

George Soros, Movie Mogul: 'Social Justice' Cinema and the Sundance Institute

By Rondi Adamson

Summary: Since 1996, George Soros's Open Society Institute has been funding the production of "social justice" documentaries to win converts to the billionaire's brand of liberalism. In 2001, Soros joined forces with actor-director Robert Redford and let Redford's Sundance Institute take over his Soros Documentary Fund. What's the outcome of this made-in-Hollywood merger?

Here are just a few of the films George Soros hopes will make their way to your neighborhood cinema multiplex and onto the shelves at Blockbuster:

Soldiers of Conscience (2007): "Their country asked them to kill. Their hearts asked them to stop. From West Point grads to drill sergeants, from Abu Ghraib interrogators to low-ranking reservist-mechanics; soldiers in the U.S. Army today reveal their deepest moral concerns about what they are asked to do in war." (film website)

An American Soldier (2008): "A disproportionate number of people serving and dying in Iraq come from small-town southern America. How they get there, rather than why, is the point of 'An American Soldier.' It's a film about process: the seduction process." (Washington Post film critic John Anderson)

Semper Fi: Always Faithful (in production): "Two retired marines lead the fight for justice for U.S. soldiers exposed to dangerous toxic chemicals while stationed at Camp Lejeune Marine Corps Base in North Carolina." (film critic Agnes Varnum)



Left-wing propagandists: In an undated photo, Sundance founder Robert Redford (left) shakes hands with Al Gore, whose 2006 global warming movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, helped the former vice president win the Nobel Peace Prize.

Our Oil (in production): a documentary about Nigerians and Americans "amid the poverty, corruption and violence of oil production in Nigeria, one of America's top oil suppliers." (Sundance Institute press release)

My Baghdad Family (in production), in which a "family in Baghdad grapples with

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massive changes in their lives after the end of Saddam's rule. Will their dreams of a new life gradually turn into a nightmare?" (Sundance press release)

Philanthropist George Soros wants the medium of film to advance his goal of tilting America to the left. In 1996 he launched the Soros Documentary Fund with a mission to "spur awareness, action and social change." Since then the billionaire's grantmaking foundation, the Open Society Institute (OSI), has given out at least \$5.2 million to help fund the production of several hundred documentaries like those above. In 2001 the Soros Documentary Fund became part of actor-director Robert Redford's Sundance Institute and was rechristened the Sundance Fund to Support International Documentary Projects. Its mission: "to support the production of documentaries on social justice, human rights, civil liberties, and freedom of expression issues around the world."

Most of the documentaries that receive Sundance funding are highly critical of some aspect of American life, capitalism or Western culture. The projects generally share George Soros's worldview that America is a troubling if not sinister influence in the world, that the War on Terror is a fraud and terrorists are misunderstood freedom fighters, and that markets are fundamentally unjust.



Gara LaMarche, formerly a Soros lieutenant, is now CEO of the Atlantic Philanthropies.



Philanthropist George Soros

Films such as *An American Soldier* and *Persons of Interest* (a film about Justice Department detention of Arab and Muslim immigrants after 9/11) and *Why We Fight*, the much-publicized 2005 Sundance Festival winner ("an anatomy of the American war machine") underline Soros's views on the U.S.-led War on Terror. Soros derides the War as "a false metaphor that has led to counterproductive and self-defeating policies." In his view, the phrase *War on Terror* is a conversation-ender that strikes terror in the hearts of those hearing it. The expression "has inhibited the critical process that is at the heart of an open society," he says. The application of this "misleading figure of speech" has "unleashed a real war fought on several fronts—Iraq, Gaza, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Somalia—a war that has killed thousands of innocent civilians and enraged millions around the world," he wrote at the Huffington Post blog (September 29, 2006). It is true that some who support the War on Terror may question the semantic limitations of the "War on Terror" phrase (after all, how does one fight "terror," a *tactic*?). But when Soros blames the strife in Gaza, Lebanon, and Somalia—violence-prone regions long before September 11, 2001—on the U.S.-led War on Terror, he betrays his 'blame America first' mentality.

In his speeches and writings attacking George W. Bush, Soros frequently chastises Americans as dupes of administration propaganda. "There must be something wrong

with us if we believe” the “lies” of Bush. “I want to shout from the rooftops: ‘Wake up, America. Don’t you realize that we are being misled?’” Soros accuses the president of taking advantage of 9/11 to “further his own agenda,” a move he says has given rise to a “vicious cycle of escalating violence.”

Why Film?

So why is Soros interested in cinema? Certainly, he is politically at home with Hollywood celebrities. Tinseltown has long been a sanctuary for political liberals. But Soros didn’t become a billionaire eight times over by throwing money away without carefully considering the potential payoff. The shrewd Hungarian-born investor ranks 80th on Forbes magazine’s list of the world’s wealthiest people and he is the author of the well-received 1987 book, *The Alchemy of Finance*. He famously made \$1 billion on “Black Wednesday” in 1992 by betting against the British pound. Soros helped John Kerry come within a few percentage points of beating an incumbent president in wartime when he gave close to \$24 million of his own money to so-called 527 committees that made “independent expenditures” to defeat George W. Bush in 2004. Unlike many wealthy donors, Soros has shown he is just as careful about how he gives away his money as how he makes it.

Film production plays an important part in Soros’s grand plan to recapture the American mind. “Documentary films raise awareness and inspire action,” Soros explains. “The Open Society Institute gave vital support to filmmakers working to expose human rights abuses and helped the films find the widest possible audience.” In recent years Soros has committed millions of his own dollars to the Democracy Alliance, a donors’ group that aspires to create a permanent political infrastructure of liberal think tanks, media outlets, leadership schools, and activist groups—a kind of “vast left-wing conspiracy” to compete with the conservative movement. Filmmaking is sure to be a vital part of the Alliance undertaking. The Soros-funded Center for American Progress, for instance, regularly screens films like *No End in Sight* (2007), a documentary about U.S. military failings after the fall of Baghdad, to select audiences in Washington. The film was the winner of the 2007 Sundance Special Jury award. (See “Billionaires for Big Government: What’s Next for George Soros’s De-



No End in Sight, which is about U.S. military failings in Iraq, won the 2007 Sundance Special Jury award.

mocracy Alliance?” by Matthew Vadum and James Dellinger, *Foundation Watch*, January 2008).

Soros, who has given away an estimated \$5 billion to various causes since 1991, started his documentary fund as a form of political activism. Gara LaMarche, former vice president and director of U.S. programs for OSI, explained his boss’s motives: “Nonfiction film can spur awareness and action, sometimes touching audiences beyond the reach of other methods.” Movies “teach us about the world, what is happening to our fellow

travelers on the globe—what is happening to us—and what we might do about it.” Using the well-worn language of political correctness, LaMarche, who left OSI in April 2007 to head the Atlantic Philanthropies (2006 assets \$3.2 billion, grants \$748 million), notes that a decade of work by Soros and the Sundance Documentary Fund has helped highlight “marginalized groups and their quest for rights and recognition from one end of the globe to the other.”

Soros’s lieutenant praises the political impact of films like Al Gore’s 2006 global warming movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, and Edward R. Murrow’s *Harvest of Shame*, a 1960 TV documentary on the plight of farmworkers. He observes that only film images can adequately reveal the meaning of Rodney King’s police beating, of tanks rolling into Tiananmen Square, and the extent of “Joseph McCarthy’s deficit of decency”—a characterization of the late senator hotly disputed by scholar M. Stanton Evans in his book, *Blacklisted by History: The Untold Story of Senator Joe McCarthy and His Fight Against America’s Enemies* (Crown Forum, 2007).

What’s great about Sundance documentaries, LaMarche writes, is that they can contradict the false image of Iran that George W. Bush projects when he places it in “the so-called Axis of Evil.” And they can overcome the fear created by “nativist vigilante groups like the Minutemen patrolling the U.S.-Mexico border and demanding Draconian treatment of undocumented workers.”



Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch’s War on Journalism, claims Fox TV news is a hotbed of conservative misinformation.

Media Matters

The Sundance fund is one of several Soros show business projects. In a 2006 transaction, Soros used two of his companies – Soros Strategic Partners and Dune Capital Management—to purchase the DreamWorks SKG film library from Viacom for \$900 million. The deal gave the financier the DVD and re-broadcasting rights to films such as *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), *Gladiator* (2000), and *American Beauty* (1999). Commentator James Hirszen notes that the deal nets Soros “some highly desirable film rights at a time when the marketing and distribution model is changing to video on demand, video iPods and other forms of digital distribution.” But more importantly, it gives Soros “a presence in Hollywood where likeminded libs are ready, willing and able to collaborate in cinematic social engineering.”

Soros is collecting even more media and communications properties worldwide. Last month Soros Fund Management paid \$100 million for 3% of India’s Reliance Entertainment, a \$3 billion conglomerate that plans to offer Internet-based television programs in India. Reliance also produces movies and owns cinemas, radio stations and social networking websites in the world’s fastest growing major economy after China. In 2005, Soros bought 2.6 million shares in Time Warner, the gigantic diversified media company. Even earlier, when he set up Open Society Institute offices in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, Soros gave generously to fund publishers, independent television and radio stations, and even opposition political parties.

Soros is also a major donor to Media Matters for America, a liberal watchdog group created to attack conservative media “misinformation” and harass mainstream media programs that don’t toe the liberal line. In 2006 Media Matters criticized the made-for-TV miniseries, *The Path to 9-11*, a depiction of the terror plot that had the audacity to criticize the Clinton administration’s inadequate security planning. (For more information on this group, see “Media Matters for America: Soros-Funded Watchdog Attacks Conser-

vatives,” by Rondi Adamson, *Foundation Watch*, July 2007.)

Robert Redford’s Sundance Institute

While George Soros’s philanthropy began with money-making, Robert Redford’s began with moviemaking. In 1981 the Hollywood actor-director established the Sundance Institute as a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit in Park City, Utah. The Institute’s name refers to “Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,” the

Sundance festivals are remembered as communal gatherings of independent and socially aware moviemakers desperate for recognition. But today Sundance film buffs worry that the festival has gone corporate and that its screenings are aimed at Hollywood’s moneymen. The Sundance Institute boasts an impressive board of trustees, including actresses Glenn Close and Sally Field, movie producer and New York Giants co-owner Steve Tisch, designer Kenneth Cole, and philanthropist George Gund.

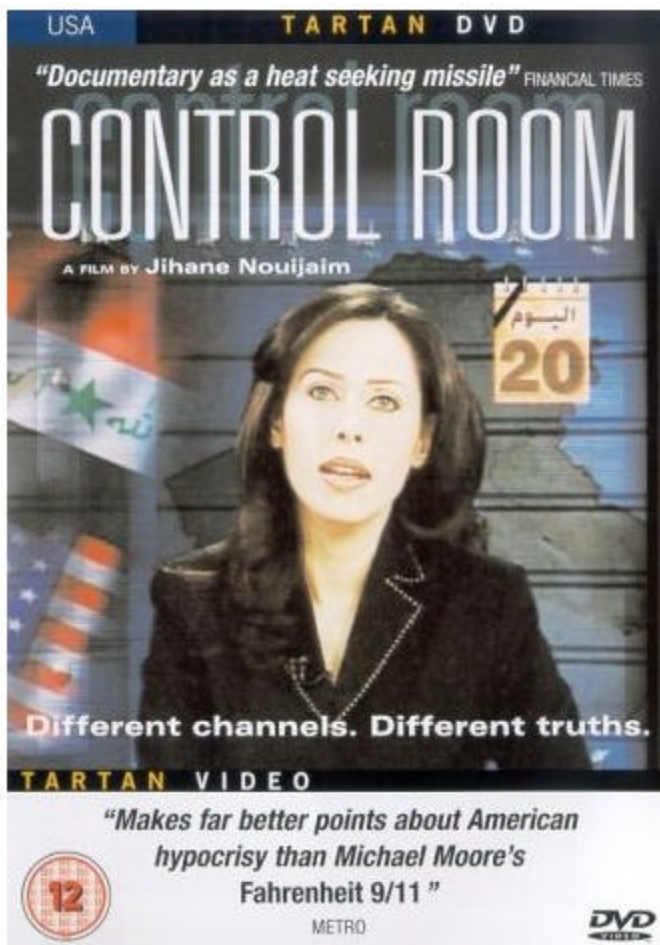
Redford is the Institute’s president and he is aggressively expanding the Sundance franchise. Besides the Utah film festival (1985), he has built his five-star 95-room Sundance Resort into a year-round Utah vacation spot. He created the Sundance Catalog (1989), an online retailer of apparel and jewelry, and announced the formation of the Sundance Preserve (2006), an 860-acre land trust. Next up: Sundance Cinemas, a planned nationwide chain of theaters that will serve as venues to showcase independent films. The first two theaters just opened in San Francisco and Madison, Wisconsin.

In 1996 Redford entered into a joint venture with CBS and NBC to create the Sundance Channel, a cable subscription television channel that schedules commercial-free films, documentaries and original programming by independent filmmakers. As might be expected, Sundance filmmakers like to trumpet their “personal vision,” but their political visions are remarkably like-

minded when it comes to the shows on the Sundance Channel. The channel features programs on nuclear war, an energy conservation series, the “Sierra Club Chronicles,” and the 2008 documentary *Pleasure for Sale*, (“a poignant, intimate and revealing look inside a legal brothel in Pahrump, Nevada.”)

On the Sundance Channel you can also expect to see:

Control Room (2004), a documentary about Arabic-language network Al Jazeera’s coverage of the Iraq war, which



Control Room, which critics say is Islamist propaganda, has run on the Sundance Channel.

1969 cowboy movie that made Redford a Hollywood star, and the Institute’s remote Utah location was a natural setting that appealed to Redford’s hankering for environmental conservation and artistic freedom.

How times have changed. Park City is now an upscale winter resort and the Sundance Institute, which reported over \$20 million in revenues in 2006, is the sponsor of the famous Sundance Film Festival, a 10-day whirlwind of independent film showings, workshops and awards ceremonies that attracts 50,000 participants each January. The first

critics have said amounts to pro-Islamist propaganda.

Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism (2004), which argues that Fox TV news is a hotbed of conservative misinformation.

The Corporation (2003), a Canadian film that puts modern corporations on the couch and depicts them as sociopathic institutions.

The Navigators (2001), a movie that through the eyes of five railway workers shows how the privatization of British Rail led to lost jobs and poor service.

When they were first launched, the Sundance film festival and the Sundance Channel experienced some growing pains. But Sundance soon established itself as a brand name for movie lovers, who were impressed by Redford's deep personal commitment to the projects, increased support from Hollywood's monied liberal establishment, and the festival's success in discovering commercially successful independent movies like *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006), *Garden State* (2004), *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), *The Full Monty* (1997) and *Reservoir Dogs* (1992).

Sundance-Soros Documentary Fund

And then came George Soros. He had independently launched the Soros Documentary Fund in 1996, but in 2001 decided to transfer it from OSI to Sundance, giving Redford's program nearly five million more dollars. This was a very smart move. It gave Redford's program the money it needed and a big morale boost. And Soros's project got something in return—major brand name recognition courtesy of Redford's celebrity clout and all-American image.

For the sake of politics the Soros partnership with Redford now links high finance to the image of celebrity. It's a potent combination. The 71 year-old Redford still maintains a romantic leading man image even as he has become more vocal about politics over the past decade and a half. Once focused on conservation and filmmaking, Redford now feels free to voice critical opinions on politics and foreign policy. He contributed to John Kerry's 2004 presidential campaign,



My Terrorist is about Yulie Gerstel, an Israeli flight attendant who later feels sympathy for the imprisoned hijacker who almost murdered her.

reportedly provided seed money to help Michael Moore get started as a filmmaker, and in an appearance on Chris Matthews's TV show, "Hardball," expressed dismay at the American-led invasion of Iraq.

Over the past six years the Sundance-Soros Documentary Fund has given out over \$4 million (some estimates are higher) to over 100 documentaries. The Fund only supports films and videos about contemporary issues. It gives grants of up to \$15,000 for

pre-production film research and development. Production and post-production grant proposals may be submitted for amounts up to \$75,000. In total, Sundance claims to have played a role in the development of more than 600 documentary films. Overall, these films reflect the mindset of the modern left.

It's difficult to imagine fundamentalist Islamic terrorists as characters worthy of sympathetic film portrayals. But the Soros-Sundance Documentary Fund came through



Pleasure for Sale examines a legal brothel in Nevada.

with funding for the films *My Terrorist* (2002) and *The Women of Hezbollah* (2000). The former is about Yulie Gerstel, an Israeli flight attendant who begins to suffer a delayed onset of Stockholm Syndrome after her airplane is hijacked on a flight to London. According to the film's promotional blurb, "In a remarkable twist of faith, twenty-three years later Gerstel began questioning the causes of violence between Israelis and Palestinians and started to consider helping release the man who almost killed her."

As for *The Women of Hezbollah*, it focuses on what its promotional blurb calls two Hezbollah "activists," Zeinab and Khadjie, examining their "commitment" to the cause. According to one review, the film offers a "complex picture of Islamism, gender relations, feminism and nationalism." According to another, it "neither endorses nor condemns Hezbollah," though it does "look on in wonderment that mothers would accept" their sons' deaths in suicide attacks. I'm glad *The Women of Hezbollah* at least manage to look on in wonderment at their sons' suicide attacks.

My Terrorist and *The Women of Hezbollah* are but two of the independent documentaries the fund has helped. Other examples are *Life and Debt* (2001) about the "impact of globalization on Jamaica"; *Wall* (2004) about the unfairness of the security barrier Israel erected to thwart terrorist attacks; *My American Dream: How Democracy Works Now* (2006) about 24 people "engaged in the struggle surrounding U.S. immigration policy"; *Still Standing* (2006), a youth organizers' television documentary on the Bush administration's failure to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina...and so on.

Not all Soros-Sundance documentaries are anti-Bush, anti-capitalist or anti-Western. *Asylum* (2003) is about a woman seeking U.S. refugee status to escape female genital mutilation, and *Calling the Ghosts: A Story about Rape, War and Women* (1996) considers the plight of Bosnian women raped in a Serbian concentration camp. Still, the documentary projects that typically receive Sundance funding reflect the preoccupations of persons convinced that rampant social injustice deserves to be depicted—and the depictions deserved to be handsomely rewarded by Hollywood.

Robert Redford unwittingly summed up this incongruity in remarking about the 2005 Sundance festival: "I'd like to think of this as a festival of dissent, and I'd like to celebrate that." Indeed, Hollywood's biggest stars nowadays appear in commercial movies that mirror the documentaries of dissent funded by Sundance and Soros.



Conservative filmmakers Govindini Murty and Jason Apuzzo

Consider several big-budget movies that appeared just last year:

Tommy Lee Jones was a Best Actor nominee for his role in *The Valley of Elah*, a film about Iraq war combat trauma and its tragic consequences;

Jake Gyllenhaal, Reese Witherspoon and Meryl Streep starred in *Rendition*, about the torture and interrogation of an Egyptian abducted from the U.S. and transported to Egypt by the CIA;

Award-winning director Brian De Palma filmed *Redacted*, a story of U.S. soldiers who persecute an Iraqi family.

Redford, Tom Cruise and Glenn Close appeared in *Lions for Lambs*, a political drama about U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. Interviewed by ABC's Diane Sawyer to promote *Lions for Lambs*, Redford chastised the media for being uncritical of the Bush administration: "At the point we found out that the cause behind the war was a lie, that's when I think everybody should have stood up, wakened up, and moved forward."

None of these movies was a box office success. But despite audience rejection, Hollywood continues to seek out similar stories

for future production, and some of these films do make money. Film production companies like Participant Media are constantly turning out films with contemporary political themes. Participant, founded in 2004 by Jeff Skoll, the 43 year-old billionaire who used to run the online auctioneer Ebay, is responsible for such films as *Good Night and Good Luck*

(Edward R. Murrow vs. Joseph McCarthy) and *Syriana* (George Clooney uncovers oil industry corruption in the Middle East) in 2005; Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Fast Food Nation* (on the horrible truth inside the hamburger industry) in 2006, and *The Kite Runner* and *Charlie Wilson's War*, both about the war in Afghanistan, in 2007. This month Participant will release *Chicago 10*, a docu-drama about anti-war protesters at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. *Chicago 10* was the Opening Night film for last year's Sundance Film Festival. (For more on Skoll and Participant Productions, see "Audience Participation: The Activism of Jeffrey Skoll's Participant Productions," by Joseph de Feo, *Foundation Watch*, March 2006.)

Fortunately, most of the Sundance movies shown in Utah stay in Utah. When festival director Geoffrey Gilmore presented the Sundance 2006 lineup, he told the Hollywood Reporter, "I don't know how broadly these films will play," before adding, "some may blow critics away or strike a chord with sophisticates, but I don't know about their marketability." This year's films seem just as unrewarding. According to a recent New York Times article, "The Sundance Film Festival's opening weekend, often the setting for rapturous audience reactions and frenzied all-night bidding wars, drew to a close looking more and more like a disappointment, if not an outright dud."

Conservative Alternatives

While Hollywood continues to throw money at anti-war film productions, box office draws like Bruce Willis are discovering that they cannot get financial support for positive stories about U.S. troops in Iraq. Willis wants to produce a movie about the "Deuce Four," the 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry, that heroically battled insurgents in Mosul, the northern Iraqi city. He wants to focus on "these guys who do what they are asked for very little money to defend and fight for what they consider to be freedom." Sounds like blockbuster material—but where are the Hollywood heavies who will help him make it and make a buck?

Ironically, the real film festivals of dissent are conservative and libertarian ones. In Hollywood, the Liberty Film Festival hosts panel discussions and film screenings that celebrate free speech, patriotism, religious freedom and democracy. Founded in 2004 by Govindini Murty and Jason Apuzzo, the festival—which receives no money from Soros or Sundance—now operates under the organizational umbrella of conservative activist David Horowitz. It screens such films as *Border* (2007), a documentary about the public response to illegal immigration; *Suicide Killers* (2006), a Warner Brothers film about Islamic terror tactics; and *The Road to Jenin* (2003), about Israel's military response to the Palestinian "Passover bombing."

In New York City, there's the Motion Picture Institute (MPI), which promotes and distributes documentary films that make the argument for individual freedom. MPI is led by activist Thor Halvorssen, who previously co-founded the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), a group fighting speech codes on campus. MPI promotes films like *Indoctrinate U* (2007), an expose of political correctness on campus, and *Mine Your Own Business* (2006), a critique of environmental elitists who oppose mining operations near an impoverished village in Romania even though local residents want the expected jobs and economic development.

Conservative groups like the Liberty Film Festival and the Motion Picture Institute aren't in the film promotion business to make a profit. Like their counterparts at Sundance, they know that marketing documentary films isn't all about money. Whether on the left or

right, many filmmakers have messages to relate and they want audiences for their stories.

Film makers Shari Robertson and Michael Cammerini have received grants from Sundance and they applaud their benefactor: "The Documentary Fund itself is changing the world, one screening or conversation at a time. And that change is more profound than any single movie can make—but every documentary (and documentary filmmaker) benefits from it." Edet Belzberg, director of two Soros-funded films, *An American Soldier* and *Children Underground*, a 2001 Oscar nominee about Romanian street children, agrees: "My filmmaking career would not be possible without the support I received from the Soros/Sundance Documentary Fund...If it weren't for that initial recognition and support, I would still be raising money to complete the film."

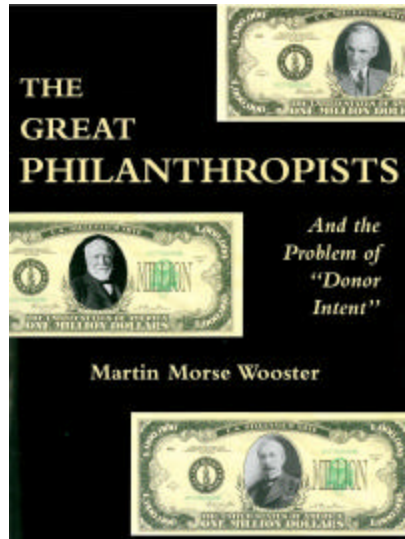
Can conservative filmmakers develop the institutions, the industry connections and the funding sources to create an alternative to Soros and Sundance? It's unfortunate that fine documentary films such as Wayne Koppings's *Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West* (2005) or Pierre Rehov's

Suicide Killers don't get nearly the publicity and acclaim that are bestowed on Soros/Sundance products. But here's hoping their time will come.

Rondi Adamson is a Canadian journalist who has been published in the Jerusalem Post, Wall Street Journal, Christian Science Monitor, Globe and Mail, Toronto Star and many other publications. She may be reached at rondi.adamson@gmail.com.

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A cautionary tale first published in 1994, this third edition by Martin Morse Wooster testifies to the continuing importance of the issue of donor intent. It contains new material focused on the ongoing *Robertson Foundation v. Princeton University* case and an update on the tragic battle over the Barnes Foundation. An Executive Summary is also included.

Wooster, senior fellow at Capital Research Center, tells a cautionary tale of what has gone wrong with many of this country's preeminent foundations. But he also shows that other foundations, such as those established by Lynde and Harry Bradley, James Duke, and Conrad Hilton, safeguard their founders' values and honor their intentions.

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PhilanthropyNotes

Mining magnate **Frank Giustra**, a partner-in-philanthropy with **Bill Clinton**, gave \$31.3 million to Clinton's charity following a visit the two made to Kazakhstan, which apparently helped Giustra seal a lucrative deal with that country's uranium monopoly, **Kazatomprom**, the New York Times reports. The suspect donation, made through Giustra's **Radcliffe Foundation**, was reported in the February issue of *Foundation Watch*. Giustra also promised to give an additional \$100 million to the **Clinton Giustra Sustainable Growth Initiative**, which is a project of the Clinton Foundation. Giustra and Clinton deny any wrongdoing.

Meanwhile, Bill Clinton finally admitted what those who study the various Ponzi schemes to regulate carbon emissions know: they will kill the U.S. economy. In a rare moment of candor, Clinton told a Denver audience: "We just have to slow down our economy and cut back our greenhouse gas emissions 'cause we have to save the planet for our grandchildren."

In other news, under pressure from the **Clinton Climate Initiative** and New York City mayor **Michael Bloomberg**, the **New York City Housing Authority** has agreed to retrofit the city's public housing units to reduce their carbon footprint. In New York, buildings account for as much as 80% of all greenhouse gases emitted in the city, and the authority operates more than 8.4% of all of the city's rental apartments. No word yet on what the massive project will cost or where the money will come from.

Having taken over as CEO of the left-leaning **Atlantic Philanthropies** last year, activist and **Democracy Alliance** member **Gara LaMarche** will be in charge of spending down the charity's entire \$4 billion endowment by 2020, the Financial Times reports. "Policy and advocacy are not dirty words – they are essential to change in all the fields we are working," says LaMarche. Although federal tax law prevents U.S. foundations from most forms of legislative lobbying, the Atlantic Philanthropies is free of many of the restrictions because it is based in Bermuda. The political views of LaMarche and those of his former employer, **George Soros's Open Society Institute**, are highlighted in the current issue of *Foundation Watch*.

Representative **Frank Wolf** (R-Virginia) is demanding that **Georgetown University** explain how it used a \$20 million donation from a Saudi prince for its academic center on Muslim and Christian relations, reports the Washington Post. In a letter, Wolf asks Georgetown President **John J. DeGioia** to assure him that the **Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding** "maintains the impartiality and integrity of scholarship." Wolf asks whether the center has ever generated any reports critical of Saudi Arabia, which allegedly finances Islamic militants and extremists. The university promises to respond.

The London-based **Tolkien Trust** founded by *Lord of the Rings* creator **J.R.R. Tolkien** is suing **New Line Cinema Corp.** for not handing over at least \$150 million from the \$6 billion-grossing movie trilogy based on the late British author's fantasy books, the Los Angeles Times reports. The trust says it and other plaintiffs are entitled to 7.5% of gross receipts based on a 1969 contract with the studio that held original rights to the work.

As investment banks back away from mortgage-related securities and other debt normally not considered risky, Wall Street's credit problems have been taking a toll on universities and cultural institutions such as the **Metro-politan Museum of Art**, the New York Times reports. The museum is now paying 15% on so-called auction-rate securities, which usually carry low interest rates. "What is going on here is a credit crunch. And the cost of the credit and the availability of credit even for good borrowers has clearly taken a big hit," said **G. David MacEwen**, chief investment officer for fixed income at **American Century Investment**.

The **U.S. Postal Service** wants to raise postage rates for nonprofit organizations and other mailers effective May 12, the Chronicle of Philanthropy reports. Beside a one-cent increase in a first class stamp, the plan calls for a 0.7% increase on nonprofit standard mail, mostly letter-size pieces, a 2.7% increase on nonprofit periodical mail, and a 7.6% increase for nonprofit standard parcels.