Mark Gonnerman: Good evening, and welcome to the Aurora Forum at Stanford University. I’m Mark Gonnerman, the Forum’s director, and I thank each and every one of you for taking the time to be with us here tonight.

As many of you know, this Forum was founded to promote and help maintain social hope. To do this, we bring socially engaged scholars to our stage for public conversations. Our last program on September 30 was with Cornel West, a scholar of religious studies who has thought a great deal about the virtue of hope. Dr. West makes a useful distinction between hope and optimism. Optimism, he says, adopts the role of the spectator who surveys the evidence in order to infer that things are going to get better. Hope, on the other hand, enacts the stance of the participant who actively struggles against the evidence (which doesn’t look great right now) in order to change the deadly tides of wealth inequality, group xenophobia, and personal despair. Only a wave of new vision, courage, and hope can keep us sane, West says, and preserve the decency and dignity requisite to revitalize our organizational energy for the work to be done. To live is to wrestle with despair yet never to allow despair to have the last word. In other words, hope is born out of active participation in the work of improving our personal, social, and political worlds. As Joan Baez says, “Action is the antidote to despair.” Or remember “Scoop” Nisker: “If you don’t like the news, go out and make some of your own.”

Choose an issue you care about and get involved. I was remembering this morning when Julia Butterfly Hill was here in June of 2003. She suggested we work to make Election Day a national holiday and then talked about how that works in Mexico. This is a simple idea, and making it happen would mark real progress. It’s worth noting that Election Day is a national holiday in the largest Muslim nation in the world, the beautiful island country of Indonesia.

Another issue is the creation of a U.S. Department of Peace. A year ago, on November 8, as presidential campaigns were just getting started, Ohio Representative Dennis Kucinich came to an Aurora Forum Town Hall Meeting just like this to speak of his vision for a more just and more peaceful America. We could fund well a Department of Peace by taking just two percent of the current Department of Defense budget, and then think of the lives and billions of dollars saved if this department could prevent just one war! Representative Kucinich and others are holding a conference on this project in Berkeley starting tomorrow night and through the weekend. A flyer for this is on the Democracy Now! table in the lobby, so please check it out.
Again, there is much to be done. Choose one thing you care about, get involved, and generate hope in yourself and in those around you.

Tonight, we are grateful to be joined by Amy Goodman, host of Pacifica Radio’s *Democracy Now!* [Sustained applause.] Amy just flew in from New York City. I think most of you know that *Democracy Now!* is a national daily independent award-winning news program that now airs on over 300 radio and television stations in North America and is being picked up at a rate of two to three new stations each week. With co-host Juan Gonzales and a hardworking staff, Amy is on a mission to make critical thinking and dissent commonplace in America. Earlier this fall, we hosted a conversation on democracy and dissent with *Harper’s Magazine* editor Lewis Lapham, who is on the same mission as Amy. Mr. Lapham says that, “Journalism serves its most useful purpose when it presents a society with the rude measure of the distance between the graceful images of an approved reality and the awkward facts of the matter. We thank Amy for her tireless work of finding and articulating inconvenient facts.

For the first part of tonight’s conversation, Amy will interview three Stanford scholars. First, Larry Diamond, a professor of political science and senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, who has published an important article in the September/October issue of *Foreign Affairs* entitled “What Went Wrong in Iraq.” This article is largely a report on what Professor Diamond found when he went to Iraq last January to April as a senior adviser to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad. Second, we are joined by David Dill, a professor of computer science who has been raising important questions about the integrity of elections in view of the advent of electronic voting technology. The other day, a friend of mine referred to this as “faith-based voting.” David Dill’s organization is VerifiedVoting.org. Third, we are very pleased to have John McManus, who directs Grade the News, a media watchdog project run out of the Stanford Graduate Program in Journalism. John has been paying close attention to Bay Area media with regard to recent election coverage, and he is concerned about the consequences of market-driven reporting. It is because of people like these that we are able to keep moving forward and generate the social hope that is part and parcel of maintaining democratic ideals.

Our format tonight will be to have 45 minutes of on-stage conversation where Amy will interview our guests from this campus. Then we’ll open up for audience conversation for another 45 minutes.

Thanks again to everyone for being here tonight, and thank you, Amy.

**Amy Goodman:** Thank you, Mark, very much for setting up this forum. It is so important, and just the fact that you are all here tonight really gives me tremendous hope that you’re not just home alone, giving up. I won’t even say this is just the beginning because you are in the midst of it, we’re all in the midst of it, and there is a lot of work to be done.
I wanted to start off by talking with Larry Diamond. It’s very unusual to be able to talk to him; we talk a lot about the war and people’s opposition to the invasion and the occupation, but we don’t often get to speak to someone who was there in Iraq as a senior adviser to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad. I wanted to start off by asking just what your reaction is to this election.

**Larry Diamond:** Frankly, severe disappointment and worry. Let me say why I’m worried and what’s at stake now because I think most people in the United States do not understand how imminent and urgent are the choices we are going to confront.

First of all, I think most people in this room know that perhaps within the next few days the United States may launch a massive military invasion of Fallujah. This would be a very, very bloody and total assault. If it happens, it will not be stopped early on as it was in April. In my judgment, it will not succeed in crushing the resistance because I think if you study nationalist insurgencies around the world—and we are facing one now in Iraq even if it is based in a particular part of the country, namely the Sunni Triangle—you find that insurgencies are not defeated or diffused by purely military means. I don’t think this one can be crushed by military force. I think we need to look primarily for a political solution. I don’t think that Al-Qaeda is still in Fallujah right now, frankly. There are signs that the city has emptied out. I think Zarqawi is too shrewd an individual to sit there waiting for the United States armed forces to crush him. I don’t think there’s probably a great deal to be gained, although perhaps from a purely tactical standpoint, something, but not a great deal, to be gained by this invasion, and politically a great deal to be lost.

I’d like to just take one moment to tell you something that has happened in the last two days that is probably going to be reported in one or more of the major newspapers in the next 48 hours. A coalition of fairly radical nationalist forces based in the Sunni heartland, but not only among the Sunnis, and including both secular and religious fundamentalist forces, has come together to issue an open letter to the United States, Britain, and the United Nations stating conditions under which they would participate in the elections in January. I’ve seen a rough translation of this open letter. These are conditions we can work with toward a political solution. The Bush administration has been informed of the existence of this letter; I don’t know if they’ve seen the English translation yet. But if they go into Fallujah, it will be with the knowledge that there is a political offering here that could begin to wind down the insurgency. I think it’s a very fateful choice that they face and may make in the next few days.

**Goodman:** You sound like they’ve already made the choice.

**Diamond:** I don’t think they have. Otherwise, I think we would be going into Fallujah right now as it was speculated at one point that we would within 24 hours of the U.S. election. So something is holding us back. I think that there is still a debate, maybe for the soul of George W. Bush, now in a second or imminently second Bush administration, as to which way we’re going to go. And I might say, just to lay it all out on the table, it’s not only about Iraq. It’s about the Middle East, where Yasser Arafat is potentially very
near death now, with all that implies for the welling up of Palestinian emotion but also possibly for the restarting of the Middle East peace process which has just been dead and derailed for the last four years; and it’s about Iraq, where there is the possibility, if the negotiations that are being led by Germany, Britain, and France don’t move forward in the next few months, of a preemptive strike by either the Bush administration or the Israelis on Iran’s nuclear facilities. If you want to know what you have to look forward to in the next four years….

Goodman: You don’t sound like someone who is a higher-up at the Hoover Institution.

Diamond: Let me say, I know for a fact that a large number of my colleagues at the Hoover Institution, Democrats and Republicans, opposed going to war in Iraq and thought it was a mistake. They did vote, and I know how some of them voted, and let me just say without revealing too much, there’s more pluralism among the fellows at the Hoover Institution than many people realize.

Goodman: Do you have a direct line to Condoleezza Rice?

Diamond: I did before I published that article.

Goodman: What was their response to your piece in *Foreign Affairs* that was called “What Went Wrong in Iraq?”

Diamond: I haven’t seen any response at all, frankly.

Goodman: What was the response at the Hoover Institution? Do you feel pressure now?

Diamond: No. Some people I think agree with what I said and some people disagree with what I said, but no one has ever said to me, Stop saying it.

Goodman: Can you describe what you experienced in Iraq?

Diamond: Yes, briefly, because I don’t want to eat up all the time here. I experienced a lot of different things. One of the things that I experienced that gave me hope and still gives me hope is the very palpable, tangible, apparent desire on the part of a lot of different people in Iraq—different constituencies, different ethnic groups, different religious groups—to elect their own government. This is why I felt early on, even before I went out there, that when the most revered moral and religious leader in the country, Ayatollah al-Sustani, demanded that there not be an appointed national assembly but that there be direct elections for a national assembly, I thought we needed to take note of that and begin to revise our own transition plan; and indeed, that is one of the things I was trying to achieve there. I found a lot of energy like the energy in this room: civic grassroots activism; young people trying to organize for democracy; human rights activists trying to document the probably hundreds of thousands of victims that are buried in mass graves; a lot of energy on the part of Iraqi women who were trying to organize to get a new deal for women in Iraq that would include a minimum percentage of seats that
would have to be held by women in the new parliament. And they succeeded, not as dramatically as they wished, but there is a kind of minimum quota in the transitional parliament that a minimum of 25 percent of the seats have to be held by women, and the electoral commission intends to enforce that.

**Goodman:** You wrote in your piece: “The United States also faced a more diffuse political problem in Iraq—deep local suspicions of U.S. motives combined with the memory of Western colonialism and resentment of the U.S. stance in the Israeli-Palestinian struggle to generate a massive lack of legitimacy for the occupation authority.” How central is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to what is going on in Iraq and a number of other issues around the world?

**Diamond:** It is relevant in Iraq but not central. I think Iraqis feel strongly about it as all Arabs do. They consider that the treatment of the Palestinians is, in a way, the treatment of all Arabs who are in solidarity with them, and I think we are not going to repair our standing in the Middle East and in the Arab world and among Iraqis and among Egyptians and among Moroccans and obviously among Palestinians until we are seen to be active again in a balanced way in pursuit of a broad settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the way, if I may say so, that President Clinton was engaged and this President Bush was not during these last four years. Iraqis are living with so much crisis, violence, degradation, fear, displacement, unemployment, and so on, that this is mainly what they’re worrying about now: the immediate conditions of their lives; the insecurity that prevents ordinary people, particularly women, from going out without fear of being kidnapped, manhandled, possibly sexually exploited.

**Goodman:** Some of the most hawkish members of the administration—Paul Wolfowitz, John Bolton—it’s said that they could be in for big promotions right now. There are some who might be leaving and there are others who will be elevated. What about the significance of this and the mandate that President Bush very clearly articulated in his first news conference today in a small joking way when a reporter asked three questions wrapped in one. He said, “Now that I have the mandate of the American people behind me, you’re not going to get to ask follow-up questions.” But clearly, this really matters to him, this whole idea of finally having a mandate, as he sees it.

**Diamond:** Well, he has a mandate; he won a majority of the vote. I think that’s undeniable.

**Goodman:** Well, we’ll find out if that’s undeniable from David Dill in a minute.

**Diamond:** If he won a majority of the vote, then he has a mandate, but of course it’s a 51 percent mandate and not a 70 percent mandate. I think we’re just going to have to wait and see what his cabinet looks like. I have no idea. I hear speculation that Powell’s leaving; I hear speculation that Powell is staying. I hear speculation that Rumsfeld is going to be asked to leave; I hear speculation that he’s not. Your guess is as good as mine. I do want to say one thing, however. I spent the last month for the book I’m writing now reading through every major historical account, I think, of how we got into
this war and how we failed to plan for the post-war [period]. I have interviewed a number of people who were there on the ground when we arrived in Baghdad and who worked in the months following. And the one thing I want to say that I feel with great conviction is that apart from everything else, whether you think we should have gone in, whether we shouldn’t have gone in, the senior Pentagon leadership—the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld; the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz; the Under Secretary, Douglas Feith; and their senior aides—if they had planned for a road expedition as well as they had planned for the post-war in Iraq, and if their failure of planning for that road expedition had led their car to careen through a crosswalk and run somebody over, they would be prosecuted in the State of California for felony criminal negligence. I would ask this question: If the result of gross negligence—a felony under the law—is that one individual dies and somebody is prosecuted for it, how do you weigh morally the negligence of public officials that led to large numbers of Americans, other international figures, and Iraqis dying because we weren’t prepared for the post-war? That is a failure of responsibility, I think, on a massive scale that would lead me to be frankly outraged if these people were retained in a second term.

Goodman: Do you think President Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Douglas Feith, and Paul Wolfowitz, should be tried for war crimes?

Diamond: No, I can’t say that they should. I don’t feel that. I don’t see any evidence of that, but I will say that the crimes at Abu Ghraib I think probably don’t stop where they’ve stopped for the moment, and I think that we need a much more thorough and independent investigation of what may have been ordered or not ordered or overlooked or whatever. But I don’t think you can prosecute public officials for criminal negligence. We don’t have laws for it and it would be hard to legislate. But I do think there needs to be accountability, and since the election itself did not produce accountability, I hope the president of the United States, when he reorganizes his cabinet, will exercise some.

Goodman: Let’s go to this issue of if President Bush did win a mandate, how reliable were the results of this election, which takes us to David Dill, professor of computer science. They say that he won something like three and a half million more popular votes than John Kerry. So the question is, how do we know?

David Dill: Well, I’ve been fighting the battle over electronic voting for two years, and the basic question comes down to one of transparency. In a well-run, paper-based election, people can have confidence in the election because they can see the handling of the ballots; they can see ballots going into the ballot box, they can watch the ballot box—multiple people are involved in transporting that to someplace, or [the ballots are] counted at the precinct, et cetera. But the process can be conducted out in the open. With electronic voting, the technology is inherently not transparent. Everything is hidden inside computers. The electronic ballots go into an electronic ballot box where nobody can see what’s happening, and the votes are counted invisibly inside a computer as well. So that’s where I started, and I believe very strongly that we need to get rid of paperless, electronic voting. We need to have paper ballots that people can see.
As a computer scientist, I also have to maintain that I’m not a Luddite; I deal with technology every day. I deal with people who have bright ideas, some of which seem to be achieving the impossible all the time. I don’t rule out the possibility that we could have a transparent, trustworthy election technology at some future point that’s not based on paper ballots. But as I see it now, with what we can achieve with the technology that we have, we ought to be having paper ballots.

But that’s not the whole problem. As I’ve learned more and more about elections in the United States, I’ve realized how complacent we are about how they’re conducted. Once people start saying, “Well, there are all these ways that people could mess with the paper ballots….” The ballots all go into a central computer system and the totals are entered there and then the results are reported out of that system, and if you start looking at the whole system from a security point of view, not just a computer security point of view, but just questions about the physical custody of paper ballots and who’s involved in the process, we have very little visibility into our elections compared with what we need in order to be really confident that we can just answer the question you just asked.

As to this particular election, I don’t have an election investigation squad to run out there and check things out, and we have something like 200,000 precincts in this country, but a lot of information comes to me. Some of these are theories about how the election was stolen or is erroneous or whatever. At this point, I haven’t seen anything that persuades me that there’s a problem so serious that it would change the outcome of the election. I could be wrong about that. We didn’t really find out what happened in Florida until quite a long time after the election was conducted, and new information was coming to me as I was leaving my office to come here.

Goodman: What was that information?

Dill: Nothing that would change the outcome of the election. What we do know is that there were a lot of problems with this election, and some of them were related to technology and some of them weren’t. I think we kind of dodged the bullet both with electronic voting and other things in this election. In public I’m going to be completely neutral about the outcome of the election, but it was a good thing in the short term that the margin of victory was not so close that, for example, Florida was in doubt and people were calling for recounts, especially if they had been calling for recounts in the electronic voting counties of Florida, because you can’t do meaningful recounts with this equipment. When you really look at it, if it is sufficiently unreliable and there are sufficient questions about it, there would have been an unresolvable dispute about the election. That would have been a very messy situation, and I don’t know what we would have done about it. We now know a lot about voting technology and about electronic voting in particular. We know it’s flawed, we know it is not trustworthy, we know it is certainly not transparent, and we ought to take advantage of the breathing room we’ve gained by having that margin of victory in this election to fix the system before the next major election.

Goodman: What has prevented there being a paper trail with electronic voting?
Dill: It’s not easy to change things quickly. After Florida 2000, it was recognized quite rightly that a lot of our voting technology, particularly punch cards, were just terrible. There were a lot of problems in Florida besides the election technology, but punch cards are just a notably bad technology. They lose a lot of votes and they’re highly inaccurate. There was a push, much of it from progressive voting rights groups, to get rid of the bad technology and replace it with better technology. So far as I can determine from having talked to many of these groups, there is not a computer technologist involved anywhere in this process. They saw nice new shiny machines, they talked to very persuasive voting machine salesmen, and decided to get the best technology available. So that’s what the push has been, with the Help America Vote Act and with decisions made in the counties. The local election officials also have been sold, in many cases, on the value of electronic voting.

So we started losing our paper trails because of the shift from punch cards to electronic voting. Now the question is, why didn’t we suddenly realize our mistake once these computer scientists spoke up about it? And one of the things I’ve discovered is that not everybody listens to computer scientists. And some people had already spent tens of millions of dollars on the equipment and they weren’t willing to say, “Oh, sorry, we’ve made a mistake” to their bosses and to the taxpayers. Other people have been involved in negotiations where they had decided and really committed to the idea of electronic voting as the solution to the voters’ problems. The vendors, having invested in the equipment and looking at potential sales in the short term—lots of government money available to buy voting machines—were not particularly thrilled at the idea of going back and redesigning them to have printers on them.

Goodman: But isn’t putting printers on them easy?

Dill: It’s actually more difficult than you would think. Printing is a well-known technology. It’s not a moon shot. But voting technology is really a lot harder than people think. Plus there’s a certification process that these machines have to go through that may take six months to a year. Furthermore, I’m personally not convinced that attaching printers to touch-screen machines is the right solution. We have rather good solutions that are used throughout California and a lot of other places which are precinct-based optical scan systems. You fill out something like a standardized exam; you put it into a scanner which is also the ballot box. It will kick the ballot back if you voted for too many people for a race or it has a stray mark on it that makes it unreadable. And these systems are widely used. They’ve been studied very extensively. They have the paper trail—namely, the paper ballot you fill out. They’re much less expensive than electronic voting systems. They’re reasonably easy for poll workers to use, and they’ve been studied a lot by political scientists and the findings are generally that voters make fewer errors on those types of equipment than on the touch-screen machines. So we need to get rid of our punch card systems, we need to get better voting technology, and the better voting technology that’s available is these precinct-based optical scan systems.

Goodman: And who is standing in the way of them?
Dill: Basically the forces that I mentioned. People are looking at large federal subsidies to buy equipment; they have close relationships with the vendors for the election equipment. And I think one of the things that appeals to certain local election officials—and, in fact, there was a recent 60 Minutes episode where Connie McCormack of Los Angeles almost said so—is the idea of really getting rid of recounts. The idea with the recount on these machines is that you can push a button and it will print out the same vote totals that it printed before. So I say that and people always laugh, but election officials actually regarded this as a feature in some cases. The reason you’re all laughing is that you want an independent check and we all know that, but election officials occupy a different world. You can sort of see the situation that they’re in. If somebody asks for a recount, that’s a huge pain to deal with, and it’s not just that you have to do all this work to count all these ballots again. You’re under tremendous pressure from the campaigns and the media and you’ve got people staring at you to do the recount and you’re under a great deal of pressure and it must be a very uncomfortable situation. If we could just get rid of the inconsistencies, wouldn’t that be a wonderful thing? We could have completely accurate elections. The problem is that it’s fallacious. As my friend Kim Alexander of the California Voter Foundation says, this is like trying to eliminate embezzlement by eliminating the accounting department. Stick our heads in the sand and then we won’t see the problem anymore, and that’s something that seems to be very attractive.

Goodman: What do you think of Congressman Holt’s proposal and having some kind of accurate record? Can you explain what it is?

Dill: This is H.R. 2239. It’s a federal bill to require voter-verified paper ballots on all election equipment in the United States, and it has a bunch of other provisions including mandatory random recounts of precincts, like half a percent of the precincts in the country. I think it’s a very good bill. It’s going to have to be reintroduced in the next Congress and there might be some fine-tuning to do there. I remember when this bill was written. People said it would go nowhere and somebody said that even if it gets 100 co-sponsors, it will not go anywhere, as if that were a completely impossible thing. The last number I remember is 155 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives. Now, Representative Holt is a Democrat.

There is a bill that VerifiedVoting.org is also supporting in the Senate introduced by Republican John Ensign from Nevada which is very, very clear. It’s a very narrow bill, very clear about the need for paper ballots and the primacy of those ballots over any electronic records if they do recounts, and it doesn’t do a lot else. But what it does, it does excellently. I think the fact that that’s gaining some support…. I’m not sure what the number of co-sponsors is now, but it has bipartisan support, and I think the fact that both of these bills have bipartisan support and that one was introduced by a Democrat and one introduced by a Republican indicates that we have a decent chance of getting some legislation, especially after the problems in this election really come to light.
Do we have any reason to be concerned that it all came down to Ohio, where Walden O’Dell is based, the head of Diebold, and we stopped electronic voting in Ohio except for those counties that already had it? Whether there are sufficient voting problems in Ohio to change the outcome of the election, my guess is no. I’m sure that there are a lot of problems and we’ve certainly seen a lot of reports of them, and once again, there may be new information that comes to light. But with my current state of knowledge, I don’t think so.

**Goodman:** What percentage of the votes cast were done on electronic voting machines?

**Dill:** The prediction before the election was that almost 30 percent of our votes would go through paperless electronic voting machines. That’s a lot. I don’t know the percentage of votes in Ohio; probably more than 10 percent, probably less than 30 percent. Seventy percent is punch cards, so it’s less than 30 percent electronic.

**Goodman:** What state had the highest?

**Dill:** Georgia and Maryland were all electronic except for absentee ballots.

**Goodman:** Some people might say that the most powerful institutions now on earth are not the voting machines, not the military or the weapons that the military deploys, but the media. That more powerful than any missile or any bomb deployed by the Pentagon, the Pentagon deployed the U.S. media in these last few years, and that the media has reached an all-time low in this country. That George Bush could never have accomplished the dissemination of the lies about weapons of mass destruction, connections between Al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, 9/11, and Iraq if he simply had a megaphone and he was standing on the steps of the White House. But he had something far more powerful. He had the U.S. media. Every place I go, people ask how is this happening. Not so much the election of President Bush, but a new study just came out from the University of Maryland that said that 75 percent of Bush supporters believe that there is a link between Al-Qaeda and Iraq, and the majority of people in this country believe weapons of mass destruction were found. That doesn’t come from any individual just spouting lies; that comes from a systematic inundation of misinformation throughout the country, and it doesn’t just come from Fox. In fact, Fox does not reach that many people on a regular basis. It comes from all of the media: NBC, CBS, ABC, MSNBC. And the question is, how has this gone on for so long when many of them are using the public airwaves? They are using a national treasure. They are using public property. These may be corporations and they may be nuclear weapons manufacturers who make many of the parts used in the wars, but they are still using our airwaves and they have a responsibility there and must be held accountable.

We’re going to wrap up this part of the discussion with John McManus, who has been looking at how the media informs us in a very grassroots way. And I also wanted to ask Larry Diamond after John how this played into the kind of work you did when you were in Iraq—the kind of manufacturing of consent here at home and people being
misinformed. Can you talk about what you found in the lead-up to the elections in terms of how local and national media covered it?

John McManus: Yes. You raise a very big question there and certainly George Bush doesn’t just walk out with the megaphone to spread his version of the truth or how the world works. After the election, I was reminded of Winston Churchill’s comment that democracy is the worst form of government except for all the others that have been tried. And the worst aspect was weighing on me, and I was thinking of what Walter Lippmann wrote about 80 years ago about democracy. What he said was that the sharpest criticism of democracy is that it relies on distracted, manipulable citizens to make the decision about who exercises power. I think that given that vulnerability, given that weakness in this society that the average citizen can be manipulated by information, we as a society ought to do everything we can to shore up that weak link. Instead, we have a system of communication that permits exploitation of that weakness. And I’m really not talking about the news media, although there’s lots of criticism we could mount about them. I’m talking about political advertising. We allow people who are very good at assembling focus groups, at testing slogans, at creating images and music that are extraordinarily persuasive and that have much more repetition than anything in the news media to carry messages that are powerful, that short circuit our thinking, that inform our opinions at levels that we’re not even aware of. A professor who sits in the next room from me in the Communications Department told me that when he heard about 9/11 and the response of the Bush administration to attack Afghanistan—even though he’s a pretty much dyed-in-the-wool Democrat—he was saying to himself, “I’m glad the Republicans are in the White House.” Even this individual felt that we were more secure with Republicans in terms of a closed-fist response toward those who would harm us. Where do those images come from? I think a lot of them come from this enormous repetition of simple tested slogans, and I think we can’t afford it as a democracy anymore. I think it’s air pollution. And I think we own the airwaves and we regulate that use of spectrum and we shouldn’t cut it off entirely.

What we should do is what many Western European countries do, which is to say, “You can have time; we’re going to give it to you and take a lot of the money out of politics. We’re going to give you time, and you’re going to make your case in a situation like this: You get a microphone, you don’t get the image and the spin-mesters. You get to explain what you’re about on the public airwaves, on the airwaves that we own, and we do it at our expense so that we take a lot of the money out of the political campaign process.” Take the image makers who, I think, have a lot to do with the study that you mentioned—this poll that the University of Maryland did that showed that not just in terms of people thinking that Iraq actually had weapons of mass destruction or a major program to develop them, but they felt that President Bush had signed a protocol to eliminate global warming or to address global warming. There is a whole range of issues in which their beliefs were completely at variance with the facts, and I think that some of that falls in the lap of the media. But I think that the media’s efforts to counteract the power of televisual advertising are completely overmatched. A fact check on page B12 of the newspaper or a 20-second story on an evening newscast compared to the relentless
pounding of these images that are on in prime time—I think there’s no contest. And so I think that we have to reclaim the airwaves. We have to brace this weakness in the American communications system and the American political system, and we can’t afford this kind of air pollution that’s suffocating democracy.

And in terms of what I found locally in media, what I found was actually fairly strong performance by most of the newspapers. Not as strong as I would like. I would love it if newspapers or journalists in general would take politics and citizenship as seriously as they take sports. If you read the *San Francisco Chronicle* or the *San Jose Mercury News* on Mondays, you will find during the football season that there’s an extra sports section called “NFL Monday.” Why not during political campaigns have an extra section called “Politics in California”? We were facing an enormously complicated set of ballot issues, very confusing issues. We could have used a lot of help with that, and we got some help but not much.

And when we look at local TV, which is the medium that polls tell us most people rely on, in the beginning we were pretty hopeful. We found that their newscasts around the debates—because the debates got very good viewership—were substantive. They were looking at these issues, they were exploring them. But as soon as the debates were over, coverage actually fell. So as it got closer to the election, we would have expected intensifying coverage of politics and we would expect the emphasis would shift from a race that was already decided in California for Kerry to these complex issues that people faced for state and local ballots. Unfortunately, what we saw was a waning of interest on their part. It was a disappointing kind of market-driven journalism, and it’s doubly disappointing because, one, they’re using our airwaves, which generate enormous profits for them, and they’re not aiding us at the time of our greatest need. As citizens, our time of greatest need is just before an election. And secondly, they’re getting this large infusion of cash, less in states like California that weren’t in play than in the so-called battleground states. The TV stations there are awash in money. There’s something like four billion dollars spent on advertising at the national level, which is at the presidential and congressional levels. And so there’s a huge infusion of cash at the same time as there’s this need to report, and instead they took the money and turned a blind eye to us. So there’s lots to complain about in terms of media coverage, but I think we really need to revise our permission to use the power of television to counter-program good journalism and to play to our passions and to create these illusions for people who don’t have the time to get to the bottom of them, who are susceptible. We need to protect ourselves from that, and we can do it legally.

**Goodman:** If the media is getting more and more money, at the same time we’re seeing fewer and fewer owners…the Clear Channeling of America. And reporters at the local level are being laid off so that the news can come from more centralized sources. There was the whole controversy over Sinclair. The guy who was the point person and did a commentary called *The Point* every day, Mark Hyman, who was the one that everyone heard justifying why they were going to do this big anti-Kerry ad on the 62 local stations that they own. Do you have a Sinclair station here?
McManus: No. The closest one I think is in Sacramento.

Goodman: And how to they respond? Do you know?

McManus: I don’t know what that station did. Does anyone from Sacramento know? It is KOVR, I think.

Goodman: There was a protest. Very interestingly, people in communities responded and they organized boycotts and advertisers also threatened these local stations saying, We’re not going to advertise if this program runs. But I was wondering what kind of local activism you see. How active are people getting in being aware how powerful the media is and the idea that we can take it back?

McManus: I think that what Sinclair did is similar to what another broadcasting company called Pappas did. There’s a corporation named Pappas that owns a number of television stations, and on their stations they offered over $300,000 in free advertising just to Republican candidates toward the end of the campaign.

Goodman: Are they allowed to do that?

McManus: They are.

Goodman: Isn’t there equal time?

McManus: The fairness doctrine has been vitiated and there are some aspects of it they actually backed off of as did Sinclair, partially at least. But I think both of these companies are poster children for why we cannot allow a few companies to own many media outlets. There are people who tell me when I make that argument that, “Gee, the market worked,” and this is the positive side. I’m usually ragging on market-driven journalism because I think when you satisfy the markets of Wall Street and you satisfy the markets for advertisers and you manipulate the market for consumers, that generally democracy loses. But in this case, those markets actually created pressures against Sinclair’s attempt to create this commercial for one side because the people who are trying to sell goods on those stations are not going to buy time if half the audience has left. So there is a positive aspect to that.

But I think these are warnings to us of what concentration of media means, what it can do. And I think we have to act. To those people who say the system worked, I say that it wouldn’t have worked had it not been for activists like MoveOn and Free Press and others, Media Alliance locally. I think there is beginning to be a reaction among the public in that we can’t leave it in the hands of corporations, and Grade the News is an expression of that. It’s a very fledgling, fragile movement at this point. I think it will have every reason to gain strength in the next four years. One thing about muckraking is that when there’s an enormous supply of muck coming your way, there’s plenty of work. I wish it weren’t so. It’s sad when we have to rely on activists to do things that governmental agencies are supposed to do.
Goodman: We’re going to take questions and comments from the audience. Also, in order to get more accurate news headlines, Chuck Scurich and Denis Moynihan, who’s the outreach coordinator for Democracy Now!, are handing around Daily Digest e-mail sign-up lists. We send out the headlines of Democracy Now! every day and the news stories in case you’ve missed them on the radio if you listen to KPFA. We’re now on KERA-PBS every night at midnight, by the way, along with a number of other linked TV channels, including 375, and Dish Network 9415 and 9410. I think there’s hope there in the fact that you’ve got independent media that’s growing so much now. But I did want to ask Larry Diamond how important it was for the justification of the invasion and the ongoing occupation to have the kind of echo chamber that the media provided for the Bush administration.

Diamond: It’s tough to say, because keep in mind that quite a number of Democrats on Capitol Hill accepted what the Bush administration was saying about weapons of mass destruction and supported going to war. I don’t think it was just the media, although that’s a very, very disturbing fact. But I wanted to say very quickly three other things. The media, which became a cheerleader for the war during the war with the embedding process—something that maybe needs to be reevaluated, and maybe you’ll have something more you want to say about that—did become quite critical I think in exposing the problems with the occupation. This created a lot of problems for CPA and we were specifically instructed…I was told, “Do not speak to the media.” I was told that I wasn’t allowed to talk to them without permission from the Strategic Communications Office. And indeed, I had to sneak out of the palace and into the dark streets to meet an NPR reporter now and then to try and provide some background on what was happening. It was really kind of pathetic, frankly. But I think once the occupation happened, the media did do a lot to begin to inform the American public about a lot of the problems.

The other thing, if I may switch from my Iraqi role for a minute to the main occupation of my life, which is studying democracy comparatively around the world: I think it is very noteworthy building on what my two fellow panelists have said, and frankly deeply troubling as someone who studies democracy comparatively, that we are now falling well behind many other democracies in the world, including, I might say, in terms of the way people vote and how they’re monitored and in terms of the provision of free airtime and public funding for political parties and campaigns—well behind many developing democracies around the world that have only been around for 10 or 20 years. And I think we need a movement in the United States to examine the entire quality of democracy in this country and develop an agenda for reform.

I’d like to put one other aspect on the table for that agenda, if I may, which I think is the single biggest scandal in this election that nobody has yet talked about tonight, and that is that well over 90 percent of the members of the United States Congress were elected two nights ago in completely uncompetitive elections. How did the Republicans gain four seats in the House of Representatives? Well, they had a lot of money, they had an energetic campaign, but look at what has happened in the last few years in redistricting in the State of Texas, redistricting in the State of Florida. And if I may say so, look at the
balance in terms of the congressional delegation in California in the other direction just so we’re being honest with ourselves here, and you’ll see not only utterly brutal and cynical partisan politics creating the most bizarrely drawn districts imaginable, but maybe David would have something to say about this. If you haven’t looked at it, I really would urge you to use your sophisticated skills on this issue as well. Computer programming has been applied. I can remember when they were doing this 20 or 30 years ago in the state legislatures with really crude methods. Now they’ve got sophisticated computer programming to squeeze the juice out of every district possible to create as many safe Republican districts in one state or safe Democratic districts in another as possible. And this is really, I think, a crime against democracy in the United States.

**Goodman:** Why don’t we take some comments from the audience.

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**Question from Banafsheh Akhlaghi:** I want to first and foremost thank you for this panel tonight and thank you for the opportunity to be able to come and talk to you all about some other events that are taking place right here in the local area, here within the boundaries of the United States without having to go as far as Iran. Amy and I met two years ago during the Muslim Public Affairs Council Conference, and her programming was one of the first to cover the type of atrocities that we see day in and day out in my office. We represent Muslims, Middle Easterners, and South Asians post 9/11. In the Arab FBI interviews and roundups, what we call “special registrations” with real ethnic profiling [took place]. We see now today discrimination toward children, and we do not have to go too far because it’s right here in Half Moon Bay, California, where Iranian children are told by their teachers that they are in some way evil and that they don’t belong in the classroom. That’s what’s happening here, and most of the time when I speak about these issues, most folks don’t know. The organization that we’ve created this summer is called the National Legal Sanctuary for Community Advancement (NLSCA), and it is the first human rights organization post 9/11.

My question to all of you is how do we get this out? How do we access the media when the media doesn’t give us the opportunity to speak? There’s a silence, an absolute silence on these issues, and this is just as important because it’s affecting people’s lives. Deportation to some of these countries means death for some of these folks. Detention at 24-hour lockdown [facilities] is impossible to think about in the United States. How to we access the media?

**Goodman:** I think Banafsheh is raising a very important point. It really goes to these global issues being manifest on a local level, which means media in local communities. These are the kinds of stories that they could sink their teeth into, but they don’t, which educate us all and enable us to get involved. Because of the stories she told a few years ago when we first met at the Muslim Public Affairs Council meeting, my brother David and I wrote in *The Exception to the Rulers* about, for example, the roundups in Los Angeles. [It reached] the point where the police ran out of handcuffs because they were arresting so many Iranians in Los Angeles in one fell swoop at these special registrations.
These are ripe for telling the local media. This is what young people who go into journalism train for, to tell these stories. What’s happening, John? Are they being told?

**McManus:** I haven’t seen much. Have you actually gone to the newsroom of the *Mercury News* or the *Chronicle* and made your case?

**Akhlaghi:** We get smidgens here or there. I was a law professor. I definitely don’t know PR, but I’m learning that the thing that they all want to hear is sensationalism. They want to have the human element, but to do it in a sound bite. I don’t know how you do that, but we’ve been attempting to. Just two days ago, on Election Day, on the second page of the *Contra Costa Times*, we were able to have Jack Chang cover the case of one of our imams from Livermore. So every now and again we’re able to access the media, but it has to be tailored in such a way that it looks like we’re in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security and we’re applauding them for letting one of us go. How do we do it?

**McManus:** I think this is one of the real problems of this journalism that puts its ear to the ground to find out what’s popular and is always trying to stir the pot so that people will keep paying attention. As you were saying, “I’m not worrying about facts; I’m just worried about keeping my audience awake.” If your interest is in maximizing audience, then you don’t stay with any particular story very long; you don’t want to give nuance; you sure don’t want to make people think that you’re in sympathy with Muslims or other people who are being demonized. There is a really serious problem there. I think that you need to approach journalists. You probably need to find allies in this community—maybe go to Media Alliance and seek them. I think this is a good example of why we need to create citizen reaction. We need to create a network of people—public broadcasters, journalism teachers, university professors, community activists who create a loud voice, and the Internet may give us that opportunity now—that speaks back to power, that demands access, that exposes stories like this that aren’t being told that are outrages in American democracy.

**Goodman:** I also think it’s important to go to places like KPFA, KALW, and other places shoring up independent media because they ultimately have an effect on the corporate media’s telling of the story. These stories are told enough times. We see the effect. It’s called “trickle-up journalism.”

**Question from the Audience:** Thank you, Amy, for being here. A quick question for Amy and then a question for Dr. Dill. Amy, I’m hoping that you are still going to follow the story of who in the world “outed” Valerie Plame and is guilty of treason. My question for Dr. Dill is, I heard what you said earlier and I’ve been hearing people in the media talk about how difficult it is to get an accurate vote count, but I don’t hear from Wall Street that we have a devil of a time getting an accurate tracking of the millions of stock transactions that occur—not once in a while on a Tuesday, but five days a week every time there’s not a holiday. And I don’t hear the banks telling us that we can’t expect our ATM transactions to be recorded with greater than 80 percent accuracy, so why not our elections?
Dill: There’s a question of motivation. Somebody asked me why it is that security equipment for gambling equipment is so much better than for voting machines. I had to sit back and think about that, but I realized that basically, in Las Vegas, if doubt is cast on the gambling machines, there are specific people who lose money, and the money that’s coming in there…a certain percentage gets skimmed off the top to go to the Nevada Gaming Commission to police the process. Enforcing these processes that you’re talking about are the people who would be embezzled from, defrauded, or would lose their money through accidents if they weren’t careful about it. So there’s sort of a direct reward structure there.

Voting is just an especially hard problem. We could do much, much better with our process. And one thing that people say is that it’s really hard to count paper ballots. But in fact, we count money, currency, anonymous things, all the time with extreme accuracy. We also do a pretty good job of making sure it doesn’t get stolen. Some gets stolen, but theft of cash is a small-scale problem in the United States. So there are really two reasons. First, we’re not trying hard enough. The second is that voting is actually in some ways a different kind of problem from banking because of the anonymity of the process.

Question from the Audience: I want to thank all of you here who helped pass Proposition 63 here in California. I plan to work to install a new health association in our county. We also need an association for Santa Cruz and San Mateo. We need board members, we need people who acknowledge mental health issues. I don’t know if you all realize what was intended with the Declaration of Independence. We intended to break away from corporations. I want to ask John if there’s a possibility that we can install associations within corporations. In 1886, a Supreme Court decision was made on Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad. We gave them the right to super-citizenship.

Goodman: This is a very important point—the whole issue of corporations being treated as people, and those corporations that aren’t responsible having their charters revoked. There’s a national movement around this. Do you know anything about it?

Dill: It’s interesting. If there’s a scandal in a public place with public officeholders, the news media will at least look into it, particularly if it’s a sex scandal. But if there is a scandal in the corporate arena, there is very little chance that it will be revealed by the news media. Enron was a complete surprise to the news media, to the business media. It was developed by government investigation. So I think if you were to ask Tony Ridder, the CEO of the Knight Ridder Corporation that owns the Mercury News and the Contra Costa Times about this question, he would be very uncomfortable sending his reporters to try to penetrate what’s happening in corporate boardrooms for fear that someone might do it to him. So I think that there’s a real double standard. There’s enormous power being exercised by corporations and there is very little scrutiny of them. You don’t have public record laws that allow you to pry your way in the way you do with investigating public boards and councils. But clearly this is an area where the media fall down; clearly this is an area where more and more power is being exercised and we need to know
because it affects us. And so I’m not quite sure what the answer is, but we need to expose the problem and maybe shame the media into covering that kind of authority, which is certainly going to grow in the next four years.

**Question from the Audience:** I’m interested in any of your reactions to the claims of several groups around the country regarding the discrepancies between voter exit polls and voter returns. I know several organizations have filed Freedom of Information Act reports and I just wonder why this isn’t getting reported and what your opinions are on this.

**Goodman:** David Dill, this question of the exit polls and the actual votes?

**Dill:** I can tell you that I’m hearing about it a lot. I don’t fully understand the situation. I think that the exit poll company owes the American people a detailed explanation of how the poll was conducted and what the precise results were just to allay concern about the election, because it bothers me that I can’t find what I need to answer people’s questions about it. My understanding is that the early election polls were incorrect. They were leaked out, and the reason they were incorrect is that the percentage of women who answered the polls was much higher than the percentage of female voters, for whatever reason. And so that skewed the results because there was a gender gap in the election and that discrepancy cleared up in the later polls. But I would like to know exactly how it was conducted and exactly what happened. Furthermore, I don’t have any particular suspicion of hanky-panky in the election, but I would support a fairly in-depth investigation of every election to cross-check everything we can, whether it’s exit polls, the different records inside the voting machines, the results at the precincts with the results that are reported in the main computer system, etcetera, because it will help the legitimacy of the elected officials and it will uncover areas of fraud if they occurred.

**Question from the Audience:** Most of you heard that Diebold was at the Crawford Ranch promising Bush the election, but did you know that the chief programmer of Diebold has two felonies against him? And, number two, a woman has written a book about touch-screen computer manufacturing, and this guy with the felonies against him put something in the computer that makes it very easy… and she said she had people who could figure it out in 20 minutes at the mainframe, or whatever the collating equipment is called, in 20 minutes they could touch keys that would change thousands of votes. So if you wonder what happened to the votes, try to find that book. It was [written by] one of the guests on *Coast to Coast.*

**Dill:** The woman is Bev Harris. She runs a web site called BlackBoxVoting.org. She has a book called *Black Box Voting,* and at least one edition of it is available free over the Web. She also uncovered the story you mentioned about the embezzler who had worked for Diebold, and she demonstrated with a chimpanzee how to delete votes in the central computer systems. So she’s actually uncovered a number of very interesting stories.

**Question from the Audience:** I want to thank you all for the work that you do, and I want to follow up on the discussion of the Pappas study that you talked about—about the
misperceptions and lack of knowledge that a lot of Americans have. I personally believe that most Americans are really good people; they want to do the right thing, but they’re getting wrong information. This is an issue that covers across the board. As a person who wants to change this, I’d like to get some suggestions from you of concrete things that I can do when I go back home. We have a few hundred people here who obviously are very concerned and passionate about issues and about politics. Could you talk about two specific things that we can do? Should we use our attorney generals in the blue states because we own not only airwaves but also a good share of these corporations? Should we use this? Should we use the Web? What would you say as experts on how we can change this, because if people get the right information, they’re probably more likely to make better decisions.

**McManus:** I don’t think you can count on corporations to act on your benefit in terms of the news media. That’s the purpose of Grade the News. There are tools on the web site you can use to actually evaluate the news, and you can find what you should be able to expect from journalism. You can actually give it a grade, and we encourage people to send them to us and to send them back to news directors and editors so the public begins to be aware of the kinds of distortions that occur and what’s missing. There are ways of doing that. In checking off topics of stories, you notice that you’ve checked five in a row that are about crimes, three that are about sports, and maybe a lame political story with very little about the environment and very little about other kinds of issues such as those that have been raised about harassment of Arabs and other foreign nationals from the Middle East. You notice these systematic omissions and distortions and you act as a group and allow people like me to help funnel your investigations to news directors. Then you create market pressures on them to act more responsibly. I think absent that kind of pressure, they’re not going to do so.

**Question from the Audience:** Most of the people in America are not getting their news from places like your great web site. They’re getting it from passively sitting in front of a TV or listening to Rush Limbaugh. *Air America* is great; we’re getting more of this, but are there other things that we can do to reach these people who are getting news passively or to change those passive sources?

**McManus:** Well, I think people have to stop being passive. And they need to make their voices heard. They need to systematically and en masse tell the public why it is that these newscasts have become distractions from what’s really important. Why is it that there’s all this crime reporting, all this sports reporting, and there’s so little about the exercise of power, particularly corporate power? “We’re not hearing what we need; we’re not going to watch your station anymore if we don’t get it.” “We’re not going to read your newspaper anymore if we don’t get it.” These people are market-driven, and if enough people complain, they’ll respond. I got one newsletter from a news director at KPIX saying, “Look what you’ve done.” Somebody wrote in citing our evaluation that KPIX had done almost nothing before the March 2 primary—very little coverage—and said, “We’re not going to watch you anymore if this keeps happening.” Well, if there were 1,000 letters like that, you can bet that they would do a lot more the next time. So I think the trick is to organize, and to organize around active groups like Media Alliance or
us to create a mass critical awareness that will result in consumer pressure on them. They will respond to that. I don’t think they’ll respond to many other things.

Goodman: I would also say in terms of getting more accurate information that you can bring Democracy Now! to your local public access TV station or PBS station or NPR station or community radio station. That’s how it’s growing, and the more stations it’s on, the more pressure it puts on the corporate media. Every week we get calls from different networks asking us who the particular guest was that we had on and if there’s any way to reach that individual. How much these people actually get on the mainstream media is another question, but it’s a start. When we went to the Central African Republic when Aristide, the President of Haiti, was ousted and followed that trip back to the United States with Congress member Maxine Waters and TransAfrica founder Randall Robinson, the Associated Press was publishing our reports to the rest of the world. CNN was calling us to get reports on the progress of the trip. The corporate network reporters [called us] when Aristide phoned Waters and then Waters came on Democracy Now! to say that Aristide claimed he was the victim of a coup d’état in the service of the United States, that he was the victim of a modern kidnapping. The network reporters took our transcripts of Democracy Now! that day because we put them out on the Web at DemocracyNow.org and they brought them to Rumsfeld at the Pentagon and the White House. They questioned Rumsfeld and they said, “Is what Pacifica is reporting true?” He started to laugh and they said, “We asked for an answer, not a laugh.” And he said, “That’s ridiculous.” But when a politician tells you that something is ridiculous, from my years as a reporter, you’re on the right track.

So I really think it is absolutely critical that we start to take very seriously the public channels of information and build up the media infrastructure. Today on Democracy Now! we had Bob Perry on—the former Newsweek and AP reporter who broke a lot of the Iran-Contra story in the 1980s—and he talked about how systematically the right in this country has built up their think tanks, has built up their right-wing media machine. And we are seeing the fruits of it right now and we have to take this very seriously, and we have to build up—I’m not going to say something comparable—but something on the other side. I’m saying a fair and balanced—in the best sense of the words—media and forums like this and these kinds of discussions that spread out around the country and have impact on a global scale. That’s simply what the media provides because it’s a forum where we can all gather around. I see the media as a huge kitchen table that stretches across the country and where we all sit around and have the most important discussions of the day: war and peace, life and death. Anything less than that is a disservice to a democratic society, so we have to take it very seriously. One thing you can do, and people are doing it all over the country, is to bring the program to these forums.

Public access TV is often completely disregarded; you don’t even know it’s there. You may go through your channels and think, Oh, there’s that station I’m not interested in. But now, in the same way people fought for KPFA and for Pacifica Radio, media activists have fought for public access. A cable company comes into town and gets a monopoly in that town. That’s because whether it’s Comcast or Cablevision or Time
Warner, the town doesn’t want the roads ripped up more than once, so one cable company gets the monopoly. They have to give something back, and what they give back, because of media activism, is some public access TV channels. If the community uses them, you’ll see how valuable they can become. Democracy Now! being on these public access TV channels has brought a lot of attention to these channels and a lot of community members then want to have shows themselves. Then the community starts to tune in, and the contract is renegotiated. If Time Warner gets what it wants, it will take back these channels, but if there is a community that is watching them, they go to the city council meeting and they say, “No, you’re not going to take back our channels; this is the place where we can make our own media and it’s in as prime a location as any other.” In New York, we have Channel 34; Channel 37 is CNN. We are right in the midst of that dial and we can build our own infrastructure. So you call your public access TV channel in town and you say, for example, “We want Democracy Now!” or “I want to do my own channel.” It’s Channel 26 in Palo Alto. You can go to DemocracyNow.org or PBS to find out. We can put the public back in public television and in public radio.

Again, I want to end where we began and say that you’re all here. I think this is the promise of how these next four years will be dealt with…the fact that you’re not just going home and hiding away. But you are gathering together because, although media is fantastic, it’s a way to get information, it is still virtual, and what is absolutely critical is mass gatherings like this.

**Question from the Audience:** I have a question that is more for Dr. Diamond. My greatest fear out of the next four years of the Bush administration is a preemptive attack on Iran. Iran is not another Iraq. There is so much funding and investment from the Asian countries, European countries, and Russia, and I’m afraid that an attack preemptively by the U.S. or Israel would result in World War III. What is your opinion on how likely a preemptive attack on Iran will be?

**Diamond:** Well, I don’t think it’s going to result in a nuclear exchange or an imminent world war, but I think it’s extremely ill-advised for a number of reasons. Then I’ll answer the last part of your question. One reason is that there is tremendous aspiration in Iran today for democracy and real disgust with the political and religious oppression and the profound, pervasive corruption of this tiny ruling elite. I mean, here is one of the few countries left in the world that is actually pro-American, and now we’re thinking of bombing it? That’s really brilliant. I can’t imagine anything that would rally popular support behind the decadent and failing regime in Tehran more readily than bombing any part of Iran for whatever reason. Sometimes you’ve got to make choices in diplomacy and statecraft, but right now when we’ve got diplomatic tools, I think that would be a bad one. I think that the Bush administration knows this would be a big roll of the dice, and I think they’ve said to Germany, Britain, and France, the European Union contact group, “Let’s see what we can get through diplomacy.” But I would say that there’s a 50-50 chance that within the next nine to twelve months Israel or the United States is going to bomb Iran’s nuclear facilities if we do not get an agreement. And I do think it would be a very frightening step because it would lead to a tremendous surge of instability throughout the region, a surge of support for the regime, and it might not get the
facilities. They would withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, they would claim to have a reason now to develop nuclear weapons, and I think we would be worse off.

Something that got buried on the inside of the news pages that I happened to note three or four weeks ago was a small story in the *New York Times* that we were in the process of transferring large numbers of bunker-busting bombs to the Israeli airports. Now, ask yourself...these are the bombs that can penetrate the deeply embedded nuclear sites that Iran has. Why are we making this transfer? If you’re worried about it, my advice is to begin to generate the kind of public debate now that can anticipate this possibility and think about how the United States and the international community can find other ways to engage this issue. But I do want to say that this is not a trivial problem. Iran is very far along in the development of a nuclear weapon and I think this would be a very bad thing for the United States, for Israel, for the entire Middle East, and for the cause, which is so vital, of preventing further nuclear proliferation.

**Question from the Audience:** I’d like to ask about something close to home. I remember when Nixon was re-elected, it took a few years for his lies to sink in and for him to be impeached. Clinton was impeached on a lie over a sexual indiscretion. I think Bush has done a little worse. Can you talk to us about optimism or hope that Bush will be found as a war criminal if not for the torture, if not for lying about the reasons for getting us into war, then for using depleted uranium weapons that are illegal as far as I can tell.

**Goodman:** I was just in Boston with Noam Chomsky at Trinity Church. When someone asked him who to vote for, he said, “Spend all of five minutes thinking about it.” But he said, “Go out and do it.” But what is happening right now in the world is where you have to focus all your energy. And the fact is that whether Kerry was elected or whether Bush was elected, they didn’t take a very different approach to Iraq. There is a growing anti-war movement in this country that started way before the anti-war movement happened around Vietnam. Even before the invasion, millions of people had mobilized. In fact, I would say it’s most people in this country and at this point of globalization, it’s all over the world. This is a blip right here. What really matters is what you do. We’re talking about people at the top; we’re talking about a handful of so-called leaders. But you are the leaders and you have proven what mass movements can do and how they can link up around the world, and this shouldn’t in any way derail anything that you’re doing but should actually fuel it further. I very much think people are on the right track in this country. We’ve never seen anything like the level of protest that we have in the past few years. All of this takes time, but it also takes absolute persistence and determination.

**Gonnerman:** Thanks to Amy Goodman, Larry Diamond, David Dill, and John McManus, and to all of you for being here tonight.

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Amy Goodman is the host of Pacifica Radio's daily newsmagazine Democracy Now! After graduating from Harvard with a degree in anthropology in 1984, she went to New York City and found WBAI on her radio dial. She began volunteering at the station and a few years later became the station's news director. She never left.

She is a recipient of the George Polk Award, the Golden Reel for Best National Documentary from the National Federation of Community Broadcasters, and a Project Censored award for the radio documentary Drilling and Killing: Chevron and Nigeria's Oil Dictatorship. She has also won numerous awards for the radio documentary co-produced with Allan Nairn, MASSACRE: The Story of East Timor, including the Robert F. Kennedy Prize for International Reporting. Goodman has reported from Israel and the Occupied territories, Cuba, Mexico, and Haiti.

Democracy Now! is broadcast locally on KPFA Radio (94.1 FM) each weekday at 9:00 am and throughout the nation on more than 270 radio and television stations. Amy and her brother, David Goodman, have recently published The Exception to the Rulers: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profititeers, and the Media That Love Them.

Larry Diamond is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, co-editor of the Journal of Democracy, and co-director of the International Forum for Democratic Studies at the National Endowment for Democracy. He is also professor of political science and sociology, by courtesy, at Stanford University and coordinator of the Democracy Program of the New Center for Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law at Stanford's Institute for International Studies. From January to April 2004, he served as Senior Advisor to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad. Diamond published “What Went Wrong in Iraq” in the September/October 2004 Foreign Affairs.

David Dill is Professor of Computer Science at Stanford University with a primary research focus on the theory and application of formal verification techniques to system designs. In 2003, he turned a critical eye to electronic voting systems, founding VerifiedVoting.org to champion transparent and publicly verifiable elections. This website educates the public about the problem with relying on electronic voting machines to record and count votes without the backup of a voter-verifiable audit trail; points to reasonable solutions that are within reach; and provides a list of actions voters can take, encouraging them to act on their own behalf to ensure that their votes are counted in future elections. In April 2004 he received the Pioneer Award from the Electronic Frontier Foundation for spearheading and nurturing a movement to maintain integrity in elections.

John McManus is the director of Grade the News, a media research project focusing on the quality of the news media in the San Francisco Bay Area. A former newspaper reporter and journalism professor, McManus has written extensively about communication, and particularly about how markets shape news. His book, Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware? won the Society of Professional Journalists' Research Prize in 1994. He is an associate of the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University and earned his Ph.D. at Stanford University. Grade the News is
affiliated with and based at Stanford’s Graduate Program in Journalism.

Comments?
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