

# Public Affairs Television, Inc.

To My Colleagues in Public Television:

When I retired the *Journal* more than a year ago, I said to our audience: “It’s time to go.” And so it was. Since 9/11, when PBS asked us practically overnight to launch a daily broadcast on the crisis, our team had taken on one challenge after another. Over the next few years we would produce three mini-series (*America’s First River*, *Faith and Reason*, and *Becoming American: The Chinese Experience*), five documentary specials (*Trading Democracy*, *Buying the War*, *Capitol Crimes*, *Is God Green?* and *The Net At Risk*), and two weekly series (*Now with Bill Moyers* and *Bill Moyers Journal*). We relished every minute of that streak – well, *almost* every minute – but on the eve of my 76<sup>th</sup> birthday, it was time to step off the treadmill of production and take some deep breaths. I told our audience, “While I don’t consider myself old, there are some things left to do that the deadlines and demands of a weekly broadcast don’t permit.” So I brought the *Journal* to a close.

Since then Judith and I (partners in all matters personal and professional) have done many of those things. We took our older grandchildren abroad. We encouraged our younger grandchildren to come and go frequently and spontaneously. We enjoyed leisurely reunions with old friends. We made some public appearances (including a joint commencement speech), sat for long stretches of time watching the hawks circle above our trees, attended to some deferred business, and thanks to Netflix, caught up on a lot of movies and television we had missed while meeting one deadline after another. And we continued to read widely for the sake of our own continuing education. Oh, yes, we and our team also published our new book: *Bill Moyers Journal: The Conversation Continues*.

All the while we admitted to each other that neither of us has the retirement skills for the long run. After 57 years of marriage we still like to work on shared projects. And the world continues to engage us.

During this period we have heard often from viewers around the country who had become part of the virtual community that grew up around our broadcasts. Kindred spirits, whose unseen but felt presence buoyed our efforts week after week on the air, wrote, emailed, or stopped us on the street to say they missed the *Journal*. Their entreaties got us to thinking about what we might yet do to contribute to the conversation of democracy. A few months ago the Carnegie Corporation of New York, whose 1965 report urging the creation of public broadcasting landed on my desk at the White House where I was helping to shape President Johnson’s domestic agenda, stepped forward with an offer to “prime the pump” with a lead grant if we undertook yet another series with creative thinkers. When I told several of our long-time funders of Carnegie’s commitment – those whose credits you have seen for many years now – they assured us of their desire to help if we returned to production.

With all this in mind, we have decided to offer stations a new hour-long weekly broadcast in January featuring people we think you and your community will want to know: people whose conversation provokes conversation, whose ideas spark more ideas. There will be a diversity of voices, one-on-one interviews with lively minds rich in experience and insight, as well as an exchange of views among people who may disagree on politics, governance, faith, religion and the state of democracy, but who nonetheless agree on the importance of a civil dialogue about their differences. There will be segments on movies, television, the web, and books. The late Eric Sevareid, one of the country's foremost essayists and my colleague and mentor at CBS News many years ago, called this kind of journalism "news of the mind" and urged me to make it my beat. I have done so in much of my work over these many decades. In fact, it was 40 years ago this year that my first best-selling book, *Listening to America*, caught the attention of public television executives who then invited me to host a new weekly series which became the original *Bill Moyers Journal*.

Our aim with the new series in January will be to offer viewers some different news, some new voices and fresh thinking, and an occasional cultural grace note. Each hour will consist of at least two segments – one timely and one timeless interview – and an occasional essay. The set, music, and graphics will signal that this is something different – something new from Moyers.

American Public Television will distribute the series and THIRTEEN (WNET) –my long-time home-base here in New York – will be the presenting station. Our colleagues at THIRTEEN are considering airing the series on Sundays from 6-7 p.m., with a repeat during the week. We know each of you will want to make your own decisions about the time that works best for viewers in your community, and we will keep that reality in mind as we plan each broadcast.

We're committed to working with stations to distribute the content on multiple platforms – through television, radio, the web, apps, and social media – in order to reach not only our long-time core audience but new audiences as well. We will provide you with customized promos, tools for local underwriting, and streaming content for your websites.

By the way, next year is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first broadcast of our series *The Power of Myth with Joseph Campbell*, one of the most popular offerings in public television's history and one of the best fund raisers for local stations. We will be updating *The Power of Myth* hopefully in time for March pledge.

I will have more to say about all this in November at the American Public Television Fall Marketplace in Memphis, where I have been invited to deliver the keynote address. We'll bring copies of our new book – *Bill Moyers Journal: The Conversation Continues* – to sign for any of you who would like one.

In the meantime, my colleagues – Judy Doctoroff at Public Affairs Television and Robin Rodriguez at WNET New York Public Media – will be available if you have questions or suggestions.

These are hard times and I understand the impact on every station. Thank you for the effort you're making to cope. My colleagues and I are grateful that we can do our part by offering you a fully-funded series that we believe will appeal to your core members who continue to believe in public television's mission.

See you in Memphis.

Bill Moyers