



Videography on Class, Wealth, Power, Resistance, and Social Justice

from *You Call This a Democracy?: Who Benefits, Who Pays and Who Really Decides*

by **Paul Kivel**

Below is a listing with brief annotations of films about many of the issues raised in *You Call This a Democracy?*. Just about every film made deals with issues of class and power, race and gender, whether explicitly or implicitly. Most of these films look directly at these issues, or at least, are excellent tools for discussions about these issues. These films vary tremendously in quality, style, subject, and intent. Use them to provoke your own thinking and to engage in discussions with others about who decides, who benefits, and who pays.

The Adventures of Robin Hood (1938) Classic story of the bandit who redistributed wealth from the rich to the poor.

At Play in the Fields of the Lord (1991) Two U.S. missionary couples in Brazil end up destroying the indigenous people they are trying to save.

Amistad (1997) African captives on the slave ship Amistad free themselves but get caught up in the U.S. legal system.

Antitrust (2000) Computer code writer discovers the superrich head of the company is corrupt and trying to build an empire.

Ballad of Gregorio Cortez (1983) Because of a language misunderstanding a Mexican cowhand kills a white sheriff in self-defense and then tries to elude the law.

Barbarians at the Gate (1993) Tells of the takeover battle for RJR Nabisco and the workings of the tobacco company.

Bastard Out of Carolina (1997) Autobiography of a white girl who struggles out of poverty and child abuse in the south.

Battle of Algiers (1966) Story of the Algerian fight for freedom from French colonial rule in 1954.



- Beloved** (1998) After Emancipation a slave is still trying to free herself from the effects of slavery.
- The Big One** (1998) Michael Moore's film about his book promo tour and his encounter with the publishing industry.
- Blue Collar** (1978) The life of three auto workers trying to improve their lives by robbing the union.
- Bob Roberts** (1992) Satire about a senatorial race and what the candidate is willing to do to win.
- Bopha!** (1993) A conservative police officer and his anti-apartheid activist son deal with moral values and family relationships in preliberation South Africa.
- Born in Flames** (1983) A futuristic story of a women's army that intervenes when women are harassed on the street and challenges state control of the media.
- Born on the Fourth of July** (1989) A paraplegic veteran returns from Vietnam and becomes an antiwar protestor.
- Bowling for Columbine** (2002) Michael Moore's look at the roots of violence and the gun industry in the U.S.
- Braveheart** (1995) Story of thirteenth century Scottish uprising against the British.
- Bread and Chocolate** (1974) Uneducated Italian immigrant tries to survive in bourgeois Switzerland.
- Breaker Morant** (1980) Three Australian soldiers are tried for killing prisoners.
- Breaking Away** (1979) Working class youth compete in bicycle race against local college students while trying to figure out their future.
- Broadcast News** (1987) A look at network news through the lens of romance.
- Bulworth** (1998) A politician begins to speak truth about politics and money, sending shock waves through society.
- The Burning Season** (1994) Brazilian peasants in the Amazon form a union to protect their land.
- Cabeza de Vaca** (1990) A Spanish sailor is rescued from a shipwreck by Native Americans in Florida, grows to respect their culture, and subsequently challenges his Spanish rescuers on their behavior.
- Cabaret** (1972) Cabaret singer in Nazi Germany tries to ignore the rising tide of violence around her.
- Casa de los Babys** (2003) Six white women wait in a coastal Mexican town to adopt Mexican babies.



- Casualties of War** (1989) A U.S. soldier in Vietnam brings attention to his buddies' rape and murder of a Vietnamese woman.
- Chicken Run** (2000) Chickens organize themselves to escape from becoming chicken pies.
- The China Syndrome** (1979) An executive at a nuclear power plant discovers a concealed accident and tries to sound the alarm.
- Chinatown** (1974) A detective tries to unravel the roles of the powerful in the complex politics of water in Los Angeles in the early history of the city.
- Citizen Ruth** (1996) The portrayal of a poor, young, pregnant white woman delivered by the criminal justice system into the hands of anti-abortion and pro-choice forces.
- A Civil Action** (1998) Lawyer brings case against corporations accused of dumping leukemia-causing toxins among children.
- Cradle Will Rock** (1999) Depression-era theater project is about to be shut down by right-wing politicians.
- Deadly Business** (1986) A former criminal becomes a government informant about the dumping of dangerous chemicals.
- Deadly Deception: General Electric, Nuclear Weapons, and Our Environment** (1991) Documentary about the devastating impact of GE's development and testing of nuclear weapons.
- Dodes 'ka-den** (1970) Depicts the community life of a group of slum dwellers in Tokyo.
- Driving Miss Daisy** (1989) Story of the 25-year relationship between an aging Jewish woman living in the South, and the black chauffeur she is forced to rely on.
- El Norte** (1983) Story of a Guatemalan brother and sister, refugees, who make the difficult trip north to succeed in the U.S.
- Erin Brockovich** (2000) A single mother uncovers a utility company's toxic waste polluting a community's water supply.
- Follow Me Home** (1997) Four young men of color set out from California to paint a mural on the White House.
- Freedom Song** (2000) Young Blacks in a small Mississippi town struggle with the impact of participating in the civil rights movement.
- Gandhi** (1982) The story of Gandhi's life and India's struggle for liberation from England using tactics of non-violent resistance.



Global Village or Global Pillage?: How People Around the World are Challenging Corporate Globalization (1999)

This documentary explores the impacts of globalization and uses video clips, interviews, music and comics to show grassroots organizing and transnational solidarity efforts to shape the global economy.

Gosford Park (2001) Drama set at a party in a country house in England in 1932, showing the lives of upstairs guests and downstairs servants.

Grapes of Wrath (1940) The Joad family migrates from dust-bowl Oklahoma to work in the orchards of California.

Harlan County, U.S.A. (1976) Coal miners try to win a United Mine Workers contract in Kentucky.

Heat and Dust (1983) A young bride joins her husband at his post in India and rebels against the caste system.

Hoop Dreams (1994) Documentary about two inner-city basketball stars' lives through high school.

Incident at Oglala: The Leonard Peltier Story (1992) A documentary about the murder of two FBI agents and the trial of Leonard Peltier in the context of recent United States government/Oglala Nation history.

The Insider (1999) Tobacco company executive turns whistleblower. Newsmen covering the story confront media collusion with the companies.

JFK (1991) A different look at the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Jack and the Beanstalk: The Real Story (2001) Modern day Jack discovers that his family was responsible for the murder of the giant and the theft of his property, and realizes he must take responsibility for it.

Julia (1977) A woman risks her life getting support to a longtime friend working in the resistance in Germany during WWII.

The Killing Floor (1985) A Black sharecropper migrates to Chicago and becomes involved in the labor movement during a period of race riots.

Lagaan (2001) When their taxes are doubled, an Indian village comes together to challenge the local British ruler to a cricket match. A musical set in nineteenth century rural India.

Lakota Woman: Siege at Wounded Knee (1994) Autobiography of Mary Crow Dog and her role in the 1973 American Indian Movement's occupation of Wounded Knee.



Les Misérables (1935, 1978) Classic French story of a man who steals a loaf of bread, is imprisoned, tortured, released, and then pursued by a detective.

Les Misérables (1995) Modern version of Hugo's classic set in WWII Germany with the hero helping a Jewish family escape the Holocaust.

Life or Debt (2002) Documentary about the impact that U.S. foreign and economic policy have on the people of Jamaica contrasted with the impression that tourists receive of the country.

Lone Star (1995) Story of fathers and sons in a border town dealing with race, class, immigration, and family issues.

The Long Walk Home (1989) In defiance of her husband, a well-off white woman in Montgomery, AL decides to support the bus strike to support her Black maid.

Los Olvidados (1950) Story of the harsh lives and the violence of young people living in the slums of Mexico City.

Lumumba (2001) The rise and subsequent CIA supported overthrow of the charismatic popular leader of the Congo.

Malcolm X (1992) The story of Malcolm X's growth from drug dealer to political leader.

Marie (1985) A docudrama about a divorced and battered woman who works her way through school, heads the parole board in Tennessee, and then blows the whistle on her bosses.

Matewan (1987) Coal miners organize and strike during the 1920s.

Milagro Beanfield War (1988) Members of a small New Mexico town organize to oppose land development and save their water rights.

Missing (1982) A conservative U.S. father tries to find out what happened to his son who disappeared during a military coup in a South American country (Chile).

Modern Times (1936) A Charlie Chaplin silent film about life as an assembly line worker.

The Nasty Girl (1990) A docudrama about a bright young German model who uncovers the Nazi collaboration of her fellow townspeople and faces their wrath.

Newsies (1992) Musical about the 1899 New York newsboys' strike against the publisher Joseph Pulitzer.

1900 (1976) The story of two Italian families, one poor and one landowning, during the early years of the twentieth century.



Nine to Five (1980) Three office secretaries kidnap their boss and start running things on their own.

Norma Rae (1979) A poor, uneducated textile worker joins forces with a New York labor organizer to unionize the reluctant workers at a Southern mill.

Northern Lights (1979) A small farmer fights against the government in the Midwest in 1915.

The Organizer (1964) A group of textile workers, led by a professor, strike against unsafe working conditions in nineteenth century Italy.

Panther (1995) A fictionalized account of the Black Panther's fight for community development seen through the eyes of a Vietnam vet turned infiltrator.

Philadelphia (1993) A corporate attorney gets AIDS and is fired, then sues his former law firm for discrimination.

The Quiet American (2003) A story about the growing undercover U.S. military presence in Vietnam in the mid-1950s.

Rabbit Proof Fence (2002) Three young native women are kidnapped by the Australian government and sent to boarding school, but they escape and travel across Australia to return home.

A Raisin in the Sun (1989) The struggles of the members of a black family who face racism and greed when they move into a white neighborhood in the 1950s.

Reds (1981) An account of John Reed's life as an early twentieth century communist who tried to start a communist party in the U.S. and wrote about the Russian Revolution.

The Revolution Will Not Be Televised (2003) An inside look at the U.S. supported 2002 attempted coup in Venezuela.

Roger and Me (1989) Semi-documentary about Michael Moore's attempt to meet with GM's president Roger Smith to talk about the devastating economic impact GM had on Flint, MI when it closed its factories there.

Romero (1989) A biography of the Salvadoran Archbishop who stood up for the poor against the ruling class and military.

Roots (1977) A black man searches for his roots in Africa, revealing many layers of U.S. history.

Rosa Luxemburg (1986) A biography of the life and politics of German Jewish radical Rosa Luxemburg.



- Rosewood** (1997) The tragic story of a prosperous Black community in Florida destroyed by attacks by neighboring Whites.
- The Ruling Class** (1972) A satire of the British upper class about an earl who believes he is Jesus Christ.
- Salaam Bombay!** (1988) Story of an Indian child beggar trying to return to his home in the country.
- Sally Hemings: An American Scandal** (2000) Fictional account of the 38-year relationship between Thomas Jefferson and his young house slave.
- Salt of the Earth** (1954) Suppressed for 30 years in the U.S., this is the story of a strike in a zinc mine in New Mexico and the anti-Hispanic racial tensions that accompany it.
- Salvador** (1986) Two U.S. citizens in El Salvador must confront the realities of political violence there.
- Sankofa** (1993) An African American model on a photo shoot in West Africa is taken back to slave days and vividly experiences the horrors of slavery and the modes of resistance used against it.
- School Ties** (1992) A story about what happens when private school classmates find out that the football star on campus is Jewish.
- Separate But Equal** (1991) Dramatization of the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision that outlawed segregated schools.
- Silkwood** (1983) The story of a nuclear plant worker and activist who was killed while investigating shoddy practices at the plant.
- Sunder** (1972) The father of a black sharecropping family is jailed for stealing to feed his family in rural Louisiana.
- Spartacus** (1960) Story of the slave revolt against the Roman Empire led by a gladiator in 73 BCE.
- State of Siege** (1973) The story of a USAID/CIA employee involved in torture who is killed by guerrillas in Uruguay in the 1960s.
- Stonewall** (1995) Story of the diverse homosexual and trans community which participated in the uprising at the Stonewall in New York.
- Strike** (1924) A silent classic about striking factory workers and their fight against Czarist troops in 1912.



This Boy's Life (1993) A young man tries to choose between prep school and hanging with his friends when he and his mother move to a town near Seattle.

Thousand Pieces of Gold (1991) A young Chinese woman is sold to a marriage broker and shipped to the United States to be a prostitute.

Three Kings (1999) At the end of the Gulf War four soldiers go on a secret mission in Iraq and learn about disturbing aspects of U.S. policy in the Middle East.

Titanic (1997) A portrayal of class structure and cross-class romance during the sinking of the famous passenger ship.

Traffic (2000) A complex fictionalized story of the politics and players in the Mexico-U.S. drug trade.

Traffik (1990) Fictionalized story of various people involved in the complicated international heroin trade.

The Triangle Factory Fire Scandal (1979) True story of the Triangle textile factory fire which killed 145 workers and changed worker safety standards.

Viva Zapata! (1952) Biography of Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata.

Wag the Dog (1997) A media company stages a foreign invasion to distract attention from the president's fondling of a Girl Scout.

The War at Home (1996) Story about the long-term effects of the Vietnam War on a vet and his family.

A Woman Called Moses (1978) The story of Harriet Tubman, who bought her freedom as a slave, started the Underground Railroad, and freed hundreds of slaves in an attack at Combahee River.

Z (1969) Semi-documentary about the assassination of a Greek nationalist in the 1960s.

Zoot Suit (1981) A Mexican American is falsely accused of a murder in the 1940s during a time of intense racial conflict.

Please send comments, feedback, resources, and suggestions for distribution to paul@paulkivel.com. Further resources are available at www.paulkivel.com.