



**February 15, 2008**

**BILL MOYERS:** You'll remember that last week we previewed director Alex Gibney's documentary TAXI TO THE DARK SIDE; a film about our government's use of torture in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Guantanamo. Gibney exposed how responsibility reached all the way up the chain of command in Washington. The film has been nominated for an Academy Award as Best Documentary, and was acquired for broadcast by the Discovery Channel.

But Discovery now says it won't be shown after all. "Too controversial," says the network. Gibney shook his head and said Discovery is perpetuating what has become the policy of this government: "it's ok to employ torture, just not show it." Well said. Better call FRONTLINE, Alex.

Also last week, we reviewed your picks for the one book that should be required reading for our next President. Some of you have written to protest that we did not mention on air the book DEBUNKING 9/11 DEBUNKING by David Ray Griffin. As I said last week, we didn't include it on air because the responses had all the signs of an orchestrated campaign. You can go online and you will see some people don't believe me. Now just take a look at these messages we found at just one blog site:

**MALE VOICE:** Let's please all choose the same book to give it an extremely high rating.

**MALE VOICE:** Let's use: DEBUNKING 9/11 DEBUNKING by David Ray Griffin.

**BILL MOYERS:** And so some of you did. I wouldn't call it a conspiracy, but I wouldn't call it fair, either.

Let's talk now about money. Big money. After President Bush announced his 2009 budget last week —my first thought was: where is Groucho Marx when we really need him?

**FINANCE MINISTER:** Here is the Treasury Department's report, sir. I hope you'll find it clear.

**GROUCHO MARX:** Clear? Huh. Why, a four-year-old child could understand this report...Run out and find me a four-year-old child—I can't make head or tail of it.

**BILL MOYERS:** We could use that four-year-old prodigy right now. President Bush's new budget adds up to more than three trillion dollars with a deficit of \$400 billion dollars — that's the amount to be spent over what the government takes in. And this week the President signed a stimulus package authorizing the Treasury to take \$168 billion dollars more from future generations so we can spend it now. All this borrowing and spending will swell the total debt of the government to \$9 trillion dollars. So where does all the money go?

For some answers we turn to this smart, hip, and very readable book. One would hope that every candidate for office, and every voter, might read it before the November elections. You'll understand why once you have heard Scott Bittle and Jean Johnson of the non-partisan, non-profit research group, public agenda.org.

Scott and Jean welcome. Why did you write this book?

**SCOTT BITTLE:** We wrote this book because the federal budget and the country is

heading toward a fiscal crisis. And everybody knows it except the American people. And they deserve to know.

**JEAN JOHNSON:** You know, one of the things I think most people don't realize is that the country has been in the red 31 out of the last 35 years. In good times and bad. And so, you know--

**BILL MOYERS:** In the red, meaning we spend--

**JEAN JOHNSON:** We have a deficit.

**BILL MOYERS:** We spend more money than we take in 31 out of 30--

**JEAN JOHNSON:** 31 of the last 35 years.

**BILL MOYERS:** I mean, does being drunk get normal?

**JEAN JOHNSON:** It is routine. I think they have gotten in the habit in Washington, rather than making the tough choices, to just push the money along. And the thing that really amazes me is we are a wealthy country. Why are we routinely in debt?

**BILL MOYERS:** You call it a crisis.

**SCOTT BITTLE:** Well, it is a crisis. Eventually, if nothing is done, by 2040, every dollar the federal government has will be taken up by Social Security, Medicare and interest on the money we've already borrowed. Between where you and I work in New York, there's this debt clock, put up almost 20 years ago by a gentleman who used his own money, because he was so concerned--

**JEAN JOHNSON:** Exactly.

**BILL MOYERS:** --about the mounting debt. But I'm told that it's going to be running out of room to record the debt, right?

**JEAN JOHNSON:** Well, we're over nine trillion now. And when it trips over to ten trillion, there's no place to put the one, unless they take off the dollar sign, and just let us know that it's money, which we probably all know that it's money. But they didn't, he didn't anticipate that it was going to go to ten trillion dollars.

**BILL MOYERS:** So who's to blame, Scott? Is it the politicians who make the promises, or is it those of us who like the benefits?

**SCOTT BITTLE:** I'm fond of the political philosophy of Homer Simpson, who said once that it takes two to lie: one to lie and one to listen. The American people have been the ones who've been listening. They see politicians who promise them tax cuts and don't talk about how to pay for it. They know that's not true. It's just they don't add those things together and stand up and say, "What are you saying?" One of the analogies we used in the book is to the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*. And the parallel that struck us as we were writing the book, is we had a lot of people tell us this is so far down the road; how can this possibly matter? And it's similar to the movie in that, well, how can one person's life make such a difference? The bottom line is if we don't deal with this, we could end up living in an America that's colder, harsher, darker, less prosperous. And it's all completely avoidable.

**BILL MOYERS:** Well help us understand that. My youngest granddaughter will be 36 by 2040. How is this going to affect her? I'll be dead. It won't affect me. How will it affect her?

**JEAN JOHNSON:** Well, taxes could be higher because they're going to be paying for a huge 78 million baby boomers who need retirement benefits and health care. There are going to be less services, like college loans won't be available. Some of the examples we use in the *IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE* scenario is the mother. She collects Social Security and

she has a little nest egg in the stock market. Well, they've had to cut her Social Security benefits. And her nest egg in the stock market has tumbled. So it really could just spread through all sorts of our lives, in the things we depend on government in the taxes we pay, and in the state of the economy, which could be very bleak.

**SCOTT BITTLE:** I don't think anyone realistically wants to get rid of Social Security and Medicare. Maybe a few. Nobody--

**BILL MOYERS:** You'll hear the argument. As you say in the book, people come up and say, "But look those people have been promised. We've been promised these benefits. You can't take them away."

**SCOTT BITTLE:** No, but you can't go bankrupt fulfilling them, either.

**JEAN JOHNSON:** It's an interesting issue, because Social Security, there are lots of ways to adjust it that probably, if the American people start to think about it, are broadly acceptable. And if we start now, if we don't postpone. And if you're going to raise revenues a little bit, you want to do it while all the baby boomers are working, so we can pay into it. If you're going to adjust benefits, you want to do it so we have time to plan, so it's not sudden. And if you can make these modest adjustments and we start now, we have time to make a system so it's stable, and really meets the expectations of most people.

**BILL MOYERS:** I enjoyed reading your 14 suggestions in here for dealing with Medicare and Social Security. But you're not running for office. You're not out there saying to people, "We're going to take care of these benefits."

**SCOTT BITTLE:** That's why the politicians who are running for office and who will have to make these decisions have to start having a conversation with the American people. They've got to put these on the table. And they've got to make it clear to people. The fact is that the Americans are not going to let the political system change their health insurance and change their retirement benefits without their consent. They have to be part of this conversation. But first, you've got to be honest with them.

**BILL MOYERS:** You say 2010 is the high noon of the budget crisis. Why is that?

**JEAN JOHNSON:** Come 2010, when most of the Bush tax cuts are scheduled to expire, the country has to talk about this. And if we could talk about it, about how much we want to pay in taxes. We're really digging ourselves in the hole. But if we have this discussion, talking about what we pay, what we're going to spend, and what's going to happen for the long term, I think that could be a turning point. And it's the opportunity to get these issues on the table.

**SCOTT BITTLE:** It's an ideal point to sit down and say, "What do we really want? What can we really afford?" If we continue to not deal with the realities, and the fact is, right now, one of the few areas of bipartisanship in Washington is the willingness not to deal with the problem.

**BILL MOYERS:** Exactly, exactly.

**SCOTT BITTLE:** If we fail to really sit down and have a national conversation and make real decisions in 2010, it's hard to see when that moment will come again. Because it will still be early enough to deal with these long term problems.

**BILL MOYERS:** The train wreck comes, you say, on Social Security, in 2017. That's when the government begins to pay out more--

**JEAN JOHNSON:** Yes.

**BILL MOYERS:** --than it's taking in on Social Security?

**JEAN JOHNSON:** Yeah.

**SCOTT BITTLE:** That's the beginning of the train wreck. That's when things--

**JEAN JOHNSON:** Exactly,

**BILL MOYERS:** slow motion trainwreck? **JOHNSON:** There are the money questions. And we think people need to know more about where the money is spent and where it's going. And they need to be more realistic. But the political side of it, I think is really quite simple. There is no way to solve this problem without either raising taxes or cutting programs, or doing some of both. Right now, that is a political death sentence. And we have to change that. We have to change it so politicians are just as worried about what folks at home say if they add to the deficit. If they go along another year in the red ink. We have to start making politicians worry about those decisions.

**BILL MOYERS:** What do you think happens collectively? I mean, individuals do the right thing. But as a society, we're breaking the bank. Can democracy deal with these kinds of very difficult choices?

**SCOTT BITTLE:** Absolutely. I'm totally convinced that the American people can deal with this.

**BILL MOYERS:** You're an optimist?

**SCOTT BITTLE:** Yes.

**BILL MOYERS:** Why are your fingers crossed?

**SCOTT BITTLE:** I'm an optimist, and I have evidence. Which is, Public Agenda has done focus groups on this issue of the national budget. And it's certainly true that when you bring people together to talk about the problems facing the country, this is not the first one on their list. But it's also true that as soon as you explain a few of the facts to them, they get it. And they understand that everybody's going to have to sacrifice a little. They understand compromise. And they're willing to deal with it.

**JEAN JOHNSON:** I see a country that is hungry for change. I see a country that knows that in many different ways, we've become prisoners of short term thinking. They know that we have to make these decisions about what's going to happen with Social Security and Medicare and the debt. And I guess we are optimists. But I just don't believe that the country is going to let itself get into this kind of trouble. We may procrastinate. That's what I'd like to stop.

**SCOTT BITTLE:** And we did this quite recently. We balanced the budget in the late '90s. And that was a classic example of bipartisanship. It came about because the first President Bush and a Democratic Congress agreed to raise taxes to address the problem. And that President Clinton and a Republican Congress agreed to control spending to maintain targets for reducing the deficit. And we had, fortunately, a prosperous economy. That kind of bipartisanship has happened in the past. We're in a bad place now, but I think we need to get past it.

**BILL MOYERS:** As you talk about doing something about Social Security and Medicare, I can hear some of our liberal friends saying, "But, you know, there they go again. That's the conservative approach. And then they're going to take it out of Social Security and Medicare. And there are ways to solve Social Security and Medicare so we don't have to do what they're saying."

**SCOTT BITTLE:** It's true. There are those who say any talk of Social Security is a stalking horse for privatization. And others on the other side who say any talk of reforming Medicare is a stalking horse for universal coverage, which they may not want. We've got to get past these kinds of hidden agenda concerns. We've got to look at the numbers. The numbers are not lying. And every organization that looks at this, liberal, conservative, in or out of government, it doesn't matter. They agree on the problem. They all know it's there.

**JEAN JOHNSON:** And I think one of the things we try to point out in the book is-- for the

people who do support Social Security and who do believe that Medicare is an important benefit that's really helped Americans' lives, we need to make these programs sustainable. Not addressing them, the choices of leaving them alone and pretending they're untouchable, that will really do them in over time.

**BILL MOYERS:** What about the military budget? The president proposes \$515.4 billion for next year. But that does not include the money for Iraq and Afghanistan. What are the practical consequences of not including the expenditures for Iraq and Afghanistan in the budget?

**SCOTT BITTLE:** Well there are two practical consequences. One is, nobody really knows how much we're spending, at least not until the end of the year, and we look back and say how much we've spent. The other is it obscures the real impact of the war on terror on the budget. We found lots of people basically think that once we get out of Iraq, the budget problem will go away. And unfortunately, that's just not true. Between 2001 and 2007, we spent about \$600 billion on the entire war on terrorism: Iraq, Afghanistan, everything else. Over that same period, we added 2.3 trillion to the debt. So the war is certainly making our financial problems worse. But it's not the sole cause, and it's not the sole answer. Is this the Ross Perot of 2008?

**BILL MOYERS:** True or false: Roll back Bush tax cuts, solve all the problems.

**JEAN JOHNSON:** It will not solve all the problems, unfortunately. I think, like the war, it's a lot of money. But we are routinely overspending. And even if we rolled back all of those tax cuts, which not even the Democrats are proposing. Some of those tax cuts are for families and for married people. We still would face a major, major problem balancing the budget. And we have to remember, balancing the budget is not enough. We also have to look at Social Security and Medicare and make some decisions about them.

**BILL MOYERS:** Yeah. You make it very clear in here that we have to both cut spending and we're also going to have to raise some taxes. I mean, that's what people don't like to hear, right? I mean, this is tough medicine.

**JEAN JOHNSON:** You know, you could do it theoretically, only by raising taxes. But it would be very, very difficult.

**BILL MOYERS:** Politically, you can't do that.

**JEAN JOHNSON:** And one of the things we try to say to people in the book there's a little worksheet, where you can figure out exactly how you would balance the budget. But we tell people, don't get too attached. Because probably nobody is going to get their own way on this. We're all going to have to give a little, and we're all going to have to kind of live with some things that are not our first choice. But not doing anything is so much worse.

**BILL MOYERS:** The only person I read and hear talking about this in any consistent way is the present mayor of New York, Bloomberg. He just this morning has a speech in the paper about we have to address this issue; the two parties are not doing it. Is

**JEAN JOHNSON:** There are some people that are addressing this. There are groups that are addressing this. And we actually are meeting more of them day by day. So, you know, we are optimistic. But there are, it takes two to tango. And the American public really has to start being realistic. They have to give the political leaders a little room to maneuver. And I think they have to demand that they be more honest and responsible. And it's time to talk turkey about this.

**BILL MOYERS:** You dedicate your book to Lawford W. Bittle, Jr. and John Jay Johnson. Who are they?

**SCOTT BITTLE:** Our fathers.

**JEAN JOHNSON:** Our dads, yeah.

**BILL MOYERS:** And why did you dedicate this to them?

**SCOTT BITTLE:** Because neither of them would have left debts for us to pay.

**BILL MOYERS:** Jean Johnson and Scott Biddle, thank you very much for WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?, YOUR GUIDED TOUR TO THE FEDERAL BUDGET CRISIS. And thank you for joining me today.

**JEAN JOHNSON:** Thank you.

**SCOTT BITTLE:** Thank you.

**BILL MOYERS:** It's not only the reality of our finances we are running from. In her new book published just this week, one of America's most prolific and provocative free thinkers says we are in a headlong flight from reason. The book is the age of American unreason- and it couldn't be more timely. Here's an excerpt:

"It remains to be seen, as the current presidential campaign unfolds, whether Americans are willing to consider what the flight from reason has cost us as a people and whether any candidate has the will or the courage to talk about ignorance as a political issue affecting everything from scientific research to decisions about war and peace."

THE AGE OF AMERICAN UNREASON offers an unsparing description of what Susan Jacoby calls "an overarching crisis of memory and knowledge".

Susan Jacoby is the program director of the Center for Inquiry in New York. Her last book FREETHINKERS: A HISTORY OF AMERICAN SECULARISM was acclaimed as one of the notable books of 2004. Welcome back.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Oh, it's wonderful to be back.

**BILL MOYERS:** How is this flight from reason, as you describe it, affecting-- playing out in our current political race?

**SUSAN JACOBY:** In an age of unreason you tend to get focus on very small personal facts as opposed to big issues. But even more than that, lack of knowledge and unreason affects the way candidates speak about everything.

I mean, for example, obviously the healthcare situation in this country is very important. All of the candidates say it is. But if people don't know, for example, how is healthcare handled in other countries? How many people, for instance, do have the right to choose their own doctors in this country? In other words, without a base of knowledge of how things are you can't really have a reasonable talk about how things ought to be. In other words, you can say, "Oh, we don't want a program which will prevent people from choosing their own doctors." Well, are we able to choose our own doctors? I'm not. I have to choose within a managed care network.

**BILL MOYERS:** You have a powerful section in here on what's happened to our political language. How, for example, politicians so often talk these days not about people but ab-

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Folks.

**BILL MOYERS:** --folks-

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Folks.

**BILL MOYERS:** --about the folks. What's wrong that?

**SUSAN JACOBY:** What's wrong with it is folks used to be a colloquialism. It was the kind of thing that you'd talk about mostly in rural areas, mostly in the south and the Midwest.

People talked about folks. It was not considered suitable for public speech. If you used it in the classroom your teacher would, you know, would get after you, because it wasn't considered appropriate language.

But think about this though. Think about our political language in the past and today. Just think about The Gettysburg Address. We highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this government, of the folks, by the folks, and for the folks, shall not perish from the earth. This is patronizing. It's talking down to people. I read all of FDR's fireside chats where he-- I could not find a single reference to folks. You know why? Because the addressing people as folks is talking down to them. It's not dignifying them. When you call people citizens you're calling them to rise-- calling on them to rise above the lowest common denominator. You really need to think about what's being said when people are called folks. It's encouraging you not to do too much. And, you know, when I--

**BILL MOYERS:** Not to expect anything special.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Not to expect anything special. And people are terribly scared of saying, "We really need to expect more."

**BILL MOYERS:** You mentioned Franklin Roosevelt. You have a wonderful comparison in here.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** I want him back.

**BILL MOYERS:** You talk about how during World War Two when he would have a radio fireside chat he would ask the American people listening out there to get a map of the world and spread it out in front of them so that as he talked about the battles that were going on they would be with him in terms of the place, the geography, the strategy of what was going on. Can you imagine a president doing that today?

**SUSAN JACOBY:** No. No, I can't. I mean, Doris Kearns Goodwin, you know, talks about this extensively in her book, NO ORDINARY TIME. Maps sold out. You couldn't buy a map before Roosevelt's fireside chat in the February after Pearl Harbor because millions of Americans went out and bought maps. And they sat there by the radio and followed what he was talking about.

But I think, you know, one of the big mistakes today-- that's made today is it-- we're-- you talk about our political culture as if it were something separate, something different from our general culture. What I say in THE AGE OF AMERICAN UNREASON is, no, that's wrong. Our political culture is a reflection of our general culture. It is-- it is as much shaped by our general culture as it shapes our general culture. Now to return to FDR, which I'm really glad you asked about, it's been forgotten now in the mythology of World War II that even when the Nazis invaded Poland and attacked England, overwhelming majority of Americans were opposed to American involvement in--

**BILL MOYERS:** Right.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** --the war. The reason they came around is not just Pearl Harbor. Franklin D. Roosevelt spent several years trying to educate a resistant public about the stake that America had in the future of Europe. The renewal of the draft in 1941, six months before Pearl Harbor, in the summer of 1941, passed by one vote. Imagine what would have happened if the Army had been disbanded, if FDR had not made all those educational efforts, where we would have been six months later when Pearl Harbor was attacked. The role of the president-- everybody talks about who's equipped to be Commander in Chief, a word I hate, which presidents didn't used to use, from day one--

**BILL MOYERS:** And why do you hate it?

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Because the President's only the Commander in Chief of the Armed Force. He's not the commander in chief of us. And it's a word that presidents didn't use except in a strictly military sense in the past. What's far more important than being commander in chief is being educator in chief. And Franklin Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln

would not have succeeded as commanders in chief if they hadn't first succeeded as teachers in chief.

To be non-partisan about it, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush are two of the biggest failures as teachers in chief of any presidents we've ever had. Bush at foreign policy obviously. It's great to bring people along with you when everybody's in favor of the war as they were in 2003 'cause there was this desire to strike back at somebody, anyone, for 9/11. So Bush just said, "Oh, yeah. Saddam Hussein had something to do with 9/11." And people believed it. But--

**BILL MOYERS:** And Clinton? What about Clinton?

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Everything in my view that's being written about the failure of the Clinton healthcare program in relation to Hillary Clinton's candidacy is wrong. Yes, it's true. It's that failure is usually attributed to their failure to bring the insurance industry groups to the table, all of the interest groups in advance.

No. The reason that healthcare reform was dead on arrival was that the American people hadn't been educated and prepared for any kind of change. Bill Clinton just announced his plan which had been developed kind of secretly, without much public participation. The health insurance industry jumped in with its Harry and Louise commercials. Now I'll bet everybody who is listening to this tonight remembers Harry and Louise. And nobody remembers a detail of the Clinton plan, the healthcare plan. It is the job of the president to get his message out before Harry and Louise. Bill Clinton didn't do that.

**BILL MOYERS:** You helped me to see something else about the importance of language. You write about the difference it makes to talk about troop and troops instead of soldier and soldiers.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Very Orwellian. That's very Orwellian. Troops used to be a term reserved only as a collective noun. Like would say, "Allied troops have landed at Normandy." Troops meant a massive military operation. We never talked about a soldier who was killed in action as a troop. We don't lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Troop. We lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Now I think that kind of euphemistic language-- it's very important when you talk about troops it in a way takes the individuality away.

**BILL MOYERS:** It becomes an abstraction.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** It becomes an abstraction, right. Not a person, an individual soldier who is dying. And by the way, I offer a theory in this book about how this substitution happens. And it's not very Machiavellian at all. It's part of, again, part of how dumb our culture has become. I think some PR person, somehow decided that soldier could mean only a man. And they were looking for a noun that sounded more neutral. It's utterly stupid, of course. A soldier can be a man or a woman. But my guess is that some dopey PR person suggested this. And somebody in the army said, "Great." And the newspapers just went along.

**BILL MOYERS:** Yeah. But now it's used commonly.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Now it's used commonly.

**BILL MOYERS:** So what has happened that prompted this book?

**SUSAN JACOBY:** In a way it was an outgrowth of FREETHINKERS, a History of American Secularism. After FREETHINKERS was published I really welcomed the opportunity to go out and speak across the country. You know, to educate people about a secular tradition which has been kind of lost and downgraded and denigrated. And I soon found, very quickly, my audiences consisted almost entirely of people who already agreed with me. And conservatives report exactly the same experience.

**BILL MOYERS:** Yeah.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Now, this was not always the case in our country. In the 19th century Robert Ingersoll, whom we've talked, who is known as the great agnostic, had audiences full of people who didn't agree with him. But they wanted to hear what he had to say. And they wanted to see whether the devil really has horns. And now what we have is a situation in which people go to hear people they already agree with. What's going on is not so much education as reinforcement of the opinions you already have.

**BILL MOYERS:** Yeah, why is it we're so unwilling to give, as you say, a hearing to contradictory viewpoints? Or to imagine that we might learn something from someone who disagrees with us?

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Well, I think part of it is part of a larger thing that is making our culture dumber. We have, really, over the past 40 years, gotten shorter and shorter and shorter attention spans. One of the most important studies I've found, and I've put in this chapter, they call it Infantainment-- on this book. It's by the Kaiser Family Foundation. And they've found that children under six spend two hours a day watching television and video on average. But only 39 minutes a day being read to by their parents.

Well, you don't need a scientific study to know that if you're not read to by your parents, if most of your entertainment when you're in those very formative years is looking at a screen, you value what you do. And I don't see how people can learn to concentrate and read if they watch television when they're very young as opposed to having their parents read to them. The fact is when you're watching television, whether it's an infant or you or I, or staring glazedly at a video screen, you're not doing something else.

**BILL MOYERS:** What does it say to you, Susan, that half of American adults believe in ghosts? Now I take these from your book. One-third believe in astrology. Three quarters believe in angels. And four-fifths believe in miracles.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** I think even more important than the fact that large numbers of Americans believe in ghosts or angels, that is part of some religious beliefs. Is the flip side of this is that over half of Americans don't believe in evolution. And these things go together. Because what they do is they place science on a par almost with folk beliefs.

And I think-- if I may inveigh against myself, ourselves, I think the American media in particular has a lot to do with it. Because one of the things that really has gotten dumber about our culture the media constantly talks about truth as if it-- if it were always equidistant from two points. In other words, sometimes the truth is one-sided.

I mentioned this in THE AGE OF AMERICAN UNREASON that after the 9/11 terrorist attacks there was a huge cover story in TIME Magazine in 2002 about the rapture and end of the world scenarios. There wasn't a singular secular person quoted in it. They discussed the rapture scenario from the book of Revelation as though it was a perfectly reasonable thing for people to believe. On the one hand, these people don't believe it. On the other it's exactly like saying-- you know, "Two plus-- two plus two, so-and-so says, 'two plus two equals five.' But, of course, mathematicians say that it really equals four." The mathematicians are right. The people who say that two plus two equals five are wrong. The media blurs that constantly.

**BILL MOYERS:** You call that a kind of dumb objectivity.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Yes. Dumb objectivity. Exactly.

**BILL MOYERS:** What does it say to you that nearly two-thirds of Americans want creationism based on the book of Genesis to be taught in our public schools along with evolution? What does that say to you?

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Well, it's that evolution is just a theory, it's just another opinion. Just as some people believe that the account of the six days of creation in Genesis is literally true, some people believe we're descended from lower animals. In other words, it places belief on the same level as science subject to proof. I should say, however, that it may also mean that a lot of Americans aren't exactly sure what creationism means. Because, in fact,

the most recent Gallop poll shows that only 30 percent of Americans believe that every word of the Bible is literally true. In other words, many-- most Americans believe the Bible is divinely inspired. But you can believe the Bible is divinely inspired and still believe in evolution.

**BILL MOYERS:** Right.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** But you can't believe that the Bible is literally true and still believe in evolution. There's a wonderful book on religious literacy by Stephen Prothero -- you know, which sites a poll that half of Americans can't name Genesis as the first book of the Bible. Well, if you can't-- but this is part of the total dumbing down of our culture. The-- one of those books apparently that the 50 percent of Americans aren't reading is also the Bible or they would know that Genesis was the first book of the Bible. It's sort of like, you know, "I don't know what Genesis is, but I believe it."

**BILL MOYERS:** Doesn't this say-- also say something beyond religious belief about the level of science education in our public schools?

**SUSAN JACOBY:** I think it says everything about the level of education in our schools. When you have, look, one out of every five Americans still believes that the sun revolves around the earth. But you shouldn't have to be an intellectual or a college graduate to know that the sun doesn't revolve around the earth. There's been a huge failure of education.

I do agree with many cultural conservatives about this. I think that schools over the last 40 years-- instead of adding things that-- just adding things, for example. African-American history, women's history, these are all great additions, and necessary. But what they've done in addition to adding things is they really have placed less emphasis on the overall culture-- cultural things that everybody should know. People getting out of high school should know how many Supreme Court justices there are. Most Americans don't.

Well, now this feeds back into our current political process. You wonder why judges and what kind of judges people will appoint why more of the American public doesn't understand it. Well, if you don't know that there are nine judges then you don't know that George W. Bush's last two judicial appointments, Samuel Alito and John Roberts, have put us one vote away from having a Supreme Court which really believes that religion should have a much more active role in public life, that's likely to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. But you have to know there are nine justices before you know that we're up to a five out of nine sure votes--

**BILL MOYERS:** Yeah.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** --to know how really important the composition of the Supreme Court is in the next election. I think our schools are doing a bad job of teaching history and science.

**BILL MOYERS:** You claim that right-wing intellectuals are dangerous because they have command of the vocabulary that makes wishful thinking sound rational.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Uh, first of all, there are right-wing intellectuals. But one of the great successes of the intellectual right, is that they have succeeded brilliantly during the last 20 years at pinning the intellectual label solely on liberals so that a lot of people think that to be an intellectual means that you are a liberal alone. And one of the reasons that I think that right-wing intellectuals are so dangerous is they've been so clever at doing this. They've been much more clever than liberal intellectuals have been.

They've made it look like liberals are the only-- are the, quote, elites. And-- but they're just, you know, people-- people who get huge salaries from business-financed, right-wing foundations. They're not the elites? Of course, they're the elites. I don't have-- I object to their ideas. I don't object to them. But the liberal intellectual community is really caught asleep at the switch by these people. And one of the points I make in *THE AGE OF AMERICAN UNREASON*, which is why I think I'm going to get killed from both the right and the left is anti-rationalism in America is not the province of either the right or the left.

It's the province of both. For example, when you will talk to right-wing intellectuals about the Iraq war-- it doesn't matter that it hasn't worked out to them. They still think it was right. And the evidence of how it got started, how it got started on false pretenses and so on, it doesn't matter to them.

**BILL MOYERS:** That's making wishful thinking--

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Yeah. The--

**BILL MOYERS:** --rational.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** They make wishful thinking sound rational. It's the same thing now when we're hearing that the, quote, surge is working. Well, the surge is working as long as we have those troops there. But when anybody says to me in the right-wing intellectuals that the surge is working-- it's working. There are fewer people being killed in suicide bombings every day because we have a lot more young soldiers there in harm's way than there were six months ago. How many people were killed in suicide bombings in Baghdad before America entered the war? I believe the answer is none. So what they're doing is comparing, you know, apples and oranges. The left-- on the other hand-- to be intellectual is not necessarily to be rational. And there are many-- there are many anti-rational intellectuals.

**BILL MOYERS:** And you're pretty hard on some of them. You say they won't acknowledge the political sig-- talking about liberal intellectuals-- won't acknowledge the political significance of public ignorance. Quote, "Liberals have tended to define the Bush administration as the problem and the source of all that has gone wrong during the past eight years. And to see an outraged citizenry ready to throw the bums out as the solution." And what you say is that that's the cheap and wrong way out. Right?

**SUSAN JACOBY:** It's the cheap way out and the wrong way out for this reason. And we've heard it over and over in the primaries from candidates who supported the war and changed their minds. "We were lied to," they said. If we'd known then what we know now we wouldn't have done it. And they say to the public, "You were lied to." But the deeper conversation we need to be having is why were Americans so willing to be lied to, not only average citizens, but politicians. And certainly when you have legislators, many of whom didn't know the difference between a Sunni and a Shiite, and you have a geographic Roper poll that I quote in my new book-- they polled Americans between ages 18 and 25. Only 23 percent of college-educated young people could find Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and Israel, four countries of ultimate importance-

**BILL MOYERS:** Right.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** --to American policy on the map, a map, by the way, that h-- it had the letter-- country's lettered on it. So in other words, it wasn't a blank map. It meant they didn't really know where the Middle East was either. So 23 percent of the college-educated and only six percent of high school graduates. Well, I would say that if only 23 percent of people with some college can find those countries on a map that is nothing to be bragging about. And that has to have something to do with why as a country -- we have such shallow political discussions.

**BILL MOYERS:** You say left of center intellectuals have focused on the right-wing deceptions employed to sell the war in-

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Yeah.

**BILL MOYERS:** --Iraq rather than on the ignorance and erosion of historical memory. The ignorance and erosion of historical memory that makes serious deceptions possible and plausible. Talk about the power and importance of memory.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Memory. Well, first of all-- one of the things that we don't remember is what our Constitution actually says. One of the things we don't remember is right now, even as we sit here, the Bush administration is trying to claim that it has the right, without

Congressional approval, to make permanent agreements for military-- in our military involvement in Iraq. Constitution says these things need to be ratified by Congress as were the treaties that you and I grew up with, the NATO treaty, for example. It was ratified by Congress. If we don't know what our Constitution says about the separation of powers then it really-- it really certainly affects the way we decide all kinds of public issues.

**BILL MOYERS:** Remember George Orwell talked about memory being about important knowledge like that being flushed down the memory hole?

**SUSAN JACOBY:** The memory hole. The--

**BILL MOYERS:** Because when that happens then the people in power can rule without any reference to the past. Any standard, any remembrance.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** For example, what the right-wing says about judges is-- our unelected judges are overstepping their powers. They talk as if judges-- judges have no right to interpret the Constitution. But that is what the unelected federal judiciary exactly was set up to do. It says so in the Constitution. But if you don't know how could-- oh, we-- yeah, we don't-- be-- in other words, people confuse the fact that they may not like certain judicial decisions with the right of judges to interpret the Constitution, indeed the duty of judges under our Constitution to interpret the Constitution. Now it's used commonly.

**BILL MOYERS:** When you wonder, as you do in the book, if any candidate has the will or courage to talk about ignorance as a political issue I find it hard to imagine a politician going very far, getting very far by telling his or her constituents--

**SUSAN JACOBY:** They're dopes.

**BILL MOYERS:** Yeah. You're ignorant. By ignorant you mean lack of knowledge, unaware.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** Lack of knowledge, right.

**BILL MOYERS:** You don't mean stupid, which means--

**SUSAN JACOBY:** No.

**BILL MOYERS:** --unintelligent.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** No.

**BILL MOYERS:** Or dimwitted.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** No.

**BILL MOYERS:** But I can't imagine a politician succeeded by saying, "We're an ignorant culture and an ignorant people."

**SUSAN JACOBY:** No. But I can imagine a politician succeeding by saying, "We as a people have not lived up to our obligation to learn what we ought to learn to make informed decisions." I can imagine candidates saying, "And we in the Congress have been guilty of that too." Because it's not just the public that's ignorant. We get the government we deserve.

In other words, you wouldn't say to people, "You're a dope." You would say, "We have got to do better in-- about learning the things we need to know to make sound public policy." We can't learn the things we need to know from five-second sound bite commercials. We can't learn the things that we need to know from a quick hit on the Internet to see the latest person making a fool of himself on YouTube. We can only learn the things we need to know from talking to each other, from books. And we all need to do a lot more of that.

You know, what I don't see on the campaign trail-- if universal healthcare were one of my priorities as a candidate, first thing I'd be doing, I'd be having sessions all over the country with three groups of people, nurses, doctors, and patients. You don't need to know what the insurance industry thinks. Because you know what they think. They're going to oppose anything that they think will place any limits on medical spending and their ability to charge you higher health insurance premiums. But I'd be sitting down in unscripted sessions with people so that when-- if I was elected I could take that knowledge with me into the White House. So I could get my message across before Harry and Louise. That's what being an educator means.

And I think a candidate could say that to people. Not, "You're dopes." But, "We all need to know a lot more than we know." We've become satisfied with too little. We've become satisfied with the lowest common denominator. It is not good enough when 23 percent of our young people who have had some college, only 23 percent of them can find these countries on a map. We all need to be able to learn how to find these countries on a map.

**BILL MOYERS:** The book is THE AGE OF AMERICAN UNREASON, published by coincidence or providence on Darwin's birthday, right?

**SUSAN JACOBY:** 199th anniversary of Darwin's birth.

**BILL MOYERS:** Susan Jacoby, thank you for joining me on THE JOURNAL.

**SUSAN JACOBY:** It was my pleasure.

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**BILL MOYERS:** Earlier we talked about what is the highest military budget since World War II. But there is another cost to war that cannot be reckoned in dollars. I mean the shattered lives we don't know about — the scars we never see — what euphemistically we call "collateral damage."

This cost was brought home to me a few weeks ago at an exhibit here in New York of photographs of displaced Iraqis — refugees who have been uprooted by the invasion and occupation. There are over four million displaced Iraqis — almost two and a half million trying to survive inside the country, another two million who have fled to other countries. Many have gone next door, to Amman, Jordan.

The photojournalist Lori Grinker traveled to Amman to record their stories, and when I saw her photographs at the exhibit, I asked her to talk about them here on the JOURNAL. It's good to see you. I look at your photographs and I have a hard time imagining how I would cope with that sort of -- with that disruption, with the devastation, with the uncertainty, with the fact that everything known to me has been ripped away and there's nothing left.

**LORI GRINKER:** Yes. And yet they manage to laugh, and the kids manage to be kids and play. They don't have many hopes of going back to Iraq. And, you know, and they've lived through terrible atrocities. There isn't anybody that doesn't have a traumatic story.

**FATIN:** After the system fell apart in Iraq, we were left with nothing and life became very difficult. The militias started to make the difference between the different peoples of Iraq. We were surrounded by terrorists and violence.

**BILL MOYERS:** As Lori Grinker photographed and interviewed the refugees in Amman, she videotaped the stories of what had happened to them in Iraq and collaborated on a film called Life Interrupted. Be forewarned...the stories and images are as unsettling as the war that caused them.

**FATIN:** One day a group of militia came into the house. They beat my father, they beat my husband, they beat my brothers. One of my sisters, they stabbed her in the back and they cut her legs, then they took her into a room and shut the door. They raped her. They raped her in our family house with the door shut with the rest of my family in the other room. Rape is normal now. The militias think that they can just come and take any girl. We

don't have anyone to complain to.

**LORI GRINKER:** This is Fatin and three of her four children, and her husband. They all live in, you know, very cramped quarters. This is the kitchen. This is – it's pretty typical of how a lot of families eat. You know, on the floor, they spread out newspapers. Her husband Sameer did the cooking. So it was eggs mixed with tomatoes and bread and that was their main meal. You know, one thing is, they might not have any furniture -- some actually didn't have furniture in their homes and they always have a T.V. So that's their connection to the outside world. And T.V. really is a way to pass the time. Even the adults, some of them, stay up all night, watching the news or watching old movies and it's really a way for them to get through this. And some of these people have been there for two or three years.

**BILL MOYERS:** What happens when you live that long in limbo?

**LORI GRINKER:** Very quickly a few weeks turns into a few months and into a few years.

**FURMAN:** My life is in danger. My life is in danger because I work with U.S. forces.

**BILL MOYERS:** Furman worked for the Americans as a translator. Like a lot of Iraqis who cooperated with U.S. forces, he now has no means of support and no place to go.

**LORI GRINKER:** He's "Turkman." From what I understand, it's Iraqi Turkish. And that's why he was so helpful to the Americans because he speaks so many languages. That's in Amman in his apartment. He had been living in-- I mean he's a very long story. But--

**BILL MOYERS:** And he can never go back to his home.

**LORI GRINKER:** His family is afraid that if he's around they'll have trouble.

**BILL MOYERS:** A man without a country for now. Right?

**LORI GRINKER:** Yes.

**FURMAN:** There is a lot of Iraqi translators that work with me in that time, they get killed. They get killed, they ask, they ask to help, they ask to help. No one helped them. If they catch me, I swear of the God, I am not safe, even here.

**LORI GRINKER:** You know, some of these people, especially those who worked with the Americans, welcomed the Americans with opened arms. They came to their neighborhood, and they would come over for lunch. And, you know, give candy to the children. And then, suddenly, it was the children throwing rocks. And it -- you know, it suddenly changed. And it's like one day, you know, they were supporting the Americans, and the next day everybody turned against them and the Americans.

**BILL MOYERS:** This is Fadi, one of three brothers who helped the Americans.

**FADI:** My family helped the U.S. troops when the first phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom. After one year from our work my middle brother he gets shot in his face so we went to the hospital and I find my brother's face like a big ball -- red ball -- and I didn't know him. The hospital in Baghdad is very very bad. My brother Jamal, he get killed -- three cars come up with twelve people armed -- come to him and try to kidnap him but when he resists, they just give him a shot. And his family they were in the same restaurant. So after that, you know, I know I will be the next.

**LORI GRINKER:** That was the afternoon prayer. See -- Iraq and Amman are an hour different from each other. So some of the Muslims follow the Call to Prayer from Iraqi T.V. Some of their lives have changed since I photographed this. Fadi, he's in Australia now he was turned down for the United States and he got accepted into Australia.

**BILL MOYERS:** Why was he turned down, do you know?

**LORI GRINKER:** He doesn't know. I mean, he was a translator, he should have been accepted.

**BILL MOYERS:** Why was his brother shot? He'd left the service of the United States. He was running a restaurant.

**LORI GRINKER:** I don't think that matters. And that's why a lot of them say they can never go back. It doesn't matter if you're no longer working with the U.S. You did and you're a traitor and you sided with the enemy.

**BILL MOYERS:** ...These women on the bus. That photograph was at the exhibit.

**LORI GRINKER:** It's very subtle. You don't notice right away that these are wounded people. This is actually. These are women in their 40's who, one had just been married. And they were hit by snipers in their car.

**BILL MOYERS:** And here they're on their way --

**LORI GRINKER:** They arrived in the military airport in Amman, and then Doctors without Borders has a van that brings them into downtown Amman.

**BILL MOYERS:** On the invitation to your exhibit was this photograph. Tell me about that.

**LORI GRINKER:** This is a 16-year old who was walking down the street a few years ago in Baghdad, and a petrol truck was bombed. And so he was all burned up. His father's taken him to Cairo for surgeries. To he was taken to Iran, but was unable to be treated there because he has a Sunni name. And then found their way to Doctors without Borders in Amman, and is being treated there now. Some are there for a year having these reconstructive surgeries. And you know, I think there's a picture where he's filming me. He's just standing in the hallway where Doctors without Borders have their patients in-between surgeries -- So he's just following me around with this little video camera. Like just a typical teen-ager. He wants to e-mail with me, although he doesn't speak English.

**BILL MOYERS:** Tell me about Zena.

**LORI GRINKER:** She was the sole survivor of an internet cafe bombing. She was emailing with a relative overseas. And she had just signed off. And she said, and people were flying. So the place exploded.

**BILL MOYERS:** Where was this?

**LORI GRINKER:** In Baghdad.

**BILL MOYERS:** She was the sole survivor?

**LORI GRINKER:** Yes.

**ZENA:** I go to the cafe, internet cafe, there was a bombing in the building. I have, six operations, in my two hands, and face, and legs. And I am crying because I never see my friends. And I want to be home.

**BILL MOYERS:** Among the many who fled to Jordan to escape the violence in Iraq, Lori Grinker was especially drawn to a woman named Zahar.

**LORI GRINKER:** She was kidnapped. And her family had to find a ransom. And you know, some people come up with the ransoms and they still don't get their family members back. Just about everybody I've met has had somebody in their family kidnapped, or two members. And they ask for \$10,000 normally or \$5,000. It's very common.

**ZAHAR:** That day they killed our dog. When my mother jumped up and they hit her in the face. My brother, when he saw them beating my mother, couldn't bear it, and he jumped up too and leapt on them. They stabbed him. They stabbed him all over his body. They stabbed him in his arms, and in his chest, and in his back. When my mother saw them beating and stabbing her son, she couldn't bear it either and she jumped up again. They stabbed her in the heart.

**BILL MOYERS:** It's hard to understand what it is to be orphaned by history. You know, to just be rolled over.

**LORI GRINKER:** It's-- you know, they're followed by the war now, and will be forever. And that's what I want to document. You know the war doesn't leave them. For them, they're living it. And they're living it all the time. And these people will be living it forever. These people's stories can tell us the story of the Iraq war. To see individuals, kids and teenagers and, you know, families without any idea of what's going to happen in the future, and that it's all related to this war, I hope that will teach the story of this war. It's a very long road for them.

**BILL MOYERS:** Lori Grinker is still following the people you saw in those photographs. And by the way, Fadi's brother Samir, who was shot in the face, is one of the few Iraqis who has been granted asylum in the U.S. His mother and nephew will arrive in March.

That's it for the JOURNAL. Next week, a report from that other war -- Afghanistan. I'm Bill Moyers.

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