

TAKING LIBERTIES

SINCE 1997



Synopsis

Right to Protest. Right to Freedom of Speech. Right to Privacy. Right not to be detained without charge. Innocent Until Proven Guilty. Prohibition from Torture. The film Taking Liberties will reveal how these six central pillars of liberty have been systematically destroyed by New Labour, and the freedoms of the British people stolen from under their noses amidst a climate of fear created by the media and government itself.

Taking Liberties uncovers the stories the government don't want you to hear – so ridiculous you will laugh, so ultimately terrifying you will want to take action. Teenage sisters detained for thirty-six hours for a peaceful protest; an RAF war veteran arrested for wearing an anti-Bush and Blair T-shirt; an innocent man shot in a police raid; and a man held under house arrest for two years, after being found innocent in court. Ordinary law-abiding citizens being punished for exercising their 'rights' – rights that have been fought for over centuries, and which seem to have been extinguished in a decade.

Introduction

This resource will be useful for those studying Citizenship, Politics, Film and Media.

Criminalisation?

The film raises a number of issues, below are a few questions that can be used as a starting point for discussion.

Key questions:

- Before you watched the film, what were your ideas about the kinds of people that might, for example, be held under house arrest or take part in protests?
- Where do you think these ideas come from?
- In the film we see a number of people that have been criminalised for their actions. Does seeing these people and hearing them speak about their own experiences challenge the views you may have had before watching the film?
- The issues raised by the film are regularly reported in the press and on TV news. Does anything strike you as new or different to the coverage in the press or on TV from the material that the film presents?
- Does this change your view of the relationship between the law, justice and those that are being criminalised in various ways?

Is it important to raise awareness of these issues?

How effective do you think the documentary has been?

Citizenship and Filmmaking

During the course of the documentary comments are made about public awareness of the government's approach to civil liberties. It might be argued that the practise of citizenship is weak as only a committed politically active portion of society are represented here as knowing what is happening. From this point of view consider these general points before you begin to debate the statements below.

- Taking Liberties proves that this country does have a critical media that exercises freedom of speech.
- Taking Liberties highlights how the main news outlets are little more than government mouthpieces.
- The erosion of rights shown in Taking Liberties is no more than we deserve given the levels of apathy, proven by non-participation in elections.

Can you think of other statements that would make interesting starting points for a discussion?

How do you get people to go to the cinema to see a political film?

- What did you enjoy about the film?
- Is this the kind of film that you would choose to see in your own time?
- Is this what you'd expect from a political film?
- What were your expectations from the film before you saw it?

Task

Imagine that you have been given the task of marketing this film to students of your own age. How are you going to get them to see the film?

In small groups/pairs develop a campaign comprising the following elements:

- Posters (what images/taglines/other information are you going to use? Where will you display them?)
- TV trailers (you have the budget to produce a 40-second TV spot. Think about the film. Which aspects would you use? What other information might you add? When will you run your trailer? Why? Which channel(s)? Between which programmes?)
- Storyboard the trailer and write the voiceover.
- Radio ads (How will you encourage your audience to see the film via radio? You can produce up to 3 ads of 30 seconds, what time and which stations will you put your ads on? What are you going to say? How are you going to say it? Would your campaign persuade you?)

Useful Links

www.noliberties.com

www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk

www.amnesty.org