

But Earnhardt's perspective extends beyond the recent election debates: "Over the 230 years of this country's past, [election manipulation] has been done both ways [by Republicans and Democrats]. But in recent years, it's been in one direction, favoring Republicans."

On this thrust, Dorothy Fadiman's *Stealing America*, which highlights many of the same points and talking heads, adds an enlightening piece of information as expressed by Lynn Landes, journalist/political scientist and former BBC correspondent: "Even though the Republicans seem to control the voting technology and the corporations that count the votes, the Democrats have not exhibited a keen interest in addressing the situation."

*Stealing America* hopes to appeal to a large college-age audience, and they've all but insured its popularity with these first-time voters by including segments from the zeitgeist conscience and mouthpiece: *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*. *Stealing* bends over backwards to communicate a non-partisan viewpoint by including interviews with "the bad guys"—people who unashamedly admit to redirecting an election that favored George Bush over John Kerry—and "would/will do it again."

With regard to documentaries, one of the most hotly discussed topics these days speculates about how much "good" they do, if their only audience is the "choir." Earnhardt's "grassroots approach" has included traveling to 36 cities since mid-January, where he rents out theaters and screens the film for local integrity voter groups, and moderates lively after-film discussions. Their alliance provides the groups a "platform" and a means of then continuing to share the information on their own, a DVD of *Uncounted* in hand. Earnhardt calls this a "non-traditional approach, with a geometric factor." For example, earlier this spring, 203 "house parties" were organized in 23 states and the District of Columbia.

In addition to the public events in theaters, churches, community centers and even individual house parties, blogs are providing a great deal of notice and "buzz" about both the film and the topic of election fraud. And the film's website, [www.uncountedthemovie.com](http://www.uncountedthemovie.com), provides ideas of actions people can take. The DVD is selling far beyond expectations and, through the website alone, has sold units to people in 20 countries as



From Dorothy Fadiman's *Stealing America* 109p by Kate. Courtesy of Concentric Media

well as in every state. Earnhardt also gives credit to bloggers, who, he says, have significantly helped spread awareness of election issues. He's now taking "a more retail market approach" by aligning with the distributor Disinformation Company and making the DVD available through both Amazon and Netflix.

His approach has worked and Earnhardt admits that the process has "affirmed my belief in the power of what one person can do. When things change, it usually starts with one person and evolves into citizen activism. Then the leadership has to listen." But the "number one defense," he advises, is to vote: "if you don't vote, it definitely won't be counted."

Dorothy Fadiman, director, and Mitchell Block, executive producer, of *Stealing America*, decided to approach the distribution issue through a "vision of college campuses." As such, they have set up 1,000 screenings on campuses across the nation. There are two primary reasons for this, as Fadiman points out: to inform and educate ("It's important to give college students a perspective on history") and to increase the number of voters, "so the results are clearer. There's a generation coming up that is not registered. The only way to head off a suspicious election before the votes are certified is to have a large lead going in." Because younger voters tend to vote more liberally, she worries that her motivation may not necessarily be "a nonpartisan act." But she and Block both stress the importance of "reaching out to people in a non-partisan way to make them aware of voting issues." As Block puts it, "It's important to understand that if you are making a film about something as important as voting, you'll turn off half

the audience [if it's approached in a partisan manner]. On an issue as basic as voting, you don't serve any purpose in speaking to only one party." Their goal is for viewers to see the film, "not as an attack, but as a plea to protect our votes."

The team is working with publicists in Los Angeles and New York and in Santa Fe and other cities, "so it gets high visibility," Block explains. They are screening the film at 100 theaters and, like Earnhardt, working with field people to do outreach and activities groups, to build grassroots and to help those groups. "It's a good mix of

not-for-profit and nonpartisan," Block continues, "mixed with traditional for-profit marketing." Block also credits the blogosphere with advancing notice of the film.

Fadiman spoke at length about Matthew Segal, founder and executive director of the Student Association for Voter Empowerment (SAVE), a student-led, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to removing access barriers and increasing civic education for young people; he is also a senior fellow at the Roosevelt Institute, the nation's first student-run think tank. Segal's vision for what he will be doing with *Stealing America* on college campuses and with related activities includes post-screening discussions, dissemination of election reform packages, and using well-visited websites to create awareness of the film.

Segal's ideas fit Fadiman's objective, which is "to make people alert and aware that the election systems we have in place are not secure, and to not be afraid or shy to raise our voices."

Admittedly, this is an uphill battle, as Earnhardt cautions: "Election manipulation rarely even makes a top ten issues list. But think about it: If your vote doesn't count, then nothing else really matters." □

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