

CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

CHICAGO EVENT

MODERATOR:

MICHAEL PACK

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MICHAEL PACK: Thank you all for coming. I'm Michael Pack, senior VP for Television Programming at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. And I've come to talk to you about our new initiative, *America at a Crossroads*. I've brought Jim Denton, who is a consultant for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and sort of the mastermind of the structure and running of the initiative, and two guests who will speak later. I will give you a little background, then ask our speakers to address some of the issues, and finally take questions from the audience, either questions for me and questions for the panelists.

When I came to CPB a little over a year ago, the board and the leadership gave me a directive to come up with strategic initiatives in the areas of public affairs and education. So with my team, I traveled around the country. We visited PBS stations, including TTW, and experts in various places. We quickly decided that in the public affairs realm, the big issues facing America were those brought about by September 11th. Where is America headed with the war on terror? What is radical Islam? What about the PATRIOT Act and civil liberties? What kind of role should we have in the world? How is our relationship with Europe changing?

These questions and issues were, by universal consensus, deemed the crucial ones facing the country. There was a general feeling that we are entering a new era in America's relationship to the world, just as we did after the Cold War. And these kinds of issues are going to face this country for a long time to come. We felt that by creating this initiative, we could raise the level of discourse.

So we set aside about \$20 million over several years to fund documentaries and limited series, two-, three-, four-part series, that would deal with these issues from unique points of view. Clearly these issues are frequently addressed in television, including public television. So we are looking for a fresh approach, one that will have a deeper, longer-term impact, since these shows won't be on the air for a while.

We feel this is part of the role of public television, to take the crucial issues facing the country and raise the level of public debate. In fact, we want to be able to go to Congress, CPB's sole and generous funder, and say that we have raised the public's awareness and knowledge about these issues. So we are looking for a range of shows that cover a wide variety of points of view, from the right to the left, inside and outside the Islamic world, from Europe and from America, a diversity of points of view that shed new light on these subjects.

To that end, we posted an RFP, which I think many of you are aware of, on our web site several months ago. First we're going to ask for R&D proposals; and then for production proposals, whether based on the R&D or not; and finally distribution-dissemination proposals.

Similarly, we hope to have an initiative focused on education, which is currently in development. We are planning to focus similar resources on middle and high school students and teaching history and civics. The general problem is that so many kids today are graduating high school not knowing what century the Civil War was in or who fought in World War II. And civic engagement involvement in the political process seems to be declining, too. So in the fall--and we will probably come back to Chicago to discuss it--we will launch an initiative focused on that target audience. That will involve not only television shows, but also Web sites and curriculum materials for the classroom. So that's a little different process, and we will come back and talk to you about that later.

Right now, I'm here to solicit all of you to send in proposals for *America at a Crossroads*. So as to reach out to new people, we've kept the proposal short -- two to four pages for the R&D. It shouldn't be that onerous, and we're hoping new people can apply. We hope too that by having a lot more R&D grants and production grants, we will get proposals from people not familiar with the public television process as well as people who are.

Also to that end, we have gone around the country and talked to groups of producers to answer questions. Today, we have brought these two people to give you an idea of some of the issues that we might be interested in. I must say in advance that you should by no means feel that their comments should be an exclusive guide, or even exactly a guide. We hope they inspire thought and debate and discussion, but you are free to send in R&D proposals that are radically different from what they say, different in point of view, different in subject matter. We're confident that they will be interesting and stimulating, and that is the sole purpose, not to point you to specific things but to give you a general source of debate.

We have asked them both to speak about the general subject, the important issues facing the country, and mostly about what they think, from their experience and background, the general public needs to know that it does not know now. You are, of course, free to form your own independent judgments of those subjects. I will introduce them, they'll speak in turn, and then I'll take questions.

Charles Lipson teaches international relations at the University of Chicago, where he's a professor of political science. His most recent book, *Reliable Partners: How Democracies Have Made a Separate Peace*, explains one of the most striking features of international relations, why democracies do not fight wars against each other. He's also written extensively on international trade, debt, and investment.

Carol Marin has been an investigative reporter at NBC 5 in Chicago, an op-ed columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*, and Director of the DePaul Documentary Project. She has worked in television and print journalism for many years.

First, Mr. Lipson and then Ms. Marin will speak.

CHARLES LIPSON: The world changed not just all in one day, September 11th. It changed when George W. Bush said in response to this, we're at war. So it's not just what was done, it was the response to it. You've heard consistently since then that we're taking an aggressive stance; we're going to take it to them. That has led to all the issues about what we're fighting, why we're fighting it, and how it's appropriate to fight it.

For example, on issues like the PATRIOT Act, you can see a real debate in the country about what's appropriate. Why is there a debate? Because most people recognize that we've gone too far in previous wars, as with the interment of the Japanese. But in general, we're willing to take steps in a moment of high danger in order to give ourselves a little more protection. The problem is, there's not going to be a signing of a peace treaty on the deck of the battleship Missouri in a Japanese harbor. We don't know how long this war will continue, and so people are reasonably concerned about how long this abrogation of rights might go on. So there's a serious tradeoff. I've talked with civil libertarians; I've talked with people on the security side. And it's really a dangerous thing.

From the fall of the Berlin Wall in '89 and the fall of the Soviet Union in '91 to September 11th is a period kind of like that described in all great fables of the hedgehog and the fox. The fox knows many things; the hedgehog knows one very big thing. During the 1990s, we didn't know what were the big issues: AIDS in Africa, the rise of China as a peer competitor, how to get other countries to follow the path of the Asian developing countries to more prosperity? There were contending viewpoints.

Now, I think, those days are past, and there is a clear sense of the challenges, though not a clear sense of how to meet them. In fact, in the academy one of the big topics, and it's certainly made the editorial pages, is America as an empire. That is, in taking on these responsibilities, are we fundamentally changing who we are? There is no simple answer. Surely we're not an empire in the sense of having colonial desires for territorial expansion. We expanded across the United States in the 19th century, manifest destiny, and then in 1898 in the Spanish-American War, but since then we essentially have not taken on large territories.

But you can see that part of the problem in Iraq is that we have not confronted the responsibilities. As horrible as what happened at Abu Ghraib prison is, we're trying to understand how all of this fits together in what we're doing. I would say that one of the generic things here is that there was almost no planning for what would happen after. Very much like the children's stories you read as a kid, where somebody on a white horse would come in and solve the problem. You might ask, well, what happened after they got back home? That wasn't part of the fairytale. And there was kind of a fairytale image of what would happen here.

That's embedded in our bureaucracies. How? Because no part of our U.S. military is trained for postwar conduct. We have MPs, whose job is essentially to round up soldiers who have been out on a spree in town. But running a prison? We just haven't been willing to face up to the fact that in the last two years we fought two wars, and, in effect, we have postwar responsibilities.

Now, there's another aspect in which our bureaucracies have had to respond to what's happened: we are facing a transnational threat. That threat is fundamentally different from anything that nation states have faced over the past several centuries. The only thing similar to it, I would say, is the late-19th-century anarchists who simply shot people, and it was hard to know what you do to stop them. There was widespread repression, but it both hurt a lot of innocent people and didn't crack down on the people trying to do these things.

One of the big problems is that we set, quite understandably, rules for spying abroad that are dramatically different from what you can do at home. This means if you are trying to trail a group that moves easily across borders, you've got to make the handoff much more secure, like a relay team. The problem is that you could end up handing off material that really violates protections that you and I hold dear. How do we handle that? I want you to understand that's different from the problem of homeland security--that's two people, two bureaucracies, each of which deals with different aspects of domestic security, who are simply not talking to each other. That's going to be difficult, but it's soluble. But what do you do if I'm in Frankfurt and do something that might be harmful to the United States and then fly back to the United States, or a person I talk with flies back? I'm using a credit card in the United States, or something like that? How do we handle that? It seems to me that there couldn't be a better time to have a general discussion about these fundamental issues.

What's missing in the discussion? In my opinion, at the national level, the discussion has never really been joined. And here I'll just make a statement of political analysis, but I don't want it to be partisan: I think that the Democratic Party has been quite confused about how to respond to these issues. Kerry has not yet responded to them, but then the whole party has not responded to them. So if you ask, should we take the war to them, or how should we handle the PATRIOT Act, there's not a clear counter-position. You don't get a clear national debate around a couple of focal points. I think that's harmful. I don't want to box somebody into a position, but I think that is part of the reason the discussion is not fully joined.

I see this in the academy. When I talk to friends I'll ask them a simple question: If Kerry is elected president, do you think our policy in the Middle East will change? Just ask yourself that--Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi, Israel-Palestine, and so forth. It's very hard to say. We know that Kerry talks about a more multilateral policy. We know that he'll want to work more closely with the Europeans. I don't think there's any question but that our transatlantic policies will change. But if you look at the problem of confronting radical Islam, it's far from clear that the policy will change. And that's another way of saying, this is a debate that two years on we're still trying to join.

CAROL MARIN: It strikes me from what Charles said, and what seems to be the topic today, that as people interested in news, communications, documentaries, and information, we're all looking for the organizing principles of some meaningful discussion. There are so many topics we're trying to get our hands around, and we can't

seem to shape out of this large group of topics something that's going to unite us, explain our problems, help us begin to feel like we are meeting the challenge of September 11th.

The truth is, we were worried about what happened on September 11th long before this--some of us just didn't know it. I don't know if you're familiar with the report "Terror 2000." Has anyone seen that? In the 1990s, the State Department, CIA, a group of spooks and analysts, were assigned the job of trying to anticipate exactly what happened on September 11th. I think a total of about 40 scholars, through the government, very quietly and confidentially put together a portfolio of possibilities. One of them was planes going into skyscrapers. One of them was anthrax and other things that would compromise our health and welfare. There were questions about the water supply. They were reasoned, thoughtful reports that, though they weren't marked confidential or top secret, were treated in that manner. The people in the office that wrote them, Marvin Citron and Peter Probst, were told to tone it down. The whole document was essentially stuck in a drawer. You can't get it at the Library of Congress. You can finally now get it, but it's still tricky.

I only say this by way of noting that for a long time we've tried to establish some sort of organizing principle. What should we be worried about? How do we talk about it? How do we address it? How do we educate ourselves? The best I think I can do today--which is not nearly as scholarly as you have just heard, and probably not as useful, but I'm a television person--is to give you bullet points.

One of the broad categories that I think people are concerned about and would like to talk about is the category of sacrifices. We are at war--what sacrifices are we making? What sacrifices should we be making? What are the ones we really will make? Those with regard to oil? What are we paying, \$2 a gallon for gas right now? In terms of the sacrifice for the war, you have dependency. I think it's a galvanizing discussion that touches everyone. We have not had that conversation nationally. We are still enormously challenged by environmental issues, and they all intertwine with the oil issue. In terms of other sacrifices, what are you willing to do on the civil liberty front? How much sacrifice for how much safety? What do we give up and what do we receive?

Another area of conversation: What conditions set the stage for terrorism? As Charles's book points out, two democracies seldom go to war against each other. People who are happy, prosperous, fully employed, and have decent medical care tend to have more to lose and be less willing to create insurrections and participate in revolutions. They have more at stake. So what conditions would create a world that we want to live in but we don't seem to be achieving right now?

Category number three: quality of life. Every American is concerned about the future generation--whether our children will have what we have; whether our children will move further upward, as we hoped to, and most of us did, from our own parents. Our children, we're worried, are in a descending pattern. All those things have to do also with water, air, food, environmental issues, but in terms of supplies. Population is something we don't talk about very much. It's almost a taboo conversation now. When I was

growing up, when I was a young woman, we talked about two-kid families. We now don't even look the other way when someone says three, four, five. Population is a discussion we don't engage in very much, yet it certainly is, in the global sense, one of the most serious discussions we can have with regard to whether we have a food and water supply and decent environment, and why the desperation level in society is so significant. These are the seeds for the kind of revolution, the kind of violence, the kind of mayhem we're seeing.

Category number four: all the despair. Somebody asked me when I started thinking about producing documentaries, are you going to do one of those "oh, things are so terrible, what will we do?" documentaries? There are a fair number of those kinds of discussions, and we've all done them. We're all pretty interested in them, frankly. But, some people might argue there is a little room for hope. Hope dies last. In this spiritual universe, in this time of turmoil and trouble, what are people doing to manage, to balance, to hope, to believe? While there are many religious and theologically inclined documentaries, I really think that hope, post-9/11, is a particularly specific category. What you pin your hopes on.

Fifth: the effects on our national psyche. I was with a terrorism expert on Friday, one of those people who works in the government right now, trying to do a "Terror 2000" for 2004. He was in a shopping mall with his daughter, he said, and he was really worn out, he had stuff to do, so he sat down on a bench. Suddenly he sees a man with a two-kid stroller, and blankets and kid's sweaters over it. He's thinking, where are the kids? This is perfect; we're in the basement of a three-level, massive mall in the suburbs. What if there are no kids--that's the perfect size for C4 explosive. And he was telling me that there is nothing he sees on a given day that doesn't suggest a clue, a hint, a fear, a possibility. I wonder, in the minds of the people whose job it is to serve and protect--doctors, nurses, cops, FBI agents, generals, privates--how is their vision warped? Do you see the flower or do you see the possibility that something is disguised in the flower? I think there's a psychological discussion. It certainly would apply to children.

Number six: the tools of war. The torture discussion in Iraq has generated questions about what's okay and what's not. And I can hear other countries breathing an enormous sigh of relief that we haven't been inside their interrogation rooms. So torture is not new, but we don't know unless someone takes a picture. In Chicago we don't even know, and we have a 20-year-old scandal involving police torture that we look away from and don't entirely believe exists. What are the appropriate tools of war? This is an uncomfortable discussion, because the truth is that people do stand naked and cold, and it's considered an acceptable practice. Deprivation, bags over their heads, darkness, and so forth. What are we prepared to look at, as a society, in terms of the tools of torture? What do we say we will and won't do? And the broad application of measures we are now using--in the PATRIOT Act and in other measures, those tools are being used in other ways. It's just another great avenue. And I'd do it too, if I were a federal prosecutor. When Matt Hale, the Nazi hate-monger terrorist, went on trial, one of the things they tried to use against him was part of the PATRIOT Act. His lawyer virtually had to sign a loyalty oath saying, I will not repeat anything that Matt Hale says to me to his family, so

as not to pass it on. Matt Hale creates terror, but isn't a terrorist. It really is a question about tools.

Finally, it takes me back to "Terror 2000," the original document. Bureaucracies, we're finally beginning to admit, don't talk to each other. The State Department doesn't talk to CIA; the CIA doesn't talk to FBI. Today's report was that the computer system is still not working in the FBI, it doesn't look like it's going to work very well, and they may need to start over again. What Peter Probst and Martin Citron found before 9/11 we're finding after 9/11, and that is we're trying to keep bad, discouraging, disheartening information away from the public. We're trying not to show them the bad pictures. We're trying not to tell them the real terms of engagement for war and sacrifice. And we're reliving that circle. So I think there's a lot to talk about post-9/11, if we learn from the mistakes we made pre-9/11 and are currently making.

Thank you.

MICHAEL PACK: Thank you. I want to stress again that it's supposed to be food for thought rather than specific recipes for documentaries.

Now I'll take questions either to the panel or to Jim and myself. Before I do, I also want to thank WTTW, who are our co-hosts for this event, for putting it together and making it happen.

Okay. Any questions?

Q: Why don't we start with something basic. You're going to get a million proposals. Is there a finite number of programs you're looking to produce? Is it X weeks you're airing? Will there be any effort to match up production teams with overlapping proposals, et cetera?

MICHAEL PACK: All good questions. I think we'll look at a lot of proposals, and we will review them in the normal way that CPB does. That is, the staff will review them, and before a proposal is given a grant it will be sent to off-site reviewers to get input. Then finally, unique to *Crossroads*, we're going to have an advisory group, which will be posted on the Web site, review all the choices made by those earlier processes.

We're not really sure how many shows we'll fund, but we are planning to fund a higher percentage of the program budget than is CPB's habit. Some of them will be controversial, they're hard to raise money for, and we realize that we have to put in a higher percentage of the money. So \$20 million will not represent that many separate projects. Some will be one-hour specials, some will be limited series. It's not clear how many programs and what percentage we'll fund. We estimate 20 or so in the end, but that's just an estimate.

Finally, we will have a station advisory group advise us on how to roll them out, how we will pair them together, how they'll be broadcast. We assume that they will come

out over a period of years, and that they will have some sort of branding, but whether they'll be fully branded, or a little bit branded, whether we'll attach them as a couple of little series, whether we'll pair close ones together, I'm going to leave to this advisory group, which consists of station managers and programmers for our system.

Did I leave anything out?

Q: Yes, matching up overlapping proposals.

MICHAEL PACK: I think we can only do so much of that. If we see people who we think can productively work together, we will bring them together, and we will give people input. But it's hard to pull people together who aren't necessarily coming together. We are a grant giver rather than a commissioner, so there's a limit to what CPB, by law, can do.

Q: And can you put some definition around funding of successful proposals?

MICHAEL PACK: Well, we are funding 100 percent of the R&D, which is the first phase. We imagine it to be 50 percent and up for production. In some senses it's business as usual, in that the more funding you bring, the better. But we imagine there will be some where we will fund 100 percent, or close to it, and many where we're only at 50. So, again, it depends. But in the case of R&D, we are encouraging people to come up with great ideas and bring them in and try to think of funding in a secondary way.

Q: Given that America is at a crossroads, it's not at a crossroads in an isolated way. So I'd like to know how willing CPB is to entertain international voices or experiences with where America is now.

MICHAEL PACK: I agree completely, and we are encouraging foreign voices and foreign producers to participate. They need an American partner, because we are funded by the Congress of the United States, but we feel that you are exactly right, that the voices of people from other countries are one of the things missing from the debate. So yes, that would be a real plus.

MR. LIPSON: I want to say one thing about the foreign side that's often overlooked. It's a sort of technical point from the strategic military side. We are not just a unipolar world, a world in which America is the great power; there is essentially no military on Earth that even compares with ours anymore. Ours is at a level of sophistication and communication that makes it unique. As a result, when other countries confront terror, they're confronting it without a military option to begin with. To the extent that they see the United States having a military option, they see those decisions made without essentially any consultation. I just want people to recognize that we have a hammer, so we tend to see nails. A lot of other people don't have hammers, so they tend to not see nails even where there are nails.

Q: What do you mean by branding?

MICHAEL PACK: Well, these are all *America at a Crossroads* projects. And this is a decision we haven't made: Would we simply put a quick three-second tag on the end, or would we try to do something more elaborate? Would we have a host? Would we try to group them and make a miniseries? To my mind, that is to be driven more by what the stations and PBS want rather than what CPB wants, and that's why we formed this advisory group. Our goal is to have these shows seen as widely as possible, so we are trying to go to the end user, the stations and PBS, and give them something they will use most fully.

Along those lines, and I think this is alluded to in the RFP, we're planning to have an umbrella group that may do the Web site for the initiative as a whole in an attempt to increase its impact. Often public affairs shows have very minimal Web sites, but we think as a collective these Web sites might be of greater interest to the public, teachers, and students.

Q: Does CPB have an opinion about partnering with established series like *American Experience* or *Frontline*, since a lot of these proposals may very well fall under the rubric of what they do?

MICHAEL PACK: We have spoken to people at many of the big stations like WGBH and WNET, and we've encouraged these series to apply themselves or in partnerships with independents. We are planning to have them air outside of the series, as *Frontline* or *American Experience* specials, but on that, too, we are going to consult the station advisory group. So it could be in the series. We're concerned about it being too much in those series, but those series will be players in *America at a Crossroads*, and if you know people there and want to partner with them, that will be helpful. They're all very aware of the initiative.

Q: What's the timeframe for funding some of the research and development grants? How soon would they go into production?

MICHAEL PACK: Well, we have deadlines in the RFP, but in practice, once you're in the cycle, we try to move it fairly quickly. The deadline in the RFP is June 1 for R&D proposals, and then we hope to make decisions on a rolling basis. We'll make initial decisions maybe six to eight weeks after that. Then once you're funded, it depends on how long the R&D takes. Some people might have a short R&D period, and some might have a long one. We'll try to make, for CPB, a relatively quick response, but I think the phased approach guarantees, really, that the shows will not be on the air for a year, year and a half. It would be hard to do a show about an issue that's suddenly in the news today. We need to look for bigger subjects. And I think Charles and Carol rightly pointed to the big things that America is confronting, things that a year or two from now will still be important. You can follow a story, as long as it's updated before broadcast, as is typical with specials and documentaries on PBS.

Q: You're saying the deadline is June 1st?

MICHAEL PACK: For R&D proposals.

Q: Okay. That's just a two- to four-page description?

MICHAEL PACK: Yes. You wanted to add something?

JAMES DENTON: Only that it's necessary to read the RFP for the specifics of what's required.

MICHAEL PACK: Yes, Jim and I labored on the RFP and tried to be clear about what is needed in the proposal. For example, because it's short, we encourage people to say what is unique about their idea. Carol and Charles talked about big issues, but when you send in a proposal, we want your take on it, what you bring to it, what your unique perspective is. So we tried to spell that out in the RFP. If you have a question you should e-mail us, we will respond.

Q: I promise you I read the RFP at least three times. Could you clarify the issue of non-broadcast rights? It makes complete sense to me that you retain a lot of the rights that would normally be given to a producer. But in the case of non-broadcast rights, if the research is so compelling that you want to write a book, is that permitted?

MICHAEL PACK: Here's our thinking about rights. We feel that since CPB is going to be putting up the bulk of the money that we should retain these rights. If there is a funding reason, we can carve out an exception. For instance, if you have a British partner and they are bringing money to the table, we would make an exception for that. I cannot imagine that a book would be a problem. This is really a question for CPB business affairs, but I would be shocked if they would have a problem with people working on these shows also writing a book. We usually think of that as a good thing, a measure of success.

JAMES DENTON: The hard thing is to write the book.

MICHAEL PACK: That's right. And that's the nice thing about being the grant giver, we don't have to do any of the hard work.

Q: As production teams work to build advisory groups, would you encourage or discourage producers from including members from local PBS stations as part of those groups? Is that a conflict of interest for local PBS staff people?

MICHAEL PACK: Interesting question. I think that would be for them to decide. From our point of view, if they bring something to a project, they would be good. It's not a problem for us, I don't think. If I find out differently, I will let you know.

Q: I've got a couple of questions. One is, do you expect CPB to play an editorial role in these, or is what you get what you get?

MICHAEL PACK: CPB will not play an editorial role. We are a grant giver. Once we make a commitment, it's out of our control.

Q: And then, God knows it's hard enough to get production money. Have you given thought to encouragement or funding for outreach, for the discussions that we hope would come out of this? Or is this strictly for production?

MICHAEL PACK: We have a third phase of funding. We will set aside some percentage to be determined that will go to that. We want to make sure that the programs have an impact beyond broadcast. So we will make sure that there is funding for that.

Q: Lastly, what's the working relationship with PBS? Ultimately someone has to put this on the schedule. There's a lot of time in a day; it could end up in lots of places. How are you working through that?

MICHAEL PACK: We have discussed this project with our colleagues at PBS from the beginning, before we issued the RFP. So they are interested, and they are eager to see what specific programs come out. PBS is very aware of it and very involved.

Q: You've had a couple of these meetings already. Has your idea of this process or this initiative changed in your interactions with the producers who have asked questions? What have you learned?

MICHAEL PACK: Well, I have found these meetings encouraging. We have gotten large groups of producers. I think this is maybe the smallest, actually. New York, as you might expect, was the biggest. And I think people are very engaged, which I think is a good thing. It has only reinforced my belief that we will get proposals out of the RFP process. I think I am much more careful now to make sure that producers know that our comments and the panel's comments are not specific guides. Producers do not like to be told what to do, rightly so. But I also think it's important to give you some sense of what our interests are, and the kind of depth of knowledge and experience we hope producers will bring to their projects.

Q: Michael, can I ask, is there a prejudice against one-offs? And in terms of one-offs, 60 or 90, do you prefer 60? I know that's a lot easier to schedule.

MICHAEL PACK: That goes back to the question of what PBS wants. And it's true; PBS does not like one-offs. I personally like one-offs. I've done a lot of them myself. I think the people who make them think of them as films rather than one-offs. In the history of the documentary, most great ones have been one-offs. So I like them, and I feel the initiative will have an easier time making a place for them in the schedule, because we can group some of them together if they are similarly themed. But it's true that PBS has sort of a bias against them that we will have to overcome. I think the initiative is in a good position to push the balance a little bit back toward one-offs, and it's the same with 60s or 90s. It's true 60s are easier, but I think 90s can find a way. As a

producer I produced two 90-minute shows; I guess PBS would have liked them better to be 60s, but they were made as 90s. So surely at this early phase, R&D, we're not at the point where you have to worry about that.

Q: In the eligibility section of the RFP, there's a point that says: "demonstrate that the applicant has the capability to produce at a high professional level appropriate for national prime-time broadcast to a general public television audience." What are you looking for in terms of product to demonstrate that, if you've never produced a show like this, but you have a body of work?

MICHAEL PACK: I think the quality of your body of work would be sufficient proof that you can produce something at a high level for national broadcast. We are trying to get people to do things differently, so we're assuming people will come from the cable world, from the commercial world, or maybe another genre. We're fine with that. In the proposals a lot has to do with execution rather than idea, and we will look at the skills of the production team.

Q: I have a follow-up question: If you like a proposal and are going to consider it for R&D, would you be screening someone's work to move it forward?

MICHAEL PACK: We are likely to screen people's work before giving R&D money, yes. Jim reminds me to emphasize that we do want to encourage new participants. People criticize the public television process for being closed, and I think there's something to that criticism. We at CPB are in the best position to open it up. We get government monies, we are less concerned about the ratings. So we are trying to take that mandate seriously and open it up, but at the same time we have to look seriously at what the product will be.

Q: I wanted to get an opinion from both the panelists, what thing or entity do you believe is the greatest fear?

CAROL MARIN: This goes back to the notion of the psychological effects of 9/11. The idea that someone with plastic explosives is going to walk into a Starbucks, and we're going to begin to see this domestically. And from my standpoint, I'm trying to not look too much on that dark side.

CHARLES LIPSON: I think that that's right. I should say that some of the worst things in the world are essentially opaque to us. The huge war in the middle of Africa, it's been a war essentially as deadly as World War I, but it's beyond our reach. So we shouldn't believe that all of the bad things in the world are related to 9/11. When you talk to specialists on terror--and I've talked to quite a lot, Homeland Security, CIA, U.S. military, NATO, and others--the biggest fear they have is losing southern Manhattan. The capabilities in the hands of terrorists over the next 15 years are just growing exponentially because the knowledge of truly destructive mechanisms is great. And in biological hazards, the problem is that they don't leave much of a footprint.

That brings up one topic that was not mentioned here: Americans love technology. Remember the our-missiles-versus-their-missiles era? It's now an our-detection-versus-their-ability-to-hide era. A couple of weeks ago in Israel, there was an announcement of a new device, at least past the testing stage, that can detect traces of explosives on people at a distance. They're also working on things that will tell how panicked people are as they get on a bus. So there is a technological race that has its own fascination, independent of the human side of things that Carol said. When we think about the biggest problems in the world, some of them are related to this fundamental Frankenstein metaphor: have things been born that are out of our control?

Q: As a producer, one of the aspects of this project that really affected me concerned other countries and their citizens, outside of the U.S., and their view of us. I think that's something that most Americans are very ignorant about, and I wanted to know if we were to submit a proposal focused on something that narrow, is that something you would encourage?

MICHAEL PACK: Yes, others have expressed interest in that subject, too, and it's definitely within the scope of the *Crossroads* initiative. It's one of the things that has, in fact, changed after September 11th.

JAMES DENTON: I would say just one small thing, which is that I think the differences across America are also very great and worth exploring.

CAROL MARIN: When we invaded Afghanistan, we promised that this time we wouldn't leave. We promised that this time we were going to develop Afghanistan. I think one of the things we haven't explored very well are our contradictions. On the one hand, we're trying to do some humane work in Afghanistan. On the other, we have two DEA agents, and the warlords we fund are developing the second largest opium crop that Afghanistan has seen in a long time. So we see sometimes, whether it's in Sudan or Afghanistan, the contradictions between our stated values and the execution of our policy. Our drug policy flies in the face of our foreign policy, or vice-versa. Which one wins? Because they're both in this Tower of Babel that we seem to be developing. We're speaking out of both sides of our national mouths, and it is a very tricky balance.

CHARLES LIPSON: I heard on my favorite news show, *The Daily Show*, the other day, one of the commentators say, it's something you did do, but it's something you wouldn't do.

Q: I'd like to ask, regarding the meetings at the local PBS stations, what were some of the issues surrounding immigration and the status and rights of immigrants pending their green card status, et cetera?

MICHAEL PACK: The question of immigration was raised at almost every one of the meetings we had around the country. I think it will underlie a lot of proposals we'll get, especially dealing with domestic issues, but not only those.

JAMES DENTON: In the post-9/11 arena, immigration is an issue not just with the United States but throughout Europe, of course, which has a unique and interesting problem. Immigration is a big problem in the post-9/11 world, and it has implications that are pretty extraordinary in terms of demographic development over the course of the next 50 years, which is informing and influencing public policy not only in this country but all over the world.

CHARLES LIPSON: One of the reasons you don't hear much discussion of population in this country is that this country and Western Europe are pretty close to zero population growth. It turns out that prosperous countries essentially don't get growing populations, and the reason that the population of the United States is increasing is because of immigration. This is true in Europe. Countries like Italy are below the replacement rate, so they're bringing in people.

That brings you to the next question, which is where are people coming from? And with respect to this country, I've noticed no concerns at all, outside of conservative Republicans, about immigration from Latin America. We talk about terrorism, but the issue has to do with radical Islam. And to the extent people are concerned about terrorism, they're concerned about leaky borders--not because people are coming here to make a better life for their family but because people are coming here with pernicious aims.

The final point is that we in universities have been very struck by all this. We get huge numbers of foreign students, and some of my students who have come from South Korea, or England, or France, have had tremendous difficulty after they go home on vacation just getting back in here. We had a drop for the first time since Lord knows when in numbers of foreign students. So there are seven million immigration stories in the naked city, I think. This is one of those topics that has so many facets.

Q: All of us in the world of television are trying to find a way to get the most people to see the stories that we believe in the most. It's every producer's dream. In a world where reality shows are everywhere, and even PBS is trying to show what it's really like to live on the prairie in 1776, I think we're all trying to figure out how to have our voices heard in new and different ways. And I'm curious what sort of really fresh things you hope you're going to see that you haven't seen?

MICHAEL PACK: I agree with all the things that you say. In fact we do feel, we at CPB, that we have a singular responsibility to get these important stories on the air. All public television feels that way. And I have asked people to try to find a way to break through. I say, do not be limited by genre. We had somebody propose an animation idea--any genre would be okay as long as it's within a reasonable budget. Even drama would be okay if it could be done for a low budget. So, as a funder, no longer a producer, I can only say it's up to you guys to come up with something that will break through. It saddens me all the time, actually, that a lot of great shows come on the air and get low ratings. Even within PBS, the shows that I think are the best, the ones that I think are the most

important, do not get the highest ratings. I do not believe that a public affairs show has to get low ratings.

Let me take your underlying point. I think important shows have an inherent draw to people by virtue of their importance. I think these are issues that most people sense at a deep level are important to their lives, their future, their children's future, and they care about them. We need to find a way in public television to reach these people and get them to tune in. So I am hoping for innovation. It's a really important point.

Q: This is maybe more of a concern, but I'll try to form it as a question. I just feel like if we're funded by Congress and we're discussing 9/11, that this is a time to be critical of our government. How much do you guys have to check in with them on the project? Do they just cut a check and you give them what we get?

MICHAEL PACK: Congress has no influence on our choices. They give us a bulk appropriation and it's up to us to decide where in particular the money goes. I agree with you, this is a subject that there is really a diversity of points of view on. I feel that by carving this initiative out and setting that up as one of the premises, I will guarantee that we get a wide variety of points of view, defending the administration and attacking the administration as well as other polarities. I agree with you, one of the things limiting the discussion of these issues on other networks and channels is that there isn't a diversity of points of view. There's kind of all the same point of view, kind of in the middle. So we explicitly want multiple points of view in this initiative. We've set it up that way. We have declared it. We are committed to that. Then the only way Congress can express their dislike is to cut CPB's overall funding. They're not going to intervene and say, show A is no good.

Q: I'd hate to be responsible for that.

MICHAEL PACK: I guess that's my job. I have the job of making sure Congress doesn't interfere with any specific program, which is easier, actually. It may sound hard, but it's easier. Creativity is always harder than any kind of bureaucratic interplay.

Q: With the extensive approval process and the rolling nature of the system, what can we expect as far as communication from CPB with regard to our proposal? How do we know if we're still in the running? How long is it going to take?

MICHAEL PACK: Well, we have a very small staff, so we have had to structure the process carefully. When you send in a proposal, I think we respond very quickly. Is that right?

JAMES DENTON: One of the reasons I'm a little hesitant to answer is that it will be driven in large measure by whether we get 150 or 5,000 proposals. If you call June 1st with that question, I'll be able to give a better answer. I can say this much, within five or six working days you'll receive an acknowledgment of receipt from us, which will also indicate anything missing from your proposal that must be submitted in order for it to be

reviewed. These items are written very clearly in the RFP, so if you're following that it won't be a problem. At that point, it really becomes a numbers game and a quality game. It's the numbers of proposals, they all have to be read. It's only two to four pages, but to get through all those is going to be a fairly big exercise. I guess you can assume it's in the running if you haven't heard from us. But I would certainly like to think you would hear something within 30 days. I guess I'd better say six weeks. That's not an acceptance, but you might likely hear something back from us within six weeks, which would be seeking clarification or some point that we feel needs further development. But we probably will not be writing you back every couple of weeks saying, you're still in the running.

Q: Will we know when we're out?

JAMES DENTON: Again, it depends on how many proposals there are. We don't want to rush to knock people out of the running. But I would guess within four to six weeks we'll send out a number of letters saying that we're sorry, the proposal just didn't survive the competition, even though it was great and all. That's going to be the fact, there are going to be a lot of great ones that may not get funded. It's probably not the best thing to say to a group that we're trying to encourage, because of course we are.

Q: A follow-up about the process. I'm looking at the RFP. Production proposals won't be accepted after September 15th--what are your expectations about your R&D period, how far are you going to push that into production?

MICHAEL PACK: That's for people who do not have R&D grants. If you get funded for R&D in July and you have a nine-month R&D process, we expect as part of the end product of the R&D process a proposal. But we are likely, anyway, to extend that.

Q: Just to follow on that, what's a range of time for R&D that would seem appropriate? Between a month and ten months?

MICHAEL PACK: That's hard to say. It depends on whether it's a documentary special or a series. I think one month, ten months; one could justify either. I'm a believer that a project should be done slowly and correctly rather than a quick attempt to catch timely things. And we are thinking of the R&D as an attempt to get the story--that's a distinction we tried to draw in the RFP as well--rather than fundraising. If you have an idea for a story that takes place in Sudan, we would expect the R&D process to involve going to Sudan, seeing if there's really a story there, shooting a little footage of your main characters, and coming back and seeing if there's a story. Maybe you'll look for story A and find story B. I think it's possible to think you have a story and not find a story or not get the access that you hoped.

One of the reasons we came up with the R&D process is we noticed that there is often no time for producers to see if they've got a story. They have to spend all their time fundraising for big amounts. Often then you get a production grant to do something you're not even sure you want to do, but you didn't have the chance to check it out. That's

how we're thinking about R&D. It should be driven by what you need to find out. And prove to us that there's a good movie hidden in a great notion.

Q: Driven by content?

MICHAEL PACK: Driven by content.

Q: If someone were to have a project that is largely developed, between 60 and 75 percent developed, would you recommend that they still apply for the R&D phase or wait until the production phase?

MICHAEL PACK: I think I would still recommend applying into the R&D process. It puts you inside the track in a way that's helpful.

Q: We had the idea of partnering with a public radio show, which I saw that you encourage here. I know you're in the television department, but is that something that you could see as offering synergies to put out more product from a project?

MICHAEL PACK: Yes, a public radio partnership would be fine, great. There have been successful public television-public radio partnerships, not as many as there should be, but there have been some.

Q: For production, does it matter what format it's produced in? Do you use HD?

MICHAEL PACK: All the products have to meet PBS's specs on their Web site. So you have to follow what they require. Most of them, as you know, have a red book for producers, guidelines. And they are very particular. But I think it's focused not on what you shoot in but on the engineering quality of the final product.

Q: Let's say we propose an idea to the R&D phase and we're turned down. Is it possible to get feedback, kind of the way the NEH works? So that you might say, well, we liked your idea, what would make it better is X, Y, and Z, and we could come back with a production proposal and still be considered?

MICHAEL PACK: As Jim was saying, it does depend on the volume of proposals. In the case of programs that we fund for R&D, we are almost certain to give feedback. They'll send us a production proposal, we'll have waited for it. So we're certain to give the people who have gotten the R&D funding feedback before they get a production grant. It's the people eliminated completely that we may or may not. It depends on how much staff time we have. I'm on the National Endowment for the Humanities Council, and I will say CPB has a much, much tinier staff. They have the resources to give a lot more attention to the people applying. I think that's a terrific thing. Our administrative staff is limited by law. So we try to maximize the input we give to filmmakers based on the number of proposals and our staff time.

Q: But if you don't get the R&D grant there's no reason you can't apply for a production grant.

MICHAEL PACK: That's right. Also, we encourage people to submit more than one idea, if they have more than one idea that they think will be a good show. That's another way to maximize your chances.

Q: How are you judging the advisory committee in the R&D stage?

MICHAEL PACK: Well, we think advisory committees are good, but they're really part of the process of proving that there's intellectual seriousness and production skills. It's one factor that we would evaluate. So it's hard to answer that in the abstract. It's a good thing, but it's weighed as one of several factors.

JAMES DENTON: The competition will be very intense, and those people who are trying to make judgments and evaluations of the proposals are going to be looking very carefully at the technical competency, the expertise, the technical capacity on the production side as well as on the content side. I would just say that if I were submitting a proposal, I would just write it in such a way, whether that involves an advisory board or not, that persuades the reviewers that this thing is substantively solid.

Q: In my past experience we spend too much time trying to locate a good team of advisory scholars.

MICHAEL PACK: Everyone has their own approach, and all we can do is say, be sure that your proposal is convincing, that it is solid from the content point of view.

Q: Who are the people making the decisions? The two of you here? Six undergraduates who will be coming in for the summer?

MICHAEL PACK: Well, the two of us, and we will have two or three other staffers dedicated to *Crossroads*, and there are other people at CPB TV programming who would weigh in. So it's a small staff. Then before we give a grant we will send it to outside reviewers, outside the CPB community. Who they are depends on the nature of the program and the subject area. They will be both experts on the subject area of the proposal and other filmmakers with a television background. Then finally there will be the advisory group, and we will post their info on the site so you can see who they are.

Q: How is that advisory group being determined--the station advisory group?

MICHAEL PACK: Actually we have already picked the station advisors, including Dan Schmidt, president and general manager of WTTW in Chicago. I don't know if it's an advantage or not to have a local representative. We picked them in consultation with others at CPB, to come up with a group of people who are geographically diverse, sort of diverse in their expertise and knowledge about programming, and command respect as programmers or general managers in the system.

When we post them I think you will see, if you're knowledgeable about public broadcasting, that a lot of them are not dissimilar from others who have sat on similar advisory groups on previous projects--leading programmers and engaged general managers. And they will be providing advice and speaking to their colleagues. We need people who are vocal and have something to say, or really want to flesh out a full range of views.

Surely we will seek input and advice beyond that group among the public broadcasting community. We go to public broadcasting events and we try to get input. As this process goes on the road, it will be much easier to get input. At this point, with an RFP and nothing in particular, it's very hard for programmers to get their minds around it. They're used to thinking, what should I put on Wednesdays at 9:00? Well, there's nothing here for them to completely focus on. But they're not reluctant to give their opinion once they're actual shows. I think as you go down the line we'll get plenty of input from the system, and we'll solicit it.

Q: A quick practical money question. R&D: are the producers footing the bill, or are you funding up front?

MICHAEL PACK: The R&D grants will be structured in sort of the traditional CPB way. There is a contract on the Web site that specifies the terms. In the R&D terms, the contract is not negotiable, which is a little bit of an innovation for CPB, but we will give a grant. There will be one or two key points throughout where we will give a percentage of the grant, and at the end we will expect a final accounting. We do not expect you to send us your receipts. And the production grant will be closer to the CPB model, there will be points throughout the process where percentages of the grant will be given, and there will be other financial accounting requirements.

Q: You have a set budget for new programs. How would this affect your budget for new programs?

MICHAEL PACK: Well, we are the television programming part of CPB, and we get a percentage of the CPB overall budget, which percentage is mandated by law. Some of their budget is also mandated by law, a lot of it goes to PBS to support the national programming service. We give a grant to ITVS every year. We have five minority consortia. And we have some other funds that we are committing money to. So this is one of those several funds. History and civics will be another one. So it's part of the overall package of things that we fund at CPB.

Q: I know this has been touched upon. I just wanted to ask again, in terms of the assessment of the proposals, in addition to the content, you have to have confidence that the project can be finished in the quality that you expect. For smaller production companies, without having seen a body of work, how do you intend to assess that?

MICHAEL PACK: Well, I think that we at some point would have to look at the body of work, such as it is, for a smaller production company, a production company that

hadn't done anything or had only done little things. *Crossroads* could be a step up, a movement to national programming, but it would have to be a movement from something reasonably close. The burden is on the smaller production companies to have yet more innovative ideas. I hate to put it that way, but since we don't know your work you would have to have something even more special. It's not like access, or an innovative technique, or something to weight the scales in your direction. I don't know how to be more specific. We do want to reach out to smaller production companies, and we will make an effort to read all these proposals with as open a mind as we can. But we are given this money in trust by Congress. Our goal is to come up with shows that will be broadcast and will be of the quality of the national programming service, and that's a high mark to reach. So we are mindful of those things.

JAMES DENTON: Besides making an effort to open the system up to some degree through this program, I think it's fair to say that we are prepared to take some risks. Not outrageous risks--it's Congress' money, it's taxpayer money, and we have to manage it in the most appropriate way, obviously. But I would say if someone came in with a dynamite idea yet not with the credentials, but somehow could persuade us that they were worth the risk, if the budget was right we might try to do that.

CHARLES LIPSON: A dynamite idea about terrorism.

JAMES DENTON: No pun intended.

Q: I'm from a station. I think it's terrific that you're going to open this up. I think it's a great thing for the system and for audiences. Is there a sense of preference? Are you going to lean toward independents?

MICHAEL PACK: I think at the end of the day, a bunch of shows will be funded, we'll have to have all kinds of balances, including balances between independents and stations as well as big stations and little stations, East Coast, West Coast, middle of the country, ethnic-racial diversity. We have to take all those into account.

Q: That \$20 million has to go a long way.

MICHAEL PACK: It does, it has to go a long way. So if we're getting all program proposals from stations, I think the next time we open a proposal we'll hope that it comes from an independent. But if everything is coming from independents, then we'll hope that the next one comes from a station. We'll have to do both. We intend to do both. I think it's appropriate to do both.

Q: Assuming you get a proposal that you really would like to fund, it's one of those ideas that's innovative, it's captured your imagination, but you think the R&D budget is too high, before saying no to that project would you come back to the producers and ask them to rework the budget?

MICHAEL PACK: I think that we might. Sometimes a budget indicates how a producer is thinking. If the budget indicates the producer hasn't thought clearly about R&D at all, that would be a bad sign, especially in the example of someone whose experience base is smaller. A small adjustment, or something's missing, or we think that they can eliminate something from the R&D and hence shrink the budget, I think we would come back.

Q: If a project were already produced and in the can and fit your criteria, would you consider that? Would you do a licensing fee for it?

MICHAEL PACK: Well, we would encourage that producer to contact PBS--we could try to be helpful. But we can only give grants to projects that haven't yet been completed, or outreach grants. We can't make a license. So there's little we can do. And we're not even yet at the outreach-dissemination phase of the *America at a Crossroads* project. We would be hard-pressed to help such a project within the confines of *America at a Crossroads*.

Q: I'm just wondering how you hope to achieve balance if you're funding things on a rolling basis.

MICHAEL PACK: We'll think about it as we go, quite frankly. We're thinking only two, three waves of funding. We won't be able to achieve all these different kinds of balance issues in every wave. I think if we fund an initial six projects, if there's not a perfect geographic balance, we'll hope to adjust for it later. We're really paying pretty strict attention to a general sense of balance, that we have a range of views. It may not be perfectly balanced at the first wave, but I think right from the start people will rightly demand, because of the way we've set this up, that we have a lot of diversity of viewpoints and that kind of balance right from the very first wave. You're right, it's harder to achieve that in waves. But I think we will have to do that.

Q: One way to achieve balance is by having a diverse number of viewpoints across these *Crossroads*, but I'm wondering about individual programs and what your expectations are for balance in a show. Is it possible to bring to a show a point of view that may not be balanced, or not try to be journalistically showing every side? Or do you expect every show to strive for this journalistic balance that we hear so much about?

MICHAEL PACK: We do not. We expect and encourage these *Crossroads* shows to have a point of view. They don't all have to, but we think that's a good thing. And that's why we have responsibility over *Crossroads* to make sure there's a balance. We would require all shows to meet CPB standards, objectivity, balance in terms of basic standards of journalism, that facts be accurate, that other points of view be reflected, that contrary elements be brought in. But I do think within that there will be strong points of view, and we want to encourage that.

Q: Are we being encouraged to have an outreach and dissemination idea in the proposal, or is that going to be a later phase that you will fund?

MICHAEL PACK: We think of that as a later phase. Any great ideas that you have would be fine, but we are not expecting producers to be thinking about that in the R&D, especially because we think there might be outreach and Web-based opportunities that come from combining them. So we are not expecting the producers necessarily to address that, unless there's some hidden, great outreach opportunity nestled in the project.

Thank you all for coming.