

The blasphemy of *Loose Change*

Alexandra Sedeno (asedeno@trinity.edu)¹
Department of Communication, Trinity University

Two very different outlooks exist on who was responsible for the attacks on September 11, 2001; al-Qaeda and the United States government. The motives for the United States government to plan the attacks were to either provide the United with a reason to go to war with Iraq or to extend the power of the Bush Administration; perhaps even both. "A Scripps-Howard poll of 1,010 adults found that 36% of Americans consider it 'very likely' or 'somewhat likely' that government officials either allowed the attacks to be carried out or carried out the attacks themselves" (Grossman). *Loose Change*, written and directed by Dylan Avery, "is an online video designed to pick apart, point by point, the conventional narrative of what happened on September 11, 2001" (Grossman). It is a documentary film hailed as 'the best 9/11 film' by a *Loose Change* website because it proves that the attacks were an inside job.

However, the film has major flaws as a documentary. "Documentary filmmakers share a common, self-chosen mandate to represent the historical world rather than to imaginatively invent alternatives ones" (Nichols). To refute this point, what Avery does in the film *Loose Change* is to invent alternative worlds or versions of what took place on 9/11. *Loose Change* demonstrates its anti-American government agenda by taking advantage of sentiments in society, exploiting the actual events that occurred on September 11, 2001, and finally, by irresponsibly supplying fabricated information.

The United States of America had not seen such a crisis or been in such a state of panic since the World Wars. For people all over the world watching the World Trade Centers collapse in a matter of minutes was like watching America crumble without any explanation of the cause. Americans were all in a weak condition and very vulnerable. People were

mourning the loss of loved ones and heroes, and more importantly, they were coming to the dreaded possibility, contrary to common belief, that the United States was not almighty and powerful, nor was it invincible. It is when individuals are feeling this low that the chance for anything to give them some sort of comfort and relief becomes high. In creating *Loose Change*, Dylan Avery took advantage of American sentiments by use of propaganda.

According to The American Heritage Dictionary, propaganda is 'the systematic propagation of a doctrine or cause or of information reflecting the views and interests of those advocating such a doctrine or cause'. *Loose Change* can be compared to the propaganda film of the 1930's by Nazi Germany, *Triumph of the Will*. "The film [Triumph of the Will] glosses over the actual problems; instead it devotes the vast amount of its energy to urging viewers (especially its initial viewers in 1930 Germany) to endorse the efforts of the Nazi party and its leader to redeem Germany and put it on the path to recovery, prosperity, and power" (Nichols, 27). *Loose Change* does the exact thing against the United States government only with a different effect; it urges its American viewers to endorse the idea that the United States government was responsible for the 9/11 attacks in order for Americans not to give credibility to higher U.S institutions or common media outlets. "*Loose Change* appeals to the viewer's common sense: it tells you to...trust your eyes and your brain..." (Grossman). In this manner, Avery imposes a new wave of thought in order to change American viewer's perception of a government that has wronged them.

Avery demands that 'it is the duty of every American to watch this film'. This furthers the assertion that the film takes advantage of American sentiments because it conveys that if an American is not to watch this film, they are not exercising their moral duty as Americans to do so. It makes the reader of this quote feel as though he or she is forced or coerced into watching the film and if not, guilt or even worse, becoming a non-American, will be the consequence.

With the high use of the internet these days, it is very easy to gain access to information. Avery used the internet as the tool to spread his theory. "The internet is making it far easier to spread such theories because the traditional media are losing their hold on the news" (Welch). Many college students around the states are supporters of this film and their ease of access to the internet has aided their ability to watch the film. "Christian Pecaut, 25, a Stanford graduate

¹ Alexandra Sedeno, an undergraduate communication student at Trinity University, wrote this term paper in December 2006 for a course on documentary film. The course was taught by Professor Aaron Delwiche. Student papers are available online at <http://www.trinity.edu/adelwich/documentary/guides.html>

who is promoting the film at the University of California, Berkeley campus, said the film is 'catchy, hip' with an 'upbeat soundtrack'" (Welch). On a side note, how would an 'upbeat soundtrack' increase the validity of the theories in the documentary?

However, not everyone is falling for the theories conveyed by Avery. Debra Burlingame, whose brother was the pilot of American Flight 77 that crashed into the Pentagon says, "They aren't truth-tellers looking to save the world. They're con artists hoping to sucker conspiracy-theory paranoids or anti-government malcontents into shelling out their hard-earned dollars" (Welch). The bottom line is that Avery's use of propaganda in *Loose Change* is very apparent. He brought his theories to the public in a time when the public was vulnerable. "We're always ready to believe something about which we know nothing" (Welch).

Perhaps the most criticized point of the film is that it exploits the actual events that occurred on September 11, 2001. The use of lies told throughout the film is very abundant and extremely frequent. *Loose Change* has been deemed as a film that has helped to spread yet another existing conspiracy theory; the 9/11 Truth Movement. According to The American Heritage Dictionary, a conspiracy theory is 'a theory seeking to explain a disputed case or matter as a plot by a secret group or alliance rather than an individual or isolated act'. Avery is blaming the United States government for their alleged participation or initiative to create the attacks on September 11, 2001; he is not blaming the usual suspects for the attack- Osama Bin-Laden or al-Qaeda.

According to William M. Welch, author of the article, 'Conspiracy film rewrites Sept. 11', "Most of what the film alleges is refuted by the evidence at hand. Anything not answered definitively by the government is interpreted by the film as proof of a cover-up. One huge flaw of the film is that the theories prompted by Avery ask small questions that demand unreasonably large answers.

"There's a big problem with *Loose Change* and with most other conspiracy Theories. The more you think about them, the more you realize how much they depend on circumstantial evidence, facts without analysis or documentation, quotes taken out of context and the scattered testimony of traumatized eyewitnesses" (Grossman).

Despite the acknowledgement of this idea, conspiracy theories, including the 9/11 Truth Movement, are still strongly held onto by many. Academics who study

them say that, "...they meet a basic human need: to have the magnitude of any given effect to be balanced by the magnitude of the cause behind it. A world in which tiny causes can have the consequences feels scary and unreliable" (Grossman). This justifies why a disaster like September 11th needs a massive conspiracy behind it. The conspiracy theory argued by Avery is a popular one because in any event, small or large, ambiguity can be found. "As divisive as they are, conspiracy theories are part of a process by which Americans deal with traumatic public events. In a curious way, they're an American form of national mourning" (Grossman).

Perhaps one of the most intriguing points is that *Loose Change* irresponsibly supplies fabricated information. The cheap production of this film is important to keep in mind. It was the invention of two college kids who cited Wikipedia as a source. With the use of a regular PC, the creators used internet clips accessible to all individuals and a \$1,000 budget to make a documentary that has been widely disputed throughout the states. It provides visual tricks and distortions that can and have been disproved. Many outraged individuals have created websites and blogs which negate information presented in *Loose Change*. One website in particular, *Screw Loose Change*, offers fascinating misrepresentations made by the film. The film uses printed text of citations in order to make it appear more official which are, in fact, words they found in blogs. The erroneous use of second sourcing is frequent. The film even uses selective quotes in order to suit the purpose of the point the filmmakers are trying to make.

The attack of the Pentagon has been a high point issue of debate for conspiracy theorists. It is said that the building was not hit by a commercial airline but rather, it was hit by a cruise missile. According to *Loose Change*, the crash site does not show enough damage.

"Take the section about the attack on the Pentagon. Experts will tell you that the hole was punched by the plane's fuselage, not its wings, which sheared off on impact. But then what happened to the wings? And the tail and the engines? The lawn, where the plane supposedly dragged a wing on approach is practically pristine. And could Hani Hanjour, the man supposedly at the controls, have executed the maneuvers that the plane performed? He failed a flight test just weeks before the attack." (Grossman).

This idea is easily refuted. "But if the Pentagon was hit by a cruise missile, then what happened to American Airlines Flight 77? Where did all the real, documented people go? What about eyewitnesses who saw a plane, not a missile?" (Grossman).

Another interesting point refuted by the contributors of the *Screw Loose Change* website is the mention of Marvin Bush as head of security of the World Trade Center in *Loose Change*. Here, the idea is that bombs were put into the World Trade Center by the U.S government but how? Avery quotes a number of individuals who worked in the World Trade Center who say that they witnessed many unannounced and unusual drills and bomb-sniffing dogs being removed on the day of September 6, 2001. The film then asks, 'who authorized all of this?' and then say that Marvin Bush was the Board of Directors at Securacom from 1993 until 2000. As the contributors of the *Screw Loose Change* website point out, first, the question is answered with an inconsequential statement. Second, Marvin Bush had nothing to do with the daily security operations of the World Trade Center. Thirdly, he left his position as a board member of the company in 2000, more than 14 months before the terrorist attacks.

Yet another point made by the contributors of the *Screw Loose Change* website is that Avery makes deliberately lies throughout the film. For example, he shows clips of Osama Bin Laden wearing gold jewelry and adds that wearing gold is forbidden by the Koran and thus Osama does not wear gold. The point is refuted by adding that Avery cannot really know that the jewelry is gold for certain. Hundreds more of rebuttals can be made for the film's irresponsible supply of fabricated information.

For numerous and obvious reasons, *Loose Change* is a documentary that is a dreadful misrepresentation of the events which occurred on September 11, 2001. Dylan Avery fed into the idea that the attacks on September 11th were made by the United States government and capitalized on it. The major problem with this is that he did it at the expense of the viewers and the American public as a whole. Avery took advantage of vulnerable sentiments in society by use of Anti-American government propaganda in order to lure viewers into watching the film. He even said that it is 'the duty of every American to watch *Loose Change*'. Avery exploited the actual events that occurred on September 11, 2001 by using a conspiracy theory to illustrate that it was the United States government was responsible for the 9/11 attacks. Finally, Avery

irresponsibly supplied fabricated information that has been easily refuted by many individuals.

The truth is that Dylan Avery is a con-artist who capitalized on the use of a conspiracy theory which offered an answer to the unanswerable and who also gave false information to support his lofty assertions. The film, *Loose Change*, is not the most effective 9/11 documentary around but rather an anti-American government propaganda film that really only justifies a conspiracy theory supported by false sources.

References

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