



3-9-2010

# Independent Media in a Time of War

Amy Goodman

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## Recommended Citation

Goodman, Amy (2007) "Independent Media in a Time of War," *Sacred Heart University Review*: Vol. 24: Iss. 1, Article 1.  
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/shureview/vol24/iss1/1>

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AMY GOODMAN

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*Independent Media in a Time of War*

How many of you have heard or watched *Democracy Now*? Well, I come from Pacifica Radio, which was founded fifty-six years ago by a World War II conscientious objector named Lou Hill. When he came out of the detention camps, he said there has to be a media outlet that is not run by corporations that profit from war, but run by journalists and artists, and that's how Pacifica was born. Not run by corporations, as George Gerbner, founder of the Cultural Environment movement says; not run by corporations that have nothing to tell and everything to sell, that are raising our children today.

And so the first Pacifica station went on the air in 1949, KPFA, followed by KPFK in Los Angeles and WBAI, 99.5 FM in New York city in 1960. We've just celebrated our forty-fifth anniversary. In 1977, WPFW in Washington went on the air, and in 1970 KPFT in Houston. Those are the five Pacifica stations. When the Houston station went on the air, it's the only radio station in the country whose transmitter was blown up twice in the first year of operation, blown up by the Ku Klux Klan. And when the exalted Cyclops, or was it the Grand Dragon—I often confuse their titles—admitted responsibility, he said it was his proudest act, because I

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*Amy Goodman is the host and executive producer of Democracy Now! This talk, on one of the subjects of her book (co-authored with her brother, David Goodman), The Exception to the Rulers (Hyperion, 2004), was presented at the Tenth Annual Media Studies Symposium at Sacred Heart University on April 20, 2005.*

think he understood how dangerous *Pacifica* is, dangerous because it allows people to speak for themselves. And when you hear someone speaking from their own experience, that breaks down stereotypes and caricatures that feed the hate that fuels these groups. It's very important we be able to hear people speaking for themselves, especially in a climate in this country when whole populations are demonized: always African-Americans, now Muslims, Arab-Americans, people of South Asian descent. And when you have a media, the networks, where the average sound bite is eight or nine seconds, what can be said in that amount of time, especially when the most common people on the networks are a very small circle of pundits who know so little about so much, explaining the world to us?

These populations that have been demonized hardly get a chance to speak for themselves. And why is that important? When you hear someone describing where they come from, what their religion is, who their communities are, even the debates within their own communities, it changes your view. I mean, you might say, "That sounds like my Uncle Henry," "It sounds like my sister," or "That sounds like my grandfather." And that changes the way you behave toward perhaps someone or a group of people.

We all know about the Abu Ghraib torture scandal in Iraq, but I think that it began long before the first low-level soldier laid a finger on the first Iraqi person. I think somehow these soldiers felt they had a kind of permission. I'm not talking about the chain of command: that has to be investigated right to the top. But it's a permission from being raised here at home in a media culture where whole populations are iced out. And if they're demonized and if you only hear media that acts as an amplifier for those in power that are doing the demonizing, it makes it a little easier to treat them as subhuman.

It is so important we have a media for everyone. In the 1950s, the great singer-writer-activist, Paul Robeson, was white-listed from almost every public space in this country, but he knew he could be heard over the airwaves of *Pacifica* Radio. James Baldwin debating

Malcolm X over the effectiveness of the lunch-counter sit-ins in the South, civil disobedience, knew they would be broadcast over WBAI. It is so important we have a media that brings us history.

I come from Ground Zero. You all live somewhat near there, but I come from blocks from where the towers of the World Trade Center once stood. On September 11, at 9:00 in the morning, we were doing our broadcast—we now do it at 8:00. The first plane hit the first tower at 8:42. The second plane hit the second tower at 9:03. We were already in the midst of our show, and we were doing a special that day on the connection between terror and September 11, 1973, the day Salvador Allende died in the palace, the Chilean president, as the U.S.-backed Pinochet forces rose to power, the Nixon-backed, Kissinger-backed, ITT-backed Pinochet forces rose to power in Chile.

September 11 is not the first time September 11 was connected to terror. September 11, 1990, Guatemalan anthropologist, Myrna Mack died at the hands of U.S. backed-security forces in Guatemala. September 11, 1977 in South Africa, Stephen Biko, founder of the Black Consciousness movement, was being beaten to death in the back of a van by U.S.-backed apartheid forces. He died in the early morning hours of September 12. September 11, 1971, the Attica uprising began, in upstate New York at the prison: prisoners protesting prison conditions. Two days later, then-New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller called out the New York State troopers and they opened fire, killing eighty-eight men, including guards, and wounding hundreds of others.

September 11, 2001 is not the first time that terror came to our soil. Ask any African-American about slavery. Ask any Native American about what's happened in this country. But September 11, 2001 was a horrific moment. Three thousand people incinerated in an instant. We will never know how many people died on that day, because those who go uncounted in life go uncounted in death, and they're the undocumented workers who worked at the World Trade Center. We should know their names. We should know their stories. That's what dignifies a life.

We stayed at the firehouse where we work, a hundred-year-old firehouse that's been converted into a community media center just blocks from Ground Zero. In those next days, we were the closest national broadcast to Ground Zero. We were within the evacuation zone. Most of the people were being cleared out, but we knew we had to keep broadcasting. We could see that the war machine was gearing up in Washington. And we started to broadcast the voices of those who lost loved ones, but who were saying that retaliation is not the answer, people like Rita Lasar, who lost her brother Abe Zelmanowitz on the twenty-seventh floor of the World Trade Center. Abe was working next to his best friend, Ed, who was a paraplegic. They worked for Blue Cross. And even as Abe's brother was screaming to him on a cell phone to get out now, he said, "As soon as the emergency workers come out and help Ed down, I'll go out with them." They died, with so many others. And then there was Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez, who lost their son Greg Ernesto Rodriguez above the hundredth floor of the World Trade Center. He worked for Cantor Fitzgerald. Six hundred and fifty-eight of one thousand and fifty of their workers died there.

Rita heard that President Bush a few days later gave his National Cathedral address and invoked the name of Abe Zelmanowitz, invoked the story of Abe, and called him a national hero, and she said "No." And she wrote a letter to the *New York Times*. She said even if she knew the worst pain of her life, it would only increase her suffering to know that a woman in Afghanistan would soon lose her brother. She said, "Not in my name. Not in my brother's name." And Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez wrote a letter to President Bush. It swirled around the Internet. And they said it would not lessen their pain to know that a mother and father in Afghanistan would soon lose their son. They said, Not in our name. Not in our son's name.

And a nationwide movement grew up all over this country: Not In Our Name. September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows. And we sometimes saw them on television, talking about their loved ones. But when they moved from description, describing those they

had lost, to prescription, what should happen, the media cut away, and they went to the terrorism experts, the Oliver Norths and the Henry Kissingers. Well, maybe the media got it right in that case: they are the experts in terror. It takes one to know one. And I don't say that lightly or glibly. You look at the record of Henry Kissinger. You look at his involvement in the coup in Chile. You look at his involvement with the Argentine generals, who engaged in the dirty war. In fact, just today in the news headlines, one of the military officials in Argentina from that war was sentenced to 640 years in prison, from decades ago. We read it in the headlines from yesterday. For the death flights, taking prisoners on planes and dropping them one by one out of these planes. You look at Kissinger's role in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam: millions died there. You look at his role in one of the great genocides of the twentieth century, and that's Indonesia's invasion and occupation of East Timor, a small Catholic country three hundred miles above Australia, which I'll talk about in a minute, one of the great slaughters of the twentieth century.

I do think Osama bin Laden and his accomplices should be tried for what happened on September 11, but I also think that Henry Kissinger should be tried for war crimes. We have to have a uniform standard of justice, and that's what the International Criminal Court is all about, which is precisely why President Bush unsigned that treaty. He said we are not going to have our soldiers and our officials tried in an international criminal court. Clinton didn't do much better: he signed it the last day he possibly could, and then Bush came into office and unsigned the treaty. But if we don't have a universal standard of justice, it will generate an anger in the rest of the world.

I mean, let's look at Alberto Gonzales, who's just been confirmed as the Attorney General of the United States. There is a big untold story in these last few years—we talk about it in the beginning of the new preface to *The Exception to the Rulers*—and that is the level of resistance in the highest and lowest levels of the military to what is going on right now. On *Democracy Now!* a couple

of months ago we had Brigadier General James Cullen, who joined with a number of other generals and admirals in writing a letter protesting the confirmation of Alberto Gonzales. He was the White House counsel for President Bush, elevated to Attorney General. He was the one who laid the legal groundwork for the torture at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo by saying that the Geneva Conventions don't apply. Now, why do these generals and admirals care about that? Because if they don't apply for prisoners the U.S. takes, what will happen to U.S. servicemen and women who are captured in other places? General Cullen said that Alberto Gonzales is a threat to U.S. servicemen and women for that very reason. We should hear these voices. It is very important. And I really do think that the antiwar movement in this country is more than a fringe minority. It is more than a silent majority. It is the silenced majority, silenced by the corporate media.

I want to look at two examples of media coverage. One is the Terry Schiavo case: you know, blanket coverage for two weeks outside the hospice where the protesters were. I was invited on MSNBC's *Hardball* to talk about that coverage, to say what I thought about it. You know, it was pretty amazing to find out that between 80 and 90% of Americans were opposed to Congressional intervention and Bush signing off on legislation. Between 80 and 90%: we did not get that sense from the media coverage. If anything, that it was divided. More than half, more than 60% of evangelicals were opposed to the intervention. That's pretty incredible. Instead, what we got, every time that small group of protesters went to the microphone, led by Randall Terry of Operation Rescue—and we learned very little about him, even though there was blanket coverage—every time he went to the mike, the networks would cut away from the regularly scheduled program to bring you those voices. MSNBC asked what I thought, and I said, “Let that be a model of coverage of protest in this country.” Two weeks before was the second anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. There were over eight hundred protests around the country; tens of thousands marched, vigiled, rallied. One of the

largest ones was at Fort Bragg, outside Fort Bragg, where those who lost loved ones in Iraq, spoke. Some were soldiers who were refusing to go to Iraq: there are more than 5,500 who are saying no. We rarely hear about this. And I watched all the networks that night, the major nightly newscasts—it's a painful job, but somebody's got to do it—and I did not see one protestor interviewed. That is a media beating the drums for war, and that is not acceptable.

There are ways to get the word out. How many of you have heard me tell the story of the *Sally Jessy Raphael Show*? Well, during the Persian Gulf War, I had the chance to go—does everyone know what that show is? You know, it's a talk show, like *Oprah*, *Phil Donahue*—I had the chance to go on this program. It was during the bombing, the first time the U.S. was bombing Iraq, and I was on WBAI railing against the bombing of the cradle of civilization back to the cradle, and a young volunteer ran in. You know, community radio, Pacifica radio, NPR, PBS, they all rely on volunteers, especially when we're in fund-raising drive, to help answer phone calls, and I hope you do that at your station, WSHU. It's so important to preserve independent media. So we were broadcasting and a young volunteer ran in and said, The *Sally Jessy Raphael Show* is on the phone. I said, Oh, right, and I just kept talking. She said, No, no, seriously. So I picked up the phone and sure enough, there was a producer. She said that she was listening in her limousine and she wanted me to come on the broadcast. They would record it and then they would send it out around the country two days later. Wow, I said, sure, I'll come on. They were going to have three women for and against the war. So the first thing I thought about is, well, what to wear. It's like, millions of people are going to watch the show, right? I thought I could dress as a man pretending to be a woman, masquerading as a man who is actually a woman. You know, I wanted to fit in to the program, to the kind of shows that they do. So anyway, I figured out what to do and I went on down to the show.

They put us in two green rooms: three women for the war, three women against the war. Interestingly, the other five—the two with



me against and the three for—were all military. They put us in two rooms. They said they didn't want us to meet before we got out on the stage. I asked why, and they said they wanted us to duke it out on the stage. I hadn't really seen the show, and that made me a little bit nervous, you know, the whole Jerry Springer thing and everything. So, the producer said, no, really, I just want the show to work. I want it to get the top ratings to prove that we can deal with issues that matter. And I thought that she was on to something: it doesn't matter whether you work in the system or outside the system. What matters is that you can accomplish what you want to. And if you can, no matter how painful, stay there and do it.

So we went out on the stage, and the program began. The lights came up, the music came on. Sally came out and she gave the microphone to someone in the audience as she started her show, who said, I'm really concerned about Saddam Hussein's biological and chemical weapons, to which the woman next to me responded. Her name was Dr. Yolanda Hewitt-Vaughn. She was an Army captain trained as a doctor, and she was refusing to go to the Gulf. She said she was trained to save lives, not take lives. And she responded, and she said, I share your concern, but I also think it's important to point out that we have biological and chemical weapons right here in the United S. . . And before she could get out the word "States," Sally rolled around and she came barreling down the aisle, and she started shouting, You be quiet, this is my show, you shut up or get out. Well, I hadn't really seen the show very much, and she was coming down at such a velocity. Here was Dr. Yolanda-Hewitt Vaughn, and she was wearing this long black dress, with her hair tied back, big glasses, very soft spoken, her hands were clasped in her lap. She looked almost Amish. And here was Sally: she seemed like she was coming up on the stage, and I said, Whoa Sally, back off. They told us to invite our friends, and I brought people from WBAI, and they started chanting "Free Speech, Free Speech." You can dress them up, but you can't take them anywhere! Anyway, Sally stopped the taping of the broadcast, and started to break down.

The producers came out. They were rocking her back and forth, saying to her, That's OK, Sally, that's OK. We had never seen anything like this before. I mean, it was the one moment of unity for us six women on the stage. And somehow they convinced her to carry on with the taping of the show, except that we would have to raise our hands if we had anything to say. Now I hadn't ever seen that before, except on *Sesame Street*, but we agreed, and the show went on, and it was very good. Sally showed videotape of the protesters in Washington. She said to me, Who are these people? I didn't know everyone's name, but I said, you know, these are people who believe it's their duty, that peace is patriotic, that to support the troops is to call for them to be brought home. I said things like that. And let's face it, most people don't identify with thousands of people marching in the streets. And why do they do it? Well, because they are not invited into the corporate network studios to have a "civilized" one-on-one discussion with the anchor, to talk about why they oppose war. They can only hope that on a global warming day like today a CBS executive might open a window and that chant of "No War!" will waft in and hit an open microphone. That's their best bet.

Anyway, I didn't say all that, but I said that these are people who believe it is their duty to go out, that peace is patriotic. We said lots of things. I said that as the granddaughter of an Orthodox rabbi, I am horrified to see little Israeli children wearing gas masks, but I am more horrified to see little Palestinian children without gas masks. And that's the kind of conversation we had for the hour. My grandfather died years ago, but my grandmother: well, we're just about to celebrate her 108th birthday. I just said that recently at a talk, and a woman came up to me and said that she was just with her grandmother, celebrating her 106th birthday, and her grandmother turned to her and said, "Oh, to be 100 again!" So there's hope.

Anyway, the program ended, the cameramen gave us the thumbs up sign, and I went back to WBAI. Two days later we turned on the TV and the program wasn't on. So, you know, lots of

people were calling, and I called the *Sally Jessy Raphael Show* and I said, Where is it? And they said that there was a problem with the synching of the sound and the video. I started to get that sinking feeling, and I said I think you had a problem with the sound of our voices. She said, "Don't be like that. We'll have you back another day." And I said, "You know that can't happen, because Dr. Yolanda Hewitt-Vaughn is going to jail." Yes, she was court-martialed. She was sentenced to three years in prison. She lived just below death row in the brig. I was recently in St. Louis. We had launched *The Exception to the Rulers* and I was signing books afterwards and a young man came up and I said, Who should I sign this to? He said, You could sign it to me, Emilano Hewitt-Vaughn. This was Dr. Yolanda Hewitt-Vaughn's son. He was eight when his mother was arrested, with his two younger siblings raised by their father while she was in jail. And he had hoped to start an Amnesty chapter in his high school, hoping, because Amnesty had declared Yolanda Hewitt-Vaughn a prisoner of conscience. She was ultimately freed after eight months instead of three years, and he hoped that maybe he could free someone else's mother the way his mother had been freed. As Margaret Mead said, never doubt for a moment that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Anyway, back to the producer. I said, you know, we can't get back together again, and I want to speak to the executive producer, now. And she said, "He's a very busy man." I got so many calls at WBAI: where's the show? I said don't call us, call the *Sally Jessy Raphael Show*. I don't know why they're not running it. And a few days later I got a call from a high-level producer of the show, and they said that the executive producer would like to speak to you, now. I guess they got hundreds of calls. I said, I'm a very busy woman. Anyway, they asked if I would cry censorship if they edited the program. I said, of course not, I'm an editor too. As Sally pointed out, it is her show. I assume you'll edit out Sally's fit. They did. But the show ran, because of media activism, and because they held on to it, it ran with headlines around the country that said

things like “Things Get Messy with Sally Jessy,” and the most interesting response I got was from women on southern military bases, who called up to say we’ve never heard this view on television before, and we agree with you. Here were women who were being sent to war or whose loved ones were, to kill or be killed—I don’t know which is worse—and they were saying they can’t have these debates on military bases. They rely on us in civilian society to have these discussions, to have these critical dialogues about the most important issues of the day: life and death, war and peace. And anything less than that is a disservice to the servicemen and women of this country. Anything less than that is a disservice to a democratic society.

We begin and end *The Exception to the Rulers* with a story of Timor, and I thought it would be instructive to talk about it here. By the way, my niece, Ariel, my brother David’s daughter, is handing out the daily digest e-mail lists that you can sign up on and get our daily headlines every day. We are a daily grassroots global international news hour. You can hear us on WESU in the Wesleyan area, you can hear us on WBAI, and we are on both satellite networks, on DISH network, channel 9415, Free Speech TV, 9410 LINK TV, and also on DIRECT TV, channel 375. We’re broadcasting on over 300 radio and TV stations. You can get us on your public access TV station, the two satellite stations, and we video and audio stream at [democracynow.org](http://democracynow.org). We are also passing out the flyers that let you know about the program. Feel free to sign up.

One other thing before I get to the story of Timor, and that is to say that in terms of models of coverage: the world’s media stopped for a week to cover the death of the pope, and I thought it was very interesting what happened in that week. I mean, the pope, Pope John Paul II, even in his physical demise, allowed the world to see what that looks like, and there was a tremendous power in that. Then when he died, to see his body laid out, and then ultimately carried in the coffin: the whole world really stopped and watched this ceremony, and I think it was certainly a very respectful one. I compare that to the fact that in this country, President Bush has

invoked an executive order that does not allow us to see the coffins, the body bags of the soldiers brought home to this country. Why not? I think he understands the power of those images. When you see that, you understand that a life is over, and you pay your respects. Also, wounded soldiers. When was the last time you saw a seriously injured soldier on television? Almost never. They're brought home under cover of night, deliberately. Over 20,000 have been MedEvaced out of Iraq, and yet we rarely see this. Because of advanced medicine, many survive, although more than 1,500 have died. That was one of the things we had to update when we moved from the hardcover to the paperback edition of *The Exception to the Rule*, and it was painful to change the number of how many more soldiers had died. Many do make it, but because of modern medicine, they just survive. And also of course, there's the psychological trauma. We are in a many-city, "Unembed the Media" tour, demanding the unembedding of the media, and when I was picked up at the Denver airport by young man who went to the University of Colorado, Boulder, he said his father is a psychologist at the VA in Denver. He can't believe the number of soldiers coming home in terrible psychological pain from post-traumatic stress, and yet the hospital is constantly pressured, because of the cutbacks in the VA budgets. Is that what we call supporting our soldiers?

Let me end with Timor, because I think it is both a story of horror and a story of hope. I'll start with the update of December 26 and the tsunami that happened in the Pacific. It hit Sri Lanka, Thailand, but the area hardest hit was a place called Aceh. Now before December 26, if you heard someone say that name, you'd probably say, "God bless you." After December 26, we learned that it was a region of Indonesia. That region has been hit by two tsunamis: one, the natural catastrophe, the other, the Indonesian army. The Indonesian army, a brutal army that has declared that area a state of siege, hasn't allowed others in for a long time, and even after December 26, when 200,000 residents of Aceh were killed, they killed more, calling them dissidents, as they tried to control that region.

Now when all the world's press went to cover the tsunami, that was the right thing to do. It was unbelievable, the response. When the media does the right thing and sheds the spotlight on someone who is suffering, it doesn't matter if they're brown or black, white, yellow, red; it doesn't matter. When we see an orphan child, when we see a woman who's lost her husband, a husband who's lost his child, it opens your heart, and there was this unprecedented outpouring of support. It showed that when the media shows us something that matters, we care. And you contrast that with not being able to see the images of war. I don't like "reality TV," but when it comes to the invasion and occupation of Iraq, I think we need a little reality TV, because I do think that if we saw for one week babies dead on the ground, women with their legs blown off from cluster bombs, if we saw the casualties, U.S. servicemen and women, I think that Americans are a compassionate people, and that Americans would say No to war, that it is not the answer to conflict in the twenty-first century.

But Timor. Just a thumbnail sketch of this country. On December 7, 1975, Indonesia invaded Timor, this small Catholic country three hundred miles above Australia. The day before the invasion, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and President Ford went to Indonesia, met with the long-reigning dictator, Suharto, and gave the go-ahead for the invasion. Ninety percent of the weapons were from the United States. The Indonesian military, the same one that hurts the people in Aceh today, then invaded East Timor, by land, by air, and by sea. Ninety percent of the weapons they used were from the United States, and what ensued over the next two decades was one of the worst genocides of the twentieth century.

They closed the country to the outside world, but I got a chance to go there in 1990 and 1991. And in 1991, I survived a massacre there. I was there with my colleague, Allan Nairn. He was writing for the *New Yorker*. I was doing a documentary for Pacifica Radio. It was November 12, 1991. It was about 6 o'clock in the morning. A thousand people went to Mass, in Dili, the capital of

East Timor, at the flagship church, the Motael church, and when they left the Mass, they started a procession, remembering a young man who had been killed two weeks before. He had taken refuge in the Catholic church because he wanted to speak to a delegation that was going to investigate the human rights situation, and he, like many in Timor, was afraid he'd be arrested before the delegation came. So he, with many other young people, were in the church and the Indonesian soldiers surrounded it, and they shot into it and they killed this young man. So two weeks later, there was a commemoration procession, and the Timorese from their Mass marched to the cemetery, thousands of them: girls in their Catholic school uniforms, boys in their school shorts, women in their traditional Timorese garb, they marched through the streets of Dili, through this geography of pain, where for more than seventeen years in every few buildings, in police barracks, a military unit, a hotel, a Timorese was either tortured at the back or disappeared or a woman raped in an official's home. And they marched through this whole region. They made their way to the cemetery. When they got to the cemetery, there were thousands of them.

We were interviewing them, and saying, "Why are you daring to do this?" I mean, this was the boldest act of defiance the Indonesian military had ever seen, simply people putting their hands up in the "V" sign: Victory. In East Timor: Viva, independence. And we said, Why are you doing this? And they'd say, For my mother, for my father, for my sister, for my village which was wiped out. And then we saw from the direction the procession had come hundreds of Indonesian soldiers marching within their U.S. M-16s at the ready position. The people couldn't get away. There were walls on either side of the road. Allen and I walked to the front of the crowd, because although we knew they had committed many massacres in the past, the Indonesian military, they had never done it in front of Western journalists, and we thought maybe, just maybe our presence could head off this attack. And we also took out our equipment to let them see who we were. I had always hid it before, because I was afraid if the Timorese were

caught talking to journalists, they could be arrested. This time, I held up my microphone, put the headphones on, Allan put the camera above his head, we walked to the front of the crowd. The soldiers marched up, twelve to fifteen abreast. They swept around the corner. Without hesitation, without warning, without provocation, they swept past us and opened fire on the crowd, gunning people down from right to left, mainly young people, college-age kids who were there to support others who had been cut down over these seventeen years.

A group of soldiers threw me to the ground. Allan threw himself on top of me to protect me from further injury, and they took their U.S. M-16s like baseball bats and they slammed them against his skull until it fractured. They were killing everyone around us. A group of them lined up with their guns at our heads, firing-squad fashion, and they started to shout two things: "Politique" and "Australia." "Politique" because they were saying for us to witness something like this was political. But that's our job as journalists: to go to where the silence is, and say something, to bear witness. And they were also saying "Australia." They were asking us if we were from Australia. We knew what that meant. Seventeen years before, when Indonesia first invaded, there were six Australia-based journalists covering the invasion. They immediately executed five of them. The last one, Roger East, was working out of a radio station in Dili, the capital. They dragged him out of the radio station, and as he shouted, "I'm from Australia," they shot him into the harbor with thousands of other Timorese. The Australian government hardly protested, we believe because later, years later, Indonesia and Australia would sign a Timor Gap Treaty, dividing up Timor's oil between Australia and Indonesia. Oil is the source of so much pain in the world.

And so on November 12, 1991, seventeen years later, as we lay on the ground, Allan covered in blood, the guns at our heads, we shouted back, No, we're from America, America. They'd stripped us now of everything. The only thing I had left was my passport, and I'd throw it at them. They'd kick me in the stomach. When I'd get



my wind back, I'd say "America, America," and at some point they took the guns from our heads, we believe because we were from the same country their weapons were from. They would have to pay a price for killing us that they had never had to pay for killing the Timorese. And they moved on. A Red Cross jeep pulled up. We were able to get into it, and we drove like that. Dozens of Timorese jumped on top of us. We drove as a human mass to the hospital. When we got there the doctors and nurses started to cry when they saw us, not because we were in worse shape than the Timorese. They killed more than 270 Timorese on that day. But I think they cried because of what we represent to the people of Timor. I mean all of us, as Americans, and not just to the people of Timor, but to people all over the world. I think we represent two things: the sword and the shield. The sword, because of the U.S. military; and all too often the U.S. government provides military weapons to oppressive regimes. But also we represent the shield, the American people, and people see that all over.

Every little act we engage in has a ripple effect all over the world. For example, after Aceh, Paul Wolfowitz, now the World Bank President—he was the Defense Secretary, the deputy Defense Secretary, one of the architects of the invasion—went to Aceh—he used to be the ambassador to Indonesia—and called for the renewal of military aid to the Indonesian military, just in the last few months. That's pretty astounding, because it was finally cut off in 1999, when the people of East Timor went to the polls to vote for their freedom and the Indonesian military burned East Timor to the ground. But there was Wolfowitz calling for its restoration; unfortunately Condoleeza Rice announced that it would be restored. Now he's World Bank President, and you wonder if that's his idea of "development," taking the money of countries to shore up military repressive regimes. Just making a phone call to a Congress member in a case like that and saying, Cut off the military training aid, has an enormous effect, not only on Timor but to populations all over the world that are suffering from repressive regimes. That's just one example of what can be done now. But I

think on that day, on November 12, 1991, the doctors and nurses saw that shield bloodied, and it just deepened their despair.

I'll end ten years later, on May 19, 2002, the day the people of East Timor celebrated their freedom. Allan and I had been banned from ever returning to Indonesia. We'd been arrested and deported as we tried, over the years. But we got into East Timor for that amazing day. A hundred thousand Timorese gathered in Tasitolo, a small sandy plain outside of Timor, for Independence Day. Kofi Annan, the U.N. Secretary General got up and gave his speech at just about midnight, and then Xanana Gusmao, the rebel leader of Timor, the founding president of East Timor, got up and he unfurled the flag of the democratic republic of East Timor. The people looked up and there was this fireworks display, and you could see the light reflected in their tear-stained faces. This nation of survivors had prevailed. They had resisted and they had won, and they thanked people all over the world for helping them, because although they were the bravest, they were on the front lines, and they bore the brunt of the pain, they knew they couldn't do it without people, especially from places like the United States, saying "No" to their government supplying weapons to repressive regimes, and they thanked everyone. And it is a lesson to all of us, whether we are journalists or students, photographers, filmmakers, whether we're professors, teachers, librarians, whether we drive taxi-cabs, doctors, nurses, whether we are lawyers, whether we are artists, activists, employed or unemployed. We have a decision to make, every hour of every day, whether to represent the sword or the shield.

Democracy now!