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COMMENTS
NBC Invents War-o-tainment
NBC is promoting "Stars Earn Stripes" during its Summer Olympics telecast as the next big sporting event. But the sport it's exhibiting is war.
July 31, 2012 |

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If you've watched the Olympics on NBC you've probably seen ads promoting a war-o-tainment reality show cohosted by retired U.S. General Wesley Clark, co-starring Todd Palin, and with no apparent role for reality. The ads brag about the use of real bullets in a way that promoters of the new Batman movie probably wouldn't try. But the chances that any of the celebrities engaged in "war competition" on NBC's "Stars Earn Stripes" will be shot and killed is essentially what it was for John Wayne, as he promoted war while dodging it (even if nuclear weapons testing got him in the end).

RootsAction.org and Just Foreign Policy have set up a website at StarsEarnStripes.org to push NBC to show the real cost of war, and to help get them started. http://act.rootsaction.org/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=6405

"Stars Earn Stripes" is being produced by the TV "genius" behind Donald Trump’s “Apprentice” and “Sarah Palin’s Alaska.” (Husband Todd Palin is a "Stars Earn Stripes" co-star.) NBC is promoting the show during its Summer Olympics telecast as the next big sporting event. But the sport it’s exhibiting is war.

On “Stars Earn Stripes,” celebrities will pair-up with members of the U.S. military to compete at war-like tasks, including "long-range weapons fire." Only there won't be any of the killing or dying.

Our wars kill huge numbers of people, primarily civilians, and often children and the elderly. NBC is not showing this reality on its war-o-tainment show any more than on its news programs. Other nations' media show the face of war, giving people a very different view of war-making. NBC news programs have repeatedly used retired generals, pretending independence but getting their pro-war talking points from the Pentagon. See New York Times: Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon's Hidden Hand and Glenn Greenwald: The Pulitzer-Winning Investigation That Dare Not Be Uttered on TV . http://act.rootsaction.org/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=6405

In the United States, our tax dollars are spent by the billions each year marketing the idea that war is a sport and associating the military with sporting events. Media companies like NBC are complicit in the propaganda. While 57% of federal discretionary spending goes to the military, weapons makers can't seem to get enough of our tax dollars. In the spirit of transferring veterans’ care to the realm of private charity, "Stars Earn Stripes" will give prize money each week to "military-based charities" in order to "send a message."

One of NBC’s corporate parents, General Electric, takes war very seriously, but not as human tragedy -- rather, as financial profit. (GE is a big weapons manufacturer.) A retired general hosting a war-o-tainment show is another step in the normalization of permanent war. And consider for a moment who that retired general is. During the 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia commanded by Gen. Wesley Clark, civilians and a TV station were bombed, while cluster bombs and depleted uranium were used. Had Clark done these things for another nation, NBC would probably favor his prosecution and certainly not employ him. See Democracy Now! Confronts Wesley Clark Over His Bombing Of Civilians .

StarsEarnStripes.org is asking NBC to stop treating war as a sport, and to air an in-depth segment showing the reality of civilian victims of recent U.S. wars, on any program, any time in the coming months. We've provided some resources to help NBC research and show the
David Swanson's books include "War Is A Lie." He blogs at davidswanson.org and warisacrime.org and works for the online activist organization rootsaction.org. He hosts Talk Nation Radio.
EXTRA!
This media analysis magazine was founded by FAIR, the anti-censorship, anti-monopoly national media watch group, which has offered criticism of media bias and censorship since 1986.  http://www.fair.org


The corporate media have shown a must greater concern over cutting military budget than over cutting domestic programs.

Charles P. Pierce, “The Cost of America's Secret Wars, Then and Now” *Esquire*, December 6, 2011, RSN

Pierce writes: "This is what secret wars are about. Secret wars are still wars. There will be atrocities. And, because this is the nature of all governments in all wars, these atrocities will be covered up and lied about. But the problem with secret wars is not that they are secret from the people on whom they are waged, or the people who simply live in the country where they are waged. As Doonesbury once memorably pointed out, the 'secret bombing' of Cambodia wasn't any secret to the Cambodians. But secret wars, waged by the Executive branch beyond the reach of congressional oversight, inevitably lead to a deep and abiding corruption in the government of this country."


"The Censored War and You"
Compares coverage of the Vietnam and Afghanistan wars

NEW YORK TIMES CHEERLEADING FOR IRAQ WAR II
Bill Keller Speaks Out on Judy Miller, Iraq War Coverage and Fox News” Joe Strupp, Media Matters for America

The report begins: "New York Times Executive Editor Bill Keller says one of his biggest mistakes as editor was not addressing the paper's misleading pre-Iraq War coverage sooner, including the reporting of former Times writer Judy Miller."


Military correspondent Martha Raddatz justified US drone strikes killing civilians as necessitated by combat.

“Public TV's Libya Limits: Narrow war debate on PBS NewsHour” 3/29/11

If public television's mission is to bring diverse viewpoints to the airwaves, the discussions about the war in Libya on the PBS NewsHour haven't lived up to that standard. Over the past two weeks, the NewsHour has featured an array of current and former military and government officials in its discussion segments--leaving little room for antiwar voices, U.S. foreign policy critics and legal experts.

-On March 18, the NewsHour interviewed the Obama administration's UN Ambassador Susan Rice.

-On March 22, the NewsHour brought on Charles Kupchan, a former Clinton administration National Security Council staffer, along with a couple of rare guests without U.S. government or military backgrounds: Daniel Dombey of the Financial Times and former Libyan Ambassador Ali Suleiman Aujali, who broke with the Gadhafi regime and is aligned with the opposition.

-On March 23 the NewsHour was back to the officials-only format, interviewing a pair of former senators, Democrat Gary Hart and Republican Norm Coleman, both of whom support the White House action in Libya, and Deputy National Security Adviser Denis McDonough.

-On March 24, the NewsHour interviewed retired Army Gen. Jack Keane and Frederic Wehrey, a former Air Force officer and Iraq War vet now at the Rand Corporation, both of whom supported sending some U.S. ground troops to Libya. Viewers weren't told that Keane’s consulting firm, Keane Associates, includes major military companies among its clients (USA Today, 3/10/10), or that Keane is also on the board of General Dynamics, a major military contractor.


There are many aspects of the Libya War that should be discussed on public television, featuring the views of those outside of elite Beltway circles. The 1967 Carnegie Commission report that gave birth to PBS envisioned it as a "forum for debate and controversy" that would "provide a voice for groups in the community that may be otherwise unheard." The NewsHour should include those principles in its decisions about whom to include in its coverage of Libya.

ACTION:
Tell the NewsHour to open up its Libya discussions to voices outside the Beltway, including antiwar voices, U.S. foreign policy critics and legal experts.

CONTACT:

PBS NewsHour  onlineda@newshour.org
(703) 998-2138  You might also want to send your comments to PBS ombud Michael Getler (ombudsman@pbs.org), and post copies of your comments on the FAIR Blog.

CENSORING THE BIBLE: Jenkins, *Laying Down the Sword*


Allitt writes: "Is it true that the Bible teaches peace and the Koran war? Only if you approach the books selectively, taking the gentlest of Jesus' teachings and setting them against the harshest of Muhammad's. Philip Jenkins's challenging new book *'Laying Down the Sword'* shows that the Bible contains incitements not just to violence but also to genocide."


CONTROL OF INFORMATION USA:  Two Annotated Bibliographies

Dick Bennett (James R.), *Control of Information in the United States* (Meckler 1987, 2,943 entries) and *Control of the Media in the United States* (Garland 1992, 4,479 entries).