



The AFI DOCS Interview: NOBODY SPEAK Director Brian Knappenberger

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

When online gossip rag Gawker published a sex tape involving Hulk Hogan, the former wrestler sued, but who was the mysterious billionaire bankrolling his legal fees? Using this salacious trial as just one example, *NOBODY SPEAK: TRIALS OF THE FREE PRESS* is a cautionary tale about the dangers of the super rich controlling the message and the media.

The film [screens at AFI DOCS](#) on Saturday, June 17. AFI spoke to director Brian Knappenberger.

AFI: What led you to pursue documentary filmmaking?

BK: I learned still photography at an early age and have always been interested in visual storytelling. I also grew up in the farm-surrounded suburb of Broomfield, CO, next to what was then the Rocky Flats nuclear weapons facility. Growing up, we had a vague sense of what was happening at Rocky Flats â?? there were protests, our next-door neighbor worked there, we had a general sense that certain areas around us might be contaminated, etc. â?? but what emerged in me was a deep mistrust of power, a suspicion of war and its awful tools, and that maybe filmmaking could shed some light on what was previously dark.

AFI: What inspired you to tell this story?

BK: It started as a â??privacy versus first amendment storyâ?• that was by itself really interesting and relevant, but it ended up becoming something very different â?? a stark example of big money controlling public opinion and information. When that happened, I knew I had to dig deeper and hang on for the ride.

nobody_speak_hulk_hogan_-_still_1_-_h_2017

AFI: How did you find the subjects in your film?

BK: My subjects emerged themselves from the information wars. They climbed out of the muck, and I just chased them down.

AFI: What was a particular obstacle you faced while making the film?

BK: The main obstacle we faced is essentially what is portrayed in the film — the legal threats. Some people were hesitant to talk.

AFI: What do you want audiences to walk away with after screening your film?

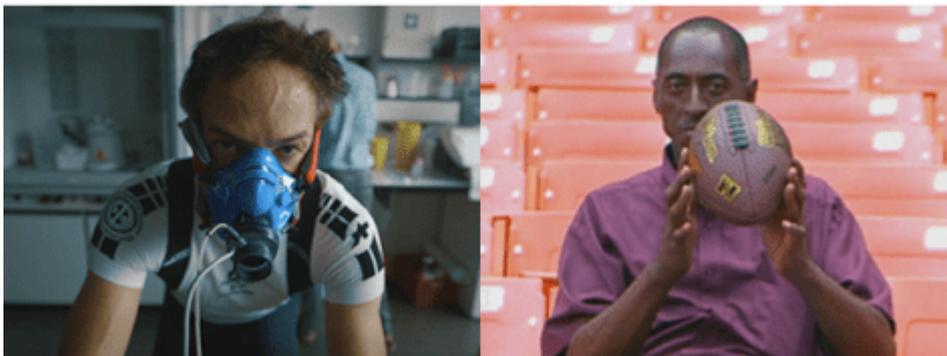
BK: That the first amendment and a free press are vital to a democracy. The press isn't the enemy of the people; the press *is* the people. We desperately need a strong, rambunctious, muckraking adversarial press if we have any hope of maintaining our democracy. The press shouldn't *just* speak truth to power — the press should rattle and stomp on the very foundations of power. We should all support good investigative journalism financially. But that's not enough. In a chaotic information world, we also need stand up for the concept itself, to keep it alive. A strong, independent press is far more important to our country than any politician, public figure, business executive or even (maybe especially) President.

AFI: Why are documentary films important today?

BK: Documentary filmmaking at its finest is independent and able to dive into areas that sometimes corporatized media would shy away from. In an ideal world, the documentary director is free to talk to people, tell stories, explore subjects and generally wreak havoc in ways that can surface the truth.



EVERYONE
HAS A STORY



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