Victoria Riskin: Good evening, everyone, and welcome. This is the first event of the Public Affairs Committee that we have founded this year at the Writers Guild. The objective of this committee is to be informative, even provocative, and to have programs and debates to engage the industry in a dynamic dialogue about the future of film and television, and the role and responsibility of the writer and for all of us who are in the Hollywood community.

This first event, as you know, is entitled *"*We Hate You (But Please Keep Sending Us *Baywatch*." Its title is designed to illustrate the ambivalent relationship that most of the world has with America. We are the only superpower left. This love-hate relationship, at the worst extreme, has resulted in a worldwide network of anti-American terrorism. At the other extreme, it has resulted in the globalization of American culture, much of which flows from the pens of the members of the Writers Guild of America to film and television, and has generated a glamorous view of America that people envy, although sometimes it seems violent and sex-driven. According to the Pew Global Attitudes Project, there has been an increasing discontent with the U.S. over the past two years. "People both embrace things American, and at the same time, decry U.S. influence on their societies." What concerns, if any, should we in this room and in this community, have about the images Hollywood paints of America and exports around the world? We've assembled an outstanding panel to tackle this, and we have a wonderful moderator. Marty Kaplan is Associate Dean of the USC Annenberg School for Communication, where he also directs the Norman Lear Center which studies the impact of entertainment on society. A summa cum laude graduate of Harvard College in Molecular Biology, a Marshall Scholar of English to Cambridge University in England,

and a Stanford Ph.D. in Modern Thought and Literature, he was also a speechwriter deputy campaign manager for Vice President Walter Mondale. He worked at Disney and survived for 12 years, where he was vice president of motion picture production, and then became a screenwriter and a producer. His writing credits include *Distinguished Gentleman* starring Eddie Murphy and the adaptation of Michael Frayn's play *Noises Off*. He can be heard regularly on *Marketplace on Public Radio International*. He is also a terrific person and will be a wonderful moderator. It's my pleasure to introduce Marty Kaplan.

Marty Kaplan: Thank you. We have an extraordinary group tonight, so it's a thrill to be able to have them all here. You've heard of stories ripped straight from the headlines. Today's *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Ti*mes both have huge articles about the new Pew Center for Press and Public Policy poll. Our topic, "*We Hate You (But Please Send Us More 'Baywatch')*", as Vicki Riskin said, is about an ambivalence or paradox. In fact, as it turns out, it's not *Baywatc*h, but rather *The Bold and the Beautiful*, which is the most-watched program on the globe. It's shown in 98 countries, 450 million people watch it. I teach a course on international entertainment and I had a cast member from *The Bold and the Beautiful*, and every person who was not American in the course had seen it and knew exactly who he was.

On the other hand, though they are happy consumers of our entertainment, one way or another, they also find us wanting. If the news doesn't depress you enough, I suggest you read the full Pew Center poll, which can be downloaded. And if you thought you needed Prozac before, you'll need it even more afterward. I'll just read you the lead sentence from the *L.A. Times* coverage of it: "America's global image has deteriorated

sharply in the last two years." They don't like us. It's not that they don't like our government, not that they don't like our policies. They don't like *us*. They do like some of the things that Hollywood does. There are a few exceptions here and there, but by and large, it's a really bleak picture. That's from 44 countries. If that doesn't discourage you, you can reach for the Zoloft after you read another research report, also recently issued from Boston University called "The Next Generation's Image of Americans, Attitudes and Beliefs Held by Teenagers in Twelve Countries." So this is teenagers, and if anything, it's worse. And if you need to have an excuse for a nightcap, you can read the Council on Foreign Relations report called "Public Diplomacy, A Strategy for Reform." Here is just a summary of what they found: "Of course, foreign perceptions of the United States are far from monolithic, but there is little doubt that the stereotypes of the United States as arrogant, self-indulgent, hypocritical, inattentive, and unwilling or unable to engage in cross-cultural dialogue are pervasive and deeply-rooted."

So we've got our work cut out for us tonight. What I'd like to do is start by asking a couple of questions of people who are not directly in the entertainment business, and getting a few issues and topics on the table, and then broadening out our conversation. What I'd like to do to start is to quote something. There's a magazine called *New Perspectives Quarterly*. This is the current issue, and it has an article in it by Dr. Akbar Ahmed, who teaches at American University called "Hello, Hollywood: Your Images Affect Muslims Everywhere." I'm just going to read a few sentences from the article to get a few points on the table. "Hollywood has been at war with Islam for the last two decades. Major Hollywood blockbusters such as *True Lies*, *Executive Decision* and *The Siege*, with top stars, have perpetuated an Islam-equals-terrorism image." He goes on

to say that “Many people in Africa and Asia view films glorifying sex and violence, and equate these to American culture. These secular images are the cause for much of the anger and hatred that exists in the world against America. Crass secular films are partly the answer to the question Bush asked, “Why do they hate us?” And he ends telling an anecdote about his 10 year-old daughter who had recently seen *Moulin Rouge*, and was running around the house singing sweetly “Voulez-vous Coucher Avec Moi.” When he asked his daughter if she knew what that meant, she said, “No.” She told him, she was horrified and ends by saying, “Some of the people like himself would have blamed Hollywood for reaching into their homes and corrupting the minds of their children.” So I’d like to start by asking Salam a question. Is Hollywood, as this article says, an important reason for why America is to quote George Bush, “hated”?

Salam Al-Marayati: Well, I think part of the answer is yes. I don’t think that’s the complete answer. I think when you talk about image-making and what’s the image of America that we present to the rest of the world? What’s the image of those parts of the world that we present to them? I think those are important factors. You would find many critics of Hollywood, whether they're here in America or abroad. It doesn’t have to be Muslim. It could be conservative Christian, it could be a number of Jewish groups who are critical of the kind of material that they find on the TV screen and in the movies. But I would disagree that that is all there is to it. My criticism of Hollywood is that when it comes to Muslims, they are usually absent other than filling to role of a terrorist. If you want a terrorist, that’s when find the Muslim. If you’re looking for a doctor or a lawyer or just an average person, you don't find that normal Muslim in Hollywood. And I think that’s the criticism that many Muslims have around the world. And sometimes during

these movies like *Executive Decision* and *True Lies*, if the producers are generous enough, they'll balance it with an FBI Muslim who will go and bash the terrorist Muslim. That's their way of balance. I think people see through that. I still think, however, that American culture is still something that's curious. That's why American television is watched. I think people enjoy and are fascinated by American entertainment because of its creativity, its sophistication, its technology. So that's probably, in my opinion, part of the paradox things.

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

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

Let me give you a case in point. As the ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia, we have a compact, a free association, with Micronesia. Why? Because they were a trustee after the Second World War. Now they're an independent nation and we have a compact with them. We have taken all of our Title II programs from America and applied them to that culture, which is steeped in tradition. So they don't implement our programs the way the general accounting office thinks they should. So they failed the audit. We're contemplating extending the compact for another twenty years when there have been massive failures in implementing our programs. Now what's wrong there? We're putting square pegs into round holes. So I traveled back and forth across the Pacific to the State Department, Department of Interior, to say that American taxpayers' money is going into the ocean. What we need are compliance monitors who know the culture. They don't have to speak the language because everybody speaks English. But they need to be able to communicate with the people there so they will know how to implement these programs we fund. So being sensitive to that and being a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, I have started an entertainment caucus. Right now we have thirty to forty people who have signed up to be part of it. What we want to do is deal with these issues that affect entertainment, not only here but abroad.

Kaplan: One of the things that this audience will probably try to assess is whether that's good news or bad news. For some people, Washington's interest in Hollywood entertainment is good news. For some it's not.

Norm, you're on the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which oversees an element of what has been mobilized by the U.S. government called public diplomacy — sometimes

called soft power. Radio Sawa is something that you're intimately involved in. I want to read you a line from an Op-ed piece in the *L.A. Times* about the film *8 Mile*. It says, "Eminem is a hero to Middle Eastern youth, and the U.S. government is broadcasting hip-hop on the airwaves of Radio Sawa." Is that an important part of America's projection into the world of politics and diplomacy?

Norm Pattiz: Well, let me say a couple of things. First of all, Radio Sawa started last April, so it's been on the air just a few months. Prior to Radio Sawa, the entire commitment of U.S. international broadcasting to the Middle East was seven-hours-a-day of Arabic language programming, broadcast in a one-size-fits-all approach to all twenty-two countries within the region on short-wave that nobody listened to. We had about a one-percent audience share. And that was just recognition, not actually people who were listening. So we knew we needed to do something right away. It's also important to understand the context and the environment into which we are broadcasting, at least as it relates to the United States, the West, our policies, and so forth. There is, in fact, a media war going on. And the weapons of that war would include hate radio and television, incitement to violence, dis-information, government censorship, and journalistic self-censorship.

So it's within that environment a lot of the information that you were quoting from the various polls comes. It's from that environment that the feelings about America, its policies, its people, its culture, come. And let me just say I really think that American popular culture, and movies and television, plays a very small part in the kinds of attitudes that you are seeing reflected in these kinds of studies. Because we really don't have that much penetration in the region. We really don't. But in the case of Radio

Sawa for instance, it didn't take long to realize that we weren't going to attract an audience if we simply kept doing the same things that we were doing.

I'm in the radio business. Public diplomacy is something new for me. But we have approached this as if we were putting a new radio station on in the region. So we went out and we contracted with Western research firms who subcontracted with research firms in the region, and we did the market research that was necessary to find out what kind of programming would appeal to our audience. What audience were we going after? We decided we were going after the 25-and-under audience, which represents well over 60 percent of the population of the region, and does not generally listen to international broadcasting. And we determined that we were going to use music as the driver. It would be music that would attract that audience. And we do play Eminem. We play the sanitized versions that Eminem produces. But the fact of the matter is that Sawa, in a very short period of time, playing a rotation of popular Arabic tunes and popular Western tunes, with 10 minutes of news at 15 after the hour and five minutes of news at 45 after the hour.

With the weekly research that we've been doing, Sawa is now reaching 80 percent of its target audience. And we ask incidental questions along with that. I think it's very important to understand whether these attitudes really are pervasive. Whether an Arab audience and a Muslim audience will listen to an American radio product that is clearly identified as coming from U.S. International Broadcasting. When we ask "What is your favorite radio station?" 52 percent say it's Radio Sawa. When we ask "What radio station do you listen to most for news?" it went from one percent Radio Sawa when we first started asking the question in June, to 43 percent Radio Sawa now. And when we

say “Which radio station presents the most accurate and truthful news?” 39 percent of our target audience, which is primarily 15 to 30, say Radio Sawa. Now that’s in a region where it’s popular to boycott American goods, where American public policies, and certainly American policies towards the Middle East, are to say the least not very popular. So there are opportunities for us to spread the word and to present ourselves in a more positive way.

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

Laura Ziskin: I think what Norman said is right. I think we probably are only a small part of the results of those kinds of surveys. I can only speak for myself. I do make entertainment. I’m interested in telling stories. I’m not in the propaganda business. When I was at a studio, I would ask, “How much do they think about the impact of what they’re doing?” I would say, not at all. If they can tell stories and produce films that people go to see, that’s really all they care about. Having said that, I think the individuals who make films actually do think about it. I can only speak for myself. My concerns may not be another producer’s concerns, but there are certain things that, just for my own value system, I won’t put in movies. But I’m not really thinking as a propagandist. I’m really basing that on my own personal values, and I think that happens all the time, every day. But I think there are a wide range of values. There are lots of filmmakers who will make films that will be very successful and very profitable all

over the world, in spite of the fact that they may go against the principles or the values of a culture. They still make money and continue to make them, and they feel fine about it. And I think I would always defend their right to do it. But as a filmmaker, I try to think about what I'm doing and be true to my own values.

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

Bryce Zabel: I think it is relevant. It's interesting. You were mentioning the Pew report, which actually I did download and read. It's very similar to a Gallop poll that came out not long ago. It's sobering. It's very discouraging to see these. But I think that the one thing I take away from reading them is that they are not necessarily just pointing the finger at culture. Culture is, as was said, one of the things that is impacting. Policy is obviously the primary thing that people respond to, how they perceive the government's policy. But some of the things they like least about Americans are things that they get from our movies and from our television shows.

Ziskin: And some of the things they like most.

Zabel: That's right. One of the things I was just going to say is, one year ago tonight Aaron [Sorkin] and I and some other people were on a panel at the Television Academy very similar to this. In fact, Salam and I were on *Politically Incorrect* about a year ago around this time. And I'm just struck by how little has happened since then. There was this sense that post-9/11, we were really going to get in the game and something big was going to happen. We were going to try to tell our story, however we might tell the story. I think the big tragedy of the last year is that we haven't actually come up with any policy whatsoever. And I don't think we're talking about propaganda. I think we're all

Americans. We want to figure out how can we at least engage the rest of the world in a dialogue. I've said this before, probably the only response to a practicing terrorist is a visit from Special Ops. On the other hand, when you're talking about terrorists who are in training or who might be created from a culture, we have to address that. We have to begin to think about it. That's why this dialogue is good. The question is, "How will this dialogue someday be turned into action?" I do think that all of us who work in the business, in the back of our minds, all think about it. Aaron, you certainly don't wake up in the morning and say, "How will *West Wing* play in the Middle East?" But you've thought about it from time to time, especially I'm sure, as that storyline unfolded this year.

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

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

Kaplan: It's engraved outside the building.

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

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

Sorkin: I think about it, but often times I think that I don't arrive at the same conclusion that some people would like me to. For instance, if I want to tell stories, particularly on *The West Wing*, dramatizing a strange relationship that we have with the Arab world, particularly the Saudis, I'm going to bring characters onto the show and we're not going to like them. I'm going to point out how they're a little bit screwy. I apologize if it's tokenism. I do try then to have un-screwy Muslims around too, working for the good guys to the extent that I can, but I'm certainly not thinking about how it's going to play in Saudi Arabia.

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

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

Tony Bui: Vietnam's changed so much in this last decade. Vietnam as we know renewed ties with America in the mid-'90s. And with that, so much culture from the West has come in. I remember when I was first going back to Vietnam in '92, '94. I did *Three Seasons* in '98. But my family — I had cousins who were four, six, eight — they constantly wanted me to bring American movies back. It was much harder to find at that time. The cultural censors were very strict about what could come in. But that was the big thing. You bring in tapes. And there were very specific kinds. They don't want the films that win the Academy Award that year. They wanted very specifically, action films. sci-fi thrillers, *Batman*. Films like that. And if you go to let's say the local video stores in Vietnam, that's all they have. They have mostly entertainment-oriented films. And I remember just talking to my cousins and my uncle at the time. My uncle is an actor in Vietnam. It's a third-world country. They want to come back. The biggest production in Vietnam at that time was like a $35,000 film. So they see these big films, and it's just entertainment.

So the issue is not even just about delivery. It's about consumption. And the children love it. I remember there was a wave when Britney Spears started to come in. 'N Sync started to come in. The American culture had more and more impact in Vietnam. So I've seen a change throughout. Interestingly, there's more of a positive image in Vietnam of America than I think we think there is. When I was shooting *Three Seasons*, even when I was casting a lot of the American crew members — and we took like 45 crew members from America — they were constantly saying things like, "Is it safe to go there? Don't they hate Americans? Isn't there still animosity?" And the reverse is true. Every single one of them came and ended up staying there, and ended up traveling

through the country. I can only speak about Vietnam, but the irony is I think the people in Vietnam are more embracing of Americans than a lot of the Americans are embracing of Vietnam. In other words, what I'm trying to say is that America has not let go of the war. Vietnam has.

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

Cuaron: I don't think you can have a creative approach of being concerned what other people are going to think. I agree with what Laura says. It's pretty much about what you think is right. Call it moral values or where you cross the line or don't, but from your own perspective. I don't think you can think about, "Okay, if I do this, it's going to be received in this country like this or like that." Actually, in this specific case, my brother and I, we wrote the script together and said "Let's do this. Nobody is going to see it, but who cares?" And it was a very happy surprise that actually some people saw it. I didn't think about how it was going to play in the Middle East, no. And I don't think it's going to be seen in the Middle East. I don't think you can approach anything creatively thinking about how all these people are going to think.

But that brings up the theme of responsibility because I believe in freedom of speech, yes. And it's very easy to say "freedom of speech." It's just the word "responsibility" sometimes is lost with the concept of freedom of speech. Because I believe that freedom of responsibility isn't exactly the same word. Saying so, I think anybody can do

whichever films they want to do. And if they want to present Muslims just as horrible terrorists, they have the right of doing that. People having the right of doing that doesn't mean that it is responsible and just because there's freedom of speech you have to embrace and applaud those things. The filmmaker that says, "Well, I'm just doing my job. I'm not responsible." I think that he's bullshitting himself. Because if he's not responsible, why do it? If you're not trying to communicate, why do films? Obviously, audiences have the right of saying, "I don't want to see that film." That's also a right that audiences have. I don't know if Hollywood is the cause of all this animosity and all these things. I don't really believe it is the cause, but I believe nowadays, if you don't help, you're hurting. If you're going to do a film that is not going to help heal whatever is going on around the world, in a way, it's affecting what is going on around the world.

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

Al-Marayati: Yeah, a couple of points. I think from the viewpoint of the study, I think it's important to note that the study didn't focus on Middle Eastern countries. The study focused on the world. And it was also interesting from the study that in places like Canada, Britain, and Germany, there is more anti-American sentiment. So we're looking at a global phenomenon. We're not looking at why Muslims and why is it the Arab world? It think too often we look at global anti-American sentiment and then just kind of pigeonhole it into that particular region and say, "Well, it doesn't matter because 'X', 'Y'

and ‘Z’.” So it’s important to note that this image is something that is happening even amongst people of very similar, if not identical, cultures.

And I definitely like the point about responsibility. Of course, we can look at one situation, one story, and look at one angle of it. And then make a story out of it. But we have to widen our horizons quite a bit and — I wouldn’t say become more sensitive — but become more aware of the different developments throughout the world. And I’d like to point out to what’s happened in the past in terms of Hollywood. Again, I’m just speaking about Hollywood as a viewer myself. For example, the movies that were made that were critical of American policy in Latin America. I think that did a lot in terms of building bridges between the American people and the people of Latin America. Such movies as *Missing*, for example. And I remember the scene when the general is being asked, “Why are you doing this? Why are you siding with the dictators?” And the general says, “I’m protecting your way of life.” That is basically what is being repeated throughout the world today, and I think similar things can be done.

I’m not saying that you have to do it. I agree — when it comes down to it, the creative industry is just that. They need to be creative. They need to be given their independence and freedom. But we have to shift the paradigm. Instead of trying to be balanced and sensitive, we need to think about what is in the best interest of America and can we do things that will help the situation? I also think about the movies that were critical of what happened in Vietnam after so long. I think something similar can be done with respect to what’s happening throughout the world today.

Kaplan: We’ve heard kind of a noble version of what storytellers can be. I’d like to ask Aaron and Bryce and Laura, where are the “schlock-meisters”? Where are the tyrant,

ruthless executives and people who will do anything for a buck? Is this the Hollywood we now live in, where people want to help and make a difference?

Zabel: No, I don't think so. What your question raises for me is, I think what we have almost is a pipeline problem because if you think about it, we all believe in freedom of speech. That's one of the great American values that we'd love to share with the rest of the world, and I think most of the world would probably benefit by having that. But if you look at what the American public gets in terms of films — let's call it a "spectrum of television and film" — we get our 500 channels, we get 300 movies, we get all the stuff. So we get the good, the bad, and the ugly. We get everything. But when things get sold overseas, the pipeline shrinks, whether that be films or television.

I would suggest that we should be asking ourselves "How is it possible for some of the really excellent material that is produced in Hollywood — whether it be for film or television — how can we increase the pipeline and increase the vision of America and its diversity and its solutions in terms of freedom and democracy? So I think what Norm has been doing with Radio Sawa is a good way to start to talk about those things. But I think we should do more. I think we should do what he's talking about. And when I say "We're not in the game", I mean we're not in the game. We've got the [Voice of America]. And all due respect to the VOA, but the stuff that they put on television —

Kaplan: It's terrible.

Zabel:— Would be bad in Czechoslovakia. And we need to get in the game at VOA.

Pattiz: Here's something you can do, because clearly VOA television is not the answer. First of all, VOA television for 65 countries has a budget of $20 million dollars. What are you going to do with that? But VOA television makes small-market television look really,

really, really good. But there is a proposal now that we have presented to the White House that has gotten their support, that we presented in Congress. As a matter of fact, your committee — the Hyde Committee — has a public diplomacy bill which embraces and has money for international broadcasting, and specifically for Arabic language television.

This is a place where you really can get involved, because I know Karl Rove and other people from the White House have come out and sat down to have meetings. And it's been kind of "Kumbaya" and "Let's all think together" and "What can we do?" I was asked to attend a couple of those meetings, and I said, "I really don't want to go until there is something tangible to talk about." So we had a meeting last month at the Museum of Television and Radio for eight network presidents and the heads of the broadcast services of international broadcasting. And we're going to have more of those meetings because we are going to get — I don't have it yet, but I'm the eternal optimist — I believe we are going to get the funding to do a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week, multi-platform, full-service television network operation into the Middle East. That's the pipeline that you're talking about. What we will do is provide news and information because our mission at international broadcasting is to promote freedom and democracy through the free-flow of accurate, reliable and credible news and information, to be an example of a free press in the American tradition. That's what our mission is. But to be successful — if Sawa has shown anything — we have to attract an audience. And what do we have to attract that audience? What you do. It's the best stuff in the world. We ought to use that stuff.

So if you really want to show your patriotism, and you really have some clout with people who have film packages and TV shows and series television, and you really want to be patriotic during the most critical time that many of us have ever faced in the history of our country — right now — then there is going to be a pipeline, and your help is sought out and requested.

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

Pattiz: Well, so am I.

Zabel: Well, but your Middle East television network is primarily a news organization —

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

Zabel: Norm, what I'm suggesting is we have a problem that exceeds just the Middle East. We have people all over the world who are not grooving on America right now. And we need to figure out a way to engage the whole world. Al-Qaeda's in 60 countries. We can't just look at just the Middle East.

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

Sorkin: You've been referring to this article and the headline is "U.S. Losing Popularity in World". I know how it feels. Bill Maher has a book out right now. It's called *When You*

Ride Alone, You Ride With Bin Laden. He's invoking a World War II-era poster encouraging Americans to conserve gasoline, and it said, "When You Ride Alone, You Ride With Hitler." By the way, I don't make any money from the book. It's a terrific book. It's very smart and very, very candid. There's a chapter that's called "They Hate Us Because We Don't Even Know Why They Hate Us". It's funny because I'm of two minds. I'm curious. The point of the chapter of this book obviously is that it's not enough simply to say, "They hate our freedom. They hate our liberty." It doesn't quite make sense, that all of this is over that. On the other hand, I'm pretty sure we haven't done anything to deserve all of this. So I am of two minds. I feel like I want the answer to why they hate us just because I'm curious, and then I want to tell them how much I don't care.

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

Sorkin: Absolutely. Because I wonder, honest-to-God, I am not writing the blood-and-guts of it off at all. At the bottom of it has got to be something very, very deeply felt. At the bottom of it has got to be a sense that we are bullies, that we are trampling the rest of the world, that we're certain we know what's right and that others are wrong, and that we do not take the lives of those with darker skin than we have as seriously as we take our own. It has to be that. But I also have to believe that it's a little bit of — on a perfectly benign level — people in our society who have it easier, who are professional athletes and movie stars and fashion models, and that kind of thing. We have a kind of hate/lust relationship with them, right? We adore them and we read the magazines, and we go to their movies, and we buy the Eminem albums. And yet we don't like the fact

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

Kaplan: Congresswoman Watson?

Watson: Let me jump in here because I think there's a point that we need to recognize. We can have the media come in through radio, through television series, through movies and so on, and present a more positive picture. But that's not going to get to it. I think the reason why they hate us is that we don't have a positive policy that they can see worldwide. What we do is, we export a product, we get their money, and people get richer in Hollywood. It's about making money, and they see that. Why do they hate us? It's because we preach one thing and do something different. Now you have to understand that I am a politician. I am a progressive Democrat, and so my opinions come from that position. They didn't always hate us. But in the last two years, they're hating us. Now what does that tell you? We're out there rattling sabers. We want to take something away from someone. And we're not giving according to our ability to give. Let me tell you something. It's amazing that they don't hate us on the continent of Africa. The first seated president to ever go to the continent of Africa was Bill Clinton. They loved him. And they have a scourge, and that's AIDS. Colin Powell said we need $2

billion dollars to fight the epidemic, the pandemic, in Africa. We could only get $450 million out of our committee.

So you see, if we really wanted to do something, if we wanted to back up all the positive programming that you say is going to come forth, then we would take those dollars and we would put it into fight the scourge in Africa, in China, and other places around the world. We need a policy that says to people, “We do care about you and your issues.

Kaplan: Alfonso, you look like you were about to add something.

Cuaron: It’s just that everybody is talking here about what to do, how rich we are in this country, how many TV stations we need to put in the Middle East, how many movies we have to send. What about starting by trying to understand the other countries in this country? Trying to understand other cultures? Trying to have a broader view of what’s happening in the world? Not to have this one-sided thing that falls on them. I think that’s the biggest problem. I don’t really believe those articles that you’re reading and you’re quoting because I lived a few years in the States. I’m in Europe now prepping a movie. And you hear different perspectives of the same stories. I feel that if there’s a hate, it’s about certain policies. But now, for some reason, I cannot be against certain policies because I’m labeled anti-American. And that’s very dangerous. I don’t like Mexican politicians, and that doesn’t make me anti-Mexican. But now, for some reason, if you’re anti-American policy, you’re anti-American. So I don’t agree. “What’s wrong? They hate us. They have to love us.” In school, usually you hate the bully. So if everybody’s hating you, you can just be oblivious and say, “They hate us because we’re beautiful.” Or try to see why they hate you. You don’t want to be hated. It’s not about wanting to be loved. It’s just about trying to be generous.

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

Bui: I think it's based on every individual filmmaker. I know when scripts are sent to me, when I take meetings, I look at everything from my own personal beliefs. It's not so much at the concern of how it's going to play in other countries, but just wanting to change the image how the Vietnamese were depicted in this country. I grew up in this country. Even though I was born in Vietnam, I was raised here. My entire knowledge of the Vietnamese people was running through jungles holding guns, because those were the only movies I had seen. I only knew Vietnam through war and the books we would study in school. So making that film was to change the image of the Vietnamese people in this country. I was more concerned with how the *Three Seasons* would play in Ohio than anywhere else in the world. At least for myself, when I read scripts, when I look at projects, I do think about it from a humanistic point-of-view. What is being shared? what is my offering as an artist? And I think it's mainly because I've seen my own sort of image and face depicted incorrectly through the years and in traveling abroad. Seeing the Asian face through war or the drug dealer or whatever it is. I think it depends on your background or upbringing, but I do have a very strong perspective in terms of that agenda.

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

Ziskin: Oh, absolutely. I think it's fantastic. And in those specifics of his experience, there's something universal. That's what movies do best. This idea that one story and a collection of images and a person's journey can be seen by people all over the world, and have the same impact on all those people, that's a unifying thing, and that's fantastic. The problem, unfortunately, is that in the Hollywood system where most movies are made, more and more it's just increasingly difficult to make those kinds of movies because of entertainment news, which makes it a contest every weekend. So the studios are forced to make movies that appeal to everyone. Therefore they get less and less specific and individual because they have to appeal to everyone because they have to be hits before they open. Basically, your movie has to have an audience before anybody has seen it. So it has to be something you can classify and explain. The marketing has to work more than the movie. So the kinds of movies that Tony makes and *Y tu mama* tambien are exceptions that in a way proves the rule. It's so difficult to get those movies made right now because if they open on Friday night and people don't go because they can't be quantified in a 30-second commercial, than they don't succeed financially and they get made less and less.

So I think the saddest thing that has happened is that the kinds of movies are increasingly narrow. And they're increasingly one kind of point-of-view, and certainly the things that are easy to sell and made for the audience that comes out first to the movies. You know that demographic of young boys who want to see things blow up. That is the thing that makes the most money. The other thing that I think is terrifying is that there is one perspective. Everything we read or watch on television and all of the news — all of the media, particularly the broadcast media — at the end of the day, it's

all controlled by a very homogeneous group. It's all controlled by five — and we can be nice to them and say they're middle-aged — but five kind of elderly, white men. And they control all the media. So what Tony's doing, it's thrilling. And that's what for me, as a producer, I always look for. As I said, a singular voice, a specific voice, that then can translate and become universal. But it's harder and harder. It's harder now certainly, than when I started making movies.

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

The second point is the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. I think a major source of anti-American sentiment is the United States is blindly supporting one side — the Israeli side. We can't be an honest broker in the region if we're going to be blindly supporting one side of that equation.

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

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

Zabel: The one thing we should stipulate is, policy is still the number one way in which we are perceived. We can give ourselves a lot of credit for being taste-makers and so forth. Policy is really it. And interestingly enough, the Pew study that we started talking about, if you read it in depth, the number one issue for most people around the world is disease — in Africa and certain countries. In Africa, 98 percent of the people list disease as the number one issue. In most countries, they talk about not being able to quite feed their families or pay for them. So clearly, people have other things on their minds than the export of certain American entertainment product. But we do have challenges I just want to put out here.

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

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

Sorkin: I will actually speak to that. It's so seldom that I disagree with Bryce, but I just wanted to mention that in terms of foreign aide — and I swear to God, the only reason I know this is I'm just on page 23 of writing about it right now — in terms of foreign aide, our hearts are very much in the right place. But versus gross national product, we're at the very bottom of the list. The very bottom. I mean it's unbelievable. Cypress is out there spending more money than we are.

Kaplan: Norm?

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

Cuaron: Yeah, and the big difference is that you see all these views and then you see a French-English-Spanish view as completely different.

Pattiz: So the French, English and Spanish is —

Cuaron: Are wrong.

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

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

Audience Question: That actually leads into my question. My question to the panel is, why do we only export product? Why don't we export the opportunity to make product? We have a lot of money and we have the means to help people out there with points of view get their views across. Alfonso, your movie single-handedly changed how I viewed Mexican culture. I mean, it's just that simple. It was very positive. I love that you had —

Cuaron: I'm sorry.

Audience Question: No, in a good way. I love that you had an upper-middle class brat in that movie that drove a Jetta, because that's me. It helps you see that you relate to other people in the world if you see that they face the same problems that you have. And the fact that we don't think they have the same problems is our problem. We don't see their point of view. Why don't we export that?

Kaplan: Anyone want to take that?

Ziskin: Well, it sounds like you're saying also, why don't we import more? Because I was thinking that before when I was listening. I'm provoked by this. I don't have any answers at all. I think you're right, but how do you get the public at large to be interested? Maybe this is a function of education, obviously. Are we somehow isolationist? And of course, the more people hate us, the more we'll probably circle the wagons. I think you're right. I think that to be exposed to other cultures, that would

probably make a big difference. It's not just what we send out, but what we receive. And if you can figure out a way for the studios to make money doing that, then they will do it. You know? Unfortunately, that's what it's about.

Kaplan: Question here?

Audience Question: I think one of the best things that *West Wing* does is show how difficult and delicate a policy can be. So I would think that that would be a great show to export, a great way to show what America's about. So that's a good example. The problem is that what other countries want is *Baywatch*. That doesn't really represent us well enough.

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

Watson: But let me just say this. I was telling Aaron before we came out here, about an episode he did on Micronesia and put Micronesia on the map. It had to do with the ambassador, who was being called back because he was doing something that the President said, "Doesn't work for me." So our values, you see, come out in the dialogue that he writes so brilliantly, when the President and the other characters discuss these issues. So maybe you have to put a killing in there or a rape or something, and send it out. But I tell you, that's the only thing I watch outside of CNN, and it's changing too. Because when you start to meld all of these networks together, they become a cookie-cutter-type. You've got to have a home product or cooking. I don't need that. When I turn on TV, I want the news. I don't want a creation of the news. But I think his dialogue

can do more to educate people around the world. If it's done in their language and there's some of their culture thrown in, I think it can really express who we are.

Audience Question: After 9/11, what do you see now in terms of terrorism in films? Before 9/11, it seemed that terrorism could some degree be treated like a game in movies like with *Speed*, *True Lies*. Because we had never been touched by it, there was a certain cartoonish aspect to terrorists [in movies]. Now that 9/11 has happened, are we going to continue to see Muslim terrorists? Or do you think now there's going to be a backlash and we're going to have to completely redefine how Muslims are portrayed? And if terrorism is in movies, is there going to be more thoughtful exploration?

Zabel: The thing is, the people who flew the planes into the Towers were Muslim terrorists, right? So if we create movies about Irish terrorists doing the same thing, it's not credible. So you will see some of that. But I just wanted to point out one thing. The people who are in this room who are writers and work on television staffs, almost every series that I'm aware of has introduced as a guest star or as a character in a particular scene, a positive image of a Muslim. Post-9/11, every studio and writing staff said, "Can't we do anything in this regard?" So you're also seeing some of those images. So I think we're being a little harsh to say that they don't exist at all, because they do.

Audience Question: So is the "fun" terrorist movie now gone?

Zabel: I think largely. Although remember, we make a boatload of programming in television and film. You'll still see examples of it, but probably not as often.

Kaplan: Let's move to this question here.

Audience Question: I was wondering if there was anybody on the panel that could give a historical perspective. Was there another time in American history where our policies

were really inflaming people and entertainment was the whipping boy? It's a unique situation because 9/11 is unique. But was there another time in history when there was a similar thing? Because history teaches us things, so I'm just thinking if we kind of look at history maybe learn something.

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

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

kinds of things that are inherently American that people love all around the world that will draw them to radio and television for our message of public diplomacy.

Kaplan: Your question?

Audience Question: This is a question for Norm Pattiz. In the spirit of dialogue, will Radio Sawa present a more complicated view of what America is, not one that represents this kind of patriotic-frenzied, flag-waving, but dissenting views about America? And also, would not be one of the challenges facing Sawa be that it's moving in one direction, for example, representations of American culture to the Middle East?

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

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

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

Audience Member: I recognize the jargon.

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

Audience Member: No media carried [Vice President Al] Gore's response to the war.

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

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

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

Kaplan: This is interactivity. And we are good at it. One thing we are not good at, unfortunately, is sticking to any kind of timeline. I told you at the beginning about a series of polls that can make you want to take to your bed. I just want to quote one more. This was done by Roper for *National Geographic* just a few days ago. They surveyed people in a dozen countries and they asked them questions about geography. And if you look at the results for Americans among 18 to 24 year-old Americans given maps, 87 percent cannot find Iraq. Eighty-three percent cannot find Afghanistan. Seventy-eight percent cannot find Saudi Arabia. Seventy percent cannot find New Jersey. Forty-nine percent could not find New York. And 11 percent cannot find the United States. I quote that as a cheap transition to say that you will find in the lobby a spectacular desert buffet. I want to thank everyone here for being here. Terrific evening. Thank you so much and thank all of you.

[END]