

The modern American ideology is defined largely by innovation and productivity. These concepts define the economic market of America and in turn redefine the environment of the American household. The American household is among the most sacred and protected elements of the nation. It plays a central role in the greater system of global economics. For this reason, the American public resides in an insulated consumer bubble in which the activities of the pre-consumer industrial world hold little consequence. This distance is readily noticeable in any American home, and in many cases a greater perspective is desired and sought out by the inhabitants of the insulated reality. This perspective can be distributed conveniently through the media in the comforts of any consumer's home. The mainstream media permeates American households. Yet, the easily accessible source of intercontinental understanding does little to pierce the veil that restricts the perspective of consumer America. Instead, it reinforces the vision of American exceptionalism and reaffirms the many endeavors of capital gain sought out by the United States, in the eyes of the viewing public. It is a great act of patriotism to watch the news and to bare witness to the heroic acts of democracy enacted by the U.S. government.

The media has created a new form of patriotism. It creates a nation of incapacitated nationalists who stand deaf and blind to the implications of their actions. The public's interactions with mainstream media, defined largely by an interest in gaining a greater understanding of international affairs, serve only to reinforce the preexisting notions of American exceptionalism. As a result of the globalized economy, the number of media corporations has shrunk and the population of the viewing public has risen. It is this imbalance that perpetuates the reflective nature of the American media model, and thus further isolates the consuming public farther from the areas of production and the source of truth.

In the early 1990's, amidst the rise of networking technologies in Silicon Valley, the pioneers and CEO's at the forefront of the dotcom boom developed a philosophy rooted in the Objectivist philosophies of Ayn Rand.¹ Their philosophy is referred to as the "California Ideology" and it manifested itself in the technological expansion that gripped the last decade of the 20th century.² The California ideology foresaw a techno-utopian future in which the hierarchy of political control was surrendered to the rational judgments of a technological force. Computer networks could analyze the economics of the markets and aid in the stabilization of a society. Alan Greenspan was the first to enter the U.S. government with this very mindset. During the Clinton administration, Greenspan served as the Chairman of the Federal Reserve and persuaded Clinton to cut taxes, let the markets grow, and rely on computer technologies to stabilize the markets. The period of economic growth following Greenspan's reorganized economic plan is known as the "New Economy."³ He set up a system in which computer models predicted financial risk and hedged against them. The "New Economy" highlighted a period of cultural and economic transition within the U.S. It represented a shift from a reliance on heavy industry to a new technology and information-based economy. This shift increased a U.S. dependency on foreign manufacturing and led large companies to begin outsourcing production and labor due to a lack of inexpensive processing within the United States. Greenspan's incorporation of technology into the economic and political process led not to a reduction of hierarchy, but to a system in which multinational companies held the greatest political power because they lay in

¹ "Love and Power"-*All Watched Over By Machines of Loving Grace*. Dir. Adam Curtis. BBC Films, 2011. DVD.

² Barbrook, Richard. Andy Cameron. (1996) [1995] "The Californian Ideology". *Science as Culture*.

³ "[Testimony of Chairman Alan Greenspan](#)". Federal Reserve Board. July 16, 2002. Retrieved July 13, 2011.

the center of the new techno-centric economy.⁴ The economy became the government's tool to facilitate social change.

Bill Clinton entered the presidency with the intent of transforming America using purely political tactics.⁵ He was slowly persuaded by the Department of the Treasury to relinquish much of his political power to the financial markets with the promise of a new stability, and a system free from the corruption inherent in elite politics. The financial markets, however, were under the control of a less visible elite: the financiers and bankers. Clinton's transfer of power further combined the interests of the government and the interests of the financial markets.⁶ This action, however threatening to the hopes of a democratic nation, was defended by a quintessentially capitalist notion: The interests of the businesses are the interests of the people.⁷ Because of this shift, not only could consumer America participate in the political stability and long-term democracy of the nation through participation in government elections, but could also make a difference in the support of the American economy. In this transition "markets [were] assumed to be benevolent and even democratic."⁸ Patriotism lay not only in the voting booth but also in the grocery store, the department store, and the bank.

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of property are the cornerstones of the American dream. In Thomas Jefferson's published Declaration of Independence the phrase reads "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." This phrase was appropriated from John Locke's writings on political philosophy⁹, only Jefferson believed property to be a "creature of society,"¹⁰ and thus saw the greater power of property in happiness. The importance of property has increased greatly with the growth of global markets and the rebirth of the "American Dream." The modern conception of the American dream is widely referenced as a term that encompasses the opportunities America has to offer. The 20th century saw the "American Dream" commoditized and sold which, in turn, reshaped the dream to be a conception of consumer freedoms. Affordable housing has stood as a pillar of American public policy for over a century. At the onset of the Clinton administration there was a clear shift of emphasis from a system that supported affordable rental units to providing low-cost homeownership opportunities¹¹. In 1995 the Department of Housing and Urban Development assembled a strategy titled "The National Homeownership Strategy: Partners in the American Dream," which addressed the values of homeownership in America. The document contends that property ownership will "generate financial security... strengthen

⁴ Hermosillo, Carmen. "Introducing Humdog: Pandora's Vox Redux." *Folksonomy* (1994). Web. 25 Apr. 2012. <<http://folksonomy.co/?permalink=2299>>.

⁵ "Love and Power"-*All Watched Over By Machines of Loving Grace*. Dir. Adam Curtis. BBC Films, 2011. DVD.

⁶ Godwin, Jack. *Clintonomics: How Bill Clinton Reengineered the Reagan Revolution*. New York: American Management Association, 2009. Print.

⁷ Prahalad, C.K. and, Allen Hammond (2002) *Serving the World's Poor, Profitably*. Harvard Business Review.

⁸ Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon, 2002. Print.

⁹ Lucas, Stephen E., "Justifying America: The Declaration of Independence as a Rhetorical Document," in Thomas W. Benson, ed., *American Rhetoric: Context and Criticism*, Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989

¹⁰ Franklin, Benjamin (2006). Mark Skousen. ed. *The Completed Autobiography*. Regnery Publishing. pp. 413.

¹¹ William M. Rohe and Harry L. Watson, *Chasing the American Dream: New Perspectives on Affordable Homeownership* (2007)

communities... generate jobs and stimulate economic growth.”¹² The Bush administration maintained the property expansion efforts in the name of economic stability and the “nourishment of the American Dream.”¹³ For this reason, the American household is a beacon of democratic freedom and an emblem of the free market system. Home ownership comes with a plethora of economic duties, and because the United States Government is so encouraging in securing a home for every family, the economic duties of a homeowner become, in turn, patriotic duties. The maintenance of a profitable household ensures the stability of a community *and* the national economy.

In Alan Greenspan’s “New Economy,” the role of the economy is paramount in the evolution of social justice and political stability. Therefore the role of the consumer is equally important as the role of the politician. In the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations the government publicly encouraged domestic spending to an unprecedented point in the interests of bolstering the national economy and aiding in the expansion of the globalizing markets. The manufacturing industry in the United States has suffered tremendously as a result of cheap outsourced labor caused by a rapidly expanding global economy and the rising price of domestic labor in the United States¹⁴. The shift from an industrial economy to a service based economy has little impact on consumers and a large impact on workers. As the distance between the source of a product and the consumer grows, the more rapidly the consumers spend. With this economic shift the American consumers, charged with the political power of the dollar bill, have become more and more distanced from the implications of consumption. Given no access to the true systems of production that exist overseas, the political action of consuming has become a truly one-sided act.

With much of the industry’s manufacturing jobs moving overseas, particularly to areas known as “Export Processing Zones,” the integrity of labor laws have broken down, leading to sometimes egregious working conditions¹⁵. Export Processing Zones (EPZ’s) exist in regions where a group of countries have agreed to reduce or eliminate trade barriers. The extent of these barriers varies, however they exist in most regions to protect the rights of workers against the profit-driven desires of the companies that employ them. Within an EPZ these barriers are diminished and profits are maximized by stripping down labor and transportation costs¹⁶. The effects of these measures remain unseen in the American arena because these zones rarely exist within U.S. borders. Thus, the great divide is created. American households no longer understand the businesses they support and become helpless victims of an insulated consumer bubble, yet the act of consumption remains a political tool, affecting both the greater economies of the world and the economy of the United States. Journalist Thomas Frank coined the term “Market Populism” as a system in which the public contributes to the democracy of the markets. The

¹² William J. Clinton: "Remarks to the National Association of Realtors," April 27, 1996. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=52733>.

¹³ William J. Clinton: "Remarks to the National Association of Realtors," April 27, 1996. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=52733>.

¹⁴ Weidenbaum, Murray. Outsourcing: Pros and Cons 19.1 (2004): 23-37. *America: History and Life*. Web. 13 Mar. 2012. <<http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.drew.edu/ehost/detail?vid=6&hid=18&sid=391a07e0-b76b-47bd-b8e9-47969528c931%40sessionmgr11&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWh>

¹⁵ Klein, Naomi. *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs*. New York: Picador, 2010. Print.

¹⁶ Millen, Joyce and Timothy Holtz, "Dying for Growth, Part I, *The Politics of Globalization*, ed. Mark Kesselman, Houghton Mifflin, 2007

markets became a tool of social transformation and any consumer can impact society¹⁷. Yet as the consumer becomes blind to the implications of their actions the tool can be manipulated. The interests of the companies providing products to the consumers are no longer the interests of the public. The free market system is no longer free. The propagated ideals of Americanism and Consumerism secure the perspective of the American consumer public squarely behind the red white and blue curtain.

The Neo-liberal ideologies born out of the success of the “New Economy” during the Clinton administration called for a worldwide expansion of private business. The increased demand for consumer goods led to a global manufacturing boom and the markets of private business began to expand in the name of a more democratic system¹⁸. Market populism applied not only to consumers but also to foreign workers who previously played no role in the global economy. Local economies are seen as primitive and unproductive in the eyes of the Free Market system. The marginalized workers are given jobs and the western consumers are given products. This expansion is facilitated by the resulting profits of global expansion. Multinational companies are sought out by governments to bring business and manufacturing to economically depressed regions of the world. Often, the expansions and trade agreements of these de-localized corporations come at the cost of less established countries and economic powers¹⁹.

Inherent in a global economy are businesses that transcend national borders. The efforts of these businesses span from manufacturing to service based resources to media outlets. Globally run media organizations resist social responsibilities of locally run business and instead cater to the interests of free trade. “The hallmark of the global media system is the relentless, ubiquitous, commercialism,” which tears at the democratic distribution of truth to the uninvolved public.²⁰ Globalized media corporations own subdivisions of multiple media sources creating an illusion of journalistic diversity in the face of a monopoly. In the commercial media system companies depend on financial support from corporate sponsors. Thus, the companies must serve the best interests of their sponsors to maintain business relations. In a system in which a media corporations are heavily funded by companies specializing in manufacturing, the news stories released are less likely to deal with stories relating to the negative actions of the sponsor company. In a global economy, in which multiple companies have a hand in the release of media into the public perspective, the stories reported on the news are a vastly different than their true conceptions. The implications of economic growth are not broadcast on mainstream, commercially-funded media.

The role of media in the U.S. is to enable the detached consumer public to access a world of perspective in hopes of better understanding the role of Americans in a globalized society. The line between media and propaganda has become blurred since the beginning of the 21st century and the rise of mainstream media distribution. Since World War One, propagandists have manipulated the perspective of the American public to better suit the interests of the government. At the close of the war, prominent propagandists like George Creel realized that to truly manipulate the public perspective one must remain invisible. It was this conception that lead to

¹⁷ Frank, Thomas. *One Market Under God: Extreme Capitalism, Market Populism, and the End of Economic Democracy*. New York: Doubleday, 2000. Print.

¹⁸ Prasad, Monica. *The Politics of Free Markets: The Rise of Neoliberal Economic Policies in Britain, France, Germany and the United States*. University of Chicago Press. 2006

¹⁹ Cline, William R. (2004). "Conclusion". *Trade Policy and Global Poverty*. Peterson Institute.

²⁰ McChesney R. W. 1999. The Media System goes global. In *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*. Urbana. University of Illinois Press

the creation of Public Relations firms. These firms function to inconspicuously infiltrate the public consciousness in order to introduce a specific ideology. It is in this realm that the line between business and truth begins to blur. Walter Lippman, the so-called “Dean of Modern American Journalism,” dubbed the production of mainstream media as the “manufacturing of consent.”²¹ Edward Bernays, known as the “Father of Modern Public Relations,” held similar philosophies and joined the operations of news media and advertising.²² Bernays saw news media as a form of political advertisement. In the past twenty years the U.S. government has become increasingly reliant on the aid of PR firms such as The Rendon Group, Hill and Knowlton, and Burston Marsteller. These firms have organized media operations to sway public perception of incidents like the Gulf War, the invasion of Afghanistan, and the war in Iraq. There are currently 20,000 more public relations agents working to doctor the news than there are journalists writing it.²³ The aim of government-modified media is to protect the American image.

The current media structure serves to propagandize and inform on behalf of the interests and social agendas of the companies that finance each media venture. It is within the most highly regarded and democratic nations that the most sophisticated systems of propaganda evolve without public knowledge.²⁴ The mutual interests of owners and sponsors shape the appearance of the media and reshape its impact on the public. Propaganda has the greatest impact when its source is unknown and its impact is ubiquitous. When the government becomes involved in the business of propaganda the line between patriotism and truth disappears. The U.S. government currently seeks out specific Public Relations firms, most prominently The Rendon Group among others, to manipulate and infiltrate news sources.²⁵ The manipulation and distribution of news media within the United States ensures the consuming public that they are not at fault. Public Relations firms are hired in order to protect the public from the true implications of a consumer lifestyle. It is because the American public plays such a central role in the economic cycle that such a dense media bubble surrounds all areas of consumer life. The global industrial expansion has served only to benefit the interests of the American government and the American public. With each war waged to protect commercial interest comes a psychological war in the media arena to ensure the consumer is protected. The American media, and Western media in general, serves to unify the consumer against those who oppose the current free market system. George Creel saw the news as a way to unify the public at all costs in order to construct “one white hot mass instinct,” blindly supporting any cause that will protect their market freedom.²⁶ In this way, the media simply reinforces the supremacy of Western democracy in the mind of the consumer, and thus unites the consumer public in a war against all who oppose it.

The American Dream is a dream defined by property ownership and a consumer mentality. The American household, a central fixture in the free market system, is protected at all costs. The consumer is king, and the perspective of the consumer must be fitted to further the success of the global economy. The manufacturing of consent is the key instrument in the

²¹ Lippmann, Walter. *The Stakes of Diplomacy*. New York: H. Holt and, 1915. Print.

²² Bernays, Edward L., and Mark Crispin. Miller. *Propaganda*. Brooklyn, NY: Ig Pub., 2005. Print.

²³ Stauber, John C., and Sheldon Rampton. *Toxic Sludge Is Good for You: Lies, Damn Lies, and the Public Relations Industry*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage, 1995. Print.

²⁴ *PsyWar*. Dir. Scott Noble. Perf. Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Michael Parenti, John Stauber. Metanoia Films, 2010. Online.

²⁵ Miller, Laura, and Sheldon Rampton. "The Pentagon's Information Warrior: Rendon to the Rescue." *PR Watch*. Center for Media Democracy, 24 Sept. 2001. Web. 28 Apr. 2012. <<http://www.prwatch.org/prwissues/2001Q4/rendon.html>>.

²⁶ Creel, George. *How We Advertised America*. New York: Harper, 1920. Print.

propagation of faith in the consumer system. Ensuring that the consumer continues to consume without knowledge of the implications of consumerism itself. The media simply reflects images of American exceptionalism into the households of America in order to perpetuate the myth of true liberty. Each part of the free market system must remain isolated and unknowing of the other parts to ensure profit and “global” success. Patriotism is defined as a “love or devotion to one’s country.”²⁷ Consumption of goods, be it media opinion or consumer product, has become the highest form of patriotism. It is a lifestyle urged on by the government and the press and it is nearly unavoidable in the modern world. The modern newsroom has become “thoroughly incorporated into transnational corporate empires, with budget cuts and further diminution of management enthusiasm for investigative journalism that would challenge the structures of power.”²⁸ Thus, tearing away at the true purpose of journalism and leaving the viewing public blind to the truths that lay beyond the bubble Acknowledgement of the system is necessary in order to overcome it. The quest for unfiltered information will ultimately lead to a more socially just society. In turn, the platforms that allow the public to access such information will hold the key to revolution.

²⁷ "Patriotism." *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. Encyclopedia Britannica. Web. 6 May 2012. <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/patriotism>>.

²⁸ Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon, 2002. Print.