

Dan Rather Reports

Episode Number: 303

Episode Title: The Hollywood Influence

Description: The influence of Hollywood on the American culture from the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. Also a conversation with the founder of the festival, Robert Redford.

DAN RATHER (ON CAMERA)

EVERY JANUARY, TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE FROM AROUND THE WORLD DESCEND ON PARK CITY, UTAH, AS WE HAVE THIS WEEK, FOR THE SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL, AMERICA'S PREMIER SHOWCASE FOR INDEPENDENT FILMS. IN LARGE PART BECAUSE OF THE ATTENTION SUNDANCE HAS BROUGHT THEM, INDEPENDENT FILMS—BOTH FICTIONAL AND DOCUMENTARY—ARE MAKING AN EVER-GREATER IMPACT ON THE CULTURAL MAINSTREAM, PROVOKING DEBATE AND DISCUSSION, AND EVEN EFFECTING POLITICAL CHANGE. TONIGHT, IN THE MIDST OF A PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN THAT IS ALL ABOUT CHANGE, WE'LL TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE PLACE WHERE THE BIG SCREEN, CULTURE, AND POLITICS ALL INTERSECT. WE'LL BE TALKING TO SUNDANCE FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT ROBERT REDFORD, BRINGING YOU A SNEAK PEEK AT A COUPLE OF FILMS PEOPLE WILL BE TALKING ABOUT, AND LOOKING AT HOLLYWOOD'S LONG AND OFTEN TROUBLED ROLE AS A CULTURAL MESSENGER. TO START THINGS OFF, WE THOUGHT WE'D TALK ABOUT POLITICS AND FILM WITH ROB LONG, A LONGTIME TELEVISION WRITER, PRODUCER, AND CONTRIBUTOR TO THE NATIONAL REVIEW; AND DONALD FOWLER, A VETERAN DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL STRATEGIST WHO MAKES HIS HOME IN CALIFORNIA.

RATHER

Big week in politics. Nevada caucuses and the South Carolina primary. On the inside, what are they thinking, Donnie?

DONALD FOWLER, DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL STRATEGIST

Well, Obama's sweating a little bit. And the Clintons just breathed a real nice sigh of relief. Obama was supposed to-- at least have the advantage in Nevada, just like he was supposed to in New Hampshire. This was Bill Clinton's election, not Hillary Clinton's election. He went from casino to casino to kitchen to kitchen to laundry room to laundry room up and down the strip. And despite Obama's union endorsement, Bill Clinton, for his wife, won seven of the nine caucus sites on the Las Vegas strip.

RATHER

And Rob, on the Republican side, after the Nevada caucuses and the South Carolina primary, what are they thinking on the inside?

ROB LONG, TELEVISION WRITER AND PRODUCER

Rudy Giuliani's gotta be worried. I mean, he-- his strategy was, "Wait it out. It's all gonna be chaos, and I'm gonna come in and sort of swoop at the end in Florida and pick up these big states where I'm very popular." And he waited too long. I mean, he read the pundits, and the pundits were saying McCain was dead, Huckabee can't do anything. And he thought that was true. He thought, "Well, I'll just ride in at the last minute. I'm the guy who can beat Hillary." You know, that's the-- that's the-- the truism of politics: You have to run. You actually have to run to win. And-- the-- Giuliani hasn't really run.

FOWLER

The Republican side-- you know, it's-- it's still mixed up. It's a little confused. But McCain should be pretty happy. I mean, conventional wisdom is always right, and they said McCain was dead in the water last summer. And-- I don't know, he seems to be swimmin' with water wings right now. It's pretty-- doin' pretty good.

RATHER

How important is it, Donnie? W-- each time we said, "Oh, Iowa's really important, New Hampshire is really important. And you know, South Carolina's even more important, and Nevada's more important." What about Florida? It comes, you know, before tsunami Tuesday, February 5th. Where does it fit into the picture?

FOWLER

Florida's really not a state, Florida's four or five states. You know what they say? You know, -- the farther south you go in Florida, the farther north you are, you know? Because there's so many retirees from the northeast in Miami and Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale. So it will be another test for the leading candidates. It might give some of the voters on February 5th some cues. We'll see. It certainly could kill a few candidates, like Giuliani.

RATHER

On our program, *Dan Rather Reports*, and on HDNET, we-- we've been particularly interested in investigating and reporting on the problems with voting machines. In South Carolina, that reared its head once again. What do we know about that, Donnie?

FOWLER

Well, the-- (UNINTEL) in one county, Horry County, spelled H-O-R-R-Y. They don't want to pronounce it the way it's spelled. It's Myrtle Beach, which everybody really knows. And the-- the-- the voting machines didn't work for the first hour or so, a couple hours in the morning, was because-- not because there was fraud or something was broken. It's because they were doing-- it was-- the security was so strong that the election judges forgot to do that last security check. And if the last security check is not done, the voting machines won't work.

RATHER

All right, let's get right to it. We're in Sundance. Let's talk about movies, film, and politics. You're from this world, Rob.

LONG

That's right.

RATHER

What's the most important thing-- for people to know at this moment? Or the connection between film and politics?

LONG

Well, I think right now it's a money connection. The film business and politics. That's the-- that's the major connection now, that Hollywood is a major stop on the fundraising-- sort of tour for-- for Democratic candidates. It-- every year, some-- every-- every campaign cycle someone says, "No, no, Republicans too," but it really isn't a stop for Republicans. I think Rudy Giuliani made a couple stops in L.A.-- that's about it. The-- the actual-- the film community tends to be very far left-- and-- or staunchly Democratic, we'll say. And the movies they make, the ones that make a lot of money, tend to be, you know, popular and appealing.

RATHER

Donnie, how 'bout you? Nexus between politics and film?

FOWLER

Well, you know, Hollywood's in the business of making money. So their first priority is to make films that people are gonna buy a ticket for. It is true that-- Hollywood-- opinion leaders or the Hollywood elite are more liberal than the rest of the country, and they do produce a lot of-- politically-- films with-- political agendas. But I think you're right, they don't necessarily get good sales.

LONG

The most la-- latest crop of anti-Iraq war movie, been about five or six of 'em, have failed miserably at the box office. So the American people sort of vote with their money. They sort of-- you know, on the weekend, when they can get out and they wanna see a movie, they wanna see a fun movie or a gripping movie or an exciting movie or a terrifying movie. They don't really want to see a movie that's sort of ripped from-- headlines or CNN.

RATHER

Let me ask you something, Donnie you helped promote-- Al Gore's *Inconvenient Truth*, right?

FOWLER

Yes, sir.

RATHER

Any war stories from that?

FOWLER

Well, you know, there were two-- there were two approaches to that. You know, this was a-- this was very much an example of some of the Hollywood elite or opinion leaders wanting to make a political statement. But Paramount Pictures, who is a corporation in the business of makin' money-- was the one that distributed it. So they did the normal marketing, "This is a great movie, go see it. This is--" you know. Well, they also decided there was another way to market this movie which was very clearly to go to environmentalists and to Democrats or liberals and say, "This isn't just an entertainment choice when you buy that movie ticket, it's a political statement."

RATHER

You buy a movie ticket to see *Inconvenient Truth* and it's a vote against George Bush?

FOWLER

It's-- it-- it's either a statement about George Bush, or it's a statement to put this issue, global warming, on the agenda.

LONG

Everything's a vote against G-- against George Bush.

FOWLER

In Hollywood-- In Hollywood. So it was-- it was a two-- it was a two-step marketing. The traditional movie marketing, and in fact-- the movie was-- became the third highest grossing documentary in box office in history, behind the penguins and behind *Fahrenheit*-- Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 911*. So-- was it because environmentalists and partisan Democrats said, "I'm gonna stick it to George Bush by buying ten tickets and I'm not even gonna go see the movie"? You know? Or was it because he really had something to say and a lot of mainstream moviegoers went to see it. Probably a little of both.

LONG

I mean, I think the-- *Inconvenient Truth*, *Fahrenheit 911*, a lot of those movies-- they-- they're honestly what they are. I mean, these are documentaries. And you can take issue with 'em and you can argue about them. I mean, I actually think, even as from-- from the right, I think the-- this is a good-- I think this is a good-- trend in moviemaking, that people are making polemical movies, that other people are going to see, where they make a sustained argument over longer than 3 1/2 minutes, which is about all you get-- I mean, the presidential candidates only get a minute. This is a good thing.

RATHER

Let's talk about the here and now and war movies. As you noted earlier, Rob, movies about the Iraq war pretty much flopped right across the board. After the Vietnam war, *Apocalypse Now*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Coming Home*, they all did really well. Why the difference? Is it because they were made after the war?

LONG

I think they were made after the war, and after everyone had sort of come to a conclusion about the war. This is the war going on right now. And I think it's-- it's-- it's-- it's sort of vaguely unseemly for Hollywood millionaires to be making movies, polemical movies about a war that's still going on.

RATHER

Well, what are the chances-- if you think there are any, Donnie, that these just weren't very good m-- movies?

FOWLER

Well, it's very possible. But, you know, the-- there's also-- there's a rally around the flag mentality with the American people. And when we're at war, or when we're in danger, we don't want to be told it's worse. And a lot of these anti-war movies sort of give you the feeling that, "Oh, we're losers," or, "Oh, we're doin' the wrong thing," or, "Oh, you know, it's our fault." The American people-- you know, in a time of crisis are at their most patriotic. And they don't want to see stuff that calls their own integrity or morality into question as human beings. And so a lot of it is timing. You-- it's very hard to sell a movie when we're at war, a war wi-- that al-- most Americans would-- would agree with.

RATHER

Picking (UNINTEL) point, let's take *Redacted* and *Rendition*, two really tough movies about the war. Why didn't they make it?

LONG

Well, I think they were torn from the headlines. And so-- and I think people have already read the headlines, and they don't necessarily want to go see a movie about the headlines. I mean, all of the movies you mentioned about Vietnam, they were also about larger issues. I mean, *Coming Home* was about coming home, and-- *The Deer Hunter* was also about a w-- working class-- Pennsylvania I think they were coalminers going somewhere and suddenly ending up--

RATHER

Steelwor—

LONG

--in the-- steelworkers ending up in a jungle. What's great about the movies is that we all sort of-- everybody's gathered in a big room. And all over the country. And the lights are off, and we're having the same emotional experience. And we're all watching the same thing. And it's kind of great. And it's kind of great to be in a movie and have a moment occur in a movie that everybody cheered. That's what, you know, lots of people in my business, we go for. And I think the—

FOWLER

That's changing so much—

LONG

That is--

FOWLER

--fragmentation—

LONG

--absolutely the ch-- I was gonna say--

FOWLER

We don't have any common experiences.

LONG

We don't. And I think that's really changing. I think in a way that now you can self-select what things you want to watch. You have 900 channels on television, there's the-- the-- the-- the infinity of the internet. The-- you can watch *Fahrenheit 911* if you're already convinced. I mean, he convinced everyone who was already convinced. Most people on my side didn't-- weren't convinced. So--

FOWLER

(UNINTEL) we call it preaching to the choir.

LONG

That's exactly right. I think we've lost that. I think-- and it's true. T-- it's-- really it's too bad. I mean, even if you watch-- look what's happened at Sundance. The number of pictures that are being-- that are in competition here, the number of pictures that are released here just because it's a film festival, there's-- there's kind of strange fragmentation. It's hard to believe that anything out of this is gonna be a blockbuster that's gonna really change the way we look at movies, or ourselves.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

COMING UP, AN INTERVIEW WITH SUNDANCE FOUNDER AND SCREEN LEGEND ROBERT REDFORD.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN THE 1800S, PARK CITY GOT ITS START AS A CENTER FOR THE MINING OF SILVER. BUT IT'S SILVER SCREEN PILGRIMAGES FOR WHICH IT IS BEST KNOWN TODAY. EACH YEAR, THE SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL TRANSFORMS THIS SCENIC SKI RESORT INTO A PLACE WHERE CROWDS, CARS, AND TOUR BUSES PACK THE WINDING STREETS AND WHERE FILM LOVERS AND FILM MAKERS FIND A PERFECT, SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPECTATORS AND SPECTACLE. SUNDANCE IS AMERICA'S MECCA FOR INDEPENDENT FILMS. THAT PHRASE—"INDEPENDENT FILMS"—CAN MEAN ANYTHING FROM HANDMADE LABORS OF LOVE FINANCED ON A CREDIT CARD AND A PRAYER TO JUST ABOUT ANY MOVIE THAT PUTS ITS FOCUS SQUARELY ON STORY, PERFORMANCE, AND THE CINEMATIC CRAFT. AS THE SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL HAS GROWN IN THE MORE THAN 20 YEARS SINCE ITS FOUNDING, SO TOO HAS AMERICA'S AFFECTION FOR INDEPENDENT FILMS. TODAY, BOTH THE FESTIVAL AND THE FILMS THAT PROVIDE ITS REASON FOR BEING, WALK A LINE BETWEEN ARTISTRY AND COMMERCIALISM. WHAT BEGAN LIFE AS A FORUM FOR FILMMAKERS TO SIMPLY SHOW THE FRUITS OF THEIR LABOR HAS BECOME A THRIVING MARKETPLACE WHERE HOLLYWOOD COMES SHOPPING, DISTRIBUTION DOLLARS IN HAND—A DEVELOPMENT THAT HAS DRAWN CELEBRITIES, CORPORATE MARKETING AND A FAIR DOSE OF CRITICISM. BUT AMID THE FIESTA ATMOSPHERE AND THE INCREASING GLITZ OF THE SUNDANCE EXPERIENCE, THE SIMPLE LOVE OF FILM SHINES THROUGH. SUNDANCE IS STILL A PLACE WHERE STRANGERS COMPARE NOTES ON PREMIERS, AND WHERE ONE CAN WALK DOWN PARK CITY'S MAIN STREET AND RUB ELBOWS WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE COME HERE FROM AROUND THE WORLD—EACH HOPING THAT HIS OR HER INDIVIDUAL VISION, WILL FIND AN AUDIENCE. PEOPLE SUCH AS SABIHA SUMAR.

RATHER

The name of the film is?

SABIHA SUMAR, DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER

“Dinner with the President”.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HER DOCUMENTARY FILM TELLS THE STORY OF A MEAL WITH PAKISTAN'S PRESIDENT PERVEZ MUSHARRAF, AND THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE UP THE COMPLEX SOCIETY OF HER HOME COUNTRY.

SUMAR

It became a question of great interest to me to see and to meet the man who had a vision for turning the country around.

FILM CLIP FROM DINNER WITH THE PRESIDENT

We're really happy that all of you were able to, well invite us to dinner. It's really nice of you.

SUMAR

So that's really what brought me to his dinner table.

RATHER

Do you consider it a message film?

SUMAR

No. I think it's a story film. It's really a story it's my story. It's about deepening my own understanding of the country.

RATHER

What does this mean to you to be at Sundance, is it a come of dream come true or not?

SUMAR

Well it's very nice and Sundance Institute has supported a lot of my work. It's, for me, a way of bringing my stories alive to an American audience.

RATHER

Well, the festival has been criticized, particularly in recent years, for being too commercial. Do you agree with that?

SUMAR

Um, I don't think so, because I see a number of independent films that are a part of this festival. And the festival actually values, I think, filmmakers like myself a lot.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

OF COURSE, NO VISIT TO SUNDANCE WOULD BE COMPLETE WITHOUT TALKING TO THE MAN BEHIND IT ALL, SUNDANCE FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT ROBERT REDFORD. I HAD A CHANCE TO SIT DOWN HERE IN PARK CITY WITH THE ICONIC ACTOR, DIRECTOR, AND PRODUCER TO HEAR ABOUT HIS ENDURING VISION FOR THE FESTIVAL, ALONG WITH HIS VIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICS AND FILM IN GENERAL AND IN HIS OWN CAREER.

RATHER

Bob first of all thanks for doing this.

ROBERT REDFORD

My pleasure Dan.

RATHER

For anyone who doesn't know what is the Sundance Festival?

REDFORD

Sundance Festival is just-- was probably the first extension from what the origins of Sundance were which was the labs. 1979, 1980 I decided that I was going to take a break from my career. And a lot had been going very well. And there had been a lot of success and sometimes that's the moment when you want to stop. You know, you can get hooked into your success and begin to do dangerous things like repeating yourself and so forth. And I decided I wanted to put something back and I came up with the idea of creating a mechanism for developing new voices, new talent. And focusing on what was then at that time a-- a dead category, which was independent film. So, I thought what if we came up with a process here for developing new talent by using mentoring. And we used colleagues of mine that were writers, directors, film makers, actors, and asked them to come to Sundance and work with new filmmakers and bring them along-- develop their product-- so there's a better chance of being seen. So, that's how it started. About five years later, I realized that the-- a lot of filmmakers that were coming through were beginning to develop good work. But there was no place for them to be seen. So, I thought, well, maybe we could start a festival which would showcase the work. So, at least the filmmakers would have a-- a place where they could see one another's work. And maybe out of that might grow a community of filmmakers. So, 1986, I started the film festival. And it was a pretty rough start to begin with 'cause nobody really supported it. After a couple of years though, more and more people started to come and then it began to grow. And so, that's really how-- how the Sundance Festival started. And it got really big. Really big.

RATHER

Really big.

REDFORD

Really big.

RATHER

You're to be congratulations on that.

REDFORD

Thank you.

RATHER

You've said that Sundance has always had a political aspect to it. What is it?

REDFORD

Well, subversive, you know, I think let's start there. I mean, the fact was that-- to be honest about it, I mean, it was a bit subversive in the sense that if everything was going this way, we were going to go that way. I think it was Freud that says, "Look in the other corner." We're occupying the other corner that-- that we-- try to do something different and a little bit more unique. But also, while doing that, uncover a whole new category of - of talent which is new filmmakers, independent film and so forth.

Also, by pushing documentaries and-- and on the assumption that documentaries might be closer to the truth than what we're going to get on a lot of corporate newscasts, because of the control of corporations over the news. And I don't have to explain who they are. It's pretty obvious. Audiences I think instinctively wonder, "Are we really getting the truth? Or are we getting a-- a-- a biased point of view here?" So, when you put a documentary out, I think you have a better chance of-- getting the truth to the audience and I-- and I think they know that. And so, obviously, there's a lot of politics in documentaries. The festival this year has an enormous amount of films that are political in nature but they're all from the very personal point of view.

RATHER

We're trying to do a program on the nexus of film and politics. Is there such a nexus?

REDFORD

There is. I don't know that there is the equal nexus of audience reception for that. But I-- but I think-- absolutely there is. I-- I think particularly-- in documentaries. I think documentaries share a slightly different-- space than-- than-- mainstream films do-- vis a vis politics. I think audiences tend to look at politics and they say, "Well, if there's a documentary it's probably telling me the truth unless it's so one-sided-- unless it's so extreme." You know, which there's-- I think audiences are discerning. They can recognize something extreme when they see it. And they'll make their own decision. But if it's a heartfelt story, and particularly involving somebody's personal life vis a vis politics. For example, the Iraq War. You know, when you have a documentary about veterans coming home. Post Traumatic Syndrome. Those are heartfelt stories that I have a hunch audiences will accept those more as documentary rather than mainstream.

RATHER

You've also said-- and this is a quote: I've always meant to use art in a political way. End quote. What way?

REDFORD

Well, I don't—what's-- I must have been insane to say something like that. I'm surprised I'm still in the business. I think probably that was relating to years ago I had made two films almost back to back. One was *Three Days of the Condor* which was a thriller based on what happens to an individual when they just happen to fall in the line of some high level thing that's going on with the action arm of the CIA, which, at that time, was unregulated. And little was known about it, but they had extreme power.

REDFORD IN *THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR*

I pick up traces of what I think is an intelligence network the company doesn't know about. And I report it. Now why is that going to make anybody mad Higgins? Unless it was the company's network and you didn't want it blown. Not even to your own guys. Now somebody is lying Higgins. Come on. Why is everybody so shocked?

REDFORD

Then *All The President's Men* which took almost four years to get made. We all know what that was about.

REDFORD IN *ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN*

Hi I'm Bob Woodward from the Washington Post.

VOICE ON PHONE IN *ALL THE PRESIDENTS MEN*

Yes, yes. What is it.

REDFORD IN *ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN*

I was just kind of wondering why your name and phone number were in the address books of two of the men arrested in the Watergate.

VOICE ON PHONE IN *ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN*

Good God.

REDFORD

That film was very political. But it wasn't like I was inventing something. I wasn't creating-- I was taking a personal point of view and enlarging it to-- to be a drama. It-- it was a factual-- rendition of what actually had happened.

RATHER

Was there a point in your career, and if so where was that point, when you said, "Listen, I want to make movies that succeed. I want to make movies that entertain, but I also want to have a message"?

REDFORD

The first film I-- was able to produce back in 1969, I had a concept. I-- I had been an actor for tens years in theater and Broadway and film and television and I was getting anxious that I wanted to get to place where I could have more control over the story that were told. I-- I-- I had very strong feelings about stories I would like to see told, that had to do with my society and my country-- from what I saw, through my own experience. And so, I had the idea that-- I was pretty well-- on to the idea that America was very much about winning. And there was a slogan I was given as a kid 'cause I was an athlete as a kid, and-- I remember being told-- this slogan. It was kind of a maxim, you know. It-- it isn't whether you win or lose, but it's how you play the game. And I found out that was just a lie. You know, that everything mattered as to whether you won or lost. And I wanted to make a film that demonstrated that dramatically. So, I came up with the idea of a of a trilogy. I wanted to make a trilogy that dealt with the same subject of winning and the Pyrrhic victory of winning. What have you really won? Depending on what your values are. And so I wanted to make that statement. I chose three categories that I thought were dominant in our society, sport, politics and business. So, I started with sport. And I chose skiing as a sport because it hadn't been seen before. It was-- we'd seen baseball, we'd seen football. But we'd never seen skiing and I thought it had a beautiful-- combination of poetry and danger. Because--

RATHER

You're talking about competitive skiing?

REDFORD

Competitive skiing. Downhill racing, yeah. Which is very dangerous and-- and very exciting to watch. And it was about the-- what had this person won, really?

RATHER

The downhill racer?

REDFORD

The downhill racer. And the next one was politics and that was *The Candidate*.

REDFORD IN *THE CANDIDATE*

Oh that's really nice.

REDFORD

So, what had that character, who as we see is not really qualified. He's being elected by cosmetics. He's been elected because of the way he looks rather than what he knows or the substance. So, he wins, but what has he won? And what has the country really won? The third one I never got to is the business. I couldn't get a script on it, but those two films were my entry into being able to have something to do with stories that were being told that-- that were personal.

RATHER

Well, *The Candidate* which became a classic at least it's watched and still taught in political science classes and other places, in colleges. It-- it twist inside this-- this sausage factory that was the campaign's-- of that era, roughly 1970s. More recently you made this film-- *Lions for Lambs* about the Iraq War. What was the message to be out of that? What-- what do you want the audience to take away from it?

REDFORD

I think fundamentally-- there's a lot of issues-- or-- you-- you could talk about in the film, but I think down to the fundamental thing is, personal responsibility. What-- what are we going to do as individuals about our country? And it was not going to be about the Iraq War. It was not going to be an anti-war film. It was going to be a film that took-- certain issues today but look underneath them and try to say, "How did we get here? What were the factors that got us to a point where we are so compromised as a nation on the world stage?"

MERYL STREEP IN *LIONS FOR LAMBS*

Senator, what have we been doing for the past six years?

TOM CRUISE IN *LIONS FOR LAMBS*

What is relevant is the implementation of a new strategy.

MERRYL STREEP IN *LIONS FOR LAMBS*

Don't you think it might be critical to examine how we got to this point?

TOM CRUISE IN *LIONS FOR LAMBS*

How and why is not the issue now. We have to move forward.

REDFORD

You're just creating a question for the audience to think about. That's all I ever wanted. For me it was probably an extension of *All The President's Men* and *The Candidate*. That *The Candidate* was about 1970 and how we elect people. *All The President's Men* was how close we came to losing some of our fundamental-- constitutional rights. And now here. Where are we? What-- would does this look like? So that's what the film was attempting to be.

RATHER

I think you'll agree, and if not you'll say so, of course, that films having to do with this overall arching subject and particularly the war haven't done well. It-- it-- *Redacted*, *Rendition*-- *Lions for Lambs*-- none of them did well. What is the possibility that the audience has what I call "Iraq Afghanistan Fatigue"?

REDFORD

I think that's a fair-- I-- I think there-- there are probably a bunch of reasons. One is I think there were too many films. I would blame the distributors or-- or the industry for that one. I mean how, to put that many films out in such a short amount of time is not fair to the filmmaker because the-- or the audience. There's too many films to-- to choose from. When you're stacking them up like cordwood, that's not the best way to release films. Secondly, so many films were going to be dealing with that issue because that's what artists do. Artists document the changes occurring in their times. Artists are the first responders to what's going on in our society. So, since the war was a huge issue, since we found out it was-- a-- a lie, that the reasons for going in to the war were a lie, what were the-- going to be the consequences of that? So, filmmakers step in to tell their stories. Well, to have them all coming out within two months-- was going to be rough. And-- and the other part, which you're talking about, I think, is fair. It-- the audiences are-- are seeing on the news-- they-- they don't get a lot of good news, because that-- what-- what's the expression? When it bleeds it leads or you know. If there's blood and gore, if there's chaos, let's see it. Audiences can only take so much of that. And audiences, particularly American audiences, want to say, "Where's the good news? Where-- what-- what can I do that's positive? I don't want to see this any more." Now, you put a film out that basically shows them what they think they've seen on the news nightly, or on the front page of the newspapers-- they don't want to see it.

RATHER

You've talked about documentaries and your record is clear that you've supported documentaries, you love documentaries, you help documentaries a great deal with the institute here or the Sundance Festival, but when you came to the idea of doing-- *Lions for Lambs* you did it as fiction. It was a big screen fiction film. Any second thoughts

about you should have done that as a documentary? Might have resonated with the audience more?

REDFORD

No. I think maybe a different subject that was maybe more about the war, something like that. I mean there is a project I have right now to be frank it's a-- having to do with Richard Clarke's (PH) book. There is potentially a terrific film there. Not a film that's going to tell you what the issue was surrounding what Richard Clarke tried to do to warn the administration that there was an attack coming. It's about the personal relationships of the people trying to do their job. John O'Neil (PH), Richard Clarke, people like that. That's what interests me. No, I don't have any regrets about *Lions for Lambs* because it wasn't-- an-- an anti-war film. *Lions for Lambs* is using art to create a fiction around something real. And what you don't want to do, is you're not giving the audiences answers to something. You're just raising a question and handing it off to them and say, "How do you feel about this?"

RATHER

You know, I talked to you through the rest of the afternoon.

REDFORD

I could talk to you too.

RATHER

What question have I not asked you that you wanted to be asked?

REDFORD

How old I was. I'm surprised. That's what everybody asks. No, I'm-- I'm-- I'm kidding you. You-- you-- no-- nothing. We're-- we're good.

RATHER

Bob thank you very much. Appreciate you taking this time--

REDFORD

Sure.

RATHER

Thank you very, very much.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

IF, AS ROBERT REDFORD SAYS, "ARTISTS ARE THE FIRST RESPONDERS TO WHAT'S GOING ON IN OUR SOCIETY"... THEN HOW ARE SOME OF THE ARTISTS AT THIS YEAR'S SUNDANCE RESPONDING? AND WHAT ARE THEY RESPONDING TO? WE GATHERED TOGETHER THREE FILMMAKERS WHO ARE HERE WITH FILMS THAT COULD NOT BE MORE TOPICAL—DEALING WITH SUBJECT MATTER SUCH AS THE IRAQ WAR, IMMIGRATION, AND ENERGY...AND WE TRIED TO DISCOVER HOW THESE ARTISTS ARE USING

PERSONAL STORIES TO TACKLE SOME OF TODAY'S MOST PRESSING ISSUES.

RATHER (VOICEOVER)

WE CAUGHT UP WITH THEM AS THEY HIT SUNDANCE. SOUTH AFRICAN FILMMAKER NEIL ABRAMSON BRINGS HIS STORY OF A YOUNG AMERICAN SOLDIER ABOUT TO BE SHIPPED OFF TO IRAQ IN THE FEATURE FILM *AMERICAN SON*

NEIL ABRAMSON, FILMMAKER

It's a coming-of-age story in many ways. It's about a-- African American kid who's got no way out. He signs up to the Marines. And he realizes the gravity of his choice, which he was not really that in tune with.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

COURTNEY HUNT'S FEATURE FILM *FROZEN RIVER* EXPLORES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A TRAILER-PARK MOM AND A NATIVE AMERICAN WOMAN WHO TEAM UP TO SMUGGLE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS ACROSS THE CANADIAN BORDER.

COURTNEY HUNT, FILMMAKER

It looks at who they are and why they get involved in doing something like this.

JOSH TICKELL, FILMMAKER

Wow, it's definitely Sundance.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND JOSH TICKELL'S DOCUMENTARY *FIELDS OF FUEL* EXPLORES THE LOOMING OIL CRISIS AND THE POTENTIAL OF ALTERNATIVE FUELS.

TICKELL

I think people will see this film as a catalyst for a new generation of patriotism, technologies and innovation.

RATHER

When people come out of the movie house having seen your film--

ABRAMSON

Yeah.

RATHER

What do you want them to be thinking?

ABRAMSON

Um, it's really about a kid struggling to better himself. And so I hope that they-- they come out and feel the fighting spirit that is really, truly an American-- American feeling. And yet at the same time, there is discourse and a disconnect. There's a sense of disconnect. So, it's a combination of those two feelings.

RATHER

And Courtney, what do you want people to come out of the movie house thinking and saying about your film?

HUNT

I mean, I know the country is in-- in a sort of cultural confusion about what do we think about immigration. How-- who-- who's coming in and do we want 'em. And this film on a couple of different points of view addresses that.

RATHER

How essential is immigration to your plot?

HUNT

The point of view is this white trailer mom. So, it's just a way to make money to get the double wide that she wants for her children. How essential it is? It's there, but that's not what the movie's about. The movie's about why would she do this? Why would she do something that's so risky and illegal? And what would drive her to do it? Hers is a typical American point of view, just trying to make enough money to get by. Just trying to get a nicer house, just trying to look after her children. She's a single mom. She meets the issue like the average American meets the issue. If it impacts me, then it might be important. It wasn't my intention to make a movie about immigration. It was my intention to tell a story about these women who I-- this is actually true-- who drive across a frozen river for six-- at \$600 a head to bring-- immigrants into the country 'cause they'd rather do that than work at, say, you know, a great big huge store like Wal-Mart for minimum wage.

RATHER

And Josh, what do you want people to be thinking when they see your film?

TICKELL

When people see *Fields of Fuel*, they come out of the theatre waving flags, ready to do something about America's energy crisis. This film breaks through that noise and shows that every single person can do something to create energy independence in their town or their city right now today.

RATHER

Josh-- you've traveled the country. You've lectured, authored a book. What made you decide to change your adventure into a documentary?

TICKELL

You know, I read a report, Dan, that a sociologist, a psychologist and neurobiologist put together. And they said that people take the memory that they have from movies, and it's stored in the same place in their brain that memory from real life is stored. So, in essence when we watch a movie, we have the same experience as if we really lived it. And after traveling the country in the Veggie Van for two years, writing two books, lecturing on alternative energy, seeing what the United States could do if people knew, I thought, "This is the way to have enough people see the possibility for the US to have green energy. Make a movie."

RATHER

Now, the legendary studio head Jack Warner is quoted as saying, "If you want to send a message, use Western Union." Now, it does seem that we're flooded with message movies. Do these films shape public opinion? Neil?

ABRAMSON

It's difficult. I mean, I think that you can be very lucky and have it shape public opinion. But there is a lot of noise out there. You turn on the internet, you turn on the TV, you turn on your cell phone. It-- it's just coming at you in all directions. And, you know, films that are-- make you think or make you feel things that you don't really wanna feel are sometimes difficult to watch.

RATHER

Courtney, let me ask you the question this way. Do you mirror public opinion or create it?

HUNT

I think we focus it. I think we take-- we have a sense of what's going on in the world and we say, "Okay, but I'm going to address it through this single white trailer mom. And I'm gonna-- I want you to look at immigration through her eyes. I want you to see her kind of bigotry. I want you to see this, I want you to see that." And I think we-- we focus it. Whether it catches on is anybody's guess. But-- I think that we help to make that-- to bring it home, to bring it to a personal level where you're sitting for 93 minutes and you're traveling with that character in her skin, essentially. And that that helps to-- to-- maybe focus how people feel about it. And they can say, "Well, I don't agree with her. I would never do that." Well, then you know more about what you-- what you feel. Whereas you may have not even thought about immigration before that point. So, I think it can bring it-- bring it home. I mean, whether or not my movie will reach the malls is anybody's guess. You know, I'd like for it to. I think it would have a bigger impact there that way. You know, that would be my hope, that it wouldn't just be an art house film.

RATHER

Well, Josh, what do you think the keys to success, to getting the film accepted by somebody, shown somewhere and getting the message through?

TICKELL

Dan, I think the biggest thing that makes a film successful is whether or not it speaks from the heart. And people resonate to truth. They want truth. They sold everything that's not true all day long, and when they see something that's true and they get to experience that, it compels them and it moves them and it touches them and it inspires them. And that's what I think the defining line between a successful film and not so successful film is.

RATHER

With feature films, can films lead public opinion? Or do they inevitably follow public opinion?

HUNT

Oh, I think it's a conversation. It's the filmmaker has their ear to the ground, I'm responding to what I'm seeing. There's a whole conversation that goes on between what's going on in the filmmaker's world and-- and who that audience is going to be.

ABRAMSON

For me the challenge is to mirror what's happening in society. And if you-- if you find that-- you know, if you get there before someone else, you are able to-- give a fresh perspective. And when you find that fresh perspective, sometimes it surprises a lot of people and you get a lot of people-- you know, it happened with *Brokeback Mountain* or it happened with-- *Crash* or movies like that where-- the media was sort of looking in one direction, and suddenly these films triggered something and-- and spoke something that a lot of people were-- were feeling at the time. And-- it doesn't happen often, but when it does, it's a-- it's a pretty magical thing.

RATHER

Unless I miss my guess, and I sometimes do, there are gonna be any number of people who see this and say, "Well, there you have it, Dan Rather, he's gotten together three "leftist" filmmakers"-- that's been in quotation marks. "They're all Democrats or even further left than that. And-- whom are we kidding here that they're all in the propaganda business." Are you in the propaganda business?

TICKELL

I think anyone who makes anything that goes on a screen, that goes on a billboard, that gets typed, that's in a book, that's in a magazine, that's in any way, shape or form a piece of media is in some way conveying an opinion. And for us to say that's not true is-- you can't say that. I have an opinion. I have an opinionated film. And my objective is that other people are-- are able to express their opinions through that. So, is it propaganda? I think propaganda involves manipulation. I think propaganda involves taking something that's not true and making it into truth. I think what we do a lot of times as filmmakers with courageous, brave, true and honest films, is we do the opposite of propaganda. We tell the truth. We tell the messages that aren't being told.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

FILMS AND FILMMAKERS ARE ONLY PART OF THE PICTURE AT SUNDANCE, AND ONE OF THE BIG REASONS THAT CREATIVE ARTISTS BRING THEIR WORK HERE, IS IN THE HOPE OF GETTING THEIR FILMS SEEN BY AUDIENCES AROUND THE COUNTRY. THAT'S WHERE PEOPLE LIKE TOM ORTENBERG, COME IN.

TOM ORTENBERG, LIONSGATE ENTERTAINMENT

I'm looking for entertainment first. And if it happens to be a film that can change people's lives, that can effect people, all the better, but we're looking for entertainment.

RATHER

Well, did you see anything you liked?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TOM ORTENBERG IS PRESIDENT OF THEATRICAL FILMS FOR LIONSGATE ENTERTAINMENT, AND HE'S BEEN INVOLVED IN THE MAKING AND RELEASE OF SOME BIG-TIME MOVIES WITH MESSAGES, INCLUDING DOCUMENTARIES BY MICHAEL MOORE AND FEATURE—OR, NARRATIVE—FILMS, SUCH AS CRASH AND MONSTER'S BALL.

RATHER

The difference between Hollywood and Sundance?

ORTENBERG

Well, the lines between Hollywood and Sundance are certainly blurring, the festival certainly has become more glamorous and more about Hollywood and there's more money than ever poured into Sundance and more people than ever, but at it's heart the Sundance Film Festival more so than any other film festival in the world is about American independent cinema. They do a great job of picking out terrific independent films, they can't control the hollywoodization that goes on around them. They can't stop Hollywood studios from buying out store fronts on Main St. and hosting all these big swag suites and lavish parties. The studios are engaged in something of a tug of war with the festival it seems for the soul of it. But at its core, it's still about American independent film and that's what makes it special.

RATHER

What are you looking for when you look at films?

ORTENBERG

For a narrative, film has to be entertaining first. If it feels like it's preachy, if it feels like its message first and entertainment later, then it's usually a recipe for failure at the box office.

RATHER

Now, as opposed to a documentary?

ORTENBERG

A lot of people think that documentaries have to be or should be objective and really that's the farthest thing from the truth, I think a documentary, certainly, in my experience, by definition is and should be subjective, but it is, it's fact based, it's telling a true story with real people.

RATHER

But with a point of view.

ORTENBERG

With a point of view, and I think it's a misunderstanding a lot sometimes among filmmakers and among audiences that somehow a documentary shouldn't have a point of view, when I think it's absolutely necessary to have a point of view.

RATHER

Do films – both feature films and documentaries – do they lead, help create public opinion or follow public opinion?

ORTENBERG

I think that they mostly mirror it. I don't think that films really lead public opinion because if, my sense is that if people weren't feeling it in some way somehow inside them, that film would not lead them there. Fahrenheit 911 certainly helped bring the Iraq war into focus. *Sicko* last year, I think, helped bring healthcare in America into focus. A movie like *Crash* certainly helped to bring race relations into focus. But I think it has to touch something inside people and it kind of it allows what people are feeling inside even if they're not aware that they're feeling it, or don't know how to make sense of what they're feeling. But the best films can bring out the best in people, but films absolutely, narrative or nonfiction, can certainly help focus some attention on certain issues and can contribute to the dialogue in America. Absolutely.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

WHEN WE RETURN, HOLLYWOOD AND AMERICA...CHANGING TOGETHER....

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

IT'S WORTH BEARING IN MIND THAT FILM, POLITICS, AND CULTURE HAVE OVERLAPPED FOR A LONG TIME, GOING BACK TO THE EARLIEST MOTION PICTURES...FROM 1915'S BIRTH OF A NATION, CINEMATICALLY GROUNDBREAKING BUT DEEPLY TROUBLING FOR ITS OVERTLY RACIST CONTENT....TO FIRST "TALKIE" THE JAZZ SINGER...TO THE EARLY BLOCKBUSTER GONE WITH THE WIND. BUT AS THE COUNTRY HAS CHANGED, SO TOO HAS HOLLYWOOD. ELVIS MITCHELL, INFLUENTIAL FILM CRITIC AND HOST OF PUBLIC RADIO'S "THE TREATMENT," IS ATTENDING THIS YEAR'S SUNDANCE NOT ONLY AS AN OBSERVER BUT ALSO AS A PARTICIPANT, HERE WITH HIS DOCUMENTARY FILM THE BLACK LIST, A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS WITH PROMINENT AFRICAN AMERICANS OF VARIOUS PROFESSIONS, DISCIPLINES, AND BACKGROUNDS. HE SHARED WITH US HIS PERSONAL TAKE ON HOW HOLLYWOOD HAS REFLECTED AND INFORMED AMERICAN ATTITUDES ON RACE, CULTURE, AND POLITICS, IN HIS OWN LIFETIME.

ELVIS MITCHELL, FILM CRITIC

I never started out wanting to write about movies. I just was an audience member like-- like most other people. And maybe one of the things that made me want to start writing about films is I didn't feel there's anybody of my experience writing about movies. Black films tend not to get written about in the same way, which is one of the reasons I do what I do, because I want to change that discussion. The black experience in film, especially mainstream film, is about fostering stereotype. And so, the idea of seeing-- a competent black man get through a day effectively still seems to be like science fiction to some extent. The old-fashioned message film basically still treated African-Americans as children. That-- that black people were unable to affect their own destinies. And-- and it sort of still makes people swallow hard. So many of those films, the Sidney Poitier films were movies that now seem as if they were made on another planet. Because so much has changed in a number of good ways. My parents, who were thrilled when he won the Oscar, that seemed to be the bellwether of a new era. But he seemed to be the lonely black man. For example, *In The Heat of the Night*, there's a scene where the old white florist slaps him. And he slaps him back.

SIDNEY POITIER *IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT*, 1967

Was Mr. Colbert ever in this greenhouse, say last night, about midnight?

MITCHELL

The director once told me that in a lot of the south, his responding slap was cut out of the film. Sidney Poitier didn't grow up in America, and he has a different experience of life than African-Americans do. He was determined to say that I have a point of view, and-- and I'm not just going to stand around and affect things, even though these movies are shaped in this way, where I don't get to do a whole lot, or get to be around my own people a lot. I'm going to show that this is the man that I am. And-- and by virtue of standing up for himself in that way, he certainly had an impact.

I was like in junior high school, a kid during the-- the age of the blaxploitation film, which I always thought was a misnomer. 'Cause-it's a fascinating period to see black pride being manifest in movies. And the interesting thing about this, you think about sort of the-- the post-Watergate era of filmmaking, those films where nobody won, being it Jack Nicholson or Warren Beatty,-or even in some movies, Clint Eastwood. I mean, he's not the big hero in *Dirty Harry*, the first of those films. There was kind of a sense of loss, of defeat. The real kind of old school movie heroism is being depicted in blaxploitation films.

RICHARD ROUNDTREE IN *SHAFT*, 1971

What the hell is this?

MITCHELL

I remember being a kid, being—dragged by my sister to see *Shaft*. And the reaction in the audience was, when the hero of the movie, the very first scene, can't get a cab, you never saw that in movies before. And there's this kind of moment where everybody in the audience identified with it. And that was so rare. When *She's Gotta Have It* came out in 1986, there hadn't been a film about black people for a long time. And to see a film that was rooted in the culture at that minute, about black people. And also, seeing people who look like people I knew, who talk like people I knew. To see that in a movie, and-- and to have contemporary black culture in a movie at the same time it was happening, was just kind of breathtaking to me.

SPIKE LEE IN *SHE'S GOTTA HAVE IT*, 1986

I don't see what you see in those two Joe fellas? Have you ever taken a look at Jamie's head? It's a fucken 16 piece chicken macnugget head.

MITCHELL

Spike recognized that-- in that way that Goddard said that every cut, every edit is a political act. Every film by a black filmmaker was a political act. And you couldn't shirk your responsibility. And-- and Lee rightly said that, "I'm going to make people pay attention to this. I'm going to make people ask questions about their lives." In effect, every black film or film with a black cast, became de facto, a political statement. Because it showed that we have lives that are worth-- worthy of being dramatized_or-- or-- and rather than just being comedies. And instead of it being this thing that led to a wholesale change, it led to incremental change. If you can name another black President before *Deep Impact* and the movie, I'll buy you a car. There had been one before. James Earl Jones played a black President in a movie called, *The Man*. But it was extraordinarily rare.

MORGAN FREEMAN IN *DEEP IMPACT*, 1998

Now we have to make some decisions together, what do we do? You have a choice.

MITCHELL

And so, when the black President finally shows up, played by Morgan Freeman he wasn't the JFK of presidents. He was the George Washington of black presidents that was a-- a kind of a big deal. But still, he-- he was an ineffective President. There was nothing he could do it seems to me like another example of that kind of thing where a-- a black man doesn't have any power. You know, the-- the heavens are gonna like step in before he can even get a-- an act of Congress. And then, a couple of years later there was-- Dennis Hasbert on 24. And the great thing about that was no big deal was made about it. So, the ground was broken. You know, it's been almost ten years since *Deep Impact*. We still haven't had the-- the meteor strike on the earth yet, but we still haven't had a black President yet, either. I think we're at a point now where film feels like it's-- it's a bad cell phone call. There's like a-- a three second lag between it and what's going on right now. I mean, in--in terms of politics, films don't deal with these kinds of questions we're talking about. You know. It's-- almost every country outside of this has elected a woman. And so that we finally got to this point where a woman is a believable candidate seems absurd to me. So-- when it comes to movies reflecting that, that still hasn't happened yet. And-- and movies used to want to lead the discourse or at least answer questions or-- or provoke people to think about questions. But they've still been kind of off.

CAR HIJACKERS IN *CRASH*, 2004

Get the fuck out of the car, get the keys, hurry up. Get down!

MITCHELL

Crash is about something that happened to Paul Haggis about being carjacked and then asking himself, "Wow, how does this change the way I think about black people?" – And whatever problems that movie has, it's a movie that says, the discussion of race is not over in this country. It said that you can live your life and be a liberal and think well of-- of minorities, and never see one. And have to-- have those perceptions of yours tested in a real way. People responded to it, because there was a hunger that that conversation played out in the movies. There are still questions that-- that Hollywood can ask that the rest of the country wants to try to answer, at least questions that the rest of the country wants to hear. First and foremost, unfortunately, or fortunately, people wanna be entertained by a movie. And all the message stuff has to be secondary. I mean, nobody's going to a movie just to see his or her point of view echoed in the film both sides can say, "Well, I know this. Now what?" And a great film leaves you to think, "Now what?" Documentaries ask questions. Documentaries have the filmmakers' passions in them. And thanks to Sundance, and other film festivals, documentaries now have a place in movie theaters. Ten years ago this didn't happen. It's really independent films that want to make statements and these are personal statements.

AL GORE IN *AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH*, 2006

Cause if they acknowledge it and recognize it, then the moral imperative to make big changes is inescapable.

MITCHELL

I think any time a film leads to somebody getting the Nobel Peace Prize, we have to say that film probably has-- has some-- long-term effect on the way the world lives-- leads it's lives. That is what a film that comes out of Sundance can do. Great movies are taking the idiosyncratic and making that universal as something that we see in a movie that we can all relate to. I've always hated the Black List as a term. When I was a kid I thought it meant a list of really cool black people. So I was really shocked that it meant something different. One of the reasons why I wanted to make *The Black List* was I felt like so many films about-- documentaries about black people are about victims. I thought it would be great to make a film that wasn't about black people suffering. But about black people talking about their triumphs.

AL SHARPTON IN *THE BLACK LIST*, 2008

I knew it was unlikely that I'd be president, even if everyone running against me died, they would have found a way to get and make someone else president. But I knew that they couldn't once I got on that stage, they couldn't control the debate.

MITCHELL

To have people speak from a point of pleasure and pride, African-Americans, about what they've achieved, just seemed kind of extraordinary to me. It seemed like, well, why hasn't this happened yet.

RICHARD PARSONS IN *THE BLACK LIST*

When people look at you, and evaluate you or write about you, you're going to be judged on either side of the line, if you succeed you're going to be ah, here's a black person that succeeded, if you fail, it's like here's another black person that failed. And so we'll know we've made real progress when you just get to be a person.

MITCHELL

Great documentaries happen to take these stories, and they're about the-- the impact. Or they're-- they're about what these stories mean. They ask questions that, for whatever reason, meant something to the people who made them and went on to change the world. Not just the world of filmmaking, but the world.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

MOVIES, THE QUINTESSENTIAL AMERICAN ENTERTAINMENT- AND POLITICS, OUR NATIONAL ENGINE OF DEMOCRATIC CHANGE; HAVE A LONG AND POTENT HISTORY TOGETHER. GOING BACK NEARLY A CENTURY TO THE PRESIDENCY OF WOODROW WILSON, POLITICIANS HAVE MAINTAINED CLOSE TIES WITH THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE AND ACT IN MOVIES. SOME FILM STARS EVEN GOING ON TO BECOME POLITICIANS. BOTH OF THESE INSTITUTIONS HOLD A MIRROR TO THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AND EACH, FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE, RELIES ON IMAGE AND ARTIFICE. TODAY, THE INFLUENCE THEY EXERT ON ONE ANOTHER IS AS STRONG AS EVER. AND AS AMERICA APPROACHES A POTENTIALLY TRANSFORMATIVE ELECTION, THE IDEAS THAT FILMMAKERS ARE PROJECTING ONTO THE BIG SCREEN ARE ONCE AGAIN HELPING TO DRIVE DEBATE ON SOME OF THE BIGGEST ISSUES FACING OUR COUNTRY, AND OUR WORLD.

FROM THE SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL IN PARK CITY UTAH... THIS IS DAN RATHER REPORTING FOR HDNET. GOOD NIGHT.