike on most news programs, though, the majority of the military sources were not top brass but rather ordinary soldiers; one segment (6/25/10)—a followup to a segment originally reported by **Now**—looked at the relatively undercovered story of injured vets and the family members who care for them.

Thirty of the 43 war segment sources were white, five Afghan, four black and one Latino. (Three could not be identified by ethnicity.) Eight were women (22 percent), all of whom were white. No activists and only two academics (one of whom, Andrew Bacevich, was also military) were featured.

When Need to Know discussed the **WikiLeaks** document release (7/30/10), a trove of classified information showing, among other things, military doubts about the Afghanistan War, Stewart introduced the show: "Much ado about nothing or putting lives at risk? The effects of the **WikiLeaks** on the war in Afghanistan." The circumscribed choices—what about much ado about something?—made the choice of guests unsurprising: Joshua Foust, a blogger/writer who was a critic of **WikiLeaks** and was generally skeptical that there was much of value in the leaked reports.

The oil spill segments featured 50 sources. Five were people of color (10 percent), all but one of whom were male. Twelve of the oil spill sources were women (24 percent). Source occupations varied widely; the most-represented category was corporate sources (12), followed by environmental experts (7) and government officials, artists, journalists and people on the street (five each). Two were activists, one of whom was an unnamed community leader (7/2/10) saying only, "People are breaking down."

There were surprisingly few segments related to the economy, given the ongoing economic crisis during the period studied. Three segments looked at financial regulation (5/28/10, 7/16/10), one at drug money laundered through U.S. banks (5/28/10), and one at the "tiny house movement" among people looking to save money and help the environment (7/30/10). Every source in these segments was white. Men outnumbered women eight to five; of the three in-studio interviews on the economy, one (7/16/10) was with Elizabeth Warren, chair of the Congressional Oversight Panel.

"Journalism is the first rough draft of history," Meacham told the **L.A. Times** (8/6/10). "And some drafts are rougher than others."

There's time yet for Meacham, Stewart and **Need to Know** to smooth out their draft, but their record so far provides little encouragement that it will ever serve as an adequate replacement for **Now** and the **Bill Moyers Journal**. ■

Research by Michael Morel and Steve Rendall; research design by Steve Rendall.

**FAIR Action Alerts
& Media Advisories
online at fair.org**

Does *NewsHour* 'Help Us See America Whole'?

by Steve Rendall and Michael Morel

A new FAIR study of the **PBS NewsHour** finds that public television's flagship news program continues to feature sources drawn largely from a narrow range of elite white male experts. The study, the third FAIR has conducted of the **NewsHour** since 1990, documents a pattern of failure by the **PBS** news show to fulfill the mission of public television to provide a broader, more inclusive alternative to commercial news programs.

The 1967 Carnegie Commission Report on public television, which spawned 1967's Public Broadcasting Act and gave birth to **PBS**, suggested that public television "should be a forum for debate and controversy" and called on the medium to "provide a voice for groups in the community that may be otherwise unheard" and to "help us see America whole, in all its diversity."

In 1990, when FAIR first studied the **NewsHour** (then called the **MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour**), we cited public TV's mission, the program's longer format and its aversion to sensationalism as reasons we thought it might offer a broader spectrum of views than commercial television news shows.

However, the study (**Extra!**, Winter/90), published alongside a study of **ABC's Nightline** for purposes of comparison, found the opposite:

Despite the fact that **MacNeil/Lehrer** is the nightly news show of the public broadcasting service, we found that, in most respects, its guestlist represented an even narrower segment of the political spectrum than **Nightline's**.

When FAIR revisited the **NewsHour** in a 2006 study (**Extra!**, 9–10/06), we found little change in its elite-leaning guestlist. **PBS** ombud Michael Getler (**PBS.org**, 10/6/06) concluded from FAIR's 2006 study that the **NewsHour** staff "probably need to do better" at diversifying their guest list. Unfortunately,

the **NewsHour** seems to have made little effort in that direction.

FAIR's new study of the **NewsHour** examined the program's guestlist over a two-month period spanning May and June 2010. We recorded every on-air source appearing on the show, including live and taped guests, for a total of 1,006 sources appearing in 245 segments. The 813 taped sources were 81 percent of the total.

Each source was classified by occupation, nationality, gender and ethnicity. Party affiliation for politicians and association with political think tanks were noted where applicable.

Sources

Elite occupations

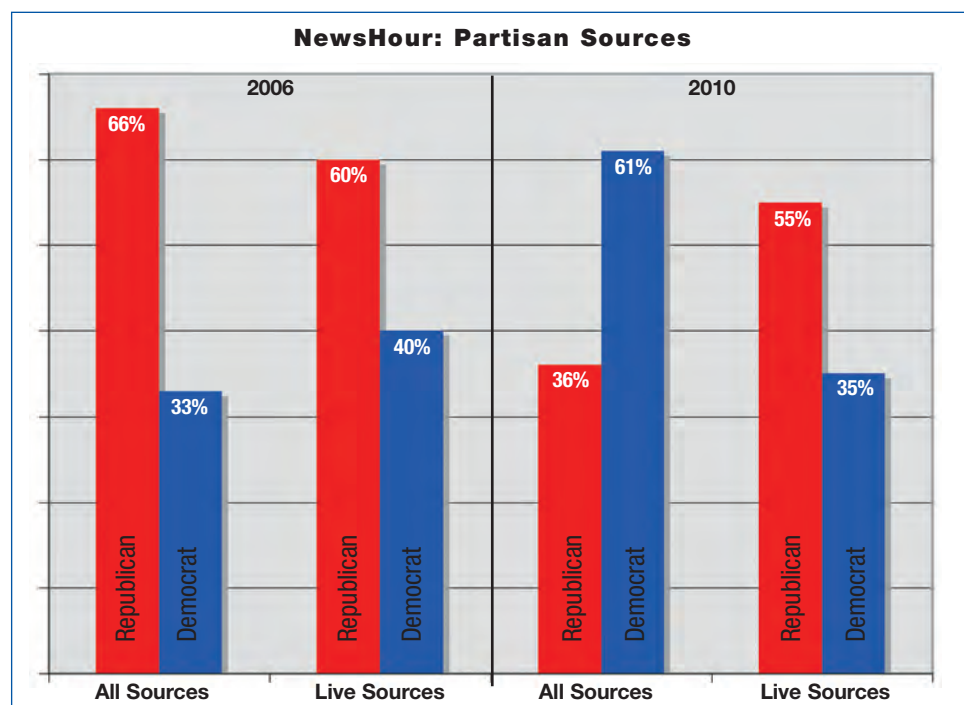
As in our 2006 **NewsHour** study, five elite occupations dominated in number of appearances. Current and former government officials, including military officials, continued to have the greatest representation, accounting for 44 percent of total

sources. This was down from 50 percent in 2006.

Corporate voices, ranging from multinational CEOs to small business owners, doubled from 2006 to 10 percent; journalists and think tank experts held steady at 10 percent and 3 percent, respectively. Academic sources dropped to 7 percent from 8 percent in 2006. These five occupations totaled 742 sources, or 74 percent of the program's 2010 total.

The **NewsHour's** five most frequent individual sources all came from these elite categories: Government officials President Barack Obama (34 appearances), Admiral Allen (17) of the U.S. Coast Guard and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (10), corporate officer Doug Suttles (11) of BP and journalist Marcia Coyle (10) of the **National Law Journal**. With the exception of Coyle, these sources appeared primarily in taped segments.

Among guests in live segments, journalists dominated the ranks. The top guests in live segments were Coyle (with 10 appear-



ances, she was the only source to appear in the top five live segments in both the 2006 and current studies), Mark Shields of **NewsHour** (8), David Brooks of the **New York Times** (8) and Amy Walters of **NPR** (4). Dan Balz of the **Washington Post** tied for fifth place with the most frequently appearing non-journalist, Admiral Allen; Balz and Allen each had three live appearances.

Public voices

Public interest advocates—sources representing civil rights, labor, consumer, environmental and other citizen-based advocacy groups—provided just 4 percent of the **NewsHour**'s guests (43 appearances). Despite their comparatively few numbers, these sources represented a range of perspectives, from environmental groups like the National Wildlife Federation, international NGOs such as Human Rights Watch and conservative advocacy organizations including Freedom Works and the National Rifle Association. With 13 sources, human rights/humanitarian groups were the largest subset of public interest groups. Representatives of environmental organizations were the next largest subset, with 10 appearances.

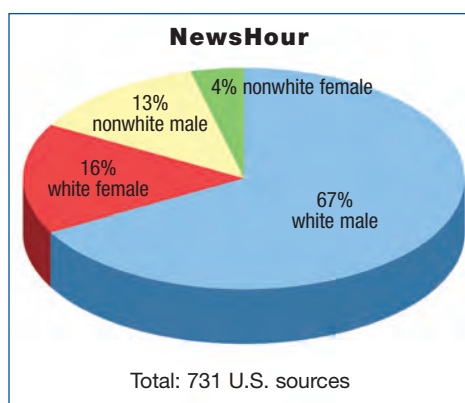
The public interest representatives who might best serve as a counterweight to the 10 percent of **NewsHour** sources who were corporate voices—sources representing labor, environmental groups and consumer rights organizations—combined for only 2 percent of the **NewsHour**'s guestlist with 16 appearances. Three sources were labor representatives, one of whom was a member of a union in Greece.

The general public—such as workers, students and persons on the street—accounted for 16 percent (164 sources) of appearances, up from 14 percent in 2006. The remaining 6 percent (those not counted among the general public, public interest advocates or the elite groupings) consisted of a variety of sources, including artists, actors and healthcare professionals.

Gender

As 201 sources, or 20 percent of the total, women continue to be dramatically underrepresented on the **NewsHour**. This number has been slowly rising, from just 13 percent in 1990 and 18 percent in 2006.

Not only did women appear one-fourth as often as men, they were three times more likely to be “general public” sources instead of experts: 30 percent of women represented the general public, versus only 12 percent of men. Women were slightly more likely to



appear live, representing 26 percent of in-studio guests.

The proportion of female sources varied significantly across subjects. In discussions of economics, military affairs, terrorism and foreign policy, the proportion of women declined to 18 percent of sources. On the subject of education, women accounted for only four of 12 sources. This marks a decrease from our 2006 study, when women accounted for just over 50 percent of sources in education stories. Women outnumbered men 55 percent to 45 percent in discussions of health-related topics, including healthcare reform, obesity and malnutrition.

Ethnicity

White sources continued to dominate at the **NewsHour**, though as with women's appearances, the percentage of people of color has risen over the years. Non-Hispanic whites accounted for 82 percent of U.S. sources, down from 85 percent in 2006 and 90 percent in 1990. White males, who make up 32 percent of the U.S. population, provided 67 percent of U.S. sources, down from 72 percent in 2006. But while percentages of women and people of color both increased slightly, appearances by women of color actually decreased by a third, accounting for only 4 percent of U.S. sources. (Women of color make up 18 percent of the U.S. population.)

Latinos represented only 1 percent of U.S. sources, down from 2 percent in 2006, even as their percentage of the population increased from 12 to 15 percent. Asian-Americans represented 3 percent and people of Mideastern descent represented 1 percent. Eleven percent of U.S. sources were African-American, up from 9 percent in 2006 and nearly matching their proportion of the U.S. population (12 percent). Forty-two percent of those appearances, however, were by a single person, Barack Obama. Without the president, African-Americans would have represented only 6 percent of U.S. sources.

People of color were more likely than whites to appear as general public sources and less likely to appear as authorities on the **NewsHour**. Of U.S. sources, people of color constituted 28 percent of general public sources but only 15 percent of authoritative sources. People of color appeared even less frequently among **NewsHour**'s more extensive live interviews, representing just 10 percent of live U.S. sources, with women of color at 3 percent. In segments about organized crime and gangs, people of color accounted for 36 percent of U.S. sources.

Partisan sources

In FAIR's 2006 study, when Republicans controlled the White House and Congress, their politicians outnumbered Democrats on the show by 2 to 1 (66 percent vs. 33 percent of all partisan sources). While this was partly attributable to the **NewsHour**'s heavy reliance on taped soundbites from administration officials, Republicans outnumbered Democrats among live guests as well by a 3 to 2 ratio.

This year, with Democrats controlling the White House and Congress, the overall numbers have reversed: Democratic sources outnumbered Republicans on the **NewsHour** by nearly 2 to 1 (61 percent vs. 36 percent of all partisan sources). However, the reversal was not complete: Among live segments, Republicans still dominated, accounting for 55 percent, while Democrats provided only 35 percent. (Ten percent worked for both parties.)

Eight sources worked for both Democrats and Republicans, making up 3 percent of all partisan sources. There were no third-party partisan sources, but there was a single appearance by an independent, Sen. Joseph Lieberman.

Think tanks

Think tanks provided only 3 percent of the **NewsHour**'s total sources; however, they contributed 14 percent of live sources. Fully half of think tank sources were from right-leaning groups. With just four sources (13 percent), left-leaning think tanks were outnumbered by right-leaning ones 4 to 1. This disparity doubled from the 2006 study, when right outnumbered left 2 to 1. Centrist think tanks constituted 37 percent of sources, down from 44 percent in 2006.

The most frequently featured think tank on the **NewsHour** was the centrist Brookings Institution, which provided five sources. Second place was a 3-way tie between the conservative Center for Strategic &

International Studies, the conservative Peterson Institute for International Economics and the centrist New America Foundation, with three appearances each.

Issues in the News

BP Oil Spill

More segments (54) were dedicated to the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico than to any other story in the study period—roughly one out of every five segments. Corporate sources (ranging from multinationals to small businesses) accounted for 18 percent of the total, while sources representing environmental organizations made up just 3 percent of appearances. Testimony from BP and other oil companies accounted for 13 percent, meaning viewers were over three times more likely to hear from an oil industry representative than someone representing environmental organizations. Though dramatically unbalanced, these numbers are an improvement compared with **NewsHour**'s coverage of the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, in which not a single environmentalist was featured in the seven spill segments reviewed in FAIR's 1990 study (**Extra!**, Winter/90).

Among total partisan sources in oil spill segments, Democrats outnumbered Republicans 57 to 38, though most of these were brief taped clips. Among live, longer format appearances, Republicans outnumbered Democrats 6 to 3. Though these sample sizes are small, they mirror the pattern of the **NewsHour** overall, featuring more Republicans than Democrats as in-studio sources.

The study's time frame probably understates the **NewsHour**'s reliance on corporate sources to cover the spill. Greenpeace's Kert Davies, appearing on the **NewsHour** on the first day of the study (5/3/10), was the first environmental advocate brought on to discuss the spill, which began two weeks earlier (4/20/10).

Afghanistan

Ten percent of **NewsHour** segments (24) concerned the war in Afghanistan. Of the 60 guests appearing in these segments, 70 percent were current or former government and military officials. Although public opinion has consistently opposed the Afghan War for over a year (PollingReport.com), public television's primetime news show featured no guest identified as an opponent of the war or expressing antiwar views. (One guest, historian and retired Col. Andrew Bacevich—6/15/10—though known as an opponent of the war, appeared only to ana-

lyze the Obama administration's military strategy.) Also missing from **NewsHour**'s guestlist were sources representing human rights or humanitarian groups, or the U.S. general public.

Only three sources on Afghanistan (5 percent) were women. Of U.S. sources, Barack Obama, think tank analyst Zalmay Khalilzad, and **Washington Post** editor Rajiv Chandrasekaran were the only people of color.

The **NewsHour**'s discussions of the firing of U.S. Afghanistan commander Gen. Stanley McChrystal and his replacement by Gen. David Petraeus demonstrated the hazards of excluding representatives of the U.S. antiwar majority. McChrystal's firing followed a **Rolling Stone** exposé (6/22/10) that disclosed criticism and insults McChrystal and his staff had aimed at various administration figures. More importantly, however, the exposé revealed that the military was far more pessimistic about the war than officials publicly admit.

The **NewsHour** devoted 10 segments with 35 sources to the story—exploring the wisdom of the personnel decisions, what they would mean politically, for morale and for the continuity of the war. But not a single antiwar guest was featured, and there was virtually no discussion of the exposé's more fundamentally damning revelations or the wisdom of continuing to fight the war.

The live, long-format interview segments featured 14 guests, including pro-war neo-cons (such as Eliot Cohen and Kimberly Kagan), military officials (like generals Merrill McPeak and Dan McNeill) and Washington, D.C., media insiders (**Washington Post** columnist David Ignatius, **Time** Pentagon correspondent Mark Thompson). Jessica Mathews (6/23/10) of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace voiced a typically pro-status quo opinion, praising the firing and hiring decisions, in part because they wouldn't affect the direction of the war at all:

And if there was a way for this to happen with minimal consequences for the war, he found it in the appointment of Petraeus...to make a personnel change without a hint of policy change, this was the only person. And Petraeus was willing to do it.... I thought the president hit every note right today.

Israel/Palestine

The **NewsHour** featured seven segments on the Mideast conflict, with 32 guests. All of

the segments dealt with either the blockade of Gaza or the Israeli raid on a Turkish flotilla attempting to break the blockade to bring aid to Palestinians. Eleven Israeli sources were featured, all current or former government or military officials, while just two Palestinian sources appeared (one current and one former official). There were seven Turkish sources, including five official sources, one flotilla passenger and one human rights advocate. In addition, U.S. Free Gaza activist Adam Shapiro (5/31/10) was interviewed, paired with Israeli ambassador to the U.S. Michael Oren.

The truncated nature of the **NewsHour**'s Mideast discussions was illustrated by the program's June 2 examination of the legality of Israel's flotilla raid, featuring legal experts Ruth Wedgwood of Johns Hopkins University and Northwestern's Anthony D'Amato. Wedgwood defended the raid at sea, while D'Amato said Israel should have boarded and searched the flotilla when it reached port in Gaza: "Israelis had a right to wait on the beaches, as they first tried to do, actually, and wait for those ships to come in.... Then they could say, we now want to search you because you might be carrying contraband."

The views of those who oppose the Gaza blockade itself were missing from this "debate"—as with so many **NewsHour** discussions where the panel conforms with a narrow Washington-insider consensus, but fails to represent the broad range of American public opinion. ■

Research by Alex Kane, Krystle Manintveld and Zachary Tomanelli.

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What's 'Public' About Public TV's News Flagship?

by Janine Jackson

On air and on its website, the **PBS NewsHour** acknowledges its funders. Along with **PBS** and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the show gets money from some usual-suspect corporations, like **Chevron** and **Bank of America**, and a dozen or more foundations—in various amounts and arrangements worthy of examination in themselves. But who *owns* public TV's flagship nightly news program? Hint: It's not **Viewers Like You**.

It's not **PBS** either, or any affiliate station. The program known as “public television's nightly newscast” (**New York Times**, 3/21/84) is in fact owned by a private, for-profit conglomerate, **Liberty Media**, that bought 67 percent of **MacNeil/Lehrer Productions** in 1994 (**L.A. Times**, 12/5/94).

Liberty Media is controlled by John Malone, who in 1994 was the owner of **TCI**, the country's largest cable operator. (**TCI** was subsequently bought by **AT&T**.) Malone and **TCI** were infamous for “ruthless policy designed to muffle critics, smother competition and saddle local governments with huge legal bills” (**Rocky Mountain News**, 12/13/94), collecting the title of “worst discriminator in the telecommunications industry” from the NAACP and League of United Latin American Citizens along the way.

TCI provoked regulators' interest by taking brazen advantage of its monopoly power—driving down the price of the **Learning Channel** with a threat to take it off its systems, then buying it at bargain price (**New Yorker**, 2/7/94); forcing **GE** to drop plans for an all-news cable channel that would compete with **CNN**, which it invests in (**Extra! Update**, 10/95); sending a memo telling cable operators to raise rates and “blame it on re-regulation and the government” (**Extra! Update**, 2/95).

Just a year before acquiring a majority stake in the **NewsHour**, Malone declared (**ABC World News Tonight**, 9/30/93): “Nobody wants to go out and invent something and invest hundreds of millions of dol-

lars of risk capital for the public interest, you know. I mean, one would be fired as an executive of a profit-making company if he took that stance.”

A few observers (**Variety**, 12/5/94) noted that “for Malone, **M/L Prods.** is a prestige buy that is likely to earn him some good will in Washington; **TCI** has been a frequent target of lawmakers.” As Verne Gay (**Newsday**, 12/5/94) put it, “The new Republican-controlled Congress may be less willing to bash Malone, even less so now that he owns **NewsHour**. Washington types, you see, adore **NewsHour**.”

But most found nothing troubling in an industry bigfoot gaining controlling interest in a politically influential news program (not to mention one on a network meant to serve public over corporate interests).

New **PBS** president Ervin Duggan issued a release (12/2/94) celebrating the “welcome infusion of capital,” but transcripts suggest the **NewsHour** didn't announce their new ownership on air. Having praised the private takeover of its flagship program, Duggan (**Philadelphia Inquirer**, 1/24/95) was nevertheless in high dudgeon a month later when Senate Republicans suggested that public broadcasting might be privatized wholesale. “Will the American people be happy with the transmogrification of non-profit television into just another TV channel, driven by ratings, the lowest common denominator of public taste and the appetite of advertisers?”

One of those reportedly interested in moves to privatize the whole network? John Malone.

Less than a year after the takeover, MacNeil hosted a roundtable (9/22/95) on **Time Warner's** merger with **Turner Broadcasting**. Well into things, a guest brought up the often adversarial relationship between major players Ted Turner, **Time Warner's** Gerald Levin and John Malone, leading to this exchange:

Robert Goldberg (Wall Street Journal): One of the great stories, if I can just jump in, is that when Levin and Malone came on board Ted Turner's board in 1987, they became partners.

Robert MacNeil: Malone, John Malone, is the head of **TCI, Telecommunications Inc.**

Richard Clurman (author): The third leg of the stool.

MacNeil: The third leg of the stool whose **Liberty** subsidiary is the big shareholder in **Turner** and had to be consulted on this deal.

Goldberg: That's right.

MacNeil: We should also declare our own interest here. **MacNeil/Lehrer Productions** in its other activities outside the **NewsHour** has a partnership with **Liberty Media**.

Goldberg: That's interesting.

MacNeil: But outside the scope of this program. But, anyway, you were about to say—

Liberty, though, doesn't think the **NewsHour** is outside *its* scope. **Liberty** had clear knowledge of what it was buying from the outset, with then-president Peter Barton telling the **Washington Post** (12/5/94), “These guys have established a reputation for solid, fair, serious journalism, and we want our cable viewers to share their approach.”

PBS's claims that it's lost nothing are gainsaid by **Liberty's** obvious belief that they've gained something—something valuable. At the 2008 stockholder meeting, **Liberty Media** CEO Greg Maffei (Malone still chairs the group's board) broke away momentarily from “incremental liquidity” and the pursuit of “tax efficient, hopefully tax free, restructuring” to say (**Fair Disclosure Wire**, 9/26/08):

I'd like to talk about one very small business in the context of **Liberty** that doesn't get a lot of play in our finan-

cials. But certainly, it's getting a lot of play in the market. There is scheduled to be a presidential debate tonight.... That'll be hosted by **NewsHour's** Jim Lehrer.... And then Gwen Ifill, senior correspondent of **NewsHour**, will moderate the only VP debate, which is scheduled for October 2.

If you ask around—and I was recently at a very interesting panel which had Tom Brokaw and Brit Hume and Katy Kay of **BBC**, and they're all saying, well, the media is biased either left or right. Pretty much uniformly, both on that panel and in the audience, the only thing that came forward was the view that the most unbiased, clearest place for news today is the **MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour**. So we're very proud to be a part of that.

That's being recognized in the market place. They won an Emmy on Tuesday for best coverage of a breaking news story and news magazine for their reports on the turmoil in Pakistan. Their national convention coverage drew the only prime time broadcast news, and attracted an average of 3 million viewers over three nights. So, I—while it's not our largest holding, it's not our largest business, I think it's one we're very proud of, that it's getting so much viewership, so much attention and so much respect.

Why, after all, would a company run by a guy who thinks the public interest is a joke buy a "public TV" show, if not for influence, and the patina of elevated disinterest it adds to what is in fact a deeply interested

enterprise? Duggan (12/2/94) swore that the **NewsHour** is "ours and ours alone," but what if the **NewsHour** began fulfilling public broadcasting's mandate—airing views that corporations were not interested in promoting? How would Maffei's shareholder meeting go then?

That the private ownership of "public broadcasting's nightly newscast" provokes little media interest perhaps is testament to the acceptance of public media as a failed project: Private ownership just goes along with commercials, corporate sponsorships, and the surfeit of "business" shows that we've come to see as the best we can do. But public broadcasting was not intended to reproduce, in calmer, "classier" form, the practices and priorities of commercial media, and in no area is its unfulfilled mandate more pressing than in news and public affairs. ■

Who Owns Public TV's Nightly Business Report? None of Your Business

The **Nightly Business Report** has been distributed by **PBS** for over three decades, making it the de facto business show of the public television system. But who exactly owns the show became murky last August, when it was revealed (**Broadcasting & Cable**, 8/19/10) that **Nightly Business Report** was being sold by Miami public TV station **WPBT** to a private company called **NBR Worldwide**. The company is headed up by Mykalai Kontilai, whose resumé includes some educational video projects, a sports energy drink company and management of mixed martial arts fighters. Kontilai also runs a company called **Public Media, Inc.**, which has been trying to develop a public TV show called **Collectors Cafe**, that would assess the value of collectibles and serve as the inspiration for coffee/collectible franchise establishments of the same name (**New York Times**, 8/19/10).

The idea that a private company could buy a public TV show raised some eyebrows; as **Hollywood Reporter** noted (8/18/10), this is "the first time that a major nightly news broadcast produced for **PBS** and owned by one of its affiliates has been acquired by a private entity." (The **NewsHour** was already privately owned—by its co-anchors—when **Liberty Media** bought a controlling stake.) **Nightly Business Report** had reportedly been struggling to raise additional corporate sponsorship, so presumably Kontilai has some plans in this regard.

No one involved will say how much **NBR Worldwide** paid for the show; **WPBT** said it was not a "huge windfall" (**New York Times**, 8/19/10). The new owners won't say who put up the money, telling **Current** (9/7/10) that the funding was "provided almost entirely by a New York-based institutional investor."

So what is arguably the main business show on public television—and by some accounts in the country (**NYTimes.com**, 8/19/10)—is now owned by a private company, and we're not sure who paid the bill. **PBS** told **Current** that they weren't part of the negotiations and are merely the distributor of the show. Over the years, **PBS** has taken a keen interest in who's funding particular programming, but as **FAIR** has documented (e.g., **FAIR Press Release**, 9/1/99), those rules seem mainly to apply to shows of the sort that corporate sponsors aren't interested in paying for—i.e., the kind of programming **PBS** was intended to distribute and to promote.—*Peter Hart*



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For them, by them

Charlie Rose's Elite Meet-and-Greet

by Peter Hart

Public television host Charlie Rose enjoys a reputation for highbrow talk. “A Larry King for Mensa members,” he “conducts a conversation, not an interview,” according to the **New York Times** (4/25/07). The paper added that Rose is “a facilitator, creating a comfortable ambiance where important people and opinion-makers can speak at length and make more than one point.... For viewers interested in thoughtful talk, Mr. Rose’s stark studio is the best place in town.”

The **Charlie Rose** show is where “the intelligentsia come to share ideas,” wrote David Kaplan in “Why Business Loves Charlie Rose” (**Fortune**, 9/28/09). Kaplan quoted **New York Times** columnist Thomas Friedman—the show’s most frequent guest—praising Rose’s interviewing style, which gives his high-powered guests “the best chance to make your case for your point of view.” The **Fortune** article pointed out that the show’s audience “is probably well under a million,” but that “few would dispute” the program’s impact in elite circles: “Nobody watches **Charlie Rose** except everybody you know.”

That, of course, would depend on your definition of “you.”

When mega-investor Warren Buffett needed an outlet to send a calming message about the Wall Street meltdown, he went to Charlie Rose—and announced that he would be investing in Goldman Sachs. Buffett explained that the moment “really was Pearl Harbor,” and that Rose’s show was a vehicle “to say something to the American public.” Again, “the public” would seem to be rather narrowly defined.

Charlie Rose used to make the kind of promises one would hope to hear from a public television program host. In a promotional pitch for the show, Rose explained that he came to public television to do a program featuring “people who don’t ordinarily appear on television.” As **Extra!** noted (5–6/96), though, at that point the show’s opening credits highlighted appearances by



all three nightly network news anchors, as well as PBS’s MacNeil and Lehrer. The slogan that currently appears on the **Rose** website—“Stay on the Inside with Charlie Rose”—gives a markedly different indication of the show’s intended audience and purpose.

Who gets a seat at the table?

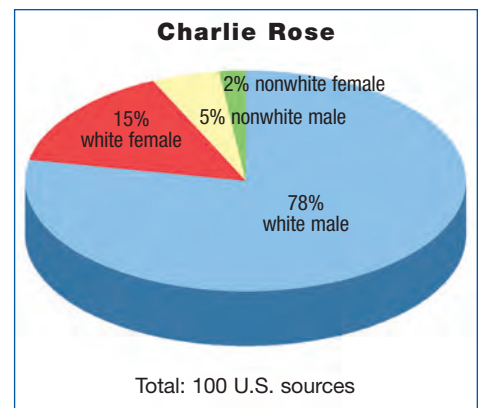
So who actually does appear on the **Charlie Rose** show? The guestlist in May and June of 2010 confirms how far Rose has strayed from his onetime pitch. Out of 132 guests, 28 percent (37) were journalists from major media outlets. The outlet providing the most guests was the **New York Times**, whose reporters made 11 appearances, far more than any other news outlet. (The **Washington Post** was next with three.) Repeat journalist guests included **Newsweek**’s Jonathan Alter—a regular on **MSNBC**—and Al Hunt of **Bloomberg**, the company that donates studio space to Rose. (See sidebar.)

There were seven mostly well-known academics (e.g., historians Doris Kearns Goodwin and Sean Wilentz). Seven corporate guests appeared, most of whom were affiliated with Wall Street/financial firms. There were also four appearances by corporate philanthropists (Bill Gates, Melinda Gates, Warren Buffett and his sister Doris Buffett).

One corporate guest, Kevin Sheekey, was identified as a “political strategist,” a nod to his former role assisting Michael Bloomberg’s political campaigns. But Sheekey shifted over to Bloomberg’s private company in early 2010. He appeared to discuss the government response to the BP oil spill, but viewers were unaware that he works for the company that provides Rose with his TV studio.

Rose interviewed relatively few U.S. government officials during the two months: two appearances by U.S. Sen. John Kerry and one each by Vice President Joe Biden, White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel, and “pay czar” Kenneth Feinberg. One New York City official—police chief Ray Kelly—and three former military officials also appeared.

There were two anomalies in the period that FAIR surveyed. Foreign leaders, particularly from Mideastern countries, accounted for seven appearances, part of a **Rose** special titled “Middle East Journal.” And there



were 13 medical/science guests, who appeared as part of the show’s ongoing series on the human brain and mental illness.

Out of the 132 guests who appeared over the course of two months, just two guests—environmental activist/writer Bill McKibben and James Tripp of the Environmental Defense Fund—might reasonably be considered representative of the types of public interest voices (representatives of civil rights, labor,

consumer, environmental and other citizen-based advocacy groups) one should expect to see on public television. Those two appearances equal the number of celebrity chefs who appeared over the two months. The only other guest who came close to this public interest category was John Hofmeister, the former president of Shell Oil who now runs a non-profit called Citizens for Affordable Energy, which stresses the abundance of available coal and oil resources.

The **Rose** show often features non-political cultural discussions. Out of the 132 guests on the program, 31 could be included in this category, including 15 performers (actors and musicians), four novelists and two chefs. Ten guests appeared on the show to discuss sports.

The list was heavily male, with just 20 appearances by women (15 percent of total guests). Of the 102 U.S. guests, 92 percent were white. Of the six African-American guests, five discussed arts or sports. Only two women of color appeared during the study period, Nnenna Freelon and Viola Davis, both African-American artists.

Not Corporation for Public Broadcasting—just corporations

The **Charlie Rose** show does not take money from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting; instead, it gets it entirely from corporations. Exactly how much is not entirely clear, nor are the amounts that come from the likes of Coca-Cola (the show's largest sponsor), Rupert Murdoch's **News Corp** and a handful of investment firms and financial institutions.

In his 2009 **Fortune** piece, David Kaplan reported what is known about the fundraising for the show, a task Rose han-

‘I Don’t Know What Independent Means’

Amy Goodman: We need public media now. In a time of war we need independent reporting.

Charlie Rose: I don’t know what independent means—independent in contrast to what?

Goodman: It means not being sponsored by the corporations, the networks like **CBS, ABC, NBC** owned by **General Electric**—or **CBS** owned by **Viacom** or **Disney** is **ABC**.

Rose: Just a moment.... My point would be in response to that is we do need you, because you bring a quality of reporting and a quality of broadcasting, and more people ought to have access to the media in order for more voices reporting. Having said that, I promise you, **CBS News** and **ABC News** and **NBC News** are not influenced by the corporations that may own those companies. Since I know one of them very well and worked for one of them.

—Charlie Rose Show, 3/12/03

dles personally. Kaplan found that many of Rose's backers will not speak about their donations, but there is "a web of peculiar interconnections between Rose and the people he covers."

Media mogul Barry Diller and fashion designer Diane von Furstenberg are both backers of the program—as well as guests. The same is true of Rupert Murdoch. But the level of disclosure falls far short of what one might expect from a show that is so closely associated with "public" broadcasting.

Kaplan also reported that Rose is a limited partner in a venture capital firm (Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers); another partner in the firm, John Doerr, has been a guest on **Charlie Rose** at least three times (1/6/06, 12/29/06, 10/20/08), but Rose only disclosed that he had a "business relationship" with his guest in the second of these appearances.

Rose drew critical attention after he was the master of ceremonies at a 2002 Coca-Cola shareholders' meeting. Rose sang Coke's praises, gushing that "few companies

are able to connect as completely with consumers" and declaring it a privilege to be associated with "the Coca-Cola family" (**Extra! Update**, 6/02). Shortly after the news about the shareholders' meeting surfaced, some viewers noticed that the mugs on the show's interview table featured the distinctive red-and-white Coke logo on one side and the **Charlie Rose** logo on the other (**Orange County Weekly**, 1/24/03).

Another controversy surfaced after an August 1, 2006, interview Rose conducted with Wal-Mart CEO H. Lee Scott inside one of the executive's New Jersey outlets. A few months later, Rose was among the New York media industry hosts at a party celebrating Scott's environmental work—something Rose had asked Scott to discuss on the show, as the **New York Times** (10/23/06) noted. **PBS** ombud Michael Getler cautioned that Rose had "an obligation not to do anything that could be seen by viewers as even a possible conflict of interest, or as diminishing the integrity or credibility of public broadcasting." Getler (10/23/06) later pointed out in his ombud column that the **Times** report on the controversy misrepresented the matter in its headline, "Interview and Then Dinner Crowd **PBS**'s Comfort Zone." Actually, Getler noted, Rose's corporate cheerleading didn't seem to bother anyone else at **PBS**—though, as he put it, "I think it should have." ■

Research by Krystle Manintveld.

A Gift From Michael Bloomberg

After his show was launched by New York public station **WNET** and distributed by **PBS**, Charlie Rose received an offer in 1994 to move the show into a production facility owned by media mogul (and now New York City mayor) Michael Bloomberg. Bloomberg's commercial media company gives Rose a free studio and office space to produce a show bankrolled by large corporate interests and investment firms—which nevertheless remains a fixture on the nation's "public" television system. The advantages of free facilities are clear for Rose, but there are some less obvious benefits for Bloomberg.

As noted in **Fortune**, at the time the deal was arranged, Bloomberg "understood that famous folk coming into his offices gave the growing company more visibility." The **New York Times** reported (7/1/01) that Bloomberg has been known to be "star-struck"; a former public relations executive recalled that Bloomberg kept tabs on the show's guestlist, and that he "would hang around if he wanted to meet the guest."

It is difficult to imagine a billionaire media executive showing much interest "hanging around" a program that regularly featured guests who were not A-list celebrities, CEOs and high-profile establishment figures. Starting in 2009, **Charlie Rose** began re-airing on the **Bloomberg Channel**, which makes perfect sense. Why the show is still on public television is harder to fathom.—*P.H.*

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This Week in Beltway Think

by Peter Hart

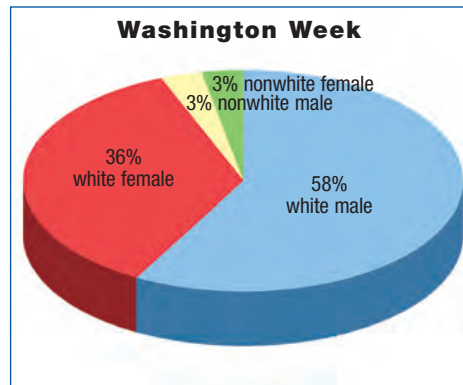
If any PBS show perfectly captures the problem with public TV's public affairs programming, it might be the oldest one: **Washington Week**. Billed as the "longest-running news and public affairs program on public television," **Washington Week** is a half-hour chat show where familiar faces from commercial media outlets give viewers an inside-the-Beltway, who's up-who's-down take on Washington politics. Like some other PBS fare, the show is a public/commercial hybrid; since 2005, **Washington Week** has been a co-production with the for-profit Washington insider magazine **National Journal**.

Press materials for the show declare that the panelists "are reporters—not pundits—shedding light, not heat." But what the reporters offer on the show is mostly a forgettable mush of conventional wisdom, a view of national and international affairs viewed through the prism of Beltway power struggles. Whether the topic is the Deepwater/BP spill or Mideast peace, the focus is narrow and laser-like: How do these stories impact Beltway debates?

Over four months of the program studied by FAIR (5–8/10), 29 reporter/panelists made a total of 64 appearances; only one guest (Elizabeth Shogren from NPR, who appeared twice) did not represent a corporate media outlet. The **Washington Post** was the most frequent outlet represented, with 11 appearances. Reporters from the **New York Times** and **ABC** made eight appearances each. **National Journal** reporters appeared twice.

ABC's Martha Raddatz made six appearances, making her the most frequent guest over the 17 broadcasts FAIR examined. Several reporters appeared four times: the **Post**'s Dan Balz and Karen Tumulty, AP's Charles Babington, NBC's Pete Williams, CNBC's Eamon Javers and **Time**'s Michael Duffy.

Of the 64 guest appearances, only four were by non-whites (6 percent): ABC correspondent Pierre Thomas appeared twice, **New York Times** reporter Helene Cooper and Nancy Yousseff of **McClatchy**. The guest list was 61 percent male.



In a **Washington Post** feature (5/9/10), New York University journalism professor Jay Rosen declared the show's format "exhausted": "Five insiders (journalists) display their understanding of what other insiders (politicians) did this week for an audience of wannabe insiders (the show's assumption about viewers)."

He added: "Because the boundaries of political debate in Washington are also the horizons of the discussion on **Washington Week**, the show has no grace, mystery, edge or dissonant voice." On the **Washington Week** blog (5/13/10), host Gwen Ifill derided "self-appointed media critic" Rosen's take as a call for "more noise, not less; more cacophony and less understanding."

Of course, that wasn't his point at all. Nor was Rosen alone in arguing that public TV discussions about Washington political developments ought to go beyond corporate media reporters. As **Forbes MediaCritic** pointed out in its Summer 1995 issue, guests from ideologically oriented magazines like the **Nation** or the **National Review** "almost never appear" on **Washington Week**. The only question to be asked of the current version of the show is whether the "almost" is even necessary.

As Ifill put it in an interview with **Mother Jones** (3/29/09), "My goal is to try to stay away as much from opinion journalism as possible. And if one of our panelists comes on and says, 'Well, this is what I think,' they generally don't get invited back." Ifill acknowledged that this rule "narrows pretty dramatically" the potential

guestlist for the show, though she indicated that this is someone else's fault:

I have a constant pet peeve about diversity. But the truth of the matter is, in Washington, covering big beats, the big newspapers and networks haven't spent a whole lot of time putting people on those beats from diverse points of view.

In the same interview, Ifill agreed that "groupthink and conventional wisdom" are a problem in the D.C. press corps, but suggested that new media could help change that: "I think we are actually in a better position right now to explode groupthink than we have ever been in Washington journalism. So I'm not really troubled by it."



The upshot would seem to be that other, newer outlets can challenge conventional wisdom, while public television, every Friday night, will help to cement it. It's not exactly how one would imagine PBS could live up to its professed mission of bringing diverse and underrepresented views to the airwaves, but it's a great way to attract corporate sponsors—**Washington Week** is currently funded by Boeing and Exxon/Mobil, and previous funders include Chevron and the National Mining Association ("the voice of the American mining industry in Washington, D.C."). **Washington Week** provides exactly the type of apolitical discussion such deep-pocketed corporate interests want to see on public television. ■

Research by Krystle Manintveld.

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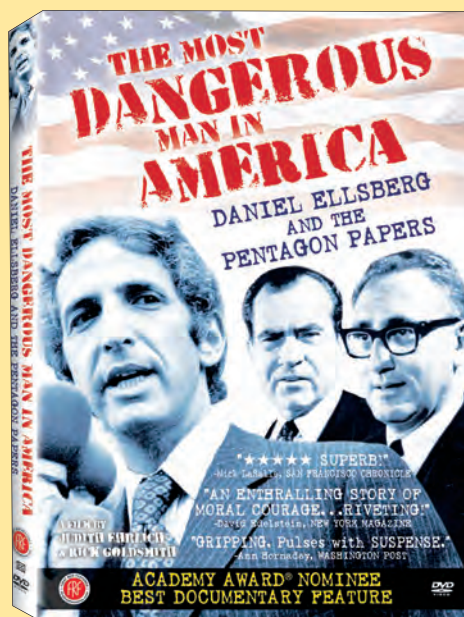
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