

Amy Goodman: It's an honor to be here, and to be on this panel.

The Department of Commerce has tracked media ownership up until about 2000. They found that 3.8 percent of full power broadcast stations were owned by people of color, and then they stopped counting. But there are others that continue to count, like the National Association of Hispanic Journalists that puts out a report every year called Brown Out . I host a program called Democracy Now which is a daily grass roots, global, unembedded, independent, international news hour.

(Applause.)

Amy Goodman: Co-host on that broadcast is Juan Gonzales, and he's the past president of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, and he recently testified at a Town Hall, an FCC Town Hall in New York and said that, as the NHJ tracks it, minority ownership has decreased from that 3.8 percent ownership in 2000. So, while you have the minority population in this country increasing -- by 2050 it'll be the majority of people in this country -- you have a picture of a small group of giant firms run almost exclusively by white investors and managers controlling the production and distribution of news and information to a largely non-white population that's to quote Juan Gonzales.

He goes on to say that, in the Brown Out reports what they have found -- since they're continuing to count while the Commerce Department is not -- is that there is a clear connection between minority ownership and more diversity in content and staffing and news.

Now, I want to go a little broader picture right now and talk about war. Now when there is a war abroad -- as there is right now, in Iraq and other places -- there is a corollary war at home, because you're talking about the draining of resources, of course, the trillions -- astoundingly enough -- that are going into this war that are not going to be spent at home on the critical issues of education and health care, et cetera.

But, I think it's very interesting how the media has cheer led for war over these years. Icing out voices of dissent. And the fact that, of every population in this country -- African-Americans have the highest proportion, from the beginning, overwhelmingly opposed to war. But when you ice out the voices of dissent, you ice out that large population, or are icing out the African-American voices means you're not going to get that dissent very much in the media.

A few weeks ago, I drove to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, took a little trip on a Sunday morning, to visit the area where Frederick Douglas was born and was enslaved. He was born on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, enslaved as a child and a teenager.

He was handed over to a man named Edward Covey, who was known as a slave breaker -- the troublesome slaves were given to him to break. Edward Covey's property was called Mount Misery . Frederick Douglas fought back, he broke away, he headed North and he changed the world.

That property today, Mount Misery, is owned by Donald Rumsfeld. It's his vacation home. He bought it in 2003, to be near his close friend, Vice-President, Dick Cheney.

So, I went to visit and when I asked how to get to Donald Rumsfeld's home they pointed me, you go this way and then a right and a left and when I came near I made a

right turn on Mount Misery road, and I made my way to the end and there was a little stake in the ground where the Secret Service was and the American flag was, a little gold stake as you go onto his property that said Mount Misery.

I then went over to the local black church -- it was about 10 in the morning, 11 o'clock was Mass, and I talked to some of the older parishioners, they were having a kind of Sunday school in church before Mass. And asked them how they felt about this juxtaposition -- they were the descendants of slaves -- and how they felt about their neighbors Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney -- and one older woman said, I really can't describe my feelings right now, because we're in church.

(Laughter.)

Amy Goodman: But I think these voices need to be heard. It's absolutely critical we have a media that is a sanctuary of dissent. It is essential to the functioning of a democratic society.

My brother David and I have written our second book, it's called Static. And we call it Static, because in this high-tech digital age with high-definition television and digital radio, all we get is evermore static. That veil of distortion and lies and misrepresentations and half-truths that obscure reality instead of the media giving us the dictionary definition of static. And that is criticism, opposition, unwanted interference. We need a media that covers power, not covers for power. We need a media that is the Fourth Estate, not for the state. We need a media that covers the movements that create static and make history.

I want to go to that last issue. Of a media that also focuses on the individual and ices out movements, delegitimizes movements, and yet they are the mechanisms of social change. How is a young person to learn how history is made if they don't understand the movements that people come out of?

I want to go back just this past year, we lost a great Civil Rights, human rights pioneer, Rosa Parks. Now she is certainly someone the media has covered and told her story -- as they should. Democracy Now, we're based in New York and we headed down - - the first African-American woman to lay in state in the rotunda and then the memorial at the church here in Washington, remarkable, thousands came inside and outside the church -- more interesting to be on the outside, there the little girls drag their mothers, they were there to witness history. I talked to a young woman who said she e-mailed her professors that day to say, I won't be in class, I'm going to get an education. And she just stood outside that church and listened to the loudspeakers of the people remembering Rosa Parks. And I talked to older women who themselves had sat down on buses in the South and the North.

Well, Rosa Parks is an interesting case in point, because the media told us, Yes, December 1st, 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, this brave woman sat down on the bus and when a white bus driver told her to stand up for a white passenger she refused. She was a tired seamstress, the media told us. She was no troublemaker.

That's where they got it wrong. She was a first class troublemaker. She was the secretary of the local NAACP, her -- the President was Edie Nixon, he came out of radical labor politics, and together they were working together to challenge racial injustice in the South. She had trained at the Highlander Center -- she was a proud activist. That doesn't

de-legitimize you, that adds to your reputation that you were willing to devote your life to making the world a better place.

And so she did a very brave thing. And to show how brave it was, a few months before, in the summer of 1955, that was the summer of Emmett Till, the 14-year old boy, his mother sent him down to Chicago to Money, Mississippi to get out of the city, to be with his family. And he's lynched, he's killed, it's not even clear exactly what happened, but he ended up at the bottom of the river. Even today, 50 years later, the Justice Department has re-opened an investigation into his case.

But when his body was sent back to Chicago, his mother, Mamie Till, engaged in a defiant act. She said she wanted his casket opened for the world to see the ravages of racism. The brutality of bigotry. And so thousands streamed by that grave, that coffin, and they saw. And then Jet Magazine, another black publication, published the photos, and they were seared into the memory and history of this country. Mamie Till, Mamie Till-Mobley had something very important to teach the press of today -- show the pictures. Show the images. Go to where the silence is -- that's our job in the media. Whether it's showing poverty at home, or whether it's showing casualties abroad -- that's our job. And expressing the voices of people at the target end of U.S. foreign policy, not just those who are making it here in Washington.

How tired people are right now, across the political spectrum of all of these networks just bringing us that small circle of pundits who know so little about so much, explaining the world to us and getting it so wrong. We've got to open up -- we've got to demand of the corporate media -- it's not just us at Pacifica and NPR and PBS and the low-power FM stations that are using the public airwaves -- the corporate networks are, too. ABC, NBC, CBS #NAME? spectrum of opinion, or have their licenses revoked. It matters. Because we're talking about issues of life and death. Having a closed media is a disservice to a democratic society and to the service men and women of this country, so often coming from poorer classes and people of color sent abroad to fight. It matters if we have the discussions that they can't have on military bases.

I just want to end on one last point. And that is the issue of racial profiling. If you don't have a media where people inside the media are sensitive to that in their own lives and knowing people in their own communities, you're not going to have it fairly, and it is a story of what is going on in this country, and we have to fight back.

I just did a story, at Democracy Now we did a story of the six Imams who were in Minneapolis for a National Imam Conference to talk about how to reach out to the non-Muslim community, and how to be more broad-minded Imams, they had their conference at the Mall of America. They then headed home across the country, and the President of the National Imam Federation and five other Imams were headed back to Phoenix, and they were stopped at the airport, because three of them had prayed before they went on the flight.

It was sunset, they knew all six shouldn't get down and pray, it might frighten people, so they decided only half of them would. Then they got on the plane and it turned out that when they sat one, three and two in the plane, just given their random seating by the airline, U.S. Airways, somehow that registered with some people on the flight as a terrorist pattern, and they were taken off in handcuffs.

And as end with one more profiling story, the story of Raed Jarrar, it's a lesson to all of us. Young Iraqi blogger and architect who lives here in Washington who was getting on a plane -- JFK -- home to Oakland when he lived in California. He thought he was getting on the flight, except he was stopped by two Jet Blue and TSA Officials and they told him he couldn't get on the plane with the t-shirt he had on. It was a black t-shirt with white letters and it said We will not be silent . And he said, What's wrong with my t-shirt? They said, It's threatening. He said, What's threatening about 'We will not be silent'? They said, It's not the English, it's the Arabic script above it. And he said, That's just Arabic for 'We will not be silent'. And they said, We can't know that, we don't have a translator here.

He tried to argue, say he was a taxpayer here, he had certain rights. Ultimately -- well, TSA told us it was the Jet Blue employee who went to get him another t-shirt to put on, I don't know if it said New York or I love New York , but he had to put it on and then they brought him onto the plane before all the other passengers, he usually sits in the front, that's where he'd reserved his seat, but they walked him to the back of the bus -- I mean plane -- and then the other passengers got on, that's how he flew home to Oakland. We ran with that story. And the next day some women came into our studio -- all wearing the t-shirt -- they were in a rush, I asked them where they were going, they said, The airport. And I said, Why are you going there? Where are you headed? And they said, It doesn't matter, we're just getting on planes.

And then NBC and ABC picked up the story -- BBC, the international press did, too, but that's not a big deal. It's a big deal, though, when the National networks pick up a story like this. We live in a globalized world, yet it is so difficult -- we live in this country, we are so isolated when it comes to information -- so for the National networks to pick it up was a big deal.

They stole our story, they didn't credit us, let's just say, but that's okay, at Democracy Now our motto is, Steal the story, please. We call it trickle up journalism.

So, the story got very big, and when these women came back they were distributing these t-shirts, in fact they'd given it to Raed on the anniversary of the invasion, the third anniversary -- it's amazing to think we've been in Iraq longer than the, longer than the U.S. was involved with World War II. But they came on the show, one of the women, and they told this story and this is where I'll end. They're making thousands, I think they've sold, at this point -- I saw some of them last night -- ten thousand t-shirts. And they're translating them into every language. Into Arabic and Farsi and Hebrew and Spanish and French, and now the original German. Why German? It goes back to World War II, the White Rose Collective. A brother and sister named Hans and Sophie Scholl who, in the time of the Nazi atrocity thought, What can we do to challenge it? They weren't Jewish, they were German Christians. They thought, Well, we could give out information. And that way Germans would never be able to say We didn't know. And so they distributed a series of pamphlets, six in all. The fourth said at the bottom, We will not be silent.

Well, Hans and Sophie Scholl, and other members of the White Rose Collective, professors and students, were arrested, they were charged by the Nazis, tried, convicted and beheaded. But that philosophy, that motto should be the Hippocratic oath of the media today. We will not be silent. Democracy Now.