

**We Hate You (But Please Keep Sending Us
Baywatch):**

The Impact of American Entertainment on the
World

A Panel Discussion Presented by the Writers Guild of America, west

USC ANNENBERG

The Norman Lear
CENTERTAINMENT
Exploring Implications of the Convergence of Entertainment, Commerce, and Society

We Hate You (But Please Keep Sending Us *Baywatch*)

The Writers Guild of America, west, presented this discussion on the surprising popularity of American entertainment in places where American politics are reviled.

The Participants

This rousing discussion took place between **Salam S. Al-Marayati**, Los Angeles director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council; **Tony Bui**, writer/director, *The Three Seasons*; **Alfonso Cuarón**, director of *Y Tu Mama Tambien*; **Norman Pattiz**, chair of Westwood One; **Aaron Sorkin**, producer of *The West Wing*; **Diane Watson**, member of Congress; **Bryce Zabel**, chair of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences; and **Laura Ziskin**, producer of *Spiderman*. The panel was moderated by **Martin Kaplan**, associate dean of the USC Annenberg School for Communication and director of the Norman Lear Center.

The Writers Guild of America, west

The WGAw, led by Victoria Riskin, represents writers in the motion picture, broadcast, cable and new technologies industries. The Writers Guild of America is the sole collective bargaining representative for writers in the motion picture, broadcast, cable, interactive and new media industries. It has numerous affiliation agreements with other U.S. and international writing organizations and is in the forefront of the debates concerning economic and creative rights for writers.

The Norman Lear Center

Founded in January 2000, the Norman Lear Center is a multidisciplinary research and public policy center exploring implications of the convergence of entertainment, commerce and society. On campus, from its base in the USC Annenberg School for Communication, the Lear Center builds bridges between schools and disciplines whose faculty study aspects of entertainment, media and culture. Beyond campus, it bridges the gap between the entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public.



Martin Kaplan, Diane Watson, Norman Pattiz, Vicki Riskin, Bryce Zabel, Aaron Sorkin, Laura Ziskin, Salam Al-Marayati, Alfonso Cuarón, Tony Bui

We Hate You (But Please Keep Sending Us *Baywatch*): The Impact of American Entertainment on the World

Participants

Salam S. Al-Marayati, L.A. director,
Muslim Public Affairs Council

Alfonso Cuarón, writer/director,
Y Tu Mama Tambien

Martin Kaplan, director, The Norman
Lear Center

Norman Pattiz, chair, Westwood
One Radio Network

Victoria Riskin, president, Writers
Guild of America, west

Aaron Sorkin, writer/producer, *The
West Wing*

Diane Watson, member of Congress

Bryce Zabel, chair/CEO, Academy of
Television Arts & Sciences

Laura Ziskin, producer, *Spiderman*

Victoria Riskin: Good evening, everyone, and welcome. This is the first event of the Public Affairs Committee that we founded this year at the Writers Guild. The objective of this committee is to be informative — even provocative if we can — and to have programs and debates to engage the entertainment industry in a dynamic dialogue about the future of film and television; the role and the responsibility of the writer; and the role and responsibility of all of us who are in the Hollywood community. This first event, as you know, is entitled “We Hate You (But Please Keep Sending Us *Baywatch*).” The title is designed to illustrate the ambivalent relationship that most of the world has with America. We are the only super-power. This love-hate relationship, at the extreme, has resulted in a worldwide network of anti-American terrorism. At the other extreme, it has resulted in the globalization of American culture, much of which flows from the pens of the members of the Writers Guild of America to film and television, and has generated a glamorous view of America that people envy, although sometimes America seems violent and sex-driven.

According to the Pew Global Attitudes Project, there has been an increasing discontent with the U.S. over the past two years. The report states, “People both embrace things American, and at the same time, decry U.S. influence on their societies.” What concerns, if any, should we in this room and in this community have

about the images Hollywood paints of America and then exports around the world?



Vicki Riskin, president of the WGAw, convened the panel.



Martin Kaplan, moderator and director of the Norman Lear Center

We look forward to all of us here tonight having a dialogue. We've assembled an outstanding panel to tackle this topic, and we have a wonderful moderator. Marty Kaplan is associate dean of the USC Annenberg School for Communication, where he also directs the Norman Lear Center, which studies the impact of entertainment on society. A *summa cum laude* graduate of Harvard in Molecular Biology, a Marshall Scholar of English at Cambridge University in England, and a Stanford Ph.D. in Modern Thought and Literature, Marty is an over-educated person. He was also a speechwriter for Vice President Walter Mondale, and deputy campaign manager for Mr. Mondale. He worked and survived at Disney for twelve years, where he was vice president of motion picture production, and then became a screenwriter and a producer. His writing and credits include *The Distinguished Gentleman* starring Eddie Murphy, and the adaptation of Michael Frayn's play *Noises Off*, directed by Peter Bogdanovich. He can be heard regularly on *Marketplace* on Public Radio International. He is also a terrific person and will be a wonderful moderator — it is my pleasure to introduce Marty Kaplan.

Martin Kaplan: Thank you. It's always a pleasure to pay tribute to a spectacular president of a guild of which I'm proud to be a member, a great colleague and a dear friend, Vicki Riskin. So, thank you so much. I'd also like to thank all the people who helped make tonight possible. The Writer's Guild has a committee on committees—thank you all for doing the work that you do. There is a Public Affairs Committee — their names are listed in the brochure. I'd particularly like to single out one person. The Guild,



Alfonso Cuarón, filmmaker

as you know, arbitrates credits. Though it's a collaborative effort, I wanted to give some credit to the person who came up with the name for tonight's event, Aaron Mendelson — well done. Often at events like this, at the very end, just when you're reaching for your car keys, a thank you is given to people who work behind the scenes relentlessly to make it happen. I'd like to change that tradition, and at the top, thank everybody involved. In particular, I would like to thank someone who's standing serenely in the back, Josette Grenon. Thank you so much.

We have such an extraordinary group and it's a thrill to be able to have them all here, and I'd like to introduce them to you. I'm going to start with someone who has the distinction of having won at Sundance, the only person to have won both the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Prize — an amazing feat. His film, *Three Seasons*, was the first film to be made entirely in Vietnam. Please welcome Tony Bui.

Fresh off the plane from England, where he is preparing *Harry Potter III*, the extraordinary writer/producer/director of *Y Tu Mamá También*. Please welcome Alfonso Cuarón.

We're fortunate to have with us tonight someone who is one of the founders and directors of the Muslim Public Affairs Committee, which is a national entity, active both here and in Washington. He is a spokesperson you have seen in the last year on virtually every channel. He's an American, though born in Baghdad, which certainly gives him an interesting perspective on what's going on now. Please welcome Salam Al-Marayati.

I'm very happy that the next guest is a member of the Board of Counselors of my school, the Annenberg School. He started *Westwood One* as a kind of mom-and-pop operation. It's now the biggest radio network in the Milky Way. He is also a



Aaron Sorkin, executive producer, *The West Wing*



Diane Watson, member of congress

member of the U.S. government's Broadcast Board of Directors, which oversees our efforts in media public diplomacy, including the *Voice of America*, and is a particular force in the creation of *Radio Sawa*, which broadcasts in Arabic in the Middle East. Please welcome Norm Pattiz.

Our next guest has won virtually every award that there is. He burst on the scene as playwright of *A Few Good Men* and then did the movie of it — as well as *The American President* — and is now, of course, the writer/producer/show-runner (and I think he also does set decoration and catering) for *The West Wing*. He is so successful that the minutest shifts in the micro-demographics of his audience are charted on all the front pages in the nation. Please welcome Aaron Sorkin.

There's a term "triple-threat." I don't know if you can get past quintuple or heptuple or whatever the Greek prefix is, but our next guest was a member of the Board of Education here in Los Angeles. She was in the State Senate. She was U.S. Ambassador to Micronesia. She was on the Board of Supervisors. She is now on — talk about hot seats — the House Committee on International Affairs. Her district includes Hollywood. She is also my Congresswoman. Please welcome Diane Watson.

Our next guest wears several hats. He is an active writer/producer with three pilots in development. He is also the chairman and CEO of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. And, if I'm not mistaken, a year ago today, he was moderating a panel for the TV Academy on the topic of the impact of 9/11 on the entertainment industry. Please welcome Bryce Zabel.

It's interesting — we're following, as you can tell, alphabetical order. This may be one of the rare circumstances when there are two Z's on the list. Our final guest is the producer of



Bryce Zabel, chair, Academy of TV Arts & Sciences



Laura Ziskin, producer, *Spider-Man*

Spider-Man. She also was the first solo woman to produce the Academy Awards last year. She was a studio head. She was the head of Fox 2000 for Rupert Murdoch. And back in the Pleistocene era, we were both colleagues at Disney. I'm delighted to welcome my old friend, Laura Ziskin.

Perhaps about now, or in a few minutes, you'll be thinking to yourself, "Do you know who they should have had on this panel?" And that certainly could extend to the moderator as well. I just wanted you to know, as those thoughts occur, there are two answers. One or the other is true. Either you're right, we asked them and they weren't available, or "Oh my God, we never thought of that! Would you please plan the next event?"

Our format tonight is that we're going to spend some time talking amongst ourselves and there won't be — I hope — any canned speeches. There won't be opening statements. We'll try to start mixing it up as quickly as we can. And then after a while, we're going to open the conversation to include you, the audience. There will be people in the aisles with microphones. If you're going to make a speech, please disguise it as a question.

You've heard of stories ripped straight from the headlines. As it turns out, it's a publicist's dream. Today's *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* both have huge articles about the new Pew Center for Press and Public Policy Poll. Our topic, "We Hate You (But Please Keep Sending Us *Baywatch*)," as Vicki Riskin said, is about an ambivalence or paradox. In fact, as it turns out, it's not *Baywatch*, but rather *The Bold and the Beautiful* that is the most-watched program on the globe. It's viewed in ninety-eight countries; 450 million people watch it. I have a hunch that there's some of *The Bold and the Beautiful* staff here. I teach a course on international entertainment and I had a cast member sit in, and

***The Bold and the Beautiful* is the most-watched program on the globe. It's viewed in 98 countries by 450 million people.**

Marty Kaplan



On the other hand, although non-Americans are happy consumers of our entertainment, they also find us wanting.

Marty Kaplan

every person who was not American in the classroom had seen it and knew exactly who he was.

On the other hand, though non-Americans are happy consumers of our entertainment, they also — one way or another — find us wanting. If the news doesn't depress you enough, I suggest you read the full Pew Center Poll. It can be downloaded. It's about ninety pages. If you thought you needed Prozac before, you'll need it even more afterward. I'll just read you the lead sentence from the *L.A. Times* coverage of it. "America's global image has deteriorated sharply in the last two years." It's a case of their not liking us. It's not that they don't like our government. It's not that they don't like our policies. They don't like us. They do kind of like some things that Hollywood does — there are a few exceptions here and there. But by and large, it's a really bleak picture.

And if that doesn't discourage you, you can reach for the Zolof after you read another research report, also recently issued, from Boston University. It's called *The Next Generation's Image of Americans: Attitudes and Beliefs Held by Teenagers in Twelve Countries*. This gauges the opinions of teenagers, and if anything, it's worse. They dislike us even more than the people in the Pew Center study. And if you need an excuse for a nightcap, you can read the Council on Foreign Relations Report. You were on the board that put this report together, Salam.

Salam Al-Marayati: I wrote a dissenting opinion.

Kaplan: It's called *Public Diplomacy: A Strategy for Reform*. Here is just a summary of what the CFR found (and this is based on other polls; a Gallop poll, a Zogby poll, State Department polls), "Of

There is little doubt that the stereotypes of the U.S. as arrogant, self-indulgent, hypocritical, inattentive and unwilling or unable to engage in cross-cultural dialogue are pervasive and deeply-rooted.

Council on Foreign Relations



Hollywood has been at war with Islam for the last two decades. Blockbusters like *True Lies*, *Executive Decision* and *The Siege* have perpetuated an Islam-equals-terrorism image. from *Hello, Hollywood*

course, foreign perceptions of the United States are far from monolithic, but there is little doubt that the stereotypes of the United States as arrogant, self-indulgent, hypocritical, inattentive, and unwilling or unable to engage in cross-cultural dialogue are pervasive and deeply-rooted.” So we’ve got our work cut out for us tonight. What I’d like to do is start by asking a couple of questions of people who are not directly in the entertainment business, to get a few issues and topics on the table, and then broaden our conversation. I’d like to quote something from the current issue of *New Perspectives Quarterly*. It has an article in it by Akbar Ahmed, who teaches at American University. Do you know him?

Al-Marayati: Yes.

Kaplan: Great. This article is called *Hello, Hollywood. Your Images Affect Muslims Everywhere*. I’m just going to read a few sentences from the article to get a few points on the table. “Hollywood has been at war with Islam for the last two decades. Major Hollywood blockbusters such as *True Lies*, *Executive Decision* and *The Siege*, with top stars, have perpetuated an Islam-equals-terrorism image.” He goes on to say that “Many people in Africa and Asia view films glorifying sex and violence, and equate these to American culture. These secular images are the cause for much of the anger and hatred that exists in the world against America. Crass secular films are partly the answer to the question Bush asked, “Why do they hate us?” He ends telling an anecdote about his ten-year-old daughter who had recently seen *Moulin Rouge* and was running around the house singing sweetly “*Voulez-vous coucher avec moi ce soir?*” And when he asked his daughter if she knew what that

My criticism of Hollywood is that when it comes to Muslims, they are usually absent other than filling the role of a terrorist.

Salam Al-Marayati



I think people enjoy and are fascinated by American entertainment because of its creativity, its sophistication, its technology—and that is part of the paradox.

Salam Al-Marayati

meant, she said “No.” He told her, she was horrified, and the author ends by saying, “Some of the people like myself would have blamed Hollywood for reaching into their homes and corrupting the minds of their children.” So I’d like to start by asking Salam a question. Is Hollywood, as this article says, an important reason for why America, quoting George Bush, is hated?

Al-Marayati: Well, I think part of the answer is yes. I don’t believe that’s the complete answer. I think when you talk about image-making and ask “What’s the image of America that we present to the rest of the world? What’s the image of that part of the world that we present to them?” I think those questions illustrate important factors. And you would find many critics of Hollywood — whether they’re here in America or abroad, whether Muslim or conservative Christian or Jew — who are critical of the kind of material that they find on the TV screen and in the movies.

But I would disagree that that is all there is to it. My criticism of Hollywood is that when it comes to Muslims, they are usually absent other than filling the role of a terrorist. If you want a terrorist, that’s when you find “the Muslim.” If you’re looking for a doctor or a lawyer or just an average person, you don’t find that “normal Muslim” in Hollywood. And I think that’s the criticism that many Muslims have around the world. Sometimes during movies like *Executive Decision* and *True Lies*, if the producers are generous enough, they’ll balance it with an “FBI Muslim” who will bash the “terrorist Muslim.” So that’s Hollywood’s way of aiming for balance. And I think people see through that.

I still think however, that in terms of culture, American culture is still something that’s curious. That’s why American television is watched. I think people enjoy and are fascinated by

American entertainment because of its creativity, its sophistication, its technology. And that is, in my opinion, probably part of the paradox of things.

Hollywood exports conditions of our lives, the sex and violence we live with everyday.

Diane Watson

Kaplan: Congresswoman Watson, you've had experience in Micronesia and Africa, and other parts of the world. Let me ask you, to what degree do you think that Hollywood's exported version of American culture is a contributor to these negative attitudes?

Diane Watson: I feel that Hollywood exports the conditions of our lives, the sex and violence we live with every day. And it's not often that you can turn on your television or go to a movie that the two are not included in almost every scene. To the extent that we understand the impact, we can do something about it. Why should Muslims feel personally insulted, or why should they be sensitive because there's sex and violence in a product that we produce here in America? What we have failed to do — and this is what I discovered as an ambassador — is to recognize and understand the culture and traditions of others. We push our products all around the globe. But should we do that without cultural awareness and understanding? People take offense when we show conditions we live with every day and when we are not sensitive to the religion they practice. And so I think where we have really failed is in our schools. I was a member of the school board. I was a teacher in multicultural education.

I was the Ambassador to Micronesia, which many of you cannot find on a map — and planes very seldom find it. Boats come in once every two weeks. But Aaron Sorkin wrote about it. We have

What we have failed to do is to recognize and understand the culture and traditions of others.

Diane Watson



a compact — a free Association — with Micronesia. Why? Because it was a trustee after the Second World War, and now they're an independent nation and we have a compact with them. We have taken all of our Title Two programs from America and applied them to that culture, which is steeped in tradition. So they didn't implement our programs the way the General Accounting Office thought they should, and they failed the audit. We're contemplating whether to extend the compact for another twenty years when there have been massive failures in the implementation of our programs. Now what's wrong there? We're putting square pegs into round holes. So I traveled back and forth across the Pacific to the State Department and the Department of the Interior to say that the taxpayer's money is going out into the ocean — what we need to do is to hire compliance monitors who know the culture in Micronesia. So, being sensitive to that and being a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, I started an entertainment caucus. And right now we have thirty to forty people who have signed up to be part of it, and what we want to do is deal with these issues that affect entertainment, not only here but abroad as well.

Kaplan: One of the things that this audience will probably try to assess is whether that's good news or bad news. For some people, an interest in Hollywood entertainment on Washington's part is good news. For some it's not, which provides a perfect segue way to ask Norm Pattiz a question. Norm, you're on the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which oversees an element of what has now been mobilized by the U.S. government called "public diplomacy" — sometimes called soft power. Radio Sawa is something that you're intimately involved in. I just wanted to read you a line from an Op-Ed piece in the *L.A. Times* from just the other day, about *8 Mile*, the film. It says "Eminem is a hero to Middle Eastern youth, and the U.S. government is broadcasting hip-hop on the airwaves of Radio Sawa in its campaign for that crucial frontier, the Arab state." Tell us, is that an important part of America's projection into the world of politics and diplomacy?

Norman Pattiz: Well, let me say a couple of things. First of all, Radio Sawa started last April, so it's been on the air just a few months. Prior to Radio Sawa, the entire commitment of U.S. international broadcasting to the Middle East was seven-hours-a-day of Arabic language programming, broadcast in a one-size-fits-all approach to all twenty-two countries within the region on short-wave radio that

I think that American popular culture plays a very small part in the kinds of attitudes you are seeing reflected in these studies because we don't have that much penetration in the region.

Norm Pattiz



Radio *Sawa*, in a very short period of time, playing a rotation of popular Arabic and Western tunes, is now reaching 80% of its target audience.

Norm Pattiz

nobody listened to. We had about a 1% audience share, and that was just recognition, not actually people who were listening. So we knew we needed to do something right away.

It's also important to understand the context and the environment into which we are broadcasting, at least as it relates to the United States, the West, many of our policies and so forth. There is, in fact, a media war going on. And the weapons of that war include hate radio and television, incitement to violence, disinformation, government censorship and journalistic self-censorship. So it's from within that environment that a lot of the information that you were quoting from the various polls comes. And up until the advent of Radio Sawa and eventually, with a couple of additional things that we're going to be doing — including getting the funding to get Arabic language TV into the region — it's from that environment that the feelings about America, its policies, its people, its culture, come.

And let me just say this — I really think that American popular culture — movies and television and what-have-you — plays a very small part in the kinds of attitudes that you are seeing reflected in these studies, because we don't have that much penetration in the region. We really don't. But in the case of Sawa, for instance, it didn't take long to realize that we weren't going to attract an audience if we simply kept doing the same things that we were doing. I'm in the radio business. Public diplomacy is something new for me. But we have approached this as if we were putting a new radio station on in the region. We went out and we contracted with Western research firms who subcontracted with research firms in the region, and we did the market research that was necessary to find out what kind of programming would appeal to our audience. What audience were we going after? We decided we were going

after the twenty-five-and-under audience, which represents well over 60% of the population of the region, and does not generally listen to international broadcasting. And we determined that we were going to use music as the driver. It would be music that would attract that audience. And we do play Eminem — we play the sanitized versions. But the fact of the matter is that Sawa, in a very short period of time, playing a rotation of popular Arabic tunes and popular Western tunes, with ten minutes of news at quarter past the hour and five minutes of news at three-quarters after the hour, with the weekly research that we've been doing, Sawa is now reaching 80% of its target audience.

I think this is very important to understand whether these attitudes really are pervasive, and whether an Arab audience and a Muslim audience will listen to an American radio product that is clearly identified as coming from U.S. International Broadcasting. When we ask, "What is your favorite radio station?" 52% say it's Radio Sawa. When we ask, "What radio station do you listen to most for news?" the response went from 1% Radio Sawa, when we first started asking the question in June, to 43% Radio Sawa now. And when we ask, "Which radio station presents the most accurate and truthful news?" 39% of our target audience — which is primarily 15 to 30 — say Radio Sawa. Now that's in a region where it's popular to boycott American goods, where American public policies — and certainly American policies towards the Middle East — are, to say the least, not very popular. So there are opportunities for us to spread the word and to present ourselves in a more positive way.

Kaplan: Let me turn to Laura Ziskin. Entertainment's a business. You have been an executive. You're a producer. You're in a business. Your job is, among other things, to make money. To what degree do the issues of the impact of the content of our entertainment on the world play in your mind, both as a businessperson looking for foreign audiences, but also in terms of the impact on their lives and cultures?

Laura Ziskin: I think what Norman said is right. I think we probably are only a small part of the results of those kinds of surveys. I can only speak for myself. I do make entertainment. I'm interested in telling stories. I'm not in the propaganda business. From the studio's point-of-view, if I ask how much do they think about the impact of what they're doing, I would say not at all. If they can tell stories and produce films that people go to see, that's really all they care about.

From the studio's point of view, if they can make stories and produce films that people go to see, that's all they care about.

Laura Ziskin



I think the individuals who make films actually do think about the impact of entertainment on the world. I base filmmaking decisions on my own personal values.

Laura Ziskin

Having said that, I think the individuals who make films actually do think about it. I can only speak for myself. And my concerns may not be another producer's concerns. But I have issues, and there are certain things that — just for my own value system — I won't put in movies. But I'm not really thinking as a propagandist. I'm really basing filmmaking decisions on my own personal values, and I think that happens all the time, every day in people's decision-making. But I think there is a wide-range of values. And there are lots of filmmakers who will make films that will be very successful and very profitable all over the world, in spite of the fact that they may go against the values of a culture. They still make money, and they continue to make such movies and feel fine about them. I think — just personally — my own values would always defend their right to do it. But as a filmmaker, I try to think about what I'm doing and be true to my own values.

Kaplan: Bryce, would you agree with that? Is the issue of impact on culture not relevant for people who create entertainment?

Bryce Zabel: I think it is relevant. It's interesting — you were mentioning the Pew Report, which actually I did download and read a lot of. It's very similar to a Gallop poll that came out not too long ago. When you actually read these reports, it's just sobering. It's very discouraging to see these poll results. But I think that the one thing I take away from reading them is that they are not necessarily pointing the finger just at culture. Culture is, as was said, one of the things that is impacting our foreign relations. Policy is obviously the primary thing that people respond to, that is, how other societies perceive our government's policy. But some

of the things they like least about Americans are things that they get from our movies and from our television shows.

Ziskin: And some of the things they like most.

Zabel: That's right. One of the things I was just going to say is, as you pointed out, one year ago tonight Aaron and I and some other people were on a panel very similar to this at the Television Academy. And in fact, Salam and I were on *Politically Incorrect* about a year ago around this time. And I'm just struck by how little has happened since then. There was this sense — post-9/11 — that we were really going to get in the game and something big was going to happen. And we were going to try to tell our story, however we might tell the story. And I think the big tragedy of the last year is that we haven't actually come up with any policy whatsoever. And I don't think we're talking about propaganda. We're all Americans. We want to figure out how can we at least engage the rest of the world in a dialogue. I've said this before — probably the only response to a practicing terrorist is a visit from Special Ops. But on the other hand, when you're talking about terrorists who are in training or who might be created within a culture due to events or circumstances or philosophy, we have to address that. And we have to begin to think about it. That's why this dialogue is good. The question is — how will this dialogue someday be turned into action? And I do think that all of us who work in the business — in the back of our minds, whether we consciously answer your question — think about it. Aaron, you certainly don't wake up in the morning and say, "How will *West Wing* play in the Middle East?" But you've thought about it from time-to-time, especially, I'm sure, as that storyline unfolded this year.

The trouble is that most Hollywood stories have always been about good guys and bad guys. You always need a bad guy, whether it's a Russian, Japanese, Indian. It's Islam's turn right now.

Aaron Sorkin



If I want to tell stories dramatizing a relationship we have with the Saudis, I'm going to bring Saudi characters on the show and we're not going to like them. I'm not thinking about how it's going to play in Saudi Arabia.

Aaron Sorkin

Kaplan: Why don't you pick that baton up?

Aaron Sorkin: First, I don't want to make an opening statement, but I think it's important to mention that I don't know anything.

Kaplan: It's engraved outside the building...

Sorkin: That said, I'd like to touch on the following nine topics. Actually, this has been a very interesting conversation. Congresswoman Watson was talking before about how we export these images, specifically bad images, of the Muslim world. And I think it is important to bear in mind that the number one American export is entertainment — movies, television shows. That said, the trouble obviously is that most Hollywood stories have always been about good guys and bad guys; and you always need a bad guy whether it's the Russians, or before that, the Japanese, or before that, the Indians. It's Islam's turn right now. Has Hollywood contributed to the bad image that Muslims have? To a small extent. Mostly it's things blowing up, which is not a joke.

Kaplan: The question that Bryce was raising is to what degree do you think about the impact of what you're doing?

Sorkin: I think about it, but oftentimes I think that I don't arrive at the same conclusions that some people would like me to. For instance, if I want to tell stories, particularly on *The West Wing*, with the characters involved in politics, then some of the stories are

■ ■ ■

Vietnam has changed so much in the last decade. In the nineties, my family constantly wanted me to bring American movies back. They didn't want films that won the Academy Award. They wanted action films, sci-fi thrillers.

Tony Bui

■ ■ ■

going to have to be about that. If I want to tell stories dramatizing a strange relationship that we have with the Arab world, particularly the Saudis, I'm going to bring Saudi characters onto the show and we're not going to like them. I'm going to point out how they're a little bit screwy. I apologize if it's tokenism. I do try then to have un-screwy Muslims around too, working for the good guys to the extent that I can. But I'm not thinking certainly about how it's going to play in Saudi Arabia.

I did want to mention — do I think it's good that we're exporting Eminem on the radio to these kids in the Middle East, and that they're loving it? I think it's terrific. Maybe I'm just thinking this vocationally, but truly, I think the most attractive thing that we can display about this country is freedom of speech and freedom of expression and that "you can do this." And frankly I think that it's good for us, too, and our youth who are also crazy about Eminem, as am I. To think, well, God, all these guys are listening to the exact same songs I am, getting the exact same thing from it. Turns out, they're not worlds different from me the way I thought. There's some common ground here and I think that with music, that's so often where we find common ground.

Kaplan: Tony Bui, you have the experience of having worked in Vietnam, which God knows has a special history with the U.S. Talk a little bit both about how America is perceived there, and how you think about your own work as it's projected onto the world stage.

Tony Bui: Vietnam has changed so much in this last decade. Vietnam as we knew it died in the mid-90's. And with that, so much culture from the West has come in. I remember when I was first going back to Vietnam in '92, '94 — I did *Three Seasons* in '98.

My family — I had cousins who were four, six, eight — they constantly wanted me to bring them American movies. It was much harder to find them in Vietnam at that time. The cultural censors were very strict about what could come in. But that was the big thing, you bring in tapes. And there were very specific kinds. They didn't want the films that won the Academy Award that year. They wanted, very specifically, action films, sci-fi thrillers, *Batman*. Films like that. And if you go to the local video stores in Vietnam, that's all they have. They have mostly entertainment-oriented films. And I remember talking to my cousins and my uncles at the time. My uncle is an actor in Vietnam. It's like a third-world country. The biggest production in Vietnam at that time was a \$35,000 film. So they see these big films, and it's just entertainment. So the issue is not even just about delivery, it's about consumption. And the children love it. I remember there was a wave in which Britney Spears started to come in, *W Sync* started to come in. The laws started to change. American culture had more and more impact in Vietnam. So I've seen a change throughout.

Interestingly, America has a more positive image in Vietnam than we in America think. When I was shooting *Three Seasons*, when I was casting American crew members — they were constantly saying things like, "Is it safe to go there? Don't they hate Americans? Isn't there still animosity?" But the reverse is true. Every single one of them came and ended up staying there, and ended up traveling through the country. I can only speak about Vietnam, but the irony is I think the people in Vietnam embrace Americans more than Americans embrace Vietnamese. What I'm trying to say is that America has not let go of the war. Vietnam has.

Kaplan: Alfonso Cuarón, your work proves that culture does not only come from the U.S. As you made *Y Tu Mamá También*, were you conscious of the picture of Mexico that the world would take from your film? Did it make a difference to you? Or were you single-mindedly devoted to telling the story that you wanted to tell, and it really didn't matter what the consequences were in terms of how the world might view that nation?

Alfonso Cuarón: I don't think you can have a moralistic approach of being concerned about what other people are going to think about it. I agree with what Laura said. It's pretty much about what you think is right. It's about your values or where you draw the line or don't, but it should stem from your own perspective. I don't believe you can think, "Okay, if I do this, it's going to be received in this country

It's very easy to talk about freedom of speech. It's just that responsibility is sometimes lost with that concept, and I believe that freedom of responsibility possesses exactly the same worth.

Alfonso Cuarón



The filmmaker who says, "Well, I'm just doing my job. I'm not responsible." is bullshitting himself. Because if he's not responsible, why is he making films?

Alfonso Cuarón

like this or like that." Actually, in the specific case of *Y Tu Mamá También*, my brother and I got together and wrote the script and said "Let's do this. Nobody is going to see it, so who cares?" And it was a very happy surprise that actually some people saw it. I didn't think about how it was going to play in the Middle East. And I don't think it's going to be seen in the Middle East.

I don't think you can approach anything creatively thinking about how all these people are going to think about your story or your themes. I believe in freedom of speech, yes, and it's very easy to say "freedom of speech." It's just the word "responsibility" sometimes is lost with the concept of freedom of speech, and I believe that freedom of responsibility possesses exactly the same worth. Saying so, I think anybody can do whichever films they want to do. And if they want to present Muslims just as horrible terrorists, they have the right of doing that. People having the right of doing that doesn't mean that that choice is responsible, or that just because freedom of speech exists you have to embrace and applaud the filmmaker's choices. The filmmaker who says, "Well, I'm just doing my job. I'm not responsible," I think that he's bullshitting himself. Because if he's not responsible, why is he making films? If you're not trying to communicate, why are you doing films? Obviously, audiences have the right of saying, "I don't want to see that film."

I don't know if Hollywood is the cause of all this cultural animosity. I don't really believe Hollywood is the cause. But I believe nowadays, actually — if you don't help, you're hurting. If you're going to do a film that is not going to help heal whatever is going on around the world, in a way, it's affecting what is going on around the world.



I think it's important to note that these studies don't focus on Middle Eastern countries only—we're looking at a global phenomenon. It's important to note that this is something that is happening amongst people of very similar cultures.

Salam Al-Marayati



Kaplan: Salam, there have been a number of comments particularly focused on the Islamic world in the Middle East, and I'm just wondering whether you wanted to pick up any of the threads you've heard.

Al-Marayati: Yes, I'd like to pick up a couple of points. I think from the viewpoint of the study, it's important to note that the study didn't focus on Middle Eastern countries. The study focused on the world. And it was also interesting from the study that in places like Canada, Britain and Germany, there is more anti-American sentiment. So we're looking at a global phenomenon. We're not looking at "Okay, why are Muslims and the Arab world singled out?" I think too often we look at global anti-American sentiment and then just kind of pigeon-hole it into that particular region and say, "Well, it doesn't matter because 'X', 'Y' and 'Z'." So it's important to note that this image is something that is happening even amongst people of very similar, if not identical, culture.

I definitely like the point about responsibility. Of course, we can look at one situation, one story, and look at one angle of it, and then make a story out of it. But we have to widen our horizons quite a bit and become more aware of the different developments throughout the world.

And I'd like to point out what's happened in the past in terms of Hollywood. And again, I'm just speaking about Hollywood as a viewer myself. For example, the movies that were made that were critical of American policy in Latin America — I think they did a lot in terms of building bridges between the American people and the people of Latin America. Such movies as *Missing*, for example. And I remember the scene when the General is telling the star of

the show who asks the General, “Why are you doing this? Why are you siding with the dictators?” And the General says, “I’m protecting your way of life.” That is basically what is being repeated throughout the world today, and I think similar movies can be made. And I’m not saying that you have to do it. I agree, when it comes down to it, the creative industry is just that — they need to be creative, they need to be given their independence and freedom. But we have to shift the paradigm. Instead of trying to be balanced and sensitive, we need to think about what is in the best interest of America, and ask ourselves whether we can do things that will help the situation. And I also think about the movies that were critical of what happened in Vietnam. I think something similar can be done with respect to what’s happening throughout the world today.

Kaplan: We’ve heard kind of a noble version of what storytellers can be. I’d like to ask Aaron and Bryce and Laura, where are the ‘schlock-meisters’? Where are the tyrants, the ruthless executives and people who will do anything for a buck? Is this the Hollywood we now live in, where people want to help and make a difference?

Zabel: No, I don’t think so. What your question kind of raises for me is the impression that we have a pipeline problem. We all believe in freedom of speech. That’s one of the great American values that we’d love to share with the rest of the world, and I think most of the world would probably benefit by having that. But if you look at what the American public gets in terms of television and film — we get our 500 channels, we get the 300 movies, we get all the stuff. So we get the good, the bad and the ugly. We get everything. But when things get sold overseas, the pipeline shrinks, and hence the title of this very event, “We Hate You (But Please Keep Sending Us *Baywatch*).” So the question concerns those things that are getting out there in the international market. And I would suggest that just in terms of asking ourselves a question about a potential solution, we should be asking ourselves how it would be possible for some of the really excellent material that is produced in Hollywood to be increased through the pipeline distribution, and increase the vision of America and its diversity and its solutions in terms of freedom and democracy? I think what Norm has been doing with *Radio Sawa* is a good way to start to talk about those things. But I think we should do more. I think we should do what he’s talking about. And when I say that we’re not in the game, I mean we’re not in the game. We’ve

got the Voice of America (VOA). And with all due respect to the VOA, the stuff that they put on television...

Kaplan: It's terrible.

Zabel: It's like it would have been back in Czechoslovakia. And we need to get the VOA in the game.

Pattiz: Here's something you can do, because clearly, VOA television is not the answer. First of all, VOA television for sixty-five countries has a budget of twenty million dollars. What are you going to do with that? VOA television makes small-market television look really, really, really good. But there is a proposal now that we have presented to the White House and in Congress that has gotten their support. As a matter of fact the Hyde Committee has a public diplomacy bill, which embraces and has money in it for international broadcasting, and specifically for Arabic language television. This is a place where you really can get involved, because I know Karl Rove and other people from the White House have come out and sat down and had meetings. And it's been kind of kumbaya and "let's all think together" and "what can we do?" I was asked to attend a couple of those meetings, but I said that I really didn't want to go to those meetings until there is something tangible to talk about. And we've now had a series of meetings, which we started last month at the Museum of Television and Radio, for eight network presidents and the heads of the broadcast services of International Broadcasting. We're going to have more of those meetings because I believe we are going to get the funding to do a twenty-four-hour, seven-day-a-week, multi-platform, full-service television network operation in the Middle East. I'm the eternal optimist. That's the pipeline that you're talking about. What we will do is provide news and information, because our mission at International Broadcasting is to promote freedom and democracy through the free flow of accurate, reliable and credible news and information — to be an example of a free-press in the American tradition. That's what our mission is. But to be successful — if *Sawa* has shown anything — we have to attract an audience. And what do we have to attract that audience? What you do. It's the best stuff in the world. We ought to use that stuff. So if you really want to show your patriotism, and you really have some clout with people who have films packages and TV shows and series television, and you really want to be patriotic during the

most critical time that many of us have ever faced in the history of our country, then there is going to be a pipeline, and your help is sought out and requested.

Zabel: Let me just jump in. That's not the pipeline that I'm talking about, although I think the idea you have is a good one about the Middle East television network. You're talking about producing news programming for the Middle East, targeted for the Middle East, with Middle Easterners. I'm talking about the product that is created by the people in this room and those of us who run the entertainment industry.

Pattiz: Well, so am I.

Zabel: But your Middle East television network is primarily a news organization.

Pattiz: No, it isn't. It's going to be a full-service television network with news, morning shows, talk shows, movies, TV shows.

Zabel: Norm, what I'm suggesting is that we have a problem that exceeds just the Middle East. We have people all over the world who are not grooving on America right now. And we need to figure out a way to engage the whole world — North Korea, Al-Qaeda in sixty countries. We can't just look at the Middle East.

Kaplan: Aaron, jump in, and then Congresswoman Watson. I think it's true that it's not just the Middle East.

Sorkin: You've been referring to this article with the headline, "U.S. Losing Popularity in World." I know how it feels. Bill Maher has a book out right now. It's called *When You Ride Alone, You Ride With Bin Laden*. He's invoking a World War II era poster that encouraged Americans to conserve gasoline, and it said "When You Ride Alone, You Ride with Hitler." By the way, I don't make any money from the book. It's a terrific book. It's very smart and very, very candid. And there's a chapter in

the book that's called, "They Hate Us Because We Don't Even Know Why They Hate Us." And it's funny because I'm of two minds. I'm curious. The point of the chapter of this book obviously is that it's not enough simply to say, "They hate our freedom. They hate our liberty." It doesn't quite make sense that all of this is over the concept of individual freedom and liberty. On the other hand, I'm pretty sure we haven't done anything to deserve all of this. So I am of two minds. I feel like I want the answer to why they hate us just because I'm curious, and then I want to tell them how much I don't care.



At the bottom of it there has got to be a sense that we are bullies, that we are trampling the rest of the world, that we're certain we know what's right and that others are wrong.

Aaron Sorkin



Ziskin: Aaron, as I listen to this, I kind of have the same question. And maybe it's an unpopular one, but how important is it? Do we need to be loved by everybody?

Sorkin: Absolutely. Because I wonder — honest-to-God, I am not writing the blood-and-guts of it off at all— that at the bottom of it has got to be something very, very deeply felt. At the bottom of it there has got to be a sense that we are bullies, that we are trampling the rest of the world, that we're certain we know what's right and that others are wrong, and that we do not take the lives of those with darker skin than we have as seriously as we take our own. It has to be that.

But I also have to believe that it's a little bit of focusing on people in our society who have it easier and who are aggrandized — professional athletes and movie stars and fashion models. We have a kind of hate/lust relationship with them, right? We adore them and we read the magazines, and we go to their movies, and we buy the Eminem albums. And yet we don't like the fact that we think that they have it better or easier than we do, and they get to

do anything they want. And I just wonder how much of that emotion is in the rest of the world. But all of America is essentially seen as a spoiled athlete. And that aggrandizement perceived in places in the world where daily life is a much greater struggle, when they have to cower in the face of American military might, over decades — and now a century — an enormous resentment builds up that I think extends beyond the Muslim world. I think that there were non-Arabs who didn't cry all that much on September 12th.

Kaplan: Congresswoman Watson?

Watson: Let me jump in here because I think there's a point that we need to recognize. We can have the media come in through radio, through television series, through movies and so on, and present a more positive picture of America. But that's not going to get to it. I think the reason why they hate us is that we don't have a positive policy that they can see worldwide. What entertainment media do is export a product, get their money, and the people get richer in Hollywood. It's about making money. And people see that. Why do they hate us? It's because we preach one thing and do something different. Now you have to understand that I am a politician. I am a progressive Democrat, and I always say that when I speak. So my opinions come from that position. They didn't always hate us. But in the last two years, they're hating us. Now what does that tell you? We're out there rattling sabers. We want to take something away from someone. And we're not giving according to our ability to give.

And let me tell you something else. It's amazing that they don't hate us on the continent of Africa. The first seated president to ever go to the continent of Africa was Bill Clinton. And they loved him. We got letters saying, "He could be king of this province." They have a scourge, AIDS. Colin Powell said we need two billion dollars to fight the epidemic, the pandemic, in Africa. We could only get 450 million out of our committee. So you see, if we really wanted to do something — if we wanted to back up all the positive programming that you say is going to come forth — then we would take those dollars and we would put it into fighting the scourge in Africa, in China, and other places around the world. To end this piece, we need a policy that says to people, "We do care about you and your

issues,” and we need to stop rattling the sabers at the people in developing countries and saying if you don’t do it our way, we’re coming after you.

Kaplan: Alfonso, you had a look on your face like you were about to add something.



What about starting by trying to understand other countries? Trying to understand other cultures. Trying to have a broader view of what’s happening in the world.

Alfonso Cuarón



Cuarón: It’s just that everybody is talking here about what to do, how to reach the rich in this country, how many TV stations we need to put in the Middle East, how many movies we have to send. What about starting by trying to understand the other countries in this country? Trying to understand other cultures. Trying to have a broader view of what’s happening in the world. Not to have this one-sided thing that is dropped on them. I think that’s the biggest problem.

Something happened a couple of years ago that I think is very scary, very dangerous, in those articles that you’re reading and you’re quoting. I have lived a few years in the States. I’m in Europe now prepping a movie, and I hear different perspectives of the same stories. I feel that if there’s a hatred, it’s about certain policies. But now, for some reason, I cannot be against certain policies because I’m labeled anti-American. And that’s very dangerous also. I don’t like Mexican politicians, and that doesn’t make me anti-Mexican. But now, for some reason, if you’re anti-American policy, you’re anti-American. I don’t agree. They hate us. They have to love us. In school, usually you hate the bully. And so if everybody’s hating you, you can just say, “They hate us because we’re beautiful.” Or try to see why they hate you. You don’t want to be hated. It’s not about wanting to be loved. It’s just about trying to be generous.

■ ■ ■

Growing up in America, I only knew Vietnam through the movie depictions I had seen. In making *Three Seasons*, I had to change the image of the Vietnamese people. I was more concerned about how *Three Seasons* would play in Ohio than anywhere else in the world.

Tony Bui

■ ■ ■

Kaplan: Tony, you are at the beginning of a spectacular career. You started with a huge bang. You're now navigating your way through the studio system. You obviously are someone who cares about many things — personally, culturally and ethically. To what degree can those things that you care about play a part in your making your own way through the Hollywood maze?

Bui: I think it's based on every individual filmmaker. I know when scripts are sent to me, when I have meetings, I look at everything from my own personal beliefs. It's not so much from a concern of how it's going to play in other countries, but just wanting to change how the Vietnamese are depicted in America. I grew up in America. Even though I was born in Vietnam, I was raised here. My entire knowledge of the Vietnamese people was of people running through jungles holding guns, because those were the only movie depictions I had seen. I only knew Vietnam through war, the books we would study in school. So in making *Three Seasons*, I had to change the image of the Vietnamese people. I was more concerned about how *Three Seasons* would play in Ohio than anywhere else in the world.

At least for myself — when I read scripts, when I look at projects — I do think about it from a humanistic point-of-view. What is being shared, what is my offering as an artist. And I think it's mainly because I've seen my own sort of image and face depicted incorrectly through the years. Seeing the Asian face through the stereotypes of war or the drug dealer or whatever it is. Perceptions vary in every individual. I think it depends on background and upbringing. But I do have a very strong perspective in terms of that agenda.

Kaplan: And Laura Ziskin, when Tony brings those humanistic concerns to his pitch meetings, does it matter?

Ziskin: Oh, absolutely. I think it's fantastic. And in those specifics of his experience, there's something universal. And that's what movies do best. This idea that one story and a collection of images and a person's journey can be seen by people all over the world, and have the same impact on all those people, that's a unifying thing and it's fantastic. The problem, unfortunately, is that in the Hollywood system where most movies are made, it's just increasingly difficult to make those kinds of movies because of entertainment news, which makes it a contest every weekend. So the studios are forced to make movies that appeal to everyone. Therefore they get less and less specific and individual because movies have to appeal to everyone because they have to be hits before they open. Basically, your movie has to have an audience before anybody has seen it. So it has to be something easily classified and explained. The marketing has to work more than the movie. So the kinds of movies that Tony makes — and *Y Tu Mamá También* — are an exception that, in a way, proves the rule. But you know there may be a movie that looks interesting and individualistic and may have something to say. And certainly somebody talked about movies of the past that were more political and did have an impact and changed the world — or changed people's perception of things. That is so difficult. It's so difficult to get those movies made right now because if they open on Friday night and people don't go because they can't be quantified in a thirty-second commercial that prompts everybody to go, then they don't succeed financially and they get made less and less.

■ ■ ■

In the Hollywood system, it's increasingly difficult to make movies like Tony's because it's a contest every weekend. So movies have to appeal to everyone because they have to be hits before they open. Your movie has to have an audience before anybody has seen it.

Laura Ziskin

■ ■ ■

I think the saddest thing that's happened is that the kinds of movies that we make for ourselves initially — for our domestic audience, that then get exported — are increasingly narrow. And they're increasingly from one kind of point-of-view, and certainly the things that are easy to sell to the audience that comes out first to the movies — you know that demographic, young boys who want to see things blow up and that kind of thing. That is the film niche that makes the most money.

The other thing that I think is terrifying is that there is one perspective. Everything we read or watch on television and on all of the news — all of the media, particularly the broadcast media — at the end of the day, it's all controlled by a very homogeneous group. It's all controlled by five — and we can be nice to them and say they're middle-aged — but five kind of elderly white men. They control all the media. So what we see comes with a limitation right there. So what Tony's doing is thrilling. And that's what, for me as a producer, I always look for. As I said, a singular voice — a specific voice — that then can translate and become universal. I want filmmakers to do it, but it's harder and harder. It's harder now certainly than when I started making movies.

Zabel: I want to touch upon something that has nothing to do with entertainment, but has everything to do with policy, because there's something that's glossed-over. It's not really talked about in Congress. It's sort of taboo there, and I think it's sort of taboo in many discussions of why they hate us. If you look at the Middle East and the Muslim world in general, there are two major sources for anti-American sentiment. One is that there's a lot of talk about freedom and democracy, and that there needs to be reform in those countries. Much of the blame goes to the religion — that it's the religion that hasn't created these democratic institutions. Two points that contradict this premise: one, that area did go through an enlightenment in the past, so religion really has nothing to do with the problems they have today. It's more psychology, the social and political thinking that is a problem today. Number two, the United States government itself has financed and supported many of the dictatorships in the region, to the point that the people in that region are exiles in their own land. You look to the common Iraqi — even the common Saudi — do they really control the destiny of their country? No, absolutely not. They have no way of influencing what's going to happen to them in the future. So when we talk about democracy and freedom, I think we have to look at ourselves as America — what other people have done in our name in that part of the world.

Another point is the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. I think a major source of anti-American sentiment is due to the United States blindly supporting one side — the Israeli side. It would be fine if we didn't claim to be honest brokers in the region, or that we want a peace that will be long-lasting. It's not going to be long-lasting. We can't be the honest broker if we're going to be blindly supporting one side of that equation.

Pattiz: I have to say something here. First of all, the United States didn't go out and become the honest broker. The United States was the only place that anybody had to go, and it's still the only place that anybody has to go. The United States has to be actively involved in the Middle East or nothing will get done because the two sides won't talk to each other, because the level of animosity between the two sides is too great to bridge without a player coming in and trying to bring them together. The United States must get more actively involved in trying to broker a peace process in the Middle East, not less involved. An awful lot of the reason why the United States is seen the way it is seen through government-controlled media, is that those media want to have the United States policies and all of the things that they point out that they don't like about the United States, come to the forefront so that their people won't focus on the problems that they have with their own governments and how oppressed they are by their own people.

Kaplan: Let me just say, this is a topic which obviously produces strong views on all sides. And much as I would love to pursue all those threads, that's a different panel. So if we could just for a moment, stipulate that this is a huge gorilla in the center of all of our discussions and see whether we can keep going on the track that we're on, much as I respect the importance of raising these different points of view. So let's try.

Zabel: The one thing we should stipulate is that policy is still the number one way in which we are perceived. We can give ourselves a lot of credit for being taste-makers and so forth, but policy is really it. And interestingly enough, the Pew Study that we started talking about, if you read it in depth, the number one issue for most people around the world is disease, in Africa and certain other countries in particular. In Africa, 98% of the people list disease as the number one issue. In most countries, they talk about not being able to quite feed their families or pay for their support. So clearly, people have

other things on their minds than the export of American entertainment products. But we do have challenges.

I just want to put out here that America, for everything that's been said here, is still the most generous nation that's existed on the face of the earth, in my opinion. And we may not be perfect, but we have always been an experiment-in-progress that is trying to make itself better. One thing we have is the television industry, for example. The communications industry that exists in the United States is the most effective communications industry that's ever been created in this world. And we have not harnessed it in any way — in any effective way — to try to create a dialogue with the rest of the world where we give a little and they give a little.

■ ■ ■

The U.S. communications industry is the most effective that's ever been created. And we have not harnessed it in any way to try to create a dialogue with the rest of the world where we give a little and they give a little.
Bryce Zabel

■ ■ ■

Audience Member #1: I wonder how much the conglomeratization of the media has fostered this sort of bipolar attitude about America. We talk about freedom of expression and freedom of speech, and yet Time Warner owns entertainment and news. And what we're really getting is an *ipso facto* totalitarian communications department. Is that fostering some of these attitudes? And is the freedom of speech that we talk about not really being put into practice?

Sorkin: I will actually speak to that. It's so seldom that I disagree with Bryce, but I just wanted to mention something in terms of foreign aid. In terms of foreign aid, our hearts are very much in the right place. But versus gross national product, we're at the very bottom of the list — the very bottom. I mean it's unbelievable. Cyprus is out there spending more money than we are.

Pattiz: Let me take a crack at that one as a radio network that either owns, manages or distributes CBS, NBC, Fox and CNN. First of all, I don't think that consolidation has really hurt news coverage in this country. This sounds like a complaint of writers, not news people. If you've ever worked with news people, you know that news people feel that they are personally anointed by God to go out and dig up the truth and find it. If you take a look right now at the same story covered by Fox or CNN or MSNBC or any of the traditional networks, you'll find them covered in far different ways than they used to be covered years ago when there were only the three major networks.

Cuarón: Yeah. And the big difference is that you see all these views and then you see a French/English/Spanish view as completely different.

Pattiz: So the French, English and Spanish are —

Cuarón: Are wrong.

Pattiz: No, they're not wrong. They're out there. There's a worldwide communications media. Those views can be looked at in the same way that our views can be looked at...

Cuarón: But the problem is America is not getting the view that the rest of the world is getting.

Kaplan: Would you like to join this conversation?

Audience Member #2: That actually leads into my question — why do we only export product? Why don't we export the opportunity to make product? We have a lot of money and we have the means to help people out there with points-of-view get their views across. Alfonso, your movie single-handedly changed how I viewed Mexican culture. I mean, it's just that simple. It was very positive. I love that you had an upper-middle class brat in that movie that drove the Jetta, because that's me. It helps you see that you relate to other people in the world if you see that they face the same problems that you have.

***The West Wing* shows how difficult and delicate a policy can be, so I think that it would be a great show to export. The problem is that what other countries want is *Baywatch* and that doesn't represent us well enough.**

Vicki Riskin



***The West Wing* is exported around the world — huge in Belgium — but the stuff that travels fast is going to be things with more action and less language.**

Aaron Sorkin

And the fact that we don't think they have the same problems — like Tony said — is our problem. We don't see their point-of-view. Why don't we export that?

Kaplan: Anyone want to take that?

Ziskin: Well it sounds like you're saying also, "Why don't we import more?" I was thinking that before when I was listening, because I'm provoked by this. I don't have any answers at all.

Audience Member #2: Provocation is good.

Ziskin: Yeah, I'm definitely provoked. But I think you're right. But how do you get the public at large to be interested? And maybe this is a function of education, because we are somehow isolationist. And of course, the more people hate us, the more we'll probably circle the wagons. I think you're right. I think that to be exposed to other cultures would probably make a big difference. It's not just what we send out, but what we receive. And if you can figure out a way for the studios to make money doing that, then they will do it. Unfortunately, that's what it's about.

Riskin: Thank you all for participating. We appreciate it. One of the best things that *West Wing*, for example, does is show how difficult and delicate a policy can be. So I would think that that would be a great show to export, not that it isn't already been a great way to show what America's about. We have the delicacy and the difficulty in making policy. So that's a good example. The problem is that what other countries want is *Baywatch*. That doesn't really represent us well enough.

Sorkin: Yeah, thank you very much. The show is exported around the world — huge in Belgium. How about Dubai? Do you want it to be huge in Dubai? It would be great. But like movies — Laura can tell you — the stuff that travels fast is going to be things with more action and less language.

Watson: I was telling Aaron before we came out here about an episode he did on Micronesia that put Micronesia on the map. It had to do with the Ambassador, who was being called back because he was doing something out there that the President didn't like. So our values, you see, come out in the dialogue that he writes so brilliantly, when the President and the other characters discuss these issues. So maybe you have to put a killing in there or a rape or something, and send it out. But I tell you, *West Wing* is the only thing I watch outside of CNN, and that's changing too. Because when you start to melt all of these networks together, they become cookie-cutter. When I turn on TV, I want the news. I don't want a creation of the news. But I think Mr. Sorkin's dialogue can do more to educate people around the world. If it's done in their language and there's some of their culture thrown in, I think it can really express who we are.

Audience Member #3: Very quickly, this is to the people in the industry on the panel. After 9/11, what do you see now in terms of terrorism in films? Before 9/11, it seemed that terrorism could be treated like a game in movies, like with *Speed*, *True Lies*. Because we had never been touched by it, there was a certain cartoon aspect to terrorists. In *True Lies*, they were pretty much treated like a cartoon. Now that 9/11 has happened, are we going to continue to see Muslim terrorists, or do you think now there's going to be a backlash and we're going to have to completely redefine how Muslims are portrayed? And if terrorism is still in movies, will there be more thoughtful exploration?

Zabel: The thing is the people who flew the planes into the towers were Muslim terrorists, right? So if we create movies about Irish terrorists doing the same thing, it's not credible. I just want to point out one thing. The people who are in this room who are writers and work on television staffs and so forth, almost every series that I'm aware of has introduced as a guest star or as a character in a particular scene or whatever, a positive image of a Muslim. Post 9/11, every studio and writing staff said, "Can't

we do anything in this regard?" So you're also seeing some of those images. So I think we're being a little harsh to say that they don't exist at all, because they do.

Sorkin: But I think there's a great question there, and I don't know the answer. Does a movie like *Die Hard* play the same today? Or *Speed*?

Audience Member #3: I guess what I'm getting at is when we see Muslim terrorists in the future — and according to what you're saying, we will — are we still going to see them as cartoon characters, or do you think there's going to be an attempt to show more of the other side of it after 9/11? What I mean is, will it be treated with a more serious tone than it was in movies like *Speed* or — even though they weren't Muslims — *True Lies*?

Sorkin: I think you have to because there's the event of 9/11 looming over any writer's sensibilities about that. And it's a little hard to write a cartoon that is amplified by 9/11. That's not a good thing.

Audience Member #3: So is the fun terrorist movie now gone, the Schwarzenegger?

Sorkin: I think so, for the most part. Also remember, we make a boatload of programming in television and film. You'll still see examples of it, but probably not as often.

Audience Member #4: I was wondering if there was anybody on the panel who could give an historical perspective. Was there another time in American history where our policies were really inflaming people and entertainment was the whipping boy? It's a unique situation because 9/11 is unique. But was there another time in history when there was a similar thing?

Sorkin: There was the blacklist. I think that was a pretty important time in history.

Audience Member #4: No, I'm talking about the foreign view of America being similar to what it is now. Because history teaches us things, so I'm just thinking if we kind of look at history maybe we could learn something.

We were on a roll coming out of World War II, and we were very well liked. We've gone through a period where that's on the decline.
Norm Pattiz



During the Cold War, people stood with one foot in a bucket of water holding a wire hanger to hear the *Voice of America* or *Radio Free Europe* on their short-wave radio. That's not the case anymore. Nobody wants to hear our policy because our policies are unpopular.
Aaron Sorkin

Pattiz: I don't think it's ever been as bad as it is now. We were on a roll coming out of World War II, and we were very well liked. And we've gone through a period where that's on the decline.

Sorkin: Here's part of the problem. A lot of people don't like some of the things that we're doing in International Broadcasting right now. Like playing music to attract an audience, and researching what the audience really wants to hear. And having a dialogue with our audience rather than speaking at our audience. They always talk about the Cold War. And they always talk about, "Well, in the Cold War, look at the role that *Radio Free Europe* and *Voice of America* played." And they're right. But that was then and this is now. In the Cold War, you were talking about dictators that were oppressing people who longed to hear what the United States of America had to say. These were people who would have stood with one foot in a bucket of water and holding a wire hanger to hear the *Voice of America* or *Radio Free Europe* on their short-wave radios. That's not the case anymore. If you lead with policy, you'll get a one-share. Nobody wants to hear our policy because our policies are unpopular. So in order for us to recast those policies in different ways, or maybe talk about things that they haven't heard in their local areas through their indigenous media, you have to use the kinds of tools that are available. And those tools are entertainment, U.S. popular culture and the kinds of things that are inherently American that people love all around the world that will draw them to radio and television for our message of public diplomacy.

Audience Member #5: This is a question for Norm Pattiz. It seems like *Radio Sawa* is really poised to make that kind of contribution.

My question comes in conversation with some of the panelists today. In the spirit of dialogue, will *Radio Sawa* present a more complicated view of what America is, i.e. not one that represents patriotic, frenzied flag-waving, but dissenting views about America? And also, would that not be one of the challenges facing *Sawa*, is that it's moving in one direction, i.e. representations of American culture to the Middle East?

Pattiz: Well first of all, it's a great question. Our mission is a journalistic mission. We don't do propaganda. We're not in the propaganda business. I don't know what you're laughing about.

Audience Member: I spend my life outside of the U.S. listening to...

Pattiz: To Radio Sawa? You spent your life outside of the U.S. listening to *Radio Sawa* in Arabic that's only been on since April?

Audience Member: I recognize the jargon.

Pattiz: Yeah, okay good. The more you listen to it, the more you'll realize how absolutely ridiculous your comment is. The point is, to follow your question up with a real answer, if you want to have dialogue, you've got to present all points of view. And the VOA charter, as a matter of fact, states that we have to present all views of America, including dissenting opinions about America. When the war with Iraq was coming to a vote we certainly carried the opinions and statements by the Administration. But we also carried the opinions and the speeches and the comments by those in government who were opposed to the war on Iraq as well. So we carry all points of view.

Audience Member: No media carried Gore's response to the war.

Pattiz: Voice of America did. You're absolutely wrong about that.

Audience Member: Nobody listens to Voice of America. We already said that.

Pattiz: Voice of America cannot by law be broadcast in the United States. The Voice of America has an audience worldwide of over 200 million people. So a lot of people listen.

Audience Member: No. Talking about CBS, ABC, FOX, NBC...

Pattiz: Well you can't change the question in mid-stream, my dear. What are you talking about?

Kaplan: This is interactivity. And we are good at it. But one thing we are not good at, unfortunately, is sticking to any kind of timelines. I told you at the beginning about a series of polls that can make you want to take to your bed. I just want to quote one more. This was done by Roper for the *National Geographic* just a few days ago. They surveyed people in a dozen countries and they asked them questions about geography. And if you look at the results for Americans — among eighteen to twenty-four year-old Americans given maps — 87% cannot find Iraq. 83% cannot find Afghanistan. 78% cannot find Saudi Arabia. 70% cannot find New Jersey. 49% could not find New York. And 11% cannot find the United States. I quote that as a cheap transition to say that you will find in the lobby a spectacular dessert buffet. I want to thank everyone for being here. This has been a terrific evening. Thank you so much, all of you .

