

**MANUFACTURING  
CONSENT**  
**NOAM CHOMSKY  
AND THE MEDIA**

**HOLOCAUST  
DENIAL VS.  
FREEDOM  
OF SPEECH**

A six-part series designed especially for classroom use, based on the award-winning box-office hit.

*"If you're in favour of freedom of speech, that means you're in favour of free speech precisely for views you despise, otherwise you're not in favour of freedom of speech."*

— Noam Chomsky

This video focuses on one of the most controversial areas in Chomsky's career: his defense of the civil rights of Robert Faurisson, a French intellectual who was suspended from his university post because he could not be protected from violence as a result of publishing revisionist literature minimizing Nazi atrocities during World War II. Faurisson denied the existence of gas chambers and of an orchestrated, genocidal campaign against Jews. He was later taken to court in part for "falsification of history." It is the classic debate about free speech vs. the right to express unpopular views or even outright lies. The video explores the context of Chomsky's defense including the misrepresentation of the debate by the press.

A Necessary Illusions / National Film Board of Canada co-production  
Distributed by the National Film Board of Canada  
Directed and Produced by Mark Achbar, Peter Wintonick  
Producer for NFB: Adam Symansky

12 minutes

Part of a six-volume package, order number: 193C 9192 183



NECESSARY ILLUSIONS

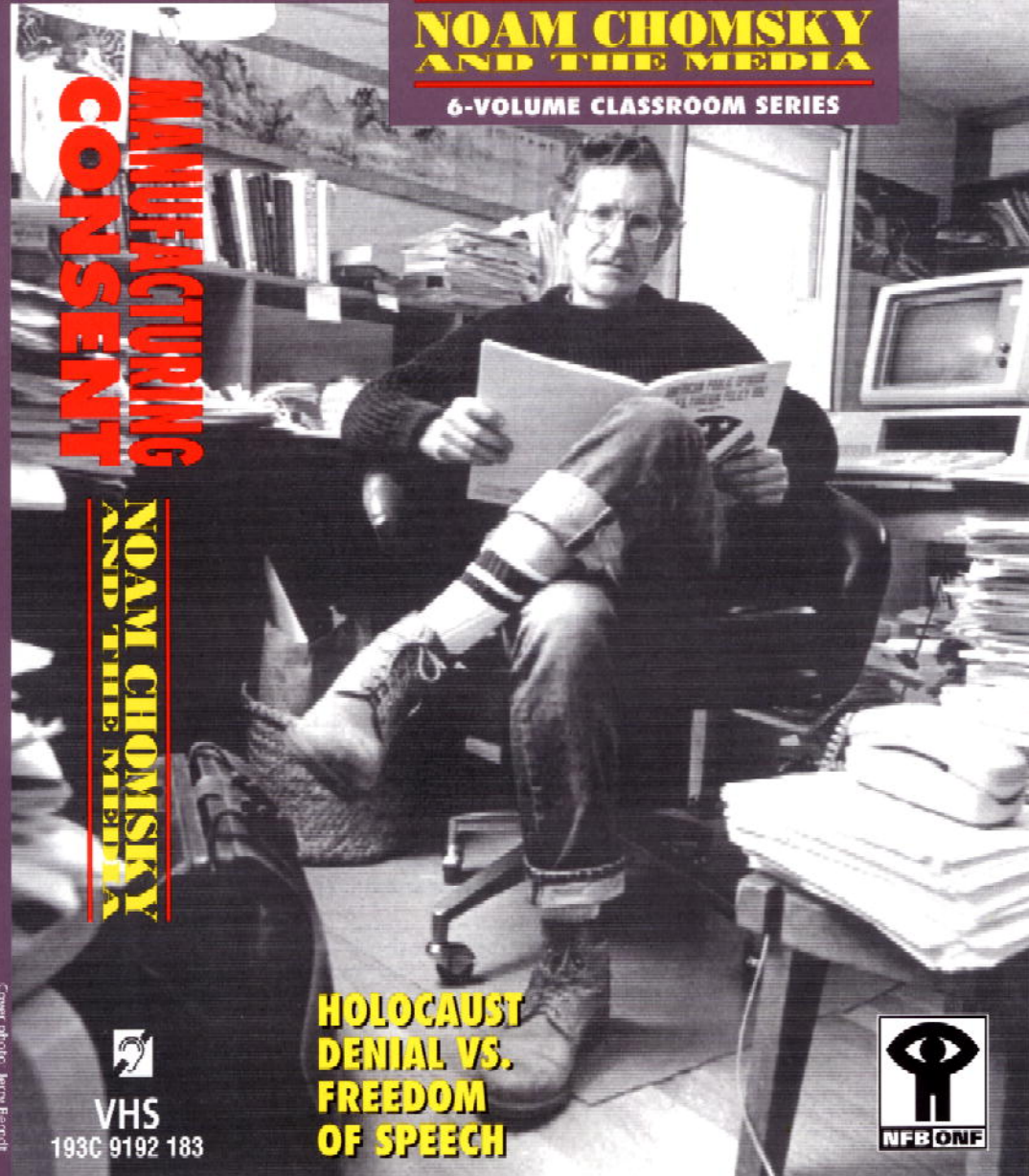


Closed captioned.  
A decoder is required.

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6-VOLUME CLASSROOM SERIES

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VHS  
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Cover photo: Jerry Berndt

## PRESCREENING ACTIVITIES

1• In preparation, viewers may wish to refer to the history of censorship and freedom of expression. There are numerous cases to draw upon: the trial of Galileo for his revolu-

tionary but heretical views on the galaxy; the censorship of books by distinguished writers such as D.H. Lawrence; police protection of neo-Nazis who marched through a Jewish neighborhood in Skokie, Illinois; and other trials of people who have used racist publications or lectures to deny the existence of the Holocaust (Keegstra and Zundel). (See also pp. 174-191)

## POSTSCREENING ACTIVITIES

1• Viewers may wish to read more detailed coverage of Chomsky's free speech discourse in *Necessary Illusions*, (pp. 123-133, 337-355) and *Deterring Democracy*, (pp. 398-401, reproduced in Achbar, 1994, p. 179). Try applying Chomskian methodology to the actions and coverage of groups in North America such as the Ku Klux Klan, or to the dissemination of pornography.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

1• Filmmakers Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonick have stated the rationale for their cinematic style in the film: **"There is a diversity of 'learning styles,' and information reaches individuals most effectively through different channels: visual, aural, textual, through story, metaphor, etcetera. Synthesizing many cinematic styles, we tried to make the film work on all these levels. Also, by using a media-within-media perspective, we reveal processes of media construction (including our own) and attempt to create in the viewer a sense of critical engagement."** Everyone should decide for him- or herself how these techniques worked. In what situations did these techniques give you a sense of "critical engagement"? Talk about several examples of ideas that were presented in engaging ways, either visually, aurally or both. (See "Notes on Process," p. 12)

2• How do you react to the protests from the Toronto Vietnamese community, that are followed by Chomsky's comments in a BBC radio studio: **"I don't mind the denunciations, frankly. I mind the lies. I mean, intellectuals are very good at lying. They're professionals at it. You know, vilification is a wonderful technique. There's no way of responding to it...I mean, the person who throws the mud always wins because there's no way of responding to such charges."** (pp. 173-174)

3• Comment on the patterns of mud-slinging that emerged in the clashes over free speech in this video. Share any real-life encounters you may have had when whoever "throws the mud always wins."



Text written by  
Barry Duncan

**Unless otherwise  
noted, all page  
references are  
to the film's  
companion book  
*Manufacturing Consent:  
Noam Chomsky  
and the Media***

Mark Achbar ed., Montreal:  
Black Rose Books, 1994

4• Summarize the history of Chomsky's dealings with Faurisson. Do you think his defenders exploited Chomsky for their own purposes?

5• To what extent did you side with Chomsky? In your opinion, how well does Chomsky fare in this dispute over Faurisson's trial? Do you think that Chomsky carries the principles of free speech too far? What would you have done in those circumstances? Chomsky states the gist of his philosophy as follows: **"If you're in favour of freedom of speech, that means you're in favour of free speech precisely for views you despise, otherwise you're not in favour of freedom of speech."** (p. 184) Those who adhere strongly to Chomsky's position may wish to share their experiences — both positive and negative — in consistently holding to their principles during disputes.

6• Chomsky has written: **"By entering into the arena of argument and counter-argument, of technical feasibility and tactics, of foot-notes and citations, by accepting the presumption of legitimacy of debate on certain issues, one has already lost one's humanity."** (See pp. 188-191) How would you reconcile these observations with his dealing with Faurisson and others who denied the Holocaust?

