

SHADOWS OF LIBERTY

what you'll find inside!

- about the film & filmmakers
- ready to watch! screening guide
- ready to talk! discussion guide
- ready to act! handout

Bullfrog Community Screening & Discussion Guide

Roll out the red carpet! Use your film screening of SHADOWS OF LIBERTY as a tool to build community and spark discussion about corporate media, censorship, and how news and information can be manipulated and skewed. This guide offers some background information plus helpful tips & discussion questions for an informative, and rewarding screening. **Good Luck!**

For additional resources, visit shadowsofliberty.bullfrogcommunities.com/sol_resources

About SHADOWS OF LIBERTY

SHADOWS OF LIBERTY examines how the US media are controlled by a handful of corporations exercising extraordinary political, social, and economic power. Having always allowed broadcasting to be controlled by commercial interests, the loosening of media ownership regulations, that began under Reagan and continued under Clinton, has led to the current situation where five mega corporations control the vast majority of the media in the United States. These companies not only don't prioritize investigative journalism, but can and do clamp down on it when their interests are threatened.



About the Director

Jean-Philippe Tremblay originates from Jonquière, Québec. He studied Law and Film Studies at Carleton University. In 2001, he was a Neg-Assembler for films such as *Insomnia*. In 2002, he further developed his *Journey* film project by traveling to South America for six months. In 2006, he completed an MA in Film Production at the London Film School where his graduation film was selected at the 50th London Film Festival. He joined DocFactory via the Bertha Foundation that same year and began research for his first feature documentary film, *Shadows Of Liberty*, and completed it in 2012.

ready to watch!

Here are some ideas and best practices to help make your community screening of SHADOWS OF LIBERTY a success!

- 1. Publicize Your Event!** This is the most important step. Not only can you tell the world about your screening, but you can also let the Bullfrog Community team know about your plans so we can help you publicize your event. Visit shadowsofliberty.bullfrogcommunities.com/sol_screenings to register your screening of SHADOWS OF LIBERTY.
- 2. Visualize Your Goal!** What do you hope to achieve with your screening? Your goal could be to generate a lively post-film discussion with your audience about what a free press means in a democracy, the reliability of your own daily news sources, or, the pro and cons of a free and open internet. Or, you can simply provide an opportunity for families to watch and learn together.
- 3. Where To Host?** Consider which locations in your area would be ideal for accommodating a community film screening of the size you anticipate: downtown movie theaters, churches and synagogues, town halls, community centers, public libraries, school auditoriums, warehouses at a business and outdoor screenings at parks and playgrounds, and even private homes have been venues for many successful community screenings.
- 4. Find A Partner!** Give some thought to who is already working on this issue in your community. Can they help sponsor the event? Spread the word? Speak on a panel discussion after the screening? Some potential partners include: Journalism and media departments at colleges, universities, and high schools, faith-based organizations and institutions, and organizations concerned with media reform and threats to free speech.
- 5. Invite A Guest Speaker!** Guest speakers and panels are a great way to encourage discussion and debate after a community screening. When people are engaged and thinking about the issues they will stay engaged long after the screening has passed. Contact editors of independent publications, journalism, political science, and communications/media teachers and professors, and local media reform activists who have expertise or insight into the issues raised by the film, and invite them to attend and participate in a discussion or Q&A session.
- 6. Engage Your Audience!** Included in this handout is a section called Ready to Act! which is meant to be a hand-out at your screening. It will help your audience know what they can do to educate themselves about key issues brought up in the film.
- 7. Spread The Word!** Think about the best methods available to you for publicizing the film screening to people in your community. Sending emails, creating event notifications on Facebook or Meetup, using Twitter, and placing screening announcements in local newspapers and newsletters is a good start. Find the SHADOWS OF LIBERTY screening poster, discussion guide (includes handout), and press photos on shadowsofliberty.bullfrogcommunities.com/sol_resources to help publicize your event around town.
- 8. Tell Us How It Went!** Visit shadowsofliberty.bullfrogcommunities.com/sol_discussion to tell us about your event. Where it was held? Who attended? What went well, and what was challenging? Your feedback will help others in organizing their own successful events and will energize Bullfrog Communities as a whole.

ready to talk!

Your audience will be excited to discuss the issues raised by SHADOWS OF LIBERTY. Here are some questions that will get people talking.

- 1.** Amy Goodman of Democracy Now! says that it's difficult to get information about what's going on in the U.S. What 5 media sources do you rate the best for news? What's your opinion of news coverage in the United States?
- 2.** Goodman says that it's especially difficult to get information from outside of the country. Are any of the 5 top news sources from outside of the U.S.? How many news sources can you name that are from outside of the U.S.?
- 3.** Roberta Baskin, a former chief investigative correspondent for a CBS news show, reported on labor abuses in Nike factories. She was demoted for suggesting that CBS news correspondents covering the 1998 Olympics were acting like "human billboards" because they wore jackets with the Nike "swoosh" logo. In what ways does the commercial nature of media clash with the ideals of professional journalism?
- 4.** Do you think that people who work for the mainstream media generally do a responsible and trustworthy job? If not, where do you turn for high-quality and trustworthy news and information?
- 5.** John Nichols of The Nation magazine says that the U.S. was founded on the concept that citizens, given necessary and relevant information, are able to govern themselves. Does your local media cover news in your community well, and does it focus on subjects and issues that interest you and seem relevant? Is the media less "free" in some communities in the United States than others?
- 6.** The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) was created in 1934 to represent the public interest and to grant licenses to broadcasters under the assumption that they serve the public interest too. Has the FCC been doing its job? How does the FCC function today?
- 7.** In the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan began reversing regulations, and the new chairman of the FCC, Mark Fowler, spearheaded the de-regulatory trend in telecommunications policy. How has the media industry benefitted or been hurt by the movement toward de-regulation? How have average working people benefited or been hurt by these same policies?
- 8.** Thirty years ago, 50 companies controlled 90 percent of all the media in the U.S. Today, it's just six corporations: GE, Newscorp, Disney, Time Warner, Viacom, and CBS. How does media consolidation effect news coverage? What effect does the corporations' profit motive have on the media they own?
- 9.** Consider what David Simon, creator of The Wire, says in the film: "Capitalism is not the best judge of what is good for a society." How does capitalism effect news? How does capitalism conflict with democracy?
- 10.** By what means have corporate-owned media and the U.S. government silenced reporters and journalists? Is there an instance in your local community in which you have experienced or witnessed voices being silenced?
- 11.** What is the role of investigative journalists? Is it, in part, to provide checks and balances on power?

12. Do you consider Julian Assange a whistleblower or a journalist? Are whistleblowers heroes or villains?

13. Chris Hedges, a former New York Times war correspondent, said that in times of war, the press loses all critical distance and journalists see themselves as patriots, first and foremost. The result is the dissemination of propaganda. Who selects the headlines and images that we see in mainstream media? If the statement that “ownership determines content” is true, how will it effect the news stories and images of war that we see in mainstream media?

14. Do you think that the U.S. would have invaded Iraq if the media had challenged the information coming from the White House? Why or why not? How is the media beating the drums for war right now?

15. Are political contributions a form of free speech that should be protected under the First Amendment? If they are, should there be a limit on what corporations, individuals, groups, and organizations may give in support of a political candidate or issue?

16. How often do you use the Internet? What do you do online? Can you remember life before the Internet, and if so, what was that like? Do you know anyone who doesn't use the Internet?

17. Before watching SHADOWS OF LIBERTY, had you heard about the net neutrality debate? What do you understand now? Are you concerned about a change in access to the Internet in the future? If so, what are your concerns?

18. If you could start over, how would you design an ideal media system for a modern democracy?

ready to act!

handout

Share this handout with your SHADOWS OF LIBERTY screening audience!

I. Get your information from diverse sources. Numerous organizations offer alternatives to corporate media:

Linktv.org – broadcasts programs that engage and educate viewers about global issues often not covered in mainstream media.

Democracy Now – an hour-long daily independent global news program hosted by progressive journalists Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez

Films for Action – is a community-powered alternative news center and learning library for people who want to change the world

Truthdig – progressive coverage of current affairs

Nation of Change – a non-profit news organization that reports 24/7 on issues affecting democracy, funded entirely by public donations

Alternet – news magazine and online community with original journalism and independent media links

Adbusters – anti-consumerist magazine

Indymedia – a collective of independent media organizations and hundreds of journalists, with grassroots, non-corporate coverage

Common Dreams – a non-profit independent news center, providing news, analysis and links to progressive organizations and information

2. Participate in media reform. There are both global and national organizations who are pushing for change – find out what they're up to and see how you can participate:

Project Censored – a media research program that aims to teach students and the public about the role of a free press in a free society

The Center for Public Integrity – one of the US' oldest and largest nonpartisan, nonprofit investigative news organizations. Its mission is to enhance democracy by revealing abuses of power, corruption and betrayal of trust by powerful public and private institutions, using the tools of investigative journalism

Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom – actively working for a more accountable, diverse and freer media and a defense of journalism and broadcasting as a public service

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting – a national media watch group for the US, criticizing media bias and censorship since 1986. FAIR has one of the best activism tools around – its **Action Alert** network, which distributes up-to-the-minute emails reporting on specific media inaccuracy and bias, encouraging you to communicate directly with journalists to get more responsible reporting. It's a tool that has forced rewrites of stories and succeeded in getting different perspectives into the news

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism – a non-profit organization that produces high-quality investigations for press and broadcast media

3. Check out both sides of the story to net neutrality

Explain Net Neutrality and what's at stake to your friends and family. First, become informed by checking out each side of the issue: SavetheInternet.com at <http://www.savetheinternet.com/> for pro-net neutrality voices and HandsOff.org at <http://www.handsoff.org/> for anti-net neutrality voices. *NOTE: HandsOff.org can be translated from German to English through Babelfish at babelfish.yahoo.com/*

4. Urge your senators to stand up for net neutrality

Policymakers are public officials, and it's their job to serve the public interest. Save The Internet features petitions and campaigns that ask our senators to protect free speech on the Internet at: <http://www.savetheinternet.com/>

5. Steamed up? Submit an Informal Complaint to the FCC

The FCC has a complaint system set up for citizens to voice their issues on communications-related topics. You will find an informal complaint form at <http://esupport.fcc.gov/complaints.html>

Once completed, submit your informal complaint by e-mail to fccinfo@fcc.gov, by fax to (866) 418-0232, or by postal mail to: Federal Communications Commission, Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, Consumer Complaints, 445 12th Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20554

6. Majorly ticked off? Submit a Formal Complaint to the FCC

End users can't submit formal complaints, but if you're a company or public interest group that's concerned and can afford the \$200 filing fee, you can file a formal complaint, which is often like a court hearing. You will most likely need a lawyer. More information on submitting a formal complaint is at Ars Technica at: <http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/news/2010/12/got-a-net-neutrality-complaint-heres-what-to-do.ars>