

File
TV/

Violence

A Plan to Put Washington In Maryland

Group Is Proposing Return of the Land

By MICHAEL JANOFSKY

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6 — Frustrated by the District of Columbia's fiscal crisis and the city's lack of representation in Congress, a new citizens group has begun a campaign to give most of Washington back to Maryland.

Under a plan that preserves the Capitol, the Mall and the White House as a Federal enclave, Maryland would get back the 70 square miles it donated for a national capital in 1791. Virginia had provided an additional 40 square miles but reclaimed the land in 1846.

"We're not saying it's the only solution," said Lawrence Mirel, a lawyer who was elected last month as president of the Committee for the Capital, a 30-member group promoting retrocession. "But any plan devised for the District must be economically viable and provide full and equal democratic rights. Ours is the only alternative that does."

For now, the idea has no known support beyond a suggestion by Speaker Newt Gingrich last year that District residents be allowed to vote in Maryland, a generous offer given the likelihood that Washington's population of 554,000 would give Maryland one more representative in the House, probably a Democrat. In Washington, the ratio of registered Democrats to Republicans is more than 10 to 1.

"I can't remember even a ripple of interest any time the idea has been raised," said John Allem, a spokesman for Mayor Marion S. Barry Jr.

Dianna Rosborough, a spokeswoman for Gov. Parris N. Glendening of Maryland, said Mr. Glendening would not consider retrocession until "a serious discussion of the issues" made clear what it would mean for the state.

District residents who once pined for statehood, now virtually a lost cause with a Republican-controlled Congress, view retrocession as "ultimate defeatism," as Mark Plotkin, a local political commentator and statehood supporter put it. "Sure, these are rough times," Mr. Plotkin said, "but this is a throw-in-the-towel group."

Still, something has to change, Mr. Mirel insisted, pointing to a local economic tailspin that has led to a decline in services, a shrinking tax base, a steady exodus of middle-class residents to the suburbs, hundreds of millions of dollars in overspending by the city government and, finally, a financial control board, which Congress created last year to restore order.

Progress has been slow. With Congress unwilling to increase the annual Federal payment the District receives in lieu of taxes, Mr. Barry and the control board remain uneasy partners in efforts to cut spending and the size of government. And while they now haggle over \$150 million in spending cuts for the 1996 fiscal year, which began last October, streets in full view of the White House remain covered with snow more than three days after the last storm.

In recent years, a variety of solutions have been proposed to lift Washington out of its economic doldrums, but none has generated much support. They have included granting statehood, which Congress opposes; returning the city government to Congressional control, which local elected leaders oppose, and taxing commuters, which members of the Maryland and Virginia Congressional delegations say they will not allow.

But Mr. Mirel said none of those initiatives would solve the city's two most pressing needs — lifting the local economy and giving local residents voting representation in Congress. Currently, the District has one nonvoting member of the House.

Mr. Mirel said that for Maryland, the economic benefits of retrocession would be enormous, raising the state's population to 5.5 million, or to 15th place from 19th, according to 1992 Census data, and creating a strong Baltimore-Washington market that could compete more effectively with Pennsylvania for new businesses.

The political advantage for District residents would be full representation in Congress, where Maryland has eight representatives.

Mr. Mirel, a 35-year resident of the city, acknowledged that gathering support for retrocession will be difficult. But he predicted that within a year or so, more people will view it as the logical way to proceed.

"Eleanor Holmes Norton told me I'm dreaming," Mr. Mirel said of the District's delegate in Congress. "And none of the elected leaders in Maryland have endorsed or embraced the idea. But fairly soon, I think, people will begin to realize this is it. This is the only answer."

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The New York Times

A New Report Becomes a Weapon In Debate on Censoring TV Violence

By BILL CARTER

A new report suggesting that violence pervades television entertainment shows is shaping as a central point of confrontation in a political battle between advocates of the V-chip — a device that can block transmission of violent programs into homes — and the broadcast networks, which adamantly oppose enforced censorship of their programs.

"This report means that broadcasters now have in their hands a working document that can serve as a basis for creating a ratings system for television shows," said Rep. Edward Markey of Massachusetts, one of the leading proponents of the V-chip. The chip would allow parents to prevent a television program from being seen in their homes if a rating system determined that it had a high level of violent or sexually explicit content.

The V-chip is a contentious part of the new Tele-Communications Act, which was ap-

proved by Congress last week and is scheduled to be signed into law tomorrow by President Clinton.

The report, which labels itself "the most comprehensive scientific assessment of television violence ever conducted," was due to be released officially today by a group called the National Television Violence Study. A broad coalition of researchers, media executives and mental health experts from several universities, including the University of Texas, the University of North Carolina and the University of California at Santa Barbara, took part in the study, which was assembled by Mediascope, a nonprofit organization hired by the Na-

tional Cable Television Association last year.

Details of the report, which concludes that "violence predominates on television, often including large numbers of violent interactions per program," were published yesterday in *The Washington Post* and other newspapers. The report, which relied on information in previously published studies on the effects of televised violence, also concludes that viewers, especially children, are "at risk" when they watch shows in which violence goes unpunished or the consequences of violence are not depicted.

Overall, the study finds that premium cable channels like HBO and Showtime are the most violent, with 85 percent of their programming including some violence, followed by basic cable channels with 59 percent, and independent television shows with 55 percent. Broadcast television has the lowest violence level — 44 percent — according to the study.

Underscoring the study's importance in

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the political debate about television violence, one of the project's chief researchers, Edward Donnerstein of the University of California at Santa Barbara, held a meeting yesterday with Mr. Markey to brief him on the conclusions.

Mr. Markey said the timing of the report was ideal. "Coming just after the Telecommunications Bill was passed and just before the President signs it, this is like Della Street rushing into the courtroom and telling Perry Mason, 'I have the conclusive evidence.'" he said.

Echoing Mr. Markey, Reed Hundt, the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, said: "This report tells us the debate is over. There is no question now that television is too violent."

But broadcasters, none of whom are thought to have been given copies of the report so far, questioned how the group could possibly have found levels of violence as high as it did.

"This thing looks ridiculous on the face of it," said Richard Cotton, NBC's senior vice president and general counsel. "They're saying there is violence in about a quarter of the shows on PBS. And they say that 44 percent of broadcast shows contain violence. Nowhere near 44 percent of our programs are dramas. What kind of shows are they counting?"

The study offers no specific examples of what constitutes violence in a specific show. Instead it lists a grid of the shows that were monitored: 2,693 separate programs, as seen on 23 different channels in the course of a composite week of viewing. The shows were broadcast between 6 A.M. and 11 P.M.

Groups of coders, selected from the volunteer undergraduates at two of the participating universities, were asked to watch the shows and decide what was a violent act based on the following definition: "Any overt depiction of the use of physical force or the credible threat of such

force intended to physically harm an animate being or group of beings."

Barbara Wilson, a professor of communication at the University of California at Santa Barbara, said the study was intended to answer complaints about previous academic examinations of violence on television where all incidents, whether comedic violence or acts of nature, were considered equally.

"We made an effort to identify the contextual features of every act," Ms. Wilson said. "Each act had to fit into the definition, so a doctor performing a life-saving operation would not count. And I doubt a food fight in a comedy would count because there would be no intent to harm."

If Wile E. Coyote is injured falling thousands of feet from a cliff in a Roadrunner cartoon, it probably would count, she said, because there was intent to harm.

Ms. Wilson said the report accepted previous research concluding that children imitate the violence they see on television, a point that broadcasters have rejected as unproven.

Network executives complained yesterday that the study could not be considered valid unless it specified what happened in each show, to classify it as violent. But Ms. Wilson said the researchers would not get into a

point-by-point summation of what went on in each show because it was the context that was important.

For example, she said, much emphasis was placed on whether "a perpetrator was punished" for an act of violence. The study found that in 73 percent of the cases, characters who committed violent acts were not punished in the same scene.

By the end of the typical program, 62 percent of the "bad characters" had been punished, the report found, but only 15 percent of the "good characters" were punished.

Asked why good characters should be punished, Ms. Wilson said that if they did not show concern or remorse about being involved in violence, that would count as almost the same thing. She agreed that punishing characters in the same scene in which they committed violence might impede storytelling, but she said that unless this was included, young children and people switching channels by remote control would not necessarily see the violence punished at the end of a story.

The report is expected to drive a further wedge between the broadcast and cable sectors of the television industry. Mr. Hundt praised the cable industry for financing a study "that is critical of their own industry," adding, "It's clear now that broadcasters should do the same

thing."

The broadcasters had commissioned their own study of television violence. It was conducted by the University of California at Los Angeles, whose conclusions, issued in September, found some "promising signs" about how the networks were reducing violence.

But Mr. Cotton of NBC conceded that the cable industry's study was likely to become a hammer that backers of the V-chip will use on the networks. "The truth is that short-term, this is going to inflame the situation," he said.

The broadcasters have been planning to challenge the V-chip in court as an unconstitutional infringement on the First Amendment right of free speech. But the supporters of the new study say the networks are now more vulnerable than ever on the issue of violence.

"The broadcasters don't want to go to court to stop the V-chip because of the First Amendment," Mr. Markey said. "They want to go to court because they're afraid it'll hurt advertising revenue. They're less concerned about how violence affects children than about how the V-chip will affect their business. Now that Della Street and Perry Mason have presented this sweeping report, they'll still go to court. But they will lose."

THE NEW YORK TIMES

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1996

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NATIONAL TELEVISION VIOLENCE STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 9 9 4 - 1 9 9 5

University of California, Santa Barbara
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
University of Texas, Austin
University of Wisconsin, Madison

M E D I A S C O P E, I N C.

file TV
reference

Melanne:

Attached are the memo we did for the VP on Haim Saban and the Power Rangers for the 2/29 media executives meeting and Saban's letter to the VP after the meeting. Greg wanted to be sure you noted that he disputes the facts of some of what the VP said at the meeting.

Greg also wanted me to send you a copy of the VP's remarks Monday at a conference held by the Annenberg School on children's television. They are forming an Advisory Council on Excellence in Children's Television (NYTimes article also attached); he thinks the First Lady might want also to highlight this sort of positive step.

He will call you as soon as he gets back to the office.

Kristen

FEBRUARY 28, 1996

MEMORANDUM FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT

FROM: GREG SIMON

SUBJECT: MEETING ATTENDEE HAIM SABAN

As you may know, Mr. Haim Saban, CEO of Saban Entertainment and producer of the "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" and "The X-Men" will attend the media executives meeting.

The Power Rangers airs in 145 markets and attracts more kids than most other animated programs or sitcoms. Last year more than \$1 billion in licensed Power Rangers merchandise was sold.

Two reports in the last three years have shown that The Power Rangers and The X-Men are among the most violent programs on television for children. Both reports took into account the context and the purpose of the violence. The reports indicated that his shows use violence as the central theme to the plot and that options other than fighting are rarely used.

You should take a strong line on Mr. Saban. Since he was so persistent in his efforts to attend this meeting he should be made to explain why his multi-billion dollar company produces some of the most violent children's programs on television today and what he is personally planning to do to cut the violent content from his programs.

If he says that they already air segments at the end of each program to tell kids not to use violence you can remind him that the children have just spent the entire rest of the show listening to how cool it is to be violent and that violence is the only way to resolve conflict and that violence has no consequences.

Attached are some quotes from newspapers regarding the two reports and quotes from Mr. Saban and others at the FOX Network which airs his shows.

HAIM SABAN – SABAN ENTERTAINMENT

Haim Saban, owner of Saban Entertainment produces "The X-Men" and "The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" shows for television. Two studies of children's TV in the last three years have shown that these shows are among the most violent programs on television for children. Both reports took into account the context and the purpose of the violence and still found his shows to be at the top of the worst offenders of TV violence.

In children's programming, what the [recently released UCLA] report calls 'sinister combat violence' showed up repeatedly in such programs as "The X-Men," "Teen-age Mutant Ninja Turtles" and "The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers." The report counted not just violent incidents, but the context in which they were displayed. Hence, the violence cited was, sadly, often central to the programs' basic themes, rather than incidental. (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, *October 7, 1995*)

These shows are about fighting," the report says. "Rarely are options other than fighting considered in these shows and the heroes are always eager to engage in combat. . . . These are the shows that, by far, raise the largest number of concerns about violence." (The San Diego Union-Tribune *September 25, 1995*)

"...sinister combat violence," where fighting is the main purpose of the program and the plot only gives justification for the combat. (St. Louis Post-Dispatch *September 21, 1995*)

"TV Violence Report Card,"... the survey, released by Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.)... "X-Men" on Fox topped the list of the most violent cartoon shows, with 129 acts of violence per hour, followed closely by CBS's "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles," with 123. (Chicago Tribune *December 19, 1993*)

The television show [Power Rangers] has been cited by anti-violence crusaders as an example of how TV keeps punching up kids' entertainment with violence to give it more impact. Last October the largest privately owned children's entertainment network in Sweden dropped the show – which the network also aired in Norway and Denmark – after the death of a 5-year-old Norwegian girl at the hands of a playmate. The kids were heavily into Power Rangers and their karate-kicking style. (The San Francisco Chronicle, *January 15, 1995*)

CJOH-TV in Ottawa announced it is cutting "X-Men" this month from its Saturday morning lineup. "We will not air this show because it no longer fits in with the new code. The characters are lifelike and express themselves through graphic violence," said CJOH station manager Al Mackay. (The Atlanta Journal and Constitution, *January 8, 1994*)

SABAN & CO. RESPONSE

...to Cheryl Saban, a "Power Rangers" writer who just happens to be married to Saban Entertainment boss Haim Saban, **that's not violence, it's 'physicality.'** (Chicago Sun-Times, December 20, 1993)

"It is a truly uplifting show, full of action and physicality," Saban says in a press release. **"'Power Rangers' is not preachy, but it does have a subtle moral fiber that children can embrace.** (Chicago Sun-Times, December 20, 1993)

"There's no reason all children's television should be as soft as Disney," says Saban, ... **"Kids have a sense of humor."** (USA TODAY, *September 26, 1994*)

Saban International, which produces 'X-Men,' said the show itself isn't to blame for its cancellation. [at CJOH in Canada] "It was a self-initiated decision to remove the show," said Saban spokesman Jeff Pryor. **"We consider 'X-Men' to be action-packed and do not believe there is any violence in the show."** (The Atlanta Journal and Constitution, *January 8, 1994*)

Margaret Loesch, the president of Fox Kids' Network, acknowledges that 'Power Rangers,' 'X-Men' and 'Batman' are violent. But she claims it's 'balanced' by softer kids' shows, like 'Bobby's World.' (The Sun (Baltimore) *January 23, 1994*)

Hoffman defended 'X-Men,' saying it's reviewed by a panel of child psychologists, psychiatrists and educators. (Chicago Tribune *December 19, 1993*)

"It's a multibillion-dollar business over the next five years," says Saban, who hopes to use the success of "Power Rangers" as a springboard to new business opportunities in television, movies, video games, live touring and even theme parks.

"We control all the streams of revenue," Saban says ... "The master toy license is one stream, video games is the second, home video another. . . . The ratings are the most visible, but they are just a piece of the puzzle."

In recent years, Saban has expanded into made-for-TV movies. Next up: a movie on the Menendez brothers for Fox. "Everything that has to do with family entertainment we will be in," Saban says. (Los Angeles Times, *March 11, 1994*)

The message, Singer said, 'is you fight with your enemies. There's no trying to negotiate. You just get rid of them.' Montgomery called that a mixed message. "On the one hand you have the pro-social messages -- **be good citizens and get along** -- and yet it resolves **all conflict with a fight**," she said. "It's very conflicted, and it's almost as if these so-called action shows have incorporated pro-social moments to justify the violence." (Los Angeles Times *February 26, 1994*)

Researchers at California State University-Fullerton found that children who were shown a Power Rangers episode responded by shoving and kicking their playmates with the same techniques that the Rangers used to fight off their foes. "One of the scary things about violence in the media is it gives children new ideas about how to be aggressive and be violent," Cal-Fullerton assistant professor Chris Boyatzis told The Los Angeles Times. (The Dallas Morning News, *September 7, 1994*)

Finally, there is one last insult to the intelligence of children. Each show concludes with the Power Rangers, back in their human guise, self-righteously lecturing little kids on how to avoid conflict. This comes, of course, after 20 minutes of showing kids that fighting is cool and effective. (Chicago Sun-Times, December 20, 1993)

The 'Power Rangers' teach that:

The best way to resolve any conflict is through violence. The Power Rangers don't start fights, but they do respond to every threat with kicks, punches and explosions. In each show, **the Power Rangers make the world a better place through violence.**

The more powerful your weapon, the more powerful you are. The show's formula is a predictable escalation of violence, from kick-boxing to missiles.

Violence is without pain, consequences or remorse. The good guys -- the Power Rangers themselves -- never suffer the effects of violence. They are zapped, pummeled and fired upon, only to pop up and fight again. Even the bad guys get painlessly blasted away. If anyone suffers, it's only the kids who watch. (Chicago Sun-Times, December 20, 1993)



SABAN

March 28, 1996

where was this ?!
[Handwritten mark]

The Honorable Al Gore, Jr.
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Vice President,

First of all, I would like to thank you and President Clinton for inviting me and my peers to the White House to discuss the planned television ratings system. While I believe the implementation of the system will be challenging for the industry, as a father of two young children, I support measures which help me to guide their recreational activities.

During the closed door session in Washington, you made two inaccurate statements regarding the "Power Rangers" which troubled me but which I chose not to address with you in that forum. However, I would now like to set the record straight. As you know, "Power Rangers" is the biggest phenomena in the entire history of kids' television and, as such, has attracted more than its share of both criticism and kudos. However, because the series became such an "event", certain myths have developed. Unfortunately, myths, if oft repeated, can become facts if not challenged.

One of these myths is that "Power Rangers" was taken off the air by its broadcaster (Global) in Canada due to violence issues. This is simply not the case. The show was edited slightly (less than 30 seconds per episode) and remained on the air for another year. Another myth is that "Power Rangers" was removed from the air in Scandinavia because a group of young boys killed a six year old girl. The show was pulled for one week and was immediately brought back when the official investigation determined that the boys involved had never even seen "Power Rangers".

My defense of the series with respect to these false stories notwithstanding, the series has received some legitimate criticism. Even though we have received far more positive than negative mail from parents, we take the negative comments to heart and many changes have been incorporated into the show in response to this criticism. As the father of a seven year old boy and a five year old girl, I pay close attention to what my children watch on television. As the world's largest supplier

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June 18, 1996, Tuesday, Late Edition - Final

SECTION: Section C; Page 15; Column 5; Cultural Desk

LENGTH: 901 words

HEADLINE: Nudging TV On New Rule For Children

BYLINE: By LAWRIE MIFFLIN

BODY:

While the Federal Communications Commission is busy writing a new rule this week to require television stations to broadcast three hours a week of educational programs for children, momentum is gathering to help broadcasters comply.

Of course, "help" is not the verb most broadcasters and network executives would choose to label this movement. "Pressure" would be their choice.

Several media research organizations completed studies this month showing the benefits to children of educational television and the demand for it from parents, as well as citing scholars' arguments for ratings codes to identify not only violent or sexually explicit programs parents might want to avoid but also educational or informational programs parents might want to embrace. And President Clinton invited network executives to a White House conference next month on improving children's television.

Yesterday at a meeting in Washington, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, who is best known as an expert in politics and television, announced that the Annenberg Public Policy Center had created an advisory panel to "assess the quality of programs submitted to the F.C.C. by stations seeking license renewal."

The nine-member panel, called the Advisory Council on Excellence in Children's Television, includes the educators James P. Comer and Charles J. Ogletree, as well as the author Jonathan Kozol and the documentary film maker Ken Burns. All have agreed to serve for three years. "I'm delighted there'll be private-sector groups evaluating and publicizing the efforts of children's television producers," Commissioner Susan Ness of the F.C.C., who spoke at the Annenberg conference, said in a telephone interview afterward. "Government shouldn't be doing that. This will be a wonderful tool a community can use to

rally in support of, or rally to correct, the choices their local broadcasters are making."

If the Annenberg panel succeeds, advocates say, its approval could become something akin to the "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval." But some fear it could also become something akin to academic censorship.

"It's not too different from the old days when the Catholic Legion of Decency rated movies, is it?" said Rick Siggelkow, co-producer, with Britt Allcroft, of the PBS show "Shining Time Station" and now vice president of the children's division of BBC Worldwide Americas.

Mr. Siggelkow said that the panel's value would lie in its independence, but that he also thought it should include representatives of the industry.

"These people have sterling credentials," he said. "But what's glaringly absent is any children's television producers, the people who have to raise the money, come up with the concepts and actually make the shows. Certainly, Ken Burns is a wonderful producer and knows what producers have to go through, but his programs are very far removed from the children's arena."

Many broadcasters argue that the advocates for more educational programming for children do not understand how difficult and expensive it is to make. They also complain that children don't watch educational programs. If a program draws paltry ratings, and therefore low advertising fees, they argue, it is a liability to them and of little service to the public.

At the Annenberg conference yesterday, Victoria Rideout, director of the Children and the Media division of the California-based advocacy group called Children Now, led a panel discussion in which advertisers talked about this quandary. She said studies released by the Annenberg Center yesterday showed that the higher-quality children's programs were usually scheduled in the least-watched time periods, creating a sort of Catch-22.

"How can we get networks and advertisers to give the high-quality programs a fighting chance?" she said by telephone from Washington. "On the panel I led, some advertising folks talked about forming a collaborative effort, where major advertisers and producers together would help produce some kids' programming, then take it to networks with some advertising support already there."

Federal law requires television stations, as a condition for license renewal, to broadcast some educational and informational programs for children. The law, the Children's Television Act of 1990, does not specify how much, but empowers the F.C.C. to decide that.

Many broadcasters object to a weekly three-hour minimum as a Government intrusion on their First Amendment right to broadcast as they see fit, according to their own community's viewing wishes.

Other broadcasters, particularly those who believe their stations already serve children well, argue that it is more practical -- and perhaps even more First Amendment-friendly -- to know in advance what's expected at license renewal time, rather than to have vague guidelines subject to interpretation by whatever five F.C.C. commissioners happen to be in place at renewal time.

Until last week, Commissioner James Quello, a conservative Democrat, and Commissioner Rachelle Chong, a Republican, had held firm against any numerical standard being adopted. But Mr. Quello dropped his opposition, saying more than half the broadcasters he had spoken to preferred firm guidelines. That left only Ms. Chong opposed. So a three-hour guideline is being written this week.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: June 18, 1996

Prepared remarks
Vice President Al Gore

National Press Club
Press Conference on Children and Television

Washington, DC
June 17, 1996

Good morning. About a year ago, my wife Tipper and I invited dozens of scholars, television programmers, and educators to Nashville, Tennessee, for a conference on the American family and the American media. Among the people who came to Nashville for those sessions was Kathleen Hall Jamieson, one of the country's most thoughtful analysts of the role of mass media in American life. In Nashville -- and in all the years I've known her -- she has taught me a great deal about how the media shape American politics and influence our children's lives.

That's why I was delighted when Kathleen and the Annenberg Public Policy Center took on this project. The Advisory Council on Excellence in Children's Television -- which begins its work today -- will establish private sector guidelines for what constitutes educational programming for children.

This blue-ribbon commission is the most recent sign that the movement for quality children's television has begun to pick up steam. For two decades now, my wife Tipper has been working to make sure parents know what's in the music their children listen to and what's on the television they watch.

And President Clinton and I have long supported giving parents the tools to make television a positive influence in their children's lives -- tools to help them welcome in the terrific and to keep out the trash.

For example, earlier this year President Clinton successfully advocated for the V-chip, a new device parents can use to keep their living rooms family-friendly. And he helped persuade the nation's television broadcasters and producers to establish a voluntary ratings system to inform parents about the content of shows their children might be turning on.

Those were important strides. But along with giving parents the tools to choose, we've been equally concerned about making sure our parents have something to choose. The V-chip and the voluntary ratings system are necessary, extremely necessary. But they are not sufficient. American families also need more programming and better programming.

So President Clinton has been working hard to increase both the quantity and quality of educational television. For example, FCC Chairman Reed Hundt, Congressman Ed Markey, children's advocate Peggy Charren and I -- along with many others -- have been working to establish a minimum requirement for television broadcasters: three hours a week of educational programming. Three hours a week is fair. It's simple. And it leaves 98 percent of broadcasting time available for other programs.

Three hours a week for our children is not too much to ask. And this week, the three-hour requirement that we've been pursuing for so long may become a reality. And that decision -- coupled with the blue-ribbon commission that's beginning work today -- could make this week the best week for children's television in a generation. By the end of this week, we will have begun to change the face of children's television.

The Annenberg Advisory Commission on Excellence in Children's Television is also an important step not simply in terms of what we're achieving, but how we're achieving it. We're improving television not by government fiat, but by the studied opinion of some of the nation's most pre-eminent private citizens, women and men committed to improving the quality of kids TV.

This technique -- "educate and inform" rather than "command and control" -- is also alive in a proposal PBS President Ervin Duggan made about two weeks ago. To further empower parents to make good choices for their kids, President Duggan proposed fixing an icon in the bottom corner of the television screen during shows that meet strict standards for quality educational programming. This way, as with food labels, parents will know whether they're choosing a healthy televised meal or simply another helping of a high-fat video junk food. It's a great idea.

So is the announcement President Clinton made last week to invite television leaders to meet at the White House for a summit on educational television. Once again, with the leadership and knowledge of the industry itself, we'll work to give parents additional guidance for making television a positive influence in their children's lives.

With the buzz of activity occurring in only the last few weeks and months -- the V-chip, the voluntary ratings system, the three-hour a week educational television requirement, the PBS icon, and today's announcement -- I believe we're ushering in a new era of high-quality educational programming for American children. The momentum we've unleashed may prove unstoppable.

I predict that a year from now, television networks will be fighting each other to win the Annenberg Advisory Commission's seal of approval, and to earn one of those PBS educational icons.

I predict that a year from now, television producers will be turning out more

educational programming and better educational programming -- and that vast numbers of talented producers, directors, actors, and writers will seize this creative challenge.

And I predict that a year from now, our nation will have moved ever closer to the goal President Clinton has been pursuing since he first came to office and others have sought still longer: television that's as good as our children, television that educates our young people and lifts up their lives.

Now I will leave you in the good hands of Kathleen Hall Jamieson, who will answer any questions.

TV violence can make you — violent!

My TV was set at Channel 2 when I turned it on on Tuesday night and caught a rerun of the actor Richard Thomas stalking a corporate office building, an arsenal of assault weapons on his back.

I'm not unduly squeamish about screen violence. I watch it willingly in documentaries or newscasts. I love it in Shakespeare and other dramas that draw us into unflinching moral engagement with our condition. But I do tend to flick the remote whenever music and body language tell me I'm about to see bloodshed for Nielsens.

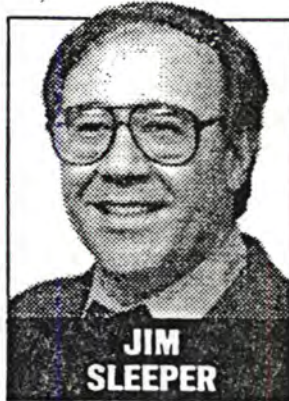
On Tuesday, though, I watched "I Can Make You Love Me: The Stalking of Laura Black" for 15 minutes with a clammy revulsion as Thomas coolly blew away a dozen people who looked like those I work with every day — people at the water cooler, on the phone. He slew them across what, for TV, is a long time, maybe five minutes. Bloody, writhing bodies everywhere. No expense spared by coproducers Ardythe Goergens and Bernadette Caulfield.

In the scenes I watched before changing channels, Brooke Shields (Laura) begs Thomas not to shoot; flies across the room, spurting blood, as he does, and crawls, weeping, to colleagues after Thomas has sauntered off to kill others. Later, seeing that she's gotten away, Thomas stalks some more. "Laura, where are you?" he calls. Director Michael Switzer has managed to prolong the mayhem.

CLEARLY, THE PSYCHOPATHIC eruption, bloodshed and suffering — based on a true story, of course — are the film's only reason for being. Variety says it combines "woman-in-jeopardy and mass-killer genres into a predictable and often gruesome concoction that has little to offer other than gratuitous violence." This isn't drama; it's the gladiator pits of a falling Rome. Since we can't seem to stop it, we have to wonder whether, as Cicero said of Rome, we are too ill to bear either our sicknesses or our cures.

I don't believe the cure is censorship or government regulation. The cure is collective withdrawal from a national addiction like the one we're undergoing over cigarettes.

For starters, we can clear our throats



and say that Ardythe Goergens, Bernadette Caulfield and Michael Switzer are monsters. And that network honchos such as CBS' Howard Stringer and the recently departed Jeffrey Sagansky should be reviled like tobacco executives wherever they go.

They should have smoke blown in their faces at cocktail parties because they're liars who spread death. Out of one side of

their mouths, they tell advertisers that the more they repeat a message, the more it will influence behavior. Out of the other side of their mouths, they piously tell congressional committees and activists that repetitive TV violence — 15 violent acts per prime-time hour on each network, says a recent study — has no discernible influence on behavior. That's like tobacco shills claiming there's no link between smoking and cancer.

Another thing they tell us is that they're only providing what the public wants. But I'm sure the public wants network execs to stand outside Black Rock and Rockefeller Center handing out hundred-dollar bills. It isn't *only* what the public wants that drives network execs. They do make decisions. And they've decided to offer whatever the public wants that makes money for them and their shareholders, even if it means titillating the worst in people, playing on insecurity and fear.

How sad. How cruel. All that fine education and corporate power, and still the difference between leadership and used-car selling is lost on the wunderkinds in these suites. Blood spurts out of their mouths. It sloshes about in their shoes. It lies like a film across their offices, newsrooms, public-service programs.

For me, Tuesday night was a watershed — or a bloodshed. Sign me up for the long march. The Center for Media Literacy, at (212) 870-2282, sends a brochure on how to see through and organize against bad media programs and priorities.

One other thing might change the climate at TV Central: A visit from a stalker. Just imagine a vice president staggering across his office, holding his guts in his hands, trying to phone his wife and kids. Blood streaming down the faces of secretaries and technicians as they stampede toward the elevators.

Hey, I'm against violence. And it's only a fantasy, right? I can't imagine what prompted it.

From Barney to Super Nintendo: What to do when your child wants it all

"A lot of the kids who want things so badly and can't afford them . . . we need to help them—and everyone else—understand that 'things' are not what make a person. Kids are shooting people for sports jackets . . . We need to deal with our values and morals."

—A parent of two children

Whether it's Barney sandals, Ninja Turtle knapsacks, Nintendo games, or simply "the perfect" pair of sneakers—do your children ever say, "Come on Mom (or Dad). Everyone else has it, and I'll be the only one without it!"?

Your children's "wants" may also include later curfews ("No one else has to come in so early!") or more privileges ("I'm the only one who can't ride my bike to the store!") or expanded horizons ("Everyone thinks I'm such a loser. I'm the only one who can't see that movie!"). The list can go on and on.

With constant bombardment from the media of attractive things to own, it's no wonder that children "want." And with pressure from peers, children often end up perceiving their wants as needs they can't do without.

It's probably fair to say that it's natural for kids to want these things and would be more surprising if they didn't. The key issue is how they deal with and feel about those wants—and what we do in response to them.

Distinguishing between wants and needs

It's vital that we help our children understand how to distinguish between wants and needs and be able to put them in a balanced perspective. It's also important for us to establish boundaries and stick to them, despite the fact that children may react by slamming doors and saying "I hate you" or "It's going to be your fault if kids leave me out."

I've learned over the years that what may seem like "the obvious" to adults is exactly what kids need to have reinforced. To help kids learn to differentiate their wants from their needs, take examples from their own experiences so they can better understand and relate more closely to the examples.

For example, you might talk about a time when their pants no longer fit, their shoes had holes in them or their coats were too thin to protect them from

colder weather. These are *needs*.

On the other hand, if your children want four pairs of shoes—one to match each different colored outfit—those are *wants*. I'm not suggesting that it's not okay to purchase such wants. That's a personal choice that is rightfully up to each parent to decide, based upon sense of values, financial circumstances and whatever else a parent might feel important to take into consideration.

I am suggesting that we make the effort to teach children the difference between a necessity and what might more appropriately be considered a luxury. Doing so can help lay a foundation for greater appreciation of what you actually do choose to buy for your child.

In my Growing Up Feeling Good programs, I invited parents and children who attend to share their feelings and experiences with me by writing them down on "sharing cards." In one such program, a parent, B.P., shared the following:

"When I buy my daughters things that are really not necessary, like the underwear that has to match the bra, they have to understand that they are privileged. They have to be made aware that they are getting something special. They can't take it for granted.

"If kids are given more than they need, it probably will not hurt them as long as they are made to be aware of how lucky they are. I just drum that into my kids all the time."

Another parent told me her son asked for a jacket that "everyone at school had." Because he already had a jacket, she told him if he wanted it, he'd have to buy it with his own money. He ended up using his holiday gift money to get it for himself.

When children earn something for themselves, they're likely to have a different sense of appreciation of the value of a dollar and a different sense of ownership than when you buy things for them.

A mother, A.H., with two daughters shared: "If you can get kids to take part



in a program for the homeless, and they see that people don't even have a place to live, then they appreciate so much more what they have."

Fostering respect for differences

I'll never forget the 6th-grade boy at one of my assembly programs years ago who wrote on his sharing card that his family didn't have enough money for shoes. He said that the principal in his school was able to help arrange to get his family shoes and clothing. What is still so painful to me is that he also said that the kids in his school still teased him about what he wore.

That boy and his family were in need. While the reality is that some children purposely tease to be cruel, my guess is that many of the children who teased him had no concept of how hurtful their comments actually were. Most of those kids probably had even less apprecia-

tion for what it might have meant to be without shoes.

When do you as a parent "give in" to your child's request? This is a judgment call, based upon circumstances and your sense of your own child. There are times when children are seriously concerned about the need to look just like "everyone else" because in their perception, that's their ticket to belonging.

We need to help our children understand that if someone only likes them for what they wear, what they look like or what they own—instead of for who they are—they need to question whether that's a good friend to have.

Children who lack self-confidence, have a lower sense of self-worth and also have weak social and communication skills may find it difficult to hold onto the perspective that they're worthy because of who they are on the "inside." They might also find it hard to trust that what's really important has nothing to do with getting the sweater that "every-

one" has. (Their lesson in this case is that they are important with or without the sweater. If someone doesn't think so, it's time to look for a different friend!)

If you sense a time when your son's or daughter's level of confidence is very low, you may decide that it's worth allowing the purchase of the sweater that "everyone else" has. In such cases, the sweater may make it seem to your child that at least on the outside, he or she appears to fit in with the other kids. Your child can then be freer to concentrate on making friends rather than worrying about appearance.

If you do make this decision, it's essential that your child be very clear about just what that sweater represents.

Grabbing the teachable moment

How do you respond when a child says, "Why can't I have it? Everyone else does?" When challenged in this

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way, you might grab this as a terrific teachable moment. Your response to "Everyone else is doing it, why can't I?" can help reinforce some valuable life lessons—about consistency, follow-through, fairness, listening, friendship, peer pressure and loving your child enough not to give in to this kind of pressure.

I'm not suggesting that it's easy or particularly pleasant to have to deal with kids who are disturbed about restrictions that they may consider unfair, overprotective and even old-fashioned. But at what price do we give in? What kinds of messages do you imagine our children will take away with them if we do?

You might find it helpful to respond with the following:

"I understand that all of your friends are doing this. And I respect their parents' right to make that decision for them. But you're not your friends and I'm not your friends' parent ... I need to be consistent with my own sense of responsibility and my own sense of what seems best for you."

You might add: "It would be much easier to just give in and let you come in as late as you want. Then I wouldn't have to deal with how upset you are and

how unfair you think I am.

"However, I feel I owe you more than that. I love you very much and am very concerned about what I know goes on later. That's why I'm taking such a hard line. I'm sorry you're so upset about this, but I hope, at least, that you do understand where I'm coming from."

It can also help to listen to your child's reasoning, let him or her know that no decision is carved in stone, and that there can be reevaluation based upon issues such as trust, maturity, etc. Kids usually appreciate it if parents at least take each circumstance unto itself, as each might be a bit different.

The truth is that your child may never quite reach the point of accepting the rules you make or may never be happy about whatever restrictions you choose to establish. (And who said life would seem fair all the time?)

It's especially important that we, as parents, be clear about what our children need versus what they want. Sometimes, parents are more affected by peer pressure than children are. We need to remember that we are role-modeling for our kids at all times. We're teaching all the time, verbally as well as nonverbally, about self-worth, respect for others and values.

S.M., a parent of two children, shared this at one of my programs:

"A lot of the kids who want things so badly and can't afford them...we need to help them—and everyone else—understand that 'things' are not what make a person. Kids are shooting people for sports jackets ... We need to deal with our values and morals."

Boundaries are one of our more important gifts to our children. Kids may not seem to want them, but there are many children who have told me they would give up their privileges (and even prize possessions and big homes) if only their parents would care enough to establish limits and bother to stick to them. □

Ellen Rosenberg is an educator, author and parent. She is creator of Growing Up Feeling Good programs for students, staff and parents at the elementary and secondary school levels as well as LIFE 101 programs for college and university audiences. She is the author of Growing Up Feeling Good (Puffin Books) and College Life (Penguin Books).

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