



TRANSCRIPT

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Host: Roland Martin

Guests: Antoine Fuqua, Film Director

Mario Van Peebles, Film Director, Actor

Will Packer, Film Producer

Reginald Hudlin, Film Director, Writer

Farai Chideya, Author, Former Host of "News and Notes," NPR

Karen Grigsby Bates, Los Angeles Correspondent, NPR

Kelley Carter, Entertainment Journalist

Blair Underwood, Actor

Vanessa Williams, Actor

Brian White, Actor

Buddy Lewis, Comedian

Jonathan Slocumb, Comedian



TV One – Washington Watch
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K. Wills Transcripts

**(SEG-
MENT 1)**

MR. ROLAND MARTIN: Welcome to this special Hollywood edition of “Washington Watch.”

Two of the most powerful jobs in the film industry are director and producer, and we have four of them here today: Mario Van Peebles, who directed “New Jack City”; Antoine Fuqua, director of “Training Day” and “Brooklyn’s Finest”; plus Will Packer, producer of “Stomp the Yard” and co-founder of Rainforest films; and, of course, Reginald Hudlin, director of “House Party” and “Boomerang.”

Folks, welcome to “Washington Watch” here in Los Angeles. Glad you are here. Le- -- let’s jump right into this issue that has been bothering me. You have this visceral reaction to the movie “Precious,” and folks are saying, “That’s not representative of Black folks.” As a producer and directors and folks who’ve done big screen and small screen, does it bother you when individuals somehow so self-identify, they don’t want to watch something because they think, “That’s not me. That’s not the Black experience”?

MR. WILL PACKER: You know, it doesn’t bother me, as a producer – okay? As a content producer, I think that Lee Daniels made a film he has a right to make. He did not make that film for everybody, and I think we have to understand that. And I think that we’ve got filmmakers on this table, and what bothers me is the fact that people expect – because there’re so few African-American filmmakers – for us to be all things

to all people. It's just not going to happen. So, there is an audience that Lee made "Precious" for, that wants to see that.

There's also a large part of the African-American audience that says, "I want to go to the movies on Friday night for escapism. That's what I want. I don't want to be preached to. I don't want to see how bad things are. I don't want to be reminded of the past. I want to go, and I want to escape my reality, so give me something fun. Make something blow up. Make me laugh."

MR. MARTIN: Reggie, you've done "Coming to America," the movie that you did with Damon Wayans and Sam Jackson, and you – [unintelligible] – people saying, "Oh, my God, Reggie, that was an stereotype you used." Or, your whole deal is like, "Look. I'm just trying to make folks laugh."

MR. REGINALD HUDLIN: Well, my focus, whether it's a comedy, a drama – whatever – is to make movies about human beings. Right? And I find that if you make three-dimensional characters, it could be a movie about a gangster. It could be a movie about a pimp. It could be a movie about whatever you want, but you go, "Wow. That resonates with me on a human level, and I'm into it." And I think whether you're talking about "Super Fly," whether you're talking about "Training Day," whether you're talking a- -- you know, a- -- about "Precious," these are films that resonate with people, because they see a humanity in the characters.

MR. ANTOINE FUQUA: A- -- as Black people, we want our cake and [to] eat it, too. You know, we want – we don't – there's not enough material out there – movies for

them to go see [so] that they can have a broader opinion of themselves – of ourselves, really. A- -- and we want movies where we're always righteous and the good guys and – and sexy, romantic stuff. And – and – and, yet, when Denzel plays a gangster, a dirty cop who dies at the end, we get upset about that – and then he wins an Oscar.

Well, you know, he's an *artist*. He should be allowed to do everything.

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. FUQUA: / should be allowed to do everything. Al Pacino made "Scarface." You know, "[The] Godfather" was about gangsters, but that's a movie that we love. You know, I hear more Black people talk about "The Godfather" than, you know – than anything else.

MR. MARTIN: "Scarface" – same thing.

MR. FUQUA: And "Scarface."

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. HUDLIN: But, you know –

MR. FUQUA: -- I mean?

MR. HUDLIN: -- but –

MR. FUQUA: We – we put – we put too much – ... sometimes we put way too much of ourselves into a film.

MR. HUDLIN: -- but – but I – I mean to be fair, the fact is there *is* something to the fact that these representations go around the world.

MR. PACKER: Absolutely.

MR. HUDLIN: And when you travel around the world, these representations –
and –

MR. FUQUA: Wait. Whoa. Hold on. Hold on.

MR. HUDLIN: -- people make assumptions.

MR. FUQUA: No, no. See, that's the problem. We have a problem here,
because it's *education*. Opera is *all* about violence.

MR. HUDLIN: There's no *question*.

MR. FUQUA: Okay?

MR. HUDLIN: But no, no.

MR. FUQUA: Opera is all –

MR. HUDLIN: But –

MR. FUQUA: -- about – [crosstalk]- --

MR. HUDLIN: -- I'm not – but – but –

MR. FUQUA: -- and – and –

MR. HUDLIN: -- but that – but –

MR. FUQUA: -- but no one's judging opera – no one's looking at the people, the
Italian the Baroque Caravaggio, as a bad guy, and that means all the Italians are bad
people; but w- --

MR. HUDLIN: -- but, you know –

MR. MARTIN: [Crosstalk] – you just said, it sounds great.

MR. FUQUA: -- and just – you –

MR. HUDLIN: -- you – but the botto- --

MR. FUQUA: -- know what I mean? But if we do it –

MR. HUDLIN: -- the botto- -- the bottom line is we are – we think that our pr- -- our image problems as a race are PR problems, and they're *power* problems. Okay? If you have po- --

MR. MARTIN: The person in power.

MR. HUDLIN: -- meaning that if you have power, you can say what you want and – and depict what you want, 'cause you're going to look – but if you try to do something negative to me because of your wrong assumptions about me, I will deal you a consequence. Because of our inability to deal a consequence [to] the people who mistreat us as a people, we rely on secondary things, like movies, to present a better image of us, to say, "No. We're human beings. Treat us fairly."

MR. MARTIN: I – I wa- -- I want to deal with this – thi- -- this whole notion, because when you are a director, when you're a producer, when you're a[n] owner, the reality is you are in that power position. But your deal is like, "Look. This is a business" –

MR. PACKER: Absolutely.

MR. MARTIN: -- "and I have to make some commercial decisions when it comes to making money."

MR. PACKER: Absolutely.

MR. MARTIN: And so how – ho- -- how do you do the balance of "I really want

this particular character,” or, “I want this particular actress, but you know what? Also, I need somebody who’s going to be in this film who will get seats” – “who will get butts in the seats”?

MR. PACKER: Absolutely. I mean let’s be real about it. We all work in Hollywood. We all work under the same economic imperative. At the end of the day, that is what it’s about. I am considered a somewhat successful producer, because I have had films that have made money. I love my people. I *know* my people. I know what they will come out in droves for. They will not come out in droves the same way for, say, a “Precious” as they will for, say, a “Coming to America.” Now, that does not mean that we don’t have a responsibility to come out and put positive imagery forth, because we do. With all due respect, I love – you’re right about opera, but opera does not speak to a race of people that have been oppressed and have the same experience that we have. So, we *do* have to be responsible for those images, while at the same time balancing the fact that if – like, Lee has kind of done a really, really good job – Mario as well – of walking that line of being able to – to make art, to be able to make what is considered high art by kind of the mainstream industry, and do that with Black faces in front of the camera.

MR. FUQUA: Let me ask you a –

MR. PACKER: It’s –

MR. FUQUA: -- a question.

MR. PACKER: -- very, very difficult to do that, because the – the movies that are

being green-lighted and funded are movies that they feel will put butts in seats on a Friday –

MR. FUQUA: But a- -- but –

MR. PACKER: -- night.

MR. FUQUA: -- as a director, it's our responsibility to expand the horizon of the art. W- -- you can't say that Black people won't go see or d- -- or opera doesn't speak to Black people. Black people – some Black people – *some* Black people don't know the origins of opera. They don't understand that a lot of great artists came from what you might consider the streets. You know what I mean?

MR. PACKER: Right.

MR. FUQUA: That's – they – they – you have to understand that most artists came from nothing. That's why, when I make movies, I make them in the ghe- -- why I made "Training Day" in the ghetto, when I made "Brooklyn's Finest," in the ghetto – 'cause I want these kids to see that they can do it – that they can be painters.

MR. MARTIN: But – but –

MR. FUQUA: They can be artists.

MR. MARTIN: -- even with that, even with the stellar in "Brooklyn's Finest," you had a hell of a time trying to get that financed –

MR. FUQUA: A *hell* –

MR. MARTIN: -- because of the –

MR. FUQUA: -- of a time.

MR. MARTIN: -- type of film.

MR. FUQUA: *Absolutely.*

MR. MARTIN: I mean you – Don Cheadle, Richard Gere. I mean you had Wesley Snipes.

MR. FUQUA: [Crosstalk] – Wesley Snipes.

MR. MARTIN: I mean you had some amazing folks –

MR. FUQUA: That's right.

MR. MARTIN: -- but you still ran up against the deal of, "Man, look. Is this going to make money, or not?"

MR. FUQUA: But – but I did it for a *cost*, though. I did it for a price. Knowing that, I did it for a certain price.

MR. MARTIN: Mario?

MR. MARIO VAN PEEBLES: Well, a – a while ago, I did a film on my dad, called "Badass," about his experience making –

MR. MARTIN: Great film.

MR. VAN PEEBLES: -- his film –

MR. MARTIN: Great film.

MR. VAN PEEBLES: -- thank you, brother.

MR. PACKER: *Absolutely.*

MR. VAN PEEBLES: Thank you. And it was interesting. I f- -- I went around to the studios with it, and the studios looked at it and said, "We love it. Can we put some

hip-hop guys in there and turn it into a comedy?” And I wound up saying, “You know what? I’ll do it myself.” And I did it in 18 days for a million dollars. Now, here’s what *The New York Times* sa- –

MR. MARTIN: Same thing your dad did. [Laughs.]

MR. VAN PEEBLES: E- -- exactly. Here’s my point. So, to do that vision, where you had a – a multiracial crew under the leadership of a Black director – so, it was really an empowering message across color lines. The same day that came out, a movie called “Soul Plane” came out. And *The Times* wrote, “Both movies are interesting”

MR. MARTIN: Yeah.

MR. PACKER: Yeah.

MR. VAN PEEBLES: “‘Soul Plane,’ made by a big studio for 16 million, says the idea of Black folks running an airline is laughable. ‘Badass’ says the idea of these folks coming together and making a hip film across racial lines is a possibility.” It doesn’t mean that either film is – is ... bad or good. We should have our “Soul Planes”; they have their “Dumb and Dumbers.” I think it’s the lack of the – we don’t see a lot of “Beautiful Minds,” or “Good Will Huntings,” or those other films. We’re – we’re – [it’s] the lack of choice.

So, I think it’s this – w- -- we’re 33 percent of the film-watching population, Roland, and 2 percent of the filmmaking population.

MR. MARTIN: Reggie.

MR. HUDLIN: What drives me crazy [is] when people talk about Black films and

positive and negative images, but we never talk about it as art. We don't say –

MR. MARTIN: First of all, what the hell is – what is a –

MR. HUDLIN: -- we- --

MR. MARTIN: -- “Black film,” anyway?

MR. HUDLIN: -- no, no. Well, fir- -- first of all –

MR. MARTIN: That's – I want to get to –

MR. HUDLIN: -- just go – but – no, no –

MR. MARTIN: -- get to that later, but –

MR. HUDLIN: -- but – but wait –

MR. MARTIN: -- go ahead.

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. HUDLIN: -- see, let's just back up – okay? You know, that movie wasn't successful. Well, you know what? *It wasn't good!*

MR. FUQUA: Right.

MR. HUDLIN: *Bad movies tend to suck!*

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. HUDLIN: *They tend to not make money!*

MR. MARTIN: But when you hear, “This is a Black film,” what's your reaction?

MR. PACKER: I – well, I'm not surprised. And I'll tell you right now from a Hollywood – there's a general macro perspective [that] a “Black film” is –

MR. MARTIN: More than two –

MR. PACKER: -- any film that's --

MR. MARTIN: -- Black folks in it?

MR. PACKER: -- got more than *one*.

MR. MARTIN: [Laughs.]

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. PACKER: If you[‘ve] got two Black people in front of the camera that are not named “Will,” or “Denz,” or somebody like that --

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. PACKER: -- guess what? You[‘ve] got a “Black film,” and they will s- -- call it “urban.” You know, I’m sure you heard that a million times.

MR. FUQUA: Oh, yeah.

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. PACKER: And you’ve got Richard Gere and Ethan Hawk, and I’m sure they were like, “So, you[‘ve] got this urban film.”

MR. FUQUA: Absolutely.

MR. PACKER: I know that’s how they --

MR. HUDLIN: When a --

MR. PACKER: -- that’s the code.

MR. HUDLIN: -- when a movie star gets to a certain level, he’s no longer considered Black by a Hollywood studio. So, say --

MR. MARTIN: Sort of like Oprah, Tiger Woods, Michael Jordan.

MR. HUDLIN: Oh, yeah.

MR. MARTIN: They're not Black.

MR. HUDLIN: Yeah.

MR. MARTIN: They're –

MR. HUDLIN: And Egypt –

MR. MARTIN: -- colorless.

MR. HUDLIN: -- is not in Africa. So –

[CHUCKLING.]

MR. HUDLIN: -- what it means, as a – as a political definition, is that Black only counts in the negative, meaning that if we can't count Will Smith movies and Denzel movies as Black films –

MR. FUQUA: Right.

MR. HUDLIN: -- then "Black" is only applied in Hollywood terms as a pejorative, meaning, "This film has a ceiling as to how much money it can make."

MR. MARTIN: And now the argument is it can't make money internationally.

MR. PACKER: Absolutely.

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. MARTIN: Therefore, it is truly a "Black film."

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. FUQUA: Absolutely.

MR. HUDLIN: International is the new South.

MR. PACKER: Absolutely.

MR. HUDLIN: But here's the thing. All these – all these barriers -- they're like the Berlin Wall. They seem like they're going to stand forever, and then they vanish.

Okay? I mean Mario –

MR. FUQUA: It's all in the work.

MR. HUDLIN: -- Mario and I have –

MR. FUQUA: It's all in the success –

MR. HUDLIN: -- been doing this –

MR. FUQUA: -- of the work.

MR. HUDLIN: -- since – since – since Jesus was a boy and – [chuckles] –

MR. VAN PEEBLES: [Chuckles.]

MR. HUDLIN: -- and, you know, it's like – “House Party” came out. It made a lot of money. He got the green light for “New Jack City.” You know, we – and we've seen it in the converse. We have s- -- you know, I've had movies that were about to go. Then some completely unrelated Black film didn't succeed, and then that movie went from a green light to a yellow light.

MR. VAN PEEBLES: We're, to some extent, in the same cinematic slave ship. And once we – you know, we're seeing a lot of folks break beyond that. We're seeing folks now directing movies having nothing to do with, you know, our culture, *per se*, that – that are African-American filmmakers. We're seeing people on TV.

MR. MARTIN: One of the first films you guys did, grassroots, e-mails – I mean it

sold – talk – talk about that –

MR. PACKER: Yeah.

MR. MARTIN: -- that particular movie –

MR. PACKER: Yeah.

MR. MARTIN: -- and how today, with Twitter and Facebook and Black Planet and all these different mechanisms, you're able to operate in a different way of reaching your core audience.

MR. PACKER: Absolutely. You[ve] got to have it. You[ve] got to stay above the curve. That's where the audience *is* now. They're on Facebook. They're on Twitter. So, with my films, which, by and large, are –

MR. MARTIN: And the first one was?

MR. PACKER: -- made – [the] first one was “Trois.” I made a film called “Trois”, totally independent. Hollywood cared nothing about it. [I] made it with \$200,000, went and sent a bunch of e-mails. A million dollars later, everybody in Hollywood was like, “Who the hell is Will Packer?” “We need to get him.” “Who is he?” “Who is his agent?” I didn't even *have* an agent.

MR. FUQUA: Um-hum.

MR. PACKER: *Still* don't have one, because it worked without them. I still use that same kind of grassroots method. Other filmmakers have done the same. Tyler Perry is one. Go out, reach the people directly – because Hollywood is in *Hollywood*. The majority of the money that my films make [is] so far away from this coast. They are

in the Atlantas and the Alabamas and the Charlotte, North Carolinas; and the Miamis and the Detroits – and that’s where that audience is. So, how do I reach that audience? I can’t depend on a big media spin.

MR. MARTIN: Do – do you guys like the fact that, all of a sudden now, with documentaries, with TV One, with BET, with direct to – direct to video, with video on demand, there’re so many more options out there to get your work out? How – you know, granted, everybody still wants to do the big film; but how do you feel about just these so many different avenues opening up, where, frankly, the Internet has torn the walls down that were obstructing people [from] getting their work out? And now it’s made it possible to really speak to a wider audience – not just here in the U.S., but globally.

MR. PACKER: Yeah, I mean – look, obviously, s- – you know, You Tube and all these social networks leads to a democratization. And as – and, again, this was the – the makeup room discussion. We were talking about this is going to change the face of media, *period*. And certainly, greater democratization makes it easier for Black folks to say what they want to say, and we’re doing it already.

MR. PACKER: I always feel like hip-hop has kind of been on the cutting edge and –

MR. MARTIN: Yep.

MR. PACKER: -- ahead of the game. When I released my film, I did what I saw people like Master P do. They went straight to the people –

MR. MARTIN: It's like –

MR. PACKER: -- and sold out of the trunk.

MR. MARTIN: -- so- – sold their – back of the trunk – right.

MR. PACKER: I didn't know any Hollywood distributors. I went straight to the people and walked around Detroit and said, "This is my movie. It's showing at that theater" –

MR. MARTIN: But is- --

MR. PACKER: -- "on Saturday."

MR. MARTIN: -- isn't it –

MR. PACKER: "Please be there."

MR. MARTIN: -- still the problem the – who controls the distribution and who owns those particular channels?

MR. HUDLIN: No, no. It's c- -- it's becoming less and less, 'cause the fa- -- like Will –

MR. PACKER: Absolutely.

MR. HUDLIN: -- said, w- -- I mean the mainstr- -- I mean people always go, "It's a conspiracy! They're sitting around, rubbing their hands together." No. *They don't care!* They're not *interested!*

MR. PACKER: They want the *money* –

MR. HUDLIN: And –

MR. PACKER: -- who makes money.

MR. HUDLIN: -- that is not a problem; that is an opportunity.

MR. FUQUA: That's right.

MR. MARTIN: Gentlemen, I love this conversation.

Let me make it clear, folks. One of the reasons why TV One was created, one of the reasons why we wanted to do "Washington Watch" [is] not just [to] talk about politics, but to give individuals like you this kind of platform. And I'll go ahead and say it. "Meet the Press" does not call you. "This Week" does not call you. "Face the Nation" does not call you. The Sunday shows do not call you to get your opinion.

MR. VAN PEEBLES: Hold on. My phone's ringing.

MR. MARTIN: And I just --

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. MARTIN: -- and I just want --

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. MARTIN: -- and I just believe -- I fir- -- firmly believe --

MR. PACKER: That's just BET. Don't worry about it.

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. MARTIN: -- I firmly believe that there're people who're in Hollywood outside of Angelina Jolie, George Clooney and Brad Pitt who have opinions on policy, or an opinion on what's happening. So, I appreciate it.

MR. PACKER: Thanks for --

MR. MARTIN: Will, Antoine --

MR. PACKER: -- what you do.

MR. MARTIN: -- Reggie, Mario, thanks a bunch.

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. VAN PEEBLES: Thanks for giving us a voice, brother.

MR. MARTIN: Appreciate it.

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. FUQUA: -- real. My *man*.

MR. MARTIN: There's much more to come on this star-studded special edition of "Washington Watch" from Los Angeles. Up next, our news panel with author Farai Chideya, NPR news correspondent Karen Grigsby Bates, and entertainment reporter Kelley Carter.

[END OF SEGMENT.]

**(SEG-
MENT 2)**

MR. MARTIN: Our "Washington Watch" panelists are known for telling it like it is, and I don't expect anything different from our guests here on the West Coast. Joining me are Farai Chideya, author and former host of "News and Notes" on National Public Radio; Karen Grigsby Bates, Los Angeles correspondent for NPR News; and former *USA Today* celebrity reporter Kelley Carter.

Folks, welcome to "Washington Watch" from Los Angeles – Karen, Farai. Kelley, you're the newbie on the panel, so we'll – we'll try to take it a little be easy on you.

MS. KELLEY CARTER: Be nice. Be nice.

MR. MARTIN: All right. We'll try to. We'll try to.

[CHUCKLING.]

MR. MARTIN: Obviously, we're in the land of – of Hollywood and movies and television – all that good stuff. And it's amazing how we still have this conversation about power – Black power in Hollywood and also images in terms of what we see. And so much has changed, but do you believe, though, African-Americans are still fighting this constant battle in terms of how we are portrayed on the big screen, on the small screen? And are we making any advances? Any at all?

MS. KAREN GRIGSBY BATES: Yeah, we're making *some* advances, but obviously there's still a question about how people are portrayed. I mean I've talked to Black people who've said, "I won't go see 'Precious.' I just hate the idea of it. I hate that" – "that White people think that this is all we are. And you know that's what's going to happen, because," you know, "it's up there on the big screen. It's been nominated for lots of awards, and I just think that the whole thing is dreadful." You know, "My mother never treated me that way."

So, you *do* have – you *do* have a certain sensitivity. And the – the biggest problem, Roland, is that there's no – there -- there's not enough range. You know? For every Roseanne Barr, there was a Debbie Reynolds, or –

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MS. BATES: -- Beaver Cleaver's mama. So, people would look and go, "Oh,

well,” you know, “all White women are not Roseanne.” They’re not necessarily looking at Mo’Nique and saying, “All Black women aren’t Precious’s mom.”

MR. MARTIN: Kelly, what amazes me with that is – I mean look. There – you know, people internalize – the same thing happened with “The Cosby Show”: “Oh, my God. That’s not real – a Black do-“ – “doctor and a Black lawyer.” And I’m like, “Come on, guys. It’s *one show*.” Every movie, every show cannot show every facet of Black America.

MS. CARTER: But I think that’s the fear – is that there’s this monolith[ic], you know, image and portrayal of – of Black people; and I think that’s why you probably find people who refuse to see movies like “Precious” – because that’s not their experience, and they’re – they’re fearful that mainstream America will look at that as the Black experience.

MR. MARTIN: But is *Madea* their experience?

MS. CARTER: I- -- you know –

MR. MARTIN: And we – and we will go watch Tyler Perry’s films.

MS. CARTER: -- *absolutely*. And, you know, for some people, it *is* their experience. [Chuckles.] I mean his fans are pretty –

[CHUCKLING.]

MS. CARTER: -- diehard. I remember I wrote a review for *The Chicago Tribune* about “Why Did I Get Married?” I thought it was probably the best of his films, but –

MR. MARTIN: Yeah?

MS. CARTER: -- I -- I mea- -- but, you know, I mean I -- I certainly said some critical things about it. I got *berated* by his fans that told me I knew no- -- they didn't know I was --

MS. BATES: E-mails --

MS. CARTER: -- African-American.

MS. BATES: -- death threats.

MS. CARTER: Told me I didn't know [anything] about the Black experience, that *absolutely* grandmothers wield machine guns, because that's what you have to *do* --

MR. MARTIN: [Chuckles.]

MS. CARTER: -- you know, in this society to keep your family straight. So, I think that that *is* an experience for African-Americans, just like, you know, "The Best Man" i- -- that -- that's a movie that *I* related to. That was *my* experience with *my* friends from college. So, you know, I -- I think it just kind of depends, but I think that that's the fear -- that we'll be stereotyped as this one, particular group of people.

MR. MARTIN: But, Farai, what is interesting is -- and we talked to Wesley Snipes and Antoine Fuqua and others, and what has changed has been the distribution system. And that is it used to be just the big screen, just the small screen; but the reality is you're seeing a *ton* of movies -- romance movies, family movies -- going straight to DVD. You obviously ha- -- you still have BET. You have TV One, but you're seeing stu- -- lots of online [media]. So, it's not as if we're not seeing a plethora of productions that showcase. And so are we actually seeking that stuff out? Or, are we

falling into the trap of causing someone else to tell us what we're like and what we look like?

MS. FARAI CHIDEYA: Well, I think that there's different patterns, very much in line with what you're saying, of consumption. There are – you know, I was at the hairdresser the other day, and a guy comes in selling, you know, bootleg DVDs.

MR. MARTIN: Which I cannot –

MS. CHIDEYA: I won't say –

MR. MARTIN: -- *stand*.

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. MARTIN: I mean I – I will put –

MS. CHIDEYA: -- I'm not – I will not say which hairdresser shop this is. I'm just saying –

[CROSSTALK.]

MS. CHIDEYA: -- there's a whole – there's a *whole* economy –

MR. MARTIN: -- I cannot –

MS. CHIDEYA: -- there's a whole – you want to talk –

MR. MARTIN: -- and I *hate* that!

MS. CHIDEYA: -- you want to talk about –

MR. MARTIN: And I'm telling you –

MS. CHIDEYA: -- straight to DVDs?

MR. MARTIN: -- I cannot *stand* it.

MS. CHIDEYA: How about straight to *bootleg*? You know? [Chuckles.]

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MS. CHIDEYA: There's a whole lot of movies that are on bootleg before they're even in the theaters.

MS. BATES: Absolutely.

MS. CHIDEYA: So, there's, like, the level of economy that does not funnel any money back to the people who actually produced the –

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MS. CHIDEYA: -- movie, which has its own complications for building wealth and building equity stakes. There [are] things that go into theaters. There [are] some very interesting distribution models being developed, particularly around documentaries, where outfits like Netflix do a limited theatrical distribution –

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MS. CHIDEYA: -- and then they do a main DVD and download distribution. So, hopefully, some of these new models will actually get more Black folks in the pipeline.

MR. MARTIN: And I think what is great [is] if you look at the movies that Will Packer did -- one of the early films – I mean they were one of the early pioneers in terms of really the grassroots social media sort of generating the attention. And I think one of the greatest things for African-Americans when it comes to entertainment when it comes to movies and music is the evolution of Facebook and Twitter, because all of a sudden, you're communicating directly with fans. You go to Facebook, Tyler Perry has

700,000 followers on that particular page.

MS. BATES: He has been –

MR. MARTIN: That's helpful.

MS. BATES: -- *very* smart about marketing himself in that way. I mean I remember when "Madea Goes to Jail" came out. And I –

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MS. BATES: -- actually did a story on this for NPR, and I was at the Kodak Theatre. And one of the things he came out and said before the – the play [sic] – even started was, "My brothers, my sisters, I love you. Please, if you have a hidden video camera, you're taking money out of this brother's pocket. We need to put it back into the film, so we can" – so, he's talking exactly about what –

MR. MARTIN: And I was in –

MS. BATES: -- you were talking –

MR. MARTIN: -- I was in –

MS. BAES: -- about.

MR. MARTIN: -- DC, watching the screening of "Brooklyn's Finest," and let me tell you something. The ushers – I *swear* they were like the CIA. I mean –

MS. BATES: Oh, yes.

MR. MARTIN: -- if – if – I'm serious. Th- --

MS. BATES: They – they stalked the aisles --

MR. MARTIN: -- they saw one guy –

MS. BATES: -- at Tyler's thing, too.

MR. MARTIN: -- with a camera --

MS. BATES: Yeah.

MR. MARTIN: -- and they knew he came in. And, trust me, that one person trained on him the entire time. So, they were like, "No. You pull that camera out, we throw your behind outta here."

MS. BATES: Yeah, yeah.

MR. MARTIN: But wha- -- what's interesting about -- you -- I'm glad you brought up the -- Tyler Perry, because you see folks, like Spike Lee, who've been critical of Tyler Perry's films. And folks have their different opinions. I *get* that, but what I appreciate about Tyler Perry, see, he's ma- -- he's making the business model and the control model, owning his own works, as opposed to letting somebody else determine that. And I think too many folks are not appreciating *that* aspect of him. "Oh, his movies are not that good, needs to be better." Look, at the end of the day, this is a person who is in control of his product.

MS. BATES: Although being in control of his product, he needs to lead by doing one thing that I don't think he's done so far. He hadn't done [it] last year when we reported on it, anyway, which is the unionization of his staff. You know, this is a *huge* issue in Hollywood -- not just the before-the-camera control, but what happens behind the camera, who the --

MS. CHIDEYA: There was a labor protest -- right? [Crosstalk] --

MS. BATES: -- you know, the cameramen s- -- are -- the cameramen -- the --
[CROSSTALK.]

MR. MARTIN: But we hear- -- but we heard --
[CROSSTALK.]

MR. MARTIN: -- the exact, same thing when CNN was created by going to Atlanta, versus being in New York. But, again, that has always been a business debate as well, versus union and nonunion.

MS. BATES: But the unions are still powerful, and the way to get more Black people into those unions is to have them on unionized sets. You know, get them into the union, get union work. They've got union healthcare plans, union whatever; and that runs the spectrum, because, otherwise, you're going to see old White guys running everything -- which is kind of how it *looks* when you go on to many sets --

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MS. BATES: -- including sets that have Black leading characters.

MR. MARTIN: Kelley?

MS. CARTER: I mean I -- I think, love him or hate him, you have to respect Tyler Perry's hustle. I mean you look at the first film he did, "Diary of a Mad, Black Woman." [It] cost --

MR. MARTIN: -- him \$5½ million to produce.

MS. CARTER: It grossed theatrically more than \$50 million. I mean those numbers are ridiculous, and he did that based off the strength of the Black churches;

based off of having social media; e-mailing his fans –

MS. BATES: [Crosstalk.]

MS. CARTER: -- telling them to go out and see this movie.

MS. BATES: Yeah.

MS. CARTER: It blew Hollywood away, because he, quite frankly, is the only guy in Holly- -- or, the only – the only filmmaker who can make movies outside of the studio system. And he's critic-proof. I mean it – it baffles me, you know –

MR. MARTIN: Which has a legacy –

MS. CARTER: -- as a critic.

MR. MARTIN: -- in BI- -- in – in Black history in terms –

MS. BATES: Oscar Micheaux.

MR. MARTIN: -- of Oscar Micheaux and so many others, who said –

MS. BATES: Yeah.

MS. CARTER: Yeah.

MR. MARTIN: -- “You know what? Fine. You don't want to tell our story. I got that.”

MS. CARTER: Absolutely.

MR. MARTIN: “My people know me.”

MS. CARTER: Absolutely. I mean his – his – the highest-rated film that he ever got by critics got a -- [chuckles] – 16 percent rating; but, yet, he made \$75 million last year.

MS. BATES: And he will tell you in a minute, “I’m not making films for them. If they come” – “I’d love for them to come and see the film. I’m making them for my mom, my” –

MS. CARTER: Right.

MS. BATES: -- “aunts, my second-grade teacher” – all those people that won’t go to so-called “mainstream” films.

MR. MARTIN: And I have –

MS. CARTER: Absolutely.

MR. MARTIN: -- no problem with that, because, again, what he is saying is, “Build your audience.”

And so, Farai, we’re seeing this – Black newspapers, Black magazines. Others are realizing that, look, if you serve your audience, they will be there for you – but you can’t ignore them.

MS. CHIDEYA: Yeah, and – and I do think, like you said, with social media, so much of it is about creating a multidimensional conversation, so that you can reach people who – you know, for example, when people look at the film audience, in general, they may say, “Well, it’s not enough to just target Black folks,” but when you aggregate Black audiences, you’ve got a goldmine.

MR. MARTIN: And when you throw in the few Whites that might show up and Hispanics that show up, all of a sudden – and, again, holding your costs down, and you’re generating 50, 60, 70 million; and when it comes to the profit margin, [the] return

on investment, folks will keep saying, “Okay. Call that person again,” because at the end of the day, it’s about making money.

MS. CHIDEYA: It’s about making –

MR. MARTIN: It’s about –

MS. CHIDEYA: -- money.

MR. MARTIN: -- gettin’ paid.

MS. CARTER: It is.

MS. BATES: Absolutely.

MR. MARTIN: Karen, Farai, Kelley, we certainly appreciate it. Thanks a bunch.

MS. BATES: Thanks for –

MS. CARTER: Thanks.

MS. BATES: -- having us.

MS. CHIDEYA: Thanks.

MR. MARTIN: All right. We’ll do it again.

Coming up next on this special Hollywood edition of “Washington Watch,” actors Blair Underwood, Brian White and Vanessa Williams.

[END OF SEGMENT.]

**(SEG-
MENT 3)**

MR. MARTIN: My next guests know how to keep their audiences wanting more.

Here with me now are actors Bair Underwood, Brian White and Vanessa Williams.

Blair, Vanessa, Brian, welcome to “Washington Watch” in Los Angeles.

MR. BLAIR UNDERWOOD: Thank you, Roland.

MS. VANESSA WILLIAMS: [Crosstalk.]

MR. BRIAN WHITE: Thank you.

MR. MARTIN: Let's – let's get right into this thing. All of you are in front of the camera in terms of – in movies and films and – you name it. But all of a sudden, you're seeing so many folks make that transition to behind the camera. Is it because of control and power?

MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah –

MR. WHITE: Yeah.

MS. WILLIAMS: -- in a word.

MR. UNDERWOOD: Yeah.

MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah – [chuckles].

MR. WHITE: Simply.

MR. UNDERWOOD: [Unintelligible] – you know, being to create your own destiny and not have to be beholden to a studio, or a network, or anybody else. And, you know, ma- -- today, with the technology, you can take your *cell phone* and make videos and tell stories. It's about storytelling – storytelling and marketing those stories.

MR. WHITE: That's it in a nutshell. If you own the cameras, you can decide what to put in front of them, who's put in front of them, what stories are told, how they're stol- -- told, the perspective. And, you know, that's crucial, important, 'cause we've never had that kind of power, authority before –

MS. WILLIAMS: Exactly.

MR. WHITE: -- in this business.

MR. MARTIN: I don't think people truly understand this whole notion of the green-light process, who's actually sitting in that particular seat. I mean you hear these stories about so-and-so, who's a vice president here, who's over here; but at the end of the day, you don't have, to my knowledge, one person -- African-American -- sitting in a position to sit there and say, "Yes, do it."

MR. WHITE: No, there's not.

MS. WILLIAMS: But the beautiful thing about how the technology has leveled the playing field? You know, about ten years ago, Bill Duke and his [Actor's] Boot Camp, who was honored just this week at the DGA, was talking about we don't need for permission -- [to] ask for permission. It's like take your phone camera --

MR. WHITE: That's *it*.

MR. UNDERWOOD: Right.

MR. WHITE: *Do* it.

MS. WILLIAMS: -- and create whatever you want to say, and put it up virally and create your audience -- and your well stream. It's p- -- it's economics. It's all of that stuff. We don't have to wait for some big okay from someone sitting in a suit. And the whole thing is changing right beneath -- right be- -- you know, beneath our feet -- that we'd *better* get on the frontlines of, like, well, how are we going to control this -- this medium. The -- the Internet has exploded the whole thing.

MR. MARTIN: I- -- is it possible to envision and actually see a Black United Artists?

MR. WHITE: There's a – there's a renaissance going on in – in Hollywood with all brown people – all minorities. We're seeing a comeuppance [sic], especially this year with "Precious." And, again, it's a call to action. If we don't support quality products – quality TV shows, quality films – a- -- as a community; if we don't put our money in there, not bootleg; make sure that the box office goes up, that the awareness is up, things aren't going to change. So, we all have a personal responsibility –

MS. WILLIAMS: But you're [crosstalk] –

MR. WHITE: -- collectively.

MS. WILLIAMS: -- all those folks at the top getting together and say, "This is what we want to see, and this is how we're going to see it" – and we're going to pull up the brothers and sisters fro- -- from – you know, who are looking, scratching at the door to co- -- to come in and say, "Let's develop your talent." "Let's develop these next projects." So, it's – *yeah*, it's about our coming together. When you gon' get – start the media[?]?

[LAUGHTER.]

MS. WILLIAMS: [Chuckles.]

MR. WHITE: You hit the nail on the head about it starting at the top, 'cause those people have fought and scratched and clawed to get to the top –

MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah.

MR. WHITE: -- in a very specific way. It's not the same way that I have to go about things. So, now they -- they've got their position, and they're protecting it. You have to undo that sense of ha- -- needing to protect --

MS. WILLIAMS: Well, I don't necessarily --

MR. WHITE: -- things to necessarily get to --

MS. WILLIAMS: -- it's -- think it's about protection and -- *completely*, but they['ve] got to fight as hard, you know to -- to maintain --

MR. WHITE: -- to maintain.

MS. WILLIAMS: -- their status and to -- and to get out the movie as -- as anybody on the other rungs.

MR. WHITE: Well, it's like -- it's like the healthcare system. You're going to have to give up something to get it to change. If you're at the top, and you're making X amount of dollars, you're going to have to make a little bit less, have a little bit more -- little bit less control to let more people come into that community, so that we *do* have what you're talking about.

MR. UNDERWOOD: Yeah.

MR. MARTIN: It's interesting when -- when we talk about the new distribution channels, when you talk about what is available. It's interesting when African-Americans will also denigrate what is there. [I'll] give you an exa[mple]. When you talk about TV One, folks will say, "Oh, man, all you're doing is showing these old comedies and movies," and things along those lines; but the reality is "Lincoln Heights" is on TV

One.

MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah.

MR. UNDERWOOD: Yeah.

MR. MARTIN: Folks may not have *seen* it the first time.

MR. UNDERWOOD: Right.

MR. MARTIN: The Taye Diggs show that was on ABC didn't even get its full airing. I – I loved the show, and I'm like, "Man. I want to see the rest of the episodes." We have a platform for that particular show. And so all of a sudden, for African-Americans in Hollywood, there's now another outlet, another opportunity to be able to showcase wares.

MR. UNDERWOOD: That's it. That's it.

MR. MARTIN: And it's appreciated that it's actually there, versus saying, "Well, you should be doing this, this and this." Kind of like, "Yeah, but this is" –

MS. WILLIAMS: Now, you have –

MR. MARTIN: -- "what it is right now."

MS. WILLIAMS: -- to create the content and – and have the meeting at TV One. They're very open. They're very open to say, "What" – "What you got?" "What you got goin' on?" So, it's like – you know, among our peers, ... we can just come with the *ideas*.

MR. UNDERWOOD: I just figure you're going to always have complaints – to your point – but it's all about let's focus on what the – you know, what is the – what is

the progress- -- the progression that we have. And the fact that you have a platform like TV One, and other outlets – again, the Internet and o- -- and other places – you know, let's f- -- let's focus on the positive.

MR. MARTIN: We were – I – I remember when “Stomp the Yard” came out, and – and there was this reaction, which I just did not understand *at* all, even among some members of my own fraternity. And they actually had, you know, Alpha Phi Alpha removed from the film, which –

MS. WILLIAMS: Aw.

MR. MARTIN: -- to me, was stupid.

MR. UNDERWOOD: Yeah.

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. MARTIN: And it's like, “Okay, fine. Okay, fine. If you want to pay” – “pay a” ... you know, “a ... fee” – “licensing fee, that's fine.”

MS. WILLIAMS: Yeah.

MR. MARTIN: But what bothered me [was] folks were saying, “Well, you have this film, and so it's really glorifying an aspect of fraternities, as opposed to all the other things that we do.” And I'm going, “Okay, stop.” Let's just be honest. People are attending step shows, and they're not attending community service projects. But it's – but my attitude is the film *did* focus on academics. It did –

MR. WHITE: Yes.

MR. MARTIN: -- talk about family, the relationship that actually exists. And so

as an artist, does it drive you crazy when folks begin to want you to project *every, single thing* –

MR. WHITE: No.

MR. MARTIN: -- in one film? Are you like, “Look. We[’ve] got two hours.”

MS. WILLIAMS: A- --and – and –

MR. WHITE: And we[’ve] got to take steps.

MR. UNDERWOOD: That’s right.

MR. WHITE: One –

MS. WILLIAMS: -- and one –

MR. WHITE: -- step at a time.

MS. WILLIAMS: -- story, and – and, frankly, I *love* that step – [unintelligible] – all those muscles bulging. *Hey*, that was the *highlight* for me!

MR. MARTIN: [Laughs.]

[LAUGHTER, CROSSTALK.]

MR. MARTIN: -- hot flashes, right.

MS. WILLIAMS: Exactly! [Chuckles.] No, for real. But, no, we just – we – we can’t do everything. It’s one story. It’s one thing, and s- -- ... so it just speaks to the need for more, the need to cover all the bases. But one story can’t do that, and as an artist, I don’t feel responsible for that. I’m going to tell *my* story.

MR. MARTIN: And I’ll give you an example. One film that comes to mind that – when I talk about this film, folks are like, “*Huh?* “ – that I thought was one of the

strongest socially conscious films, that spoke to people: “Drop Squad.”

MR. UNDERWOOD: Ah!

MS. WILLIAMS: All *right*.

MR. UNDERWOOD: Eriq La Salle.

MS. WILLIAMS: Oh, yeah.

MR. WHITE: Yeah, yeah.

MS. WILLIAMS: And – and it just was under the radar – and maybe a little bit ahead of its time.

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. WHITE: Very much so.

MS. WILLIAMS: But, no. David was trying to do some major wake-up – *major* wake-up –

MR. MARTIN: T- -- talk –

MS. WILLIAMS: -- with that.

MR. MARTIN: -- about that. I mean tha- -- just – just what –

MS. WILLIAMS: We shot in D.C. We were on [the] Howard campus, and, you know, it was really about dealing with, you know, deprogramming this wayward brother and, you know, how we were going to bring him back to the fold. And he was very corporatized and very, like, “It’s all about White is right.” And, you know, / thought it was so progressive and profound. You know, we did it –

MR. UNDERWOOD: Right.

MS. WILLIAMS: -- Tico Wells was in it. It w- -- it was a -- it was amazing; but, no, it didn't have much traction -- at *all*. It -- the -- the ... indy circuit -- you know, the festival circuit was about as much traction as it got.

MR. MARTIN: -- and, look. I'm going to tell you. I mean I -- and, look, I -- I own the DV- --

MS. WILLIAMS: That's so *sweet* that you -- [crosstalk].

MR. MARTIN: -- oh, no, no. I -- no, *I own the DVD*.

MS. WILLIAMS: [Laughs.]

MR. MARTIN: No, *I own the DVD*, because, again, though, I mean -- first of all, I -- I'm always looking at different films, and I purposely buy DVDs of Black films for my library --

MS. WILLIAMS: Okay.

MR. MARTIN: -- for -- 'cause I have nine nieces, four nephews. So, I want them to understand that, look, whe- -- whether it's documentaries or other films, that, "Look, here's a different view that you may not be aware of." So, as they get older, they'll have access to it.

But another movie I want to bring up -- I talked about "Stomp the Yard," I talked about "Drop Squad." And, again, understanding the pressures that filmmakers and producers have, and that is when people begin to say, "I need you to put a rapper in the film. I need you to put a hip-hop song in the film," so ... it can have buy-in. That happened with "Asunder."

MR.UNDERWOOD: Yeah.

MR. MARTIN: Tim Reid* faced that as well. Folks were saying, “Okay. No” – “Put” – “Put some hip-hop in the music, then we’ll go ahead and put it out.” And f- -- he was like, “Okay.” It doesn’t fit with anything in the –

MS. WILLIAMS: In the – in –

MR. UNDERWOOD: At all. At all.

MR. MARTIN: -- in the doggone film.

MR. UNDERWOOD: At *all*. Yeah. No, he did. And Tim Reid directed and executive produced it, and – and, you know, it was a slice of Black America. ‘Cause people – what – what mainstream America or the world don’t really realize is were not –

MR. MARTIN: Crazy Black stalker. You know what I’m sayin’? I mean[?] White stalkers, Hispanic stalkers. He’s a *Black* stalker.

MR. UNDERWOOD: That’s right. That’s right.

[LAUGHTER.]

MS. WILLIAMS: They come in the rainbow.

MR. MARTIN: [Laughs.]

MR. UNDERWOOD: We come in different shades and sizes, and we have different cultural instincts. And this spoke to a different cultural instinct that the – the – the so-called buyers wanted to see, and they were telling us what the marketplace would bear – which didn’t – which didn’t hold true, ‘cause people talk about that film *to this day*.

MS. WILLIAMS: Yes.

MR. UNDERWOOD: So, that's why this show and conversations like this are important, for people to say, "Take your ideas, take your" – "your thoughts, take your technology and just *do it*."

MR. MARTIN: All right.

MS. WILLIAMS: *Thank you*, Roland.

MR. MARTIN: Blair, Vanessa, Brian, we appreciate it. Thanks a bunch.

MR. WHITE: Thank you.

MR. UNDERWOOD: Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMS: We appreciate you.

MR. MARTIN: All right. We'll do it again.

MR. UNDERWOOD: All right.

MS. WILLIAMS: God bless.

[END OF SEGMENT.]

**(SEG-
MENT 4)**

MR. MARTIN: If you want to get something to eat or drink, grab it now, because you'll want to be back for this next segment. Coming up, comedians Buddy Lewis and Jonathan Slocumb cut it up, and you know I couldn't help but join in on the fun.

During the election, I was sitting there one night – I'm on the air – and, of course, you know, I mean I'm clean ... as usual. And I get a text *while I'm working*, and someone says, "Brother, your pocket square is ... a little too large."

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. MARTIN: And I text[ed] back, “Well, that’s how it was *made*.” You know, it was a Chavoy pocket square.

[END OF SEGMENT.]

**(SEG-
MENT 5)**

MR. MARTIN: All right, gents. Welcome back to “Washington Watch” from Los Angeles. Glad you’re here.

MR. BUDDY LEWIS: Um-hum.

MR. MARTIN: Let’s jump right into this thing. Buddy, you are, so-called – or, self-proclaimed, the “world’s greatest comic golfer.”

MR. LEWIS: Yeah.

MR. MARTIN: But you’re kind of gimpy right now, ‘cause you – ‘cause you blew your knee out –

MR. LEWIS: Yeah.

MR. MARTIN: -- doing some kind of Omega dance. Was it, like, a voodoo dance or something?

[CHUCKLING.]

MR. JONATHAN SLOCUMB: Roland’s starting.

MR. LEWIS: I’m not even gon’ start. Okay.

MR. MARTIN: *What?*

MR. LEWIS: We’re not even gon’ start –

MR. MARTIN: Okay. I mean just because –

MR. LEWIS: -- with your little Alpha – little, you know, anger. You know, we gon' let that sub- --

MR. MARTIN: Look – I – look –

MR. LEWIS: -- that – we gon' let that subside.

MR. MARTIN: -- we'll let it subside. S- -- self-proclaimed the world's best comic golfer. So, I *gotta* ask you: Tiger Woods.

MR. LEWIS: Oh – [chuckles].

MR. MARTIN: Everybody's goin' in on Tiger. W- -- what –

MR. LEWIS: I – I – you know what? I don't kn- -- I don't know what the problem is, you know. What Tiger Woods should've come out and said – instead of apologizing, he should've just come out and said – [affecting a bug-eyed, manic expression] -- “I'm *Tiger Woods!*”

MR. MARTIN: Oh – [chuckles].

MR. SLOCUM: You mean that's it?

MR. LEWIS: And just walked out.

MR. MARTIN: Everybody was so – you know, just all the drama with Tiger and – was it just overkill?

MR. SLOCUM: I- -- it was, but I want to – first of all, I want to – I want to welcome Tiger Woods to Black America. He pro- -- he's finally Black, because before, he wasn't quite Black. Now he's, like, a hundred percent Black.

MR. MARTIN: [Chuckles.]

MR. SLOCUMB: And America's mad at 'im, because, you know, he's a Black man, and he had all these White women. If he had just – if you gon' *cheat*, cheat with a real Black *woman*. You know, it would –

MR. MARTIN: And what's the difference?

MR. SLOCUMB: -- that would've made things better for him, 'cause he would've gotten everything in one package, 'cause a Black woman can give you everything. If he'd married Black, he'd 've been fine. I just believe in that. I – you know, I just believe there's nothing better than a Black woman. I'm just – I'm just biased. I married one. You know, my momma is one, for those that didn't know. You know? So, Black women do it *right*. And he wouldn't 've had those problems.

MR. LEWIS: No, he would've had some problems.

MR. SLOCUMB: No, no. *Some* problems.

MR. LEWIS: He woulda had --

MR. SLOCUMB: He would've *had* problems.

MR. LEWIS: -- some problems.

MR. MARTIN: But it probably wouldn't have been a golf club.

MR. LEWIS: Uh, ye- -- naw, it would've been her *brothers*.

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. LEWIS: [Laughs.] 'Cause he – he woulda been beatin' his tail. [Chuckles.]

MR. MARTIN: Jon, I gotta ask you. You – you make a point, you know, we ...

live in a world now where – where if you really want to be a hot comic, you’ve got to be on edge. You’ve got to be dirty. You’ve got to say *anything* that comes to mind, but you – but you’ve made a point in your career about being a “clean” comedian. Looking back, though, if you look at the success of other people, have you ever said, “Maybe this wasn’t the right move”?

MR. SLOCUMB: Never said it. My – my goal has always been just to let people know that there are – there are *options*. You know, Black people are not one-dimensional. And Black people cuss, but then there’re some Black people who don’t cuss, you know. So, I want to keep –

MR. MARTIN: I mean / cuss. I mean – I mean I’m ... married –

MR. SLOCUMB: Not – [crosstalk].

MR. MARTIN: -- to a minister, but – I don’t drink. I don’t smoke. But I’ll cuss ya *out*.

MR. SLOCUMB: That – well, that’s okay –

MR. MARTIN: [Chuckles.]

MR. SLOCUMB: -- you know. And people want – you know, people want to hear comedians who talk like them, you know. So, I’ve never been the cat that said, you know, because of my lang- – I love – Katt Williams is one of my favorites.

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. SLOCUMB: I *love* – you know, I think if he was here today, he would have – [unintelligible – doing his Katt Williams impersonation] – “I would like to tell everybody

today that what” – “I’m on ‘Washington Watch’ with Roland Martin. I’mma have to get up on a pedestal, so can reach” – you know. That’s –

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. SLOCUMB: -- my thing. But – so, I – I don’t – you know, I’ve never had any regrets. One time, I cussed. I entered the Red Foxx Comedy Search years ago, and I thought I had to cuss. And my be- -- one of my best friends is a *professional* cusser, actor Sean McBride. That’s my man.

MR. MARTIN: Oh, yeah.

MR. SLOCUMB: Yeah, he – he’s a real cusser. I wrote my material out. He put in the cuss words where they fit in. I did my – the competition and won, but I didn’t feel right doing it, ‘cause it’s not me. So – I just think that people are just a lot more open to the diversity of Black people.

MR. MARTIN: I’ll tell you there’s one person who is truly a professional cusser is John Witherspoon.

MR. SLOCUMB: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: Oh, yeah – [crosstalk].

MR. MARTIN: Jo- -- he can make *any* cuss word for ya.

MR. LEWIS: Oh, yeah. I mean he can make it flow right outta his mouth. That’s

–

MR. SLOCUMB: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: -- that’s b- -- and that’s a beautiful thing.

MR. MARTIN: It's very interesting when you look at what's happening in comedy. Look at "Saturday Night Live." And you talk about a lot of these shows. You have a White actor who's playing President Barack Obama, and you look at how big deals are made over[?] the lack of African-American comedy writers, I mean, in these late-night shows. And so from your vantage point, you know, how difficult is it to sit here and say, "Wait a minute. I have just as much skill as other folks," but even when it comes to what's funny, the door is not as open as it should be?

MR. LEWIS: Tha- -- that's true, but the -- the one thing we[ve] got to do now is -- is stop saying that the- -- there're -- there're no opportunities --

MR. SLOCUMB: Right.

MR. LEWIS: -- because the -- the -- I'mma tell you. The Internet is the great equalizer in the entertainment business. If you decide, "I'm gonna put something on," that's funny, and people come to watch what's funny on your site, somebody's going to come and say, "I'm" -- "I want to be a part of this," and you can make money. And -- and -- because the dynamic in Hollywood has changed. We're no longer -- they're no longer really producing things. You[ve] got to *produce* something --

MR. SLOCUMB: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: -- and sell it to them. And, you know, they -- "We'll buy it after it's produced, but we're not producing anything." So, a- -- and I tell people that are -- that always ask, "What do you" -- "What's ... the best way to get involved in Hollywood?" "Produce your own thing. *Do* it. Go out there and shoot some stuff with your flip

camera, your s- -- your cell phone. Do whatever you gotta do, make a name for yourself. Use the Internet for what it's worth."

MR. MARTIN: Jonathan, it used to always be that if you -- you had to do a major tour, had to be in a big-budget film. But how has this game changed, from your opinion, for what *you* do?

MR. SLOCUMB: Well, you know, the -- the ... one thing that I realize is that, y- -- you know, we as comics [have] got to stay up on our game, because the same way the Internet is great, it can destroy careers, as well. So, if I'm in New York, and I'm onstage, and I'm wack, and somebody's going to e-mail one million people saying, "When Slocumb comes to town, he's *wack*," they ain't --

MR. MARTIN: Oh, yeah. And -- and --

MR. SLOCUMB: -- gon' *go*.

MR. MARTIN: -- it is true. I mean -- I mean if you see somebody --

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. MARTIN: -- have a bad concert, you get that tweet, like, "Whoa. I don't know about getting *that* concert ticket next week."

MR. SLOCUMB: I just believe that, like, the opportunities that are out here, we just -- like he said, you gotta -- you gotta create your own, you know, and find your real niche, you know. I know that -- like, I -- I don't do colleges, 'cause -- not that I don't want to; it's just not *me*. I do college *alumni* like a mug. Like, they call me. They want to raise money --

MR. MARTIN: Grown folks.

MR. SLOCUMB: -- *grown* folks, you know. And once you – once you realize that, they'll come to you, you know. I've never done major motion pictures, but Tyler Perry gave me a break. I did my first movie with him, and it worked out good. So, you just gotta make it work.

MR. MARTIN: From a comedy standpoint, what do you make of this whole notion of a “post-racial” America? Because when you look at comedy, I mean, look, you listen to White comedians. You listen to Hispanic comedians and African-Americans. A lot of the stuff they do is they play off of culture. I mean Larry the Cable Guy – hilarious – absolutely hilarious. He will talk about rednecks *all day*.

MR. SLOCUMB: Yeah.

MR. MARTIN: You look at Dennis – you look at him, you look at some of the – all – so, we[‘ve] got all different comedians out there.

MR. LEWIS: George Lopez is –

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. LEWIS: -- very culturally –

MR. MARTIN: So – so, this whole notion of we're moving to a “post-racial” society –

MR. LEWIS: You know, I am *who I am*.

MR. SLOCUMB: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: And – and comedy is a – I think, is a – a manifestation of where

you come from, where you are. And so you – you[‘ve] got to speak to – to speak to that – that, *who you are*. And so I’m a Black person. I’m going to talk to Black people. If I – and I’m a ov- -- I’m over 40, so *that’s my crowd* --

MR. SLOCUMB: Right.

MR. LEWIS: -- you know? So, I’m – I’m not going to try and do kids’ shows and –and redneck festivals. That’s not *me*!

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. LEWIS: So – but I don’t think – and a- -- I don’t think that you can dismiss other cultures. W- -- you want them to come to your shows. You want people to enjoy you, but – but you[‘ve] got to be who you’re gonna *be*.

MR. SLOCUMB: Right, right. And then, you know, like I – I always premise my shows as it being a celebration and an education of Blackness, you know. So, if you’re White, and you want to come to my show, come *on*. You can learn about my people, you know; but I don’t go out and say, “I want to do a show that’s just for the White people.” I’m a Black man. I got a Black family. I live in a Black neighborhood. This is what I *know*. I want to cater to these people. It’s not closed to anybody else. Come on in. You can learn some stuff, and then, you know, life ‘ll be better.

MR. MARTIN: I often talk about African-Americans being tend setters, taste makers, and a lot of folks may not realize that the Blue Com- -- Blue [Collar] Comedy Tour – that was the – the biggest ever, ... because one of the comics saw “The Kings of Comedy.” He saw –

MR. SLOCUMB: Oh, I didn't know *that*.

MR. MARTIN: -- he saw -- he saw what D. L. --

MR. SLOCUMB: I thought --

MR. MARTIN: -- Hughley --

MR. SLOCUMB: -- they came first.

MR. LEWIS: No.

MR. MARTIN: -- no.

MR. SLOCUMB: Okay.

MR. MARTIN: He saw what D.L. Hughley, Steve Harvey, Cedric The Entertainer, Bernie — and Bernie Mac did with “The Kings of Comedy” and sat back and said, “Wow. We might” — the — “We might need to che-“ — “do this” — “check this thing out.” That was the inspiration for it.

MR. SLOCUMB: Wow.

MR. LEWIS: Roland --

MR. SLOCUMB: I didn't know that.

MR. LEWIS: -- I -- I --

MR. MARTIN: It was Jeff -- Jeff Foxworthy.

MR. LEWIS: -- Jeff Foxworthy --

MR. SLOCUMB: [Crosstalk] -- right.

MR. LEWIS: -- you -- you[‘ve] got to realize that a lot of inspirations tha- --
[chuckles] -- that have come by have come through --

MR. MARTIN: Black people.

MR. LEWIS: -- African-American people.

MR. MARTIN: Absolutely.

MR. LEWIS: At one time, that tour was the – the highest-grossing tour –

MR. MARTIN: *Ever.*

MR. LEWIS: -- *ever* at one point.

MR. MARTIN: And what was amazing is that you had critics who were going, “Why are they calling themselves ‘The Kings of Comedy’?” I was going, like, “Well, have you looked at the box office receipts?”

MR. LEWIS: And – and not –

MR. SLOCUMB: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: -- only that, those four guys that were on the show, all of them were the only Black people that had *television* shows at the time that tour went out.

MR. SLOCUMB: Right.

MR. LEWIS: They were – they were – they – those guys were on TV, and – and they were attracting Black crowds not at small theaters. I’m talking *stadiums*. They –

MR. MARTIN: Oh, yeah 18, 20 thou- --

MR. LEWIS: -- sold out the United Center in Chicago. They showed out – they showed out at the Madison Square Garden. They – they were – they were *doin’* it.

MR. MARTIN: Multiple shows.

MR. LEWIS: *Multiple* shows.

MR. SLOCUMB: Yeah.

MR. LEWIS: And they were *doin'* it. And – and – and there will probably never be again anything like that.

MR. SLOCUMB: [Crosstalk] –

MR. LEWIS: It's gonna be tough.

MR. SLOCUMB: -- actually, I think that's kind of sad, because I really feel that we, as a people – we don't build. Like, who's the next Dr. Martin Luther King? We don't know, you know. Will there be another Bara- -- President Barack Obama? We don't know, because we don't build. So, from those four Kings of Comedy, there should've been a follow-up, like, almost immediately, 'cause there are some strong comics out here –

MR. LEWIS: Very.

MR. SLOCUMB: -- who could do that; but, you know, it's just a matter of us having our own shows or not, or whether a network – [pauses pointedly and stares directly into the camera] -- would be open to –

[CHUCKLING.]

MR. SLOCUMB: -- did I just pause at TV One?

MR. MARTIN: Yes, you did. Yes, you did.

MR. SLOCUMB: Anyway, would give us opportunities, you know. So, I think there will be.

MR. MARTIN: Buddy, let me say I was – during the election, I was sitting there

one night – I’m on the air – and, of course, you know, I mean I’m clean ... as usual.

And I get a text *while I’m working*, and someone says, “Brother, your pocket square is – is ... a little too large.”

MR. LEWIS: [Laughs.]

MR. MARTIN: And I text[ed] back, “Well, that’s how it was *made*.” You know, it was a Chavoy pocket square. And I s- -- I sent that particular person the link to where he go- -- got it. Then I saw them about six months later, and he says, “You” – “You know, I bought a couple of those.”

MR. LEWIS: [Laughs.]

MR. MARTIN: So, Jo- -- Jonathan, I hooked you up.”

MR. SLOCUMB: I appreciate it. Unfortunately, I left ‘em in the hotel. They were stolen, so –

MR. MARTIN: I gotcha. Okay. Well, that – that ain’t my fault, but I did hook you up.

MR. LEWIS: Wow. I feel –

MR. MARTIN: So, see –

MR. LEWIS: -- *underdressed*.

MR. MARTIN: -- so – so, the next time you’re actually onstage, I’mma send *you* a text when you’re workin’, dammit, ‘cause I was workin’ while you texted me.

MR. SLOCUMB: Yes, sir.

MR. MARTIN: All *right!*

MR. LEWIS: [Laughs.]

MR. SLOCUMB: And we'll see you on the main floor, dancing with everybody at the – [crosstalk].

MR. MARTIN: Oh, you know I *will dance*.

MR. SLOCUMB: This is a dancing fool – [crosstalk].

MR. MARTIN: Oh, I *will dance*. I will – that's right, 'cause I will break a sweat; but, again, that's how us Alphas *do* it.

MR. LEWIS: Don't – don't break a[n] ACL, like I did. Be careful.

MR. MARTIN: No, I wo- -- no, no, 'cause, see, Alphas [are] smart. We know *how* to move. We can drop it like it's hot and come back up.

MR. SLOCUMB: Woo! This is –

MR. MARTIN: Not necessarily Omegas.

MR. SLOCUMB: -- fraternity ... talk.

MR. LEWIS: Y'all are closer to the ground. That's all.

MR. SLOCUMB: [Laughs.]

MR. LEWIS: [Laughs.]

MR. MARTIN: Right. We – we – aw, look at 'im. Well, you know, as I always say, Al- -- as I always say, Kappas use a cane. Omegas crawl. Only Alpha men know how to walk upright.

Buddy and –

MR. LEWIS: *Oh!*

MR. MARTIN: -- Jonathan, we got to go.

MR. LEWIS: That's -- [crosstalk].

MR. MARTIN: Plus, it's my show. I get the last word.

I'll be right back.

[END OF SEGMENT.]

**(SEG-
MENT 6)**

MR. MARTIN: And that's it for our special edition from Hollywood of TV One's "Washington Watch." I'm Roland Martin. Goodbye, and have a blessed week.

[END.]