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Radio Host Goodman Criticizes 'Corporate Media'

BY MAGGIE ASTOR

PUBLISHED APRIL 10, 2008

In front of a crowd of over 100 at the Columbia School of Journalism, radio host, investigative journalist, and political activist Amy Goodman called on the mainstream media to do what she feels it's not—showing the public what she says it needs to see.



"If for just one week we show these images," she said, calling for increased broadcasting of war zone footage, "babies dead on the ground, women with their legs blown off by cluster bombs from Iraq to Lebanon, soldiers dead and dying ... Americans are compassionate people. They would say no, war is not the answer to conflict in the 21st century. But we don't see those images."

Best known for Democracy Now!, the independent radio and television news show she co-founded in 1996, Goodman is internationally recognized for her investigative reporting, including her groundbreaking 1991 coverage of the decades-long East Timor genocide. Her Wednesday night visit was part of a national speaking tour to promote her new book, Standing Up to the Madness: Ordinary Heroes in Extraordinary Times, which she co-wrote with her brother David.

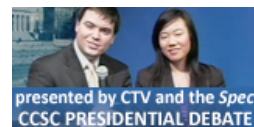
The central aims of independent media like Democracy Now!, Goodman said, are to challenge the complacency of mass media and government, and to provide information that Goodman feels major news outlets repress.

She recalled appearing on the Charlie Rose Show and making what she considered a relatively uncontroversial statement: "corporate networks have a big problem." Host Charlie Rose took offense, saying, "Corporate networks like Dan Rather? ... I work with Dan Rather ... Dan Rather is my friend."

"Well," Goodman responded at the time, "I think there are problems with the corporate media, and you don't have to take my word for it, you can take your friend Dan's word for it."

Amid laughter from the audience, Goodman built on the assumption that "corporate media" is indeed lacking, and she segued into a discussion of images' power over public opinion. She cited the story of Emmett Till, a 14-year-old African-American from Chicago who in 1955 was brutally murdered in Mississippi after whistling at a white woman. When his body was returned to his hometown, his mother demanded that his casket be opened at the funeral. Jet magazine and other media outlets nationwide publicized the images, and the incident was "seared into the history and conscience of this country," Goodman said.

In the two weeks leading up to the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, Democracy Now! monitored the interviews that NBC, CBS, ABC, and PBS conducted. Out of 399 war-related interviews aired, Goodman said, only three were with anti-war leaders.



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"That is no longer a 'mainstream' media," she said. "Those opposed to war are not a fringe minority. They are not a silent majority. They are a silenced majority, silenced by the corporate media—and it matters."

Goodman also criticized what she called "sound-byte media"—the consolidating of complex information into brief amounts of time.

"In eight seconds you can repeat the standard 'Saddam Hussein is like Hitler,' and you're ready for prime time," she said. But if a newscaster states that "the Bush administration might be guilty of war crimes ... that marginalizes you," she said, "because you sound, frankly, crazy unless you explain what war crimes are." And for that, she said, there are not enough minutes in a television time slot.

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