



FRANK RICH IN CONVERSATION WITH PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER

September 29, 2006

Celeste Bartos Forum

The New York Public Library

WWW.NYPL.ORG/LIVE

(music not transcribed)

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: I will skip all introductions tonight. I think you'll be very happy. You'll all know, probably, or some of you probably know who I am. My name is Paul Holdengräber, and I'm the Director of Public Programs here at the New York Public Library, and I imagine you all know Frank Rich. **(applause)** It's a great pleasure to have you here, Frank. I thought it was a good way of beginning to welcome you with a song by Les McCann, Eddie Harris, and Leroy Vinegar. I'll read you the lyrics that some of the people heard for a while here, our public. "The president, he's got his war, folks don't know just what it's for, nobody gives us rhyme or reason, have one doubt they call it treason. We're chicken feathers all without one gut, God damn it, trying to make it real, compared to what, sock it to me." So I'm—

(laughter)

FRANK RICH: If only I'd thought of that.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: I'm thinking this, in a way, speaks directly to your book—real compared to what?

FRANK RICH: Well, real compared to a fiction. I think, though, it's interesting to hear that song again after all these years, because while many people, including me, have talked about various overlaps between the Vietnam period and this period, that's not one of them. I think the culture is much different now, and it's played out sort of differently. We don't have—we have YouTube instead of Les McCann.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: True. And we're much better off, right?

FRANK RICH: Possibly.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: We missed you, Frank, I think for quite some time while you were writing your book. People were looking forward to you finishing the book so that they could read you again in the *New York Times*. And from the group of people who are here tonight, I think I am not the only one who was missing you. I can already hear people applauding, so I know that you have a huge fan base here of Frank Rich fans tonight. What I'm wondering, though, is who is your book addressed to? Are you just speaking to the same old group of people—Democrats, liberals, like-minded people, everyone who likes Frank Rich, looks forward to reading Frank Rich, in a way, the same way Bush speaks to his audience, you speak to yours. I'm just quite curious—who your book is addressed to, and I might even ask one more thing—who should be reading your book—so it's a double question—who isn't already.

FRANK RICH: I want everyone to read my book. The book I wrote was very deliberately not written as a sort of political treatise, at all, and in some ways not really written like my column. It's written as a narrative, as a story. What I wanted to do was write a book that would be accessible to everyone, not dumbed down in any way, but that would be a page-turner, if you will, about a story that we all think we know, which is the

story of how we went to war in Iraq, basically, after the events of 9/11. And so the tone of the book attempts to be judicious. There are strong opinions in it. But I guess if I had an imaginary reader in mind, it was a reader possibly not even now, but in the future—though I hope obviously it works now, that would say, how was it, what did it look like, what was it like, to live in a country which was so grievously attacked, as we were on September 11, 2001, and somehow be hoodwinked, in my view, into this detour into a war in a country that, as the President of the United States has only said in the past few weeks, had nothing to do with the attacks of 9/11. In a democracy, where there's so much media available, where there's so much opinion, there's so much news, that's quite an amazing feat to bring that off. One thing that I've always felt about President Bush and the Bush administration is that they're not stupid; they're very, very clever.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: You've said that Bush is not stupid himself, he only—

FRANK RICH: Thinks we're stupid.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: That's right.

FRANK RICH: Because he feels if he repeats something over and over again, we'll buy it and, to some extent, that worked in the special set of circumstances that followed September 11th.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: So we've become stupid.

FRANK RICH: I'm not sure I would make that generalization, but we were sold something. In this country we're often sold many things that we have buyers' remorse about, including products that have nothing to do with politics—cars and everything else—but I really wanted this book to work as a page-turner, as a narrative, more than as an argument, although there's an argument contained within it, and I have to say the most gratifying response I've gotten in the very short time it's been out is that my brother has a son who is thirteen or fourteen who is not a reader, a suburban kid, not New York, and

who certainly has never read my column in the *New York Times* and probably knows very little beyond the broadest headlines about anything involving the subject of this book. And picked it up because it was his uncle, and started reading it, and couldn't put it down. That to me was what I'm aiming for, not any particular political audience. Obviously people who have politics that overlap with mine is a first audience of sorts for the book, but I'm hoping, you know, that it's broader than that.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: So your nephew didn't put it down.

FRANK RICH: Doesn't mean he liked it, but he couldn't put it down.

(laughter)

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: True, true, he didn't put it down, but I imagine though you are—I think very skillfully you answered my question by saying that in a way you're writing for the audience of the future—I think in your present capacity you must be extremely interested in the *present* reader. And what I would say is he may not have put it down, but the people on the right may put this down, may put this book down, and I think—

FRANK RICH: There's not a damned thing I can do about it. What I hope is that some people on the right, indeed I know this from the response I get to my column. Some people on the right *do* read my column, some people on the right are *sources* for my column. That if people go to it with an open mind, they'll see that I have a particular story to tell. And it is a very particular story. It's not a book about so much how bad Bush is or how wrong this war is.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: It is about that, too.

(laughter)

FRANK RICH: It is, but it's most of all about how the culture was manipulated and how they did it. It's kind of a—to me it's a fascinating story.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Let's, because not everybody has heard it, it's quite an extraordinary way in which you tell that story. How did they manage to manufacture reality in this fashion? As I've told you, one book that your book actually cites on page two or three of its narrative is a book that I've always adored, and I think it's particularly suited to mention him here. Daniel Boorstin, who used to be the Librarian of Congress, wrote a book, which I invite everybody here to read—the exam will be next week—called *The Image: A Guide to*—I don't know how you say this word in English—

FRANK RICH: Pseudo-events.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: I think you don't pronounce the “p” so *to Pseudo-events in America*. And pseudo-events is really what you are talking about, in your book.

FRANK RICH: I grew up in Washington, D.C., not as part of a political family, in the period when he wrote that book, which was essentially the Kennedy era, and even as a kid, I could see, I remember enough of the Eisenhower era, to have, even though I was very young, to notice a sea change when Kennedy came in where theater amounted to much more and indeed, famously of course in the 1960 presidential debates, people who watched the debates thought Kennedy had won and people who listened thought Nixon won because Nixon may have had the better information or debating points but Kennedy was such a charismatic figure. And I'd say that if I've observed anything in all the years since that have led up to the writing of this book, it's that *that* idea that Boorstin first sort of put his finger on after the birth of modern media has just exploded with each successive administration.

For instance, in the Reagan years, obviously, you actually had a Hollywood actor at the center of the play, if you will, and techniques were developed by Michael Deaver that were quite brilliant. There's the famous story of how Reagan, when he was cutting

funding for a program involving senior citizens, the White House would have him cut the ribbon of a senior citizens' center that day so that that image, that happy image, would dominate the news, and people wouldn't listen to what the reporter was saying, that, you know, they were actually cutting hundreds of millions of dollars out of programs that this image represented. So this has just been steadily improved upon with each administration. Some have done it better than others. All want to do it. You know, you look at Bill Clinton in '92, running for president by appearing on the Arsenio Hall show, even Dan Quayle that year, you know, made a—had a running debate with a fictional sitcom character, Murphy Brown, to up the sort of showbiz ante. With this administration it's been remarkable.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: How did they improve?

FRANK RICH: Well, nothing is left to chance. I mean, take for instance the now-famous “mission accomplished” spectacle, which supposedly marked the end of major combat operations three and a half years ago, **(laughter)** almost three and a half years ago.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: But who's counting?

FRANK RICH: Right. It wasn't just about the president standing under a banner saying “mission accomplished.” It was an entire day-long play worked out as assiduously as O'Neill worked out *Mourning Becomes Electra*. It began, of course, with the president in a pilot's uniform landing in a jet. It's the picture I actually used on the cover. And reenacting what's essentially a scene out of the movie *Top Gun*.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Great movie.

FRANK RICH: Tom Cruise was in it. Just to take this piece of it a second. It wasn't entirely coincidence that they lighted on this. There was an association between Jerry Bruckheimer, who produced *Top Gun*, and the Bush White House. In fact, during the

early days of the war in Afghanistan, the Pentagon gave Bruckheimer permission and cooperation for a reality miniseries about the war in Afghanistan for the ABC primetime schedule. Ultimately, by the time it got on the air, it was a flop, people had lost interest in Afghanistan, they thought we'd won the war. But even as the Pentagon was keeping the press out of that theater of war, Jerry Bruckheimer was invited in. So you see this reenactment of that scene.

Now the president was going to give a speech, the speech where he said that—you know, basically he threw out the word victory and said major combat operations had ended, but he did *not* give the speech immediately after he got off the plane. They waited. They waited several hours. Why were they waiting? It wasn't just to put him in a business suit, although he got into a business suit. They were waiting for a particular time of day, which as people in Hollywood know, is called the Magic Hour—that time around dusk, which cinematographers love, when the world looks great, it's when the hero and heroine kiss in a movie. It's that golden moment. They wanted that moment, and that's when he gave the speech under the banner. That's not all they did. They got the troops, who had been more ordinarily dressed earlier when he landed the plane, now in color dress uniforms that they arranged by color around the president to add you know, a little bit of *pop* to the image. Finally, they made sure that the speech was given in such a position, and the cameras were positioned to catch the speech, so that you would not see San Diego, which was forty miles away. It would not—he was—the whole point of the show was the sort of—the president having victory at sea, if you will, a kind of inflation of his actual wartime service during Vietnam, a kind of single-handed—

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: That isn't hard.

FRANK RICH: Not hard, no. But he said, you know, when he got off and was meeting with the press, I can't remember the exact quote, it's certainly in the book, something like, "You know, it's really great to be flying again," as if he had been, you know, running missions over Danang. **(laughter)** Then, and it wouldn't do, given what they wanted to say, to have you know Marriott hotels in the background of the shot. So this

was all incredibly carefully calibrated. Stuff like this doesn't happen by accident. It's planned. There were producers on the boat. The boat was delayed coming in to get this all together. And then of course when it all went south, and it turned out major combat operations had not ended and there was an insurgency, the president famously sort of said, you know, "We weren't so ingenious about this, it was the Navy thought up that banner," it just happened to be in the same font of every other administration sign.

(laughter) As Jon Stewart would say at the time, "Yes, it's those irrepressible Navy sign-painters. They just can't stop themselves." **(laughter)**

But in the immediate aftermath of this, David Broder, the dean of Washington political journalism, on *Meet the Press*, said "He has such command." They reviewed it the way I used to review Andrew Lloyd Webber. **(laughter)** It was just, you know, "He had such authority in that uniform." I think it was Bob Novak on the same show, who said, "Can you imagine Joe Lieberman wearing a costume like that?" And it worked, it worked for a while, and so all through there have been versions of this. Some of them are relatively trivial. You know, the *Washington Post* discovered during the 2004 campaign that not only were the "Ask the President" pseudo—talk about pseudo-events—pseudo-town-hall meetings stacked entirely with obviously supporters of the president and that the people who asked the president were known to be supporters, but that they were actually getting there a day earlier and having rehearsals and run-throughs. And throwing panelists out if they didn't like the way—not because of their political views, they were all favorable to the president—if it didn't work as well, the same way that CBS might figure out casting *Survivor*.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: I was going to ask you at one point this evening, but maybe I'll choose that moment for now, whether you were missing writing theater criticism. In a way—

FRANK RICH: I never left it!

(laughter)

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: In a way, as you describe it, this is what you're doing.

FRANK RICH: Yes, well, you know it's interesting. When I wrote my previous book before this, it was a childhood memoir about growing up as a stage-struck kid in Washington. And the way that I structured that book was that I found when I was trying to go back to ages seven, eight, and nine, and I was telling this book from the perspective of *that* kid that I was then, that I could remember memories about my parents, and about my childhood, my parents' divorce and all the rest of it, entirely around shows. Like I couldn't remember what we did, you know, for a holiday, but I could remember what we did the night we saw *Bye, Bye, Birdie*, and that's how I organized the book. Well, I suddenly discovered about halfway through writing this book, that it was organized the same way, because you just go from one show to another. From "Shock and Awe" to "The Rescue of Jessica Lynch" to "The Pat Tillman Story." This stuff is constantly, was constantly produced, and it's polished, professional stuff. Some of it's more successful, needless to say, than a lot of what I reviewed in the New York theater.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: But I'm wondering to what extent you feel that maybe you're getting distracted by the smokescreen. In some way we all know that the present administration is manipulating us. Most politicians are pretty good at doing that these days. But—

FRANK RICH: But most politicians are not doing it.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: What are you teaching us that we didn't already know before you wrote this book?

FRANK RICH: Well, I think what I'm doing, trying to do, is atomize how it worked because people didn't know it. They fell for it. We went to war against a country that didn't attack us.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: What about the weapons of mass destruction?

FRANK RICH: Well, there, that to me was one of the most interesting parts to it. What I could do as a writer was, and I assiduously did this, I went through and pulled every single thing they did in the run-up to the war. Not the most—not just the most famous statements, or Colin Powell appearing before the UN, which everyone knows about, but I literally went and traced, when was the first time they ever used the word nuclear?

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: You should explain, maybe, to the audience, the second part of the book.

FRANK RICH: It's not so much the second part, but the appendix of the book. As a tool in writing the column a year and a half or two years ago, whenever the—actually it was '03, when the Valerie Plame Wilson case started to break. That case became a vehicle for us suddenly finding out all sorts of information about intelligence that the Bush Administration knew about but did not share with us before the war. One example, maybe even a relatively minor example, is Joseph Wilson's trip to Niger, but there are many other things, and suddenly as journalism was starting to become more investigative again, after really it had been had so frequently in the run-up to the war, stuff kept coming out. We'd find out that Curveball, who was this Iraqi defector, who was supposed to be the main source of them having the biological labs that Colin Powell talked about was a known flake and a known fabricator and was just telling people what they wanted to hear.

As each of these revelations came out, I started putting *them* on one side of the page and what they were saying in *public* in the other column in chronological order. When I first did it, it was like two and a half pages. In the book, it's an almost eighty-page appendix, because you find, it's just fascinating to see, you know, Dick Cheney at a speech in the summer of '02: "We know Saddam Hussein is going nuclear." And then you'll see, we now know that three weeks before that they saw this NIE or this CIA report, or this report

from the French government, which knew about African transactions involving uranium and Saddam.

It's just amazing how effective—it was *so* effective. You say, what did people not know that I can tell them. I can't tell some people what they don't know, but the fact is that this was so successfully done, that by the time we went to war, half the country believed that the hijackers on 9/11 were Iraqis, when of course none of them were. And so I wanted to show how it happened. It's almost like taking a train wreck and doing a freeze-frame and just watching each, watching it in slo-mo, if you will.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: So how were we had?

FRANK RICH: We were had in several ways. First of all—

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Because very intelligent people were had. Incredibly sophisticated—

FRANK RICH: Well, that's why it's such a great—that's why I think this is such an important story to tell. If every—just to go back to your other point—if everyone knew this going in, why did everyone sign on to what's probably going to be the biggest disaster in foreign policy in our lifetime, and why did *smart* people do it, including people, by the way, who were opposed to President Bush. That's a pretty *damn* effective mongering of propaganda.

There's several things that happened. First of all, there was 9/11. I don't think this ever could have happened without September 11th. The country was understandably—I was—traumatized. There was an understandable rallying effect for the president, which I wanted to believe in, and 90 percent of the country—almost 90 percent of the country—supported President Bush after 9/11. Furthermore, despite a few voices on the far left, there was almost *complete* unanimity about going to Afghanistan, and taking out the Taliban, or indeed any government who sheltered al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, and

we did that, at least it seemed at the time, effectively. It was a fast war, it was a war with not a lot of casualties, it was very, very effective, it did everything it wanted to do, or so again, obviously it's coming undone *now*, but at the time it was very effective, except unbeknownst to Americans immediately, we lost Osama bin Laden in Tora Bora in December of '01 as the war was basically succeeding and ending.

After the war, after 9/11, we know from Bob Woodward and others that, while there was a neocon contingent that was pushing for war in Iraq—there are better targets in Iraq than there are in Afghanistan—Bush said no, he resisted it. Something happened in '02 that changed it. And there are many theories. I have mine in the book. George Packer, who wrote an excellent book about his—a supporter of the war—wrote an excellent book about his disillusionment with it—calls it the Rashomon of wars, because no-one really knows—we all have our theories, but something happened, and it happened as poll numbers started to show waning support for a war on terror now that we'd knocked out the Taliban. Suddenly not 90 percent wanted a war, 52 percent wanted a war. Bush's approval ratings fell from 90 back into the mid- to low-60s.

It was an election year, 2002, midterm like this one, and that's when they started rolling out what Andy Card called this new product, the Iraq war. They created a sort of war organization, a panel within the White House, called WHIG, the White House Iraq Group, that was convened in the summer of 2002, even as the President was saying, and others were saying, we've made no decision about this war, in fact there was a group, that not only included *policy* people like Scooter Libby, a big neocon operative, obviously, within the administration but *publicists*: Karen Hughes, Mary Matalin, Karl Rove, who straddles both policy and politics. There were only eight or nine people in this group and it was about selling the product. One of them was Andy Card, whose previous nonpolitical job had been as a marketing/PR guy for the Big Three auto companies in Detroit. So that's where they were coming from.

We also—and again by putting together this timeline and just trying to tell the story, events start to make sense when you put them in a proximity to each other. For instance,

to me, to this day, the most important leaked document of the war is the so-called Downing Street Memo, where the head of British Intelligence reported back to the Blair government, as I'm sure most of you know, that the facts didn't matter, the facts and intelligence were being fixed around the policy of going to war.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: The subject of Mark Danner's book.

FRANK RICH: Mark Danner's book, absolutely, to which actually I wrote the introduction. Mark wrote the best explication of this. It's a book called—published by the New York Review called *The Secret Way to War*. That memo was dated July 23 '02. That's exactly more—as far as we can tell, from people who have figured it out, when WHIG started meeting. So that memo was *entirely* right and yet the pretense was being kept up publicly that a lot of people fell for, that we were going to wait for the evidence, that we were going to, you know, wait for empirical evidence of WMDs, we were going to wait for Hans Blix, we were going to wait for facts, but there was never any intention, and this mindset continues to this day. I mean, right now, you know, Iraq is in chaos and we're staying the course to victory, whatever that means, so it was a—it's a very—it's a very intricate process. Bush gives off this sort of vibe of, you know, I don't know, a sort of shit-kicking guy down at the ranch, easy-going guy, I think he's in fact very tightly wound and I think that this is—

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: So shit-kicking means exactly what?

(laughter)

FRANK RICH: You know, one of the guys who's down in Texas. You may not want to put too fine a point on it, but you can sort of imagine the image. Really, think on a ranch, not that what he has is actually a ranch but that's a whole—

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: That's also manufactured.

FRANK RICH: That's also a stage set.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: And you talk about that, it's partly you create through a word an image that conjures up in people the idea that he has a ranch.

FRANK RICH: There's a wonderful columnist, who mainly writes about business for a very good magazine in Texas called the *Texas Monthly*, named Michael Ennis, and I met him and he sort of walked me through, and ultimately he wrote about it, and I quote him in the book, but he said that the kind of house that the Bushes have in Crawford is a typical sort of eco-friendly house that rich people would build in his set, the way that people might build houses in the Hamptons in his set here, and it was built on the eve of him, his deciding to run for president, to give him this sort of, you know—

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: What he needed.

FRANK RICH: What he needed, which is not for people to think that he was born in Connecticut, that his mother's from Greenwich, and that he went to Andover, Yale, and Harvard, all of which he did, but my point about Bush is that for all the sort of everyday-guy vibe he gives off, he's, he isn't stupid, and this plot, and I don't say that in the sense of conspiracy, I mean, literally in the sense of this *narrative*, this dramatic plot that took us to war, in which he was a willing participant and the star actor, was not something that was improvised on the spot, you know. It was an elaborate production.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Talk a little bit about, if you would, what I think is really the theme, probably the kernel, of your book, which is the cultural context, as it were, that permitted this. Much like Boorstin, which is the reason I think both of us liked his book so much, his book about a certain cultural context, his book was written in 1961, I believe. Yours talks about the context which permitted this drama, which is why I think a theater critic could analyze this story so well.

FRANK RICH: Right, well the two reasons why I feel this story worked, was one, let's go back to 9/11 a second. They never could have sold the war in Iraq without 9/11, because what happened, just to go back to the public buying it. We approved of the war in Afghanistan. It was a victory. We—most people, I think, are *trusting* in this country, and there was no reason to ever believe that—I mean, there was some reason, obviously, but for most Americans, there was no reason to believe that this guy, having fought what they thought was a just and correct war, would now sort of go off on this detour. If there hadn't been 9/11 to set it up, I don't think the Iraq War ever could have been sold.

The cultural piece of it is, when Boorstin wrote that book, it was indeed in the aftermath of the Kennedy/Nixon debates, television was just coming into its own as a political vehicle. Now, all these years later, and particularly in the last ten years, particularly on the eve of George Bush becoming president, we have a much larger media apparatus. There's *always* been infotainment. You know, Edward R. Murrow, as we know from the recent George Clooney movie, didn't just go after Joe McCarthy, he interviewed Liberace. But we now have this 24/7 media swarm that has accelerated enormously. As recently as the first Gulf War, there was only one cable news network. Now there are three. In 1991, there was—Internet was not a mass medium. It became one towards the end of the Clinton years.

There's this huge hysterical morass of media that becomes almost the weather in this country and *can* be manipulated, particularly if you have an attack on America to precede it and you have a press that's so into—a media industry that's so into signing on to anything that the government wants that NBC literally put its peacock logo on the corner of the screen in stars and stripes even when it was affixed on stupid sitcoms, and that's the kind of culture that, I think, that the Bush Administration was the first to really come to office having at their disposal, the way that Kennedy once had the new idea of televised debates at his disposal.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: But in a way, 9/11 also played so much on that culture from the point of view of those who destroyed the towers. They used, in the most powerful way—

FRANK RICH: Absolutely—that's a very good point.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: —the medium that Bush would then excel in using even better.

FRANK RICH: I think that's a great point, and look, even now, the culture is moving forward. There's an editor at *Vanity Fair*, David Friend, who's done a fantastic book about the sort of, it's called *Watching the World Change*, about the images of 9/11 and at one point someone like the editor of *Paris-Match* makes in that book is that things have even changed in the past few years in such a way that people would have been sending photos by cellphone out of Ground Zero and stuff would have been on YouTube or whatever. Things are changing so quickly, it's at once enthralling—I know it's the subject of a number of your programs here—and terrifying.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Yesterday it was amazing, we had a program here with Chris Anderson and Lawrence Lessig, about Chris Anderson's book called *The Long Tail*, which is becoming longer by the day, really. The program was called "Does Size Matter?" And we had a very, very young audience, with about a hundred and fifty people in the audience with *laptops* on their knees, probably blogging, and actually, I'm wondering what you think of blogs?

FRANK RICH: It's very hard to generalize about blogs. It's like saying what do you think about newspapers, in a way, because—

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: What *do* you think about newspapers?

(laughter)

FRANK RICH: They're in trouble. I think it's a great thing that anyone can have a platform and, you know, take a stand on anything and write their opinion about anything. I think the issue for the news business is that for the most part, bloggers, at least in terms of like world news, don't provide new information. I mean, sometimes they do, they do it on the margins. They're much better at fact-checking information in places like the *New York Times*. In the end, if we're going to find out what's going on in the war in Iraq, we actually have to have reporters, that are probably very expensive, and not bloggers, who have training—

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Can I ask something about that? I know that I brought up the name of Mark Danner, who is someone I think we both admire quite a lot, who's been here, who's been here talking about torture, and debating Mark Bowden and a few other people—Darius Rejali and Elaine Scarry and other people here. But I asked you earlier if you missed writing theater criticism and you quickly answered by saying that you've just continued doing it in a different way, but do you miss not being a reporter, actually going out to the places that you write about?

FRANK RICH: No, I've never been that kind of reporter, quite frankly. I mean, I've done reporting in my career, I *began* my career as a reporter, and I don't miss theater criticism either. You know, I think of myself foremost as a writer, and, I mean, I'm someone who gets passionate about something and then gets passionate about something else, and it's not necessarily the case I'll write this kind of column, or a column like this, indefinitely, either, any more than I . . . And once I'm done with something I'm sort of done with it.

I loved—you know, the first piece I wrote getting out of college, strangely enough, was a ten-thousand-word profile of Daniel Ellsworth for *Esquire* magazine. I was a kid. I happened through a freak circumstance to meet him in what turned out to be the month before he would give the Pentagon Papers to the *Times*. This was years before I was actually at the *Times*. I didn't know anyone at the *Times*. And there was a lot of intrigue

in doing that kind of reporting. Particularly since he was on the lam, and I had to go into phone booths, and the FBI was pursuing me, was pursuing my parents, because I had stupidly made some phone calls to him from home. I liked all that, but I also liked reviewing Stephen Sondheim and August Wilson. I like what I'm doing now. I'm always looking for different experiences, and that may make me—I'm much more peripatetic, probably, than most people in journalism.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: I was asking the question also in terms of how you feel that you can rely solidly on sources.

FRANK RICH: Well, that's why—that's the issue about blogging. You don't have to go to journalism school. I didn't. You don't have to have—it's not like being a doctor, you don't have to have some certificate that says that you're a journalist. But you *do* have to have some basic reporting skills, which is weighing contradictory, inevitably contradictory, versions of events from multiple sources, whether the sources be people, officials, or different publications, or bloggers, or whatever, and trying to come at, figure out what's *real*, and right now that's harder than ever, and as we know from various scandals both in regular journalism and in Internet journalism, people can just completely make something up.

You know, the girl whose name I'm now going to forget on YouTube, who had the entire young America enthralled with her adventures, turned out to be an actress and it was all fiction, but she bamboozled a lot of, a lot of people, and that's sort of another version of what the Bush administration did in a different arena, but still a very powerful arena, so it's very complicated. You know, Jayson Blair got a lot of fictional stories into the *New York Times* over, through some very smart editors. So *that* is a skill. It's a learned skill, it can presumably be learned in journalism school, but it also has to be learned through experience. My first job was as a reporter on a weekly newspaper in Richmond I started with some friends, and the whole paper was oriented sort of towards muckraking, and I learned on the job.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Frank, let me try to probe again with what I tried to start this conversation with, which is the readers on the left and the readers on the right and the description—in the middle of the book you have a not very flattering description, one might say, of Michael Moore

FRANK RICH: Or of John Kerry.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Or of John Kerry, and I wonder which one was worse, but they sort of equal each other in being quite negative, let's say, and in the case of Michael Moore, you are afraid in some way, or you describe the fact that he can be—he was used very easily, and manipulated very easily by the right and by the Bush administration as the kind of enemy they always wanted to have and the daily review of your book in the *New York Times*, I forget the reporter, the journalist who wrote that review, I think it was an extremely interesting review, said that you have given in some way to your foes the ability to—you had *dissected* the spectacle they used so that now—

FRANK RICH: They could use it as a guidebook to do it in the future.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Yes.

FRANK RICH: That's fine with me. That doesn't bother me at all because what I wanted to do was to get into the story and tell it, and if someone wants to use what I wrote in a Machiavellian way, and say "God, this is a great way to sell a war on Costa Rica," or whatever, fine. I just wanted to try—I have a strong point of view to be sure, but I really wanted to tell the story and show the moving parts of it and explain how it happened and what made it click, and I think that's a very good point.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: I'm just so interested by the subject because it's come up again and again in the nine events we have had since 9/11, I've sort of completely given up on the notion of sleep, I feel I keep the night company at this point, but in any event, in many of these events, whether it's E. O. Wilson talking about his new book called *The*

Creation, or whether it's Cameron Sinclair talking about sustainable architecture, whether it is Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation*, talking about atheism and a godless world, it was quite interesting, actually, today to see in the *Washington Post* that Sam Harris paid for his own advertising.

FRANK RICH: Oh, that's—you mean for his book?

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Yeah.

FRANK RICH: That's interesting.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: It is interesting.

FRANK RICH: I'm not that crazy.

(laughter)

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: I didn't imply anything, Frank, at all, I think your book doesn't need that aid, but it was interesting to see that, and I'm curious about that. Big ads, huge ads, including mentioning the event at the Library, which caused some disarray at the door, because we didn't quite have enough seats for that event, and then there is you talking to your audience, and the point I want to make very quickly, if I may, about three or four years ago I remember in the weekend *Review*, the same section where Sam Harris took out a full-page ad, there was a graph of what the right reads and what the left reads, and the point of intersection, like in mathematics—

FRANK RICH: I remember that—

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: —and really nobody reads the same books.

FRANK RICH: I actually think it's changed. I think that, first of all, you've got to remember, a clear, a *large* majority of the country thinks this war was a mistake. This includes Democrats—I just know from my mail, I mean, from military people, things have changed, and a lot of people think the war is a mistake. A lot of people think they were misled into the war, they think by *huge* numbers, by more than 40 points, I cite this in my column for Sunday, exactly what this NIE, this National Intelligence Estimate said, that the Iraq War has *encouraged* terrorist threats against America.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Which is the subject of your column now.

FRANK RICH: Yeah, part of the subject of my column for Sunday. Every book that's written about this president or this war will at the extremes have people who are going to demean it in that polarized way, but there's more and more spillover between the two. *Fiasco*, Tom Ricks's superb book about how we screwed up the military stuff, that's being read by people on the left and the right but it's much stronger in terms of its rhetoric about the war than *my* book is. Bob Woodward, who wrote two books that were basically sympathetic and supportive for the Bush administration, and who was *praised* by people like Mary Matalin saying "this is history as it should be told, that's why we cooperated with him," is today being attacked by Tony Snow, and people on the left, who attacked his other book, will read this book now and decide, maybe decide he's a hero, I haven't—we'll see. But the fact is that there is a kind of consensus now about this war, and people want to look back at it, and that's why so many interesting books are being written.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: You know, the word you used, "rhetoric," really made me think of something. Why are people on the left, generally speaking—and I'm making a generalization for the pleasure of an argument with you, which I'm trying to have. Why are people on the left, generally speaking, a little more whiny and shrill-sounding and less—

FRANK RICH: I don't believe it. In fact, I think that's just—in fact, I just wrote a piece for the *New York Review of Books* about Democrats complaining about people—

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Peter Beinart and all of those.

FRANK RICH: But I talk about that issue. If you go to a political blog on the left, you're going to, you know, see a lot of Bush-hating rhetoric, but if you go to one on the right, you're going to say the same things about Nancy Pelosi. They're a mirror image of each other, and you can't quantify it. There's certainly in talk radio many more on the right than there on the left—I don't know what that *means*, it may say more about radio than about the political divisions in the country, but I think there are whiners on both sides, I just—I don't buy—

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: I've had trouble here maybe in my programming—it might be a shortcoming on my part—we had a debate here on the Patriot Act, and we had Richard Posner and Geoffrey Stone and I would say without quantifying intelligence here at all, I was quantifying merely rhetoric, Richard Posner came out much stronger, and I would say the only example that I have except for you present here today, is Mark Danner, you know, who can take on Mark Bowden perfectly well and analyze—

FRANK RICH: Well, look, Richard Posner and Geoffrey Stone are both very learned, good writers. I've never seen either of them as a debater. Maybe one of them lost the debate, they're both top-notch public intellectuals.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: That's why I brought them.

FRANK RICH: But I don't know what that has to do with your point about the left being shrill. Geoffrey Stone's book about freedom of speech during wartime in America is a classic, he's a professor at the University of Chicago, it's the best thing ever written on the subject. It's an academic tome. It's hardly a shrill, blogging polemic. I think, there, look, I wrote a column a couple of weeks ago about 9/11, where I made a joke about

conspiracy theorists, mainly on the left, who believe that the buildings imploded, and it was all, planes had nothing to do, and I've gotten tons of angry e-mails and so on, but I get the same things from people on the right about something else I write.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: In the *New York Times Book Review*, Jen Senior just wrote a review of Sidney Blumenthal and Lewis Lapham, I don't know if you saw that piece, and she got a lot of criticism, because she was accusing the left of not having a sense of humor.

FRANK RICH: Well, I'm not—First of all, I don't consider myself a person of the left, I'm not going to defend everyone on the left, and I have to say, everything you're saying goes against my grain as a writer, I don't believe in these kinds of sweeping generalities. I believe in very, very specific writing. The book I wrote, and I hope everything I've written—whether people like it or hate it—very, very specific, very fact-based, not making wild, sweeping generalizations about—

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Let me ask a very specific question, then. On this very stage, I asked the editor of the *New Yorker*, David Remnick, at the end of an interview, where we're coming to now, whether he thought that Bush had lied to the country.

FRANK RICH: Well, I have an answer to that—I set out, that's one of several questions I wanted to answer in this book, and *not* in the way of saying, Oh, of course, Bush lied, people died, not in terms of leftist rhetoric, but by actually looking at the evidence empirically, and that was one of the points of doing this very intricate timeline. And here's what I learned, and it's all laid out in the book with citations, so people can decide for themselves whether there's something to my argument or not.

There was indeed a lot of wrong intelligence about Iraq and about Saddam Hussein and his WMDs. And as the Bush administration is fond of saying, Democrats saw all that same intelligence and endorsed it. Europeans saw it and endorsed it. True. There was also a lot of right intelligence. What I discovered was, *without* exception, the intelligence that

turned out to be wrong was what they highlighted, and the intelligence that was right was what was not in the speeches, not in the documents, not in the white paper given to Congress and the public before the war. It's so consistent it's unbelievable. And one reason why I was suspicious about the war going in, even before the facts, we didn't know a lot of the facts then, was that they kept hammering on nuclear—they kept using this word nuclear, uranium—

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: They pronounce it differently.

FRANK RICH: Yes, they do. **(laughter)** “The smoking gun that will be a mushroom cloud.” *Everyone* knew that was the weakest evidence. Why did they hit that so hard? That's much scarier than Sarin gas. People have a vague idea of what it is, but—they, it was, and so, what I conclude in the book about whether they lied or not, is in the end it may be a distinction without a difference. Even if they intentionally *just* cherry-picked the stuff that was false—you know, Mohamed Atta meeting with Saddam intelligence agents in Prague before 9/11—*or* they were so convinced by their own *idée fixe* about having this war that they couldn't tell the difference, they fell for their own propaganda. So whether—but one way or the other, it's quite clear that they only told us the things that were false and *didn't* tell us the things that were true even when they knew they were true at the time. So history is going to have to judge whether they were self-blinded or whether they deliberately set out to lie.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: I remember David Remnick saying something to the effect of, “If by lie, you mean the withholding of information, of course they lied.”

FRANK RICH: But it's not just the withholding of information. As I show in this timeline, and as many of you know from reading news accounts, I've just tried to collect it all together, they were constantly receiving actual documents and intelligence, including from allies, saying there's nothing *to* the aluminum tubes, there's nothing *to* that he could—the French government several times, its intelligence agency warned the

White House that Saddam—forget about Joe Wilson—Saddam Hussein could *not* have been getting uranium in Niger.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: But they're French.

FRANK RICH: No, but it's their former colony, and they know all the people who deal with uranium. They knew, we're not talking about, you know, the United States, we're talking about a very small country where they knew all the players in that business, it's not something you can just do in a garage. The Germans told the known fabricators—it was time after time, they kept this to themselves, and, or deliberately said things that they had been told by good authorities wouldn't hold up.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Before we conclude, what does Frank Rich read for pleasure or do for pleasure?

FRANK RICH: Do for pleasure, I go to the theater, I like to read fiction.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: What are you reading?

FRANK RICH: Right now, I'm mainly reading about Iraq, which is not fiction. **(laughter)** But I like Murakami, the best—I'm looking forward to but haven't read yet the Claire Messud book. The best novel I've read in the past year is the last Ishiguro novel, *Never Let Me Go*, has anyone read it? It's just spellbinding. Anyway. I read, you know, on vacation I read *A Passage to India*, which turned out to be, which I hadn't read in years, and which like everything these days, seems alarmingly relevant. I went to *Madama Butterfly* the other night at the Met, suddenly you see it through a new lens with all the events of the last few years.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: I would like, as a coda, just to give people the flavor of this book, and also how lyrical it is in some ways, have you read two and a half paragraphs, if you don't mind—

FRANK RICH: I don't mind.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: —which is the very end of the book. It's a moderately hopeful ending.

FRANK RICH: Moderately hopeful. I like that.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: Moderately hopeful, not fully hopeful. I'm not sure it's a call to action, but it's a call.

FRANK RICH: Fine, sure.

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: And let me say just before Frank starts to read, that after this there will be a Q & A, and in my decade of experience of doing this, I've realized that questions can be asked in about thirty-two seconds, so rather ask questions than make long comments. There are two mics on each side of the auditorium. We ask you to go there to ask your question, and after that, Frank has agreed to sign some books, but something quite special will happen today, between the end of the program and the signing of the books, Frank is closing a column, so he needs to quickly call the paper to do some fact-checking, what bloggers don't always do.

FRANK RICH: Not that grand, just checking with the copy desk. So from here—this is the end of the, not strictly the end of the book, but the end of an epilogue:

What if those thousands of tactical errors belatedly conceded by Condoleezza Rice had not been made? (I should say, this is a few months ago she said that they had made many tactical errors in the war, thousands of them.) The story might not have turned out all that differently. The what-if that matters most is not what if the Iraqi Army had not been disbanded, but, what if the Bush administration had told the truth? What if it had not hyped the intelligence and tried to argue the case for regime change in Iraq on its merits,

whether geopolitical or humanitarian? What if it had conceded early on that it had miscalculated the post-Saddam aftermath in Iraq? What if it had then invited Americans and their elected representatives to have a candid debate about the options, costs, sacrifices, and possible benefits ahead? What if a government that so fervently espoused democracy for the world had had a commensurate faith in democracy at home?

These questions, simple and even naïve as they may be, matter more than all the tactical questions combined. That they are so rarely asked in the wake of this debacle is a measure of just how much the very idea of truth is an afterthought and an irrelevancy in a culture where the best story wins. While the Bush administration's toboggan ride into Iraq was facilitated by an easily cowed press and a timid and often disingenuous political opposition, the news culture that predated both 9/11 and this presidency also played a big role. It was in the mid-1990s that the American electronic news media jumped the shark. That's when CNN was joined by even more boisterous rival 24/7 cable networks, when the internet became a mass medium, and when television news operations, by far the main source of news for Americans, were gobbled up by entertainment giants such as Disney, Viacom, and Time-Warner. While there had always been a strong entertainment component to TV news, that packaging was now omnipresent, shaping the coverage of stories from Washington scandals to Wall Street bubbles to child abductions to war, and around the clock, not just on the evening news, the morning shows, and the occasional network newsmagazine.

In this new media-thon environment, drama counted more than judicious journalism. Clear-cut evildoers and patriots were prized over ambiguous characters who didn't wear either black or white hats. Once-definable distinctions between truth and fiction were blurred more than ever before as reality was redefined in news and primetime entertainment alike. The Bush White House certainly did not invent this culture. It has been years in the making and it is bipartisan, but this administration was the first to take office after it was fully online and was brilliant at exploiting it to serve its own selfish reality-remaking ends. The TV maw needs to be fed 24/7 and Bush's producers supplied a nonstop progression of compelling shows to do so. If this White House knew anything,

it knew how to roll out a slick product by the yard. History tells us that politics is cyclical in America and the Bush cycle may well be in its last throes. But the culture in which it thrived still rides high, waiting to be exploited by another master manipulator from either political party, if Americans don't start to take it back.

Thank you.

(applause)

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: So we'll start with the left. I think that's quite appropriate.

(laughter) We'll go to the right afterwards.

Q: I'd like to know what Mr. Rich's opinion was of the *New York Times* TV reviewer Alessandra Stanley's review of *The Path to 9/11*, which she felt was evenhanded, where she twisted the conclusions of the 9/11 Commission and said that Clinton, not Bush, was to blame for 9/11. I'd like to know what your opinion of that very controversial review was.

FRANK RICH: I'm a former critic, and I feel she has a right to say whatever she wants to say and she's entitled to her opinion.

Q: But she—the *Times* had to run a correction the next day. Is that the kind of reporter who should be working for the *New York Times*? Somebody who gets their facts wrong?

FRANK RICH: You know, you're not going to get me to start—I don't feel she deserves criticism for having a strong opinion.

Q: This has to do with an item that has kind of lingered and not been referred to at all, it seems, since it first happened. We were bidding on the oilfields near the Persian Gulf when Argentina got them and it seems that at that time, when Argentina got them, we left

Afghanistan and went to Iraq and Halliburton was born, etcetera. Do you think that there is a valid sequence in that?

FRANK RICH: I don't know enough to know. You obviously know more about this than I do. I have to say, I—

Q: It was from Public Media, it was twice on television and then they took it off and no one has referred to it. And yet it seems to be a prime strand—

FRANK RICH: If I had seen it, I would have a comment, but I'm a real believer in not having opinions about things I don't know about.

Q: Wow. Okay.

FRANK RICH: And I don't follow the narrative of Argentina in the War on Iraq, I'm sorry.

Q: Okay.

Q: What's your take on the Chris Wallace Bill Clinton interview?

FRANK RICH: On the Chris Wallace Bill Clinton interview? You know, I still haven't quite figured it out. As people who Clinton well said, this was only 40 percent of the full temper, which is pretty amazing. I guess, I think it was, you know, it was satisfying for everybody. It was satisfying for people who hate Clinton, and it was satisfying for people who hate Fox News. **(laughter)** And in that sense, I almost wrote a column about it, but I didn't, this week, I was going to say it was like the Janet Jackson moment **(laughter)**, people who love to deplore indecency just were in heaven, you know, pig heaven, and people who like to wallow in indecency were in pig heaven, too.

Beyond that, you know, the substance—in terms of the substance, Clinton had a point, he had two points. One is, of course they don't ask these tough questions of Republicans, of people in the administration, not that Chris Wallace's questions were so tough to Clinton, either. But they were a little bit more aggressive, I guess, and the other point is, that he did fail, he didn't do enough, he may have done it more haphazardly than he admitted, but he did do more about al-Qaeda than the Bush administration did in its eight months before 9/11, because they did absolutely nothing, and that's on the record.

What interested me most, and actually I write about this in part of my column on Sunday, is that Condoleezza Rice, instead of just letting, you know, grumpy old middle-aged men, go at each other, had to rush to defend her own honor and made these outrageous claims about what they were doing in '01, which just are not true. In fact, in the new Woodward book, there's an anecdote of George Tenet, I think, in July, rushing to her office and, you know, saying we've got to worry about al-Qaeda and she blew him off. So why she would step into it when she didn't really have to is what I found fascinating as a subject.

Q: My question is based on your having grown up in Washington, D.C. There are about 600,000 Americans who live there, who pay taxes, who die in wars but don't have senators who can vote for them, and I've always been mystified how people who live in the District accept that and can it ever be changed—

FRANK RICH: Well, you've hit a subject near and dear to my heart. At the height of white flight in Washington in the late Fifties, my parents moved from Montgomery County *into* the District and I went to the public school system in Washington, which had lower per capita spending per student than Mississippi or West Virginia, because it was essentially a black city and a black school system. I went to the last high school that was majority white. They had so little money—it was *great* at the time—we would have exams cancelled because they didn't have the money to pay for composition paper for us to take the exams on. You know, AP American History was an extra lunch hour, and there was so much fear of—and the city, I should explain for those of you who don't know District of Columbia history, the city then was run by something called the House

District Committee, which were white racist—Democratic in those times—Congressmen who just gave no money to this black city and the home rule, the whole home rule, as a kid, I thought, What? I'm in the nation's capital, I'm surrounded by all these buildings and there was not even a vote for President then, there was nothing, there wasn't even the mayor then, there was absolutely *nothing*, there wasn't the fake Congressperson.

So in senior year of high school I was running my school paper, the *Woodrow Wilson Beacon*, and with a friend of mine, who was another editor there, we ran an editorial in favor of home rule for the District of Columbia and it was banned by our journalism teacher and this principal, and so we started an underground paper, told the *Washington Post*, ended up on the front page of the City section of the *Washington Post*, told every television station and radio station, and that began sort of my journalism career.

(laughter) The friend, another white Jewish kid going to public schools in Washington, at the time, my friend who I did this with, Jeremy Pikser, would grow up to be the Oscar-nominated co-screenwriter of *Bulworth* and to this day, my father, who was a businessman in Washington, who is now in his mid-eighties, it's like beating your head against the wall, but is involved with DC Vote, the organization that still lobbies to get representation, you know, to go with the taxation.

I think that what I saw as a kid growing up in Washington, living in a de facto segregated city that purported to stand for everything great in our civic values, our democratic values, to see the hypocrisy in that, there's no question, had an enormous influence on my worldview and also my view about—that sort of turns up even in this book about the Bush administration or my view about the theater. I was always very conscious of the fake show that was presented, that you'd go on tour of Mount Vernon, or you'd go with school groups, we'd go to the Washington Monument, and the White House, and the Capitol, and the reality that there were in this city, Americans, black Americans were treated as second-class citizens, they didn't have *fundamental* rights guaranteed in our Constitution, and everyone was sort of, in those days, pretending as if it wasn't happening, and I think it always made me want to therefore look behind the façade of

anything that government does, Democrat, Republican, liberal, conservative, whatever, because often what you see is not what you get.

(applause)

Q: Yes, I wonder if you could share with us your opinion or evaluation of the news coverage we're getting about Iran now.

FRANK RICH: I've been asked this before, and I don't have a really handy answer. I think that the press is much chastened by what went on in the run-up to Iraq, and I think that, you know, that people are making a serious effort not to be bamboozled again. And we can't automatically assume, by the way, that we *are* being bamboozled and it's exactly the same story. But I do think that people are working this story very hard. You know, it's been a very brutal time for the news business. People are upset—in my business, are upset about it. They feel, a lot of people feel they failed, so I think there's even more of an incentive to not make the mistake again. Which doesn't mean, necessarily, that they're not building nuclear weapons—we don't know. You know, people are trying to find out and not taking any government's, whether the American or the Iranian government's, word for what's happening.

Q: Yes, you've been immersed with all these characters, as if, you know, the way you were talking about how you've made it be more of a play than—I'm wondering about the psychology of everybody that you've met or thought about. Is there some sort of collective psychosis going on? I mean, what makes somebody want to pursue a position of leadership and care so *little* about the truth or about the people or the human beings that they govern?

(applause)

FRANK RICH: Yeah, that's probably a question for, like, Erik Erikson, **(laughter)** not me, were he around. I think that you know, I would say, my feeling about Washington,

which I've spent a lot of time in, obviously, but sort of on the outside looking in. You know, the way I grew up in Washington was like growing up in Beverly Hills and not being in the movie business, you know, which gave me an interesting, I feel, perspective on it.

I feel that power is a very, very powerful drug for a lot of people. And one of the interesting things to me about George W. Bush is that I don't think he *was* particularly ideological. I don't think he *was* a neocon. We know from his public statements in the campaign against Gore, and even in his early days in the White House. He had a foreign policy that was very, as he said, humble, unambitious, he wanted to build the Star Wars missile shield that had been left over from the Reagan era, but I think he liked the idea of winning, I think he liked the idea of being in power, I think that *that* is, as Kissinger said, a tremendous aphrodisiac, and once people *get* power, they want to do anything to preserve it, by and large, very few people like to *give up* power, and so they cut a lot of corners, and I think they saw this war in Iraq as, you know, like when the Reagan administration went into Granada, slam-dunk, not very costly in terms of money or blood, that's how they planned it. They had, you know, they had an administrator, Jay Garner, they were going to just go in and go out, there were no plans for nation-building, they were going to draw down troops to thirty thousand that year. So they sort of, I think that they fell in love with their own idea and then it went astray, and when people lie or cut corners on truth or put on these kind of propaganda displays, I think it's most of all about holding on to power.

Q: Well, how can somebody be involved with, with—

PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER: I'm sorry, we'll take a couple more questions please.

Q: Yes. Thanks a lot for your writing, and I'm just wondering if you have a lot of readers under forty, because by the looks of this audience, it makes me wonder—