

# MEDIA IN ACTION



# WORKSHOP TIPS:



GLOBAL ACTION PROJECT

Each workshop is designed to stand alone but we encourage you to use them all to get the most out of the curriculum. We also strongly encourage you to download the Workshop Principles & Facilitation Tips PDF on how to create a productive, safe and creative space for exploring issues, working together, and making media. Because you will be talking about and reflecting on oppression and inequality, which are deeply engrained and must be actively challenged, there can be difficult moments to facilitate through. If you choose not to review our broader document, consider referencing these very basic elements listed below - they will help support your use of the workshop.

## **Basic Workshop Principles & Tips:**

**“Safe Space”:** Create an atmosphere in the group that maximizes everyone’s comfort level and that is determined by the youth together. This supports collective ownership of the space they will be part of and work in creatively. Safe Space includes agreeing to disagree, confidentiality, respecting each other’s ideas and the right to choose not to answer a certain question. Ground rules are set by youth at the beginning of a new group to help to set the tone for a safe space of mutual respect.

**All voices heard:** Encourage active participation by all in the group. Direct but do not dominate discussion. Educators should have clear goals but adapt to, and be sensitive to needs and interests of individual youth and the group as a whole.

**“One Mic”:** State that one person speaks at a time. When people talk over each other, it causes the group to lose focus. The facilitator or any group member can say, “one mic” to remind people to take turns.

**Collective work:** The youth work as a collective. The facilitator is there to guide the youth through the production and analysis of their media. Every effort is made to include everyone and incorporate individual ideas. Compromise is essential when working in a collective. People learn through collective processing, discussion, making, and reflection.

# 05

## FRAMING & MESSAGING

Total Time:  
2 hours



GLOBAL  
ACTION  
PROJECT

CHAPTER



# FRAMING & MESSAGING

total time: 2 hours

CURRICULUM WORKSHOP 5

## WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

The messages that media bring to audiences are framed by ideologies, beliefs and value systems that present a worldview. Participants in this workshop are introduced to visual tools that unpack the messages and ideologies carried by various pieces of media. This “TV Tool” acts as a visual device to help young people critically view media in the context of audience, distribution methods, and the resources behind its production. Importantly, the workshop engages us in considering media’s role in advancing a social justice framework rather than simply reproducing the dominant frame.

## OBJECTIVES

- Explore the idea that media is framed by ideologies
- Introduce the “TV Tool” and use it to identify and draw connections between message, audience, ideology, distribution methods, and resources
- Practice developing a message with a social justice framework

## MATERIALS & MEDIA

- Computer with internet access
- Projector
- Newsprint Paper
- Markers and Pens
- Draw GAP “TV Tool” on Newsprint (See Appendix A)
- Gap Media Power Framework (See Appendix B)
- “American Soldier” - Music Video by Toby Keith
- “Fair and Lovely” skin cream commercial

## FACILITATOR NOTES:

*This workshop builds on the “Power” and “Oppression and Liberation” workshops, but you can use it on its own to explore messaging techniques. We begin with a discussion of frames and ideology. As a whole group, we analyze several media samples (television commercials, music videos) using the G.A.P. “TV Tool.” When the group is comfortable with the basic aspects of the “TV Tool” we break into smaller teams and each analyzes a different form of media. The teams report back to the whole group and we summarize what we have learned.*

*Although the media you analyze together might be familiar, asking critical questions of media might be new to many. It’s essential that facilitators ask lots of questions and push youth to look beneath the surface to find meaning beyond “what it’s saying” towards “how it’s saying it” and why. For example, ads and commercials might have the simple message - “Buy this thing!” - but*

they say that in many different ways, using all of the media-maker's techniques of images, sound, editing, etc., producing many secondary and subtle messages.

It is important to note that some youth will be more comfortable with the concepts and language of media literacy than others. Some might feel like their favourite media is under attack and therefore they are being attacked. So it is helpful for the facilitator to make a distinction between analysis and preference. In this workshop, youth are developing tools for analysis; what they choose to like or not like, watch or not watch, is up to them.

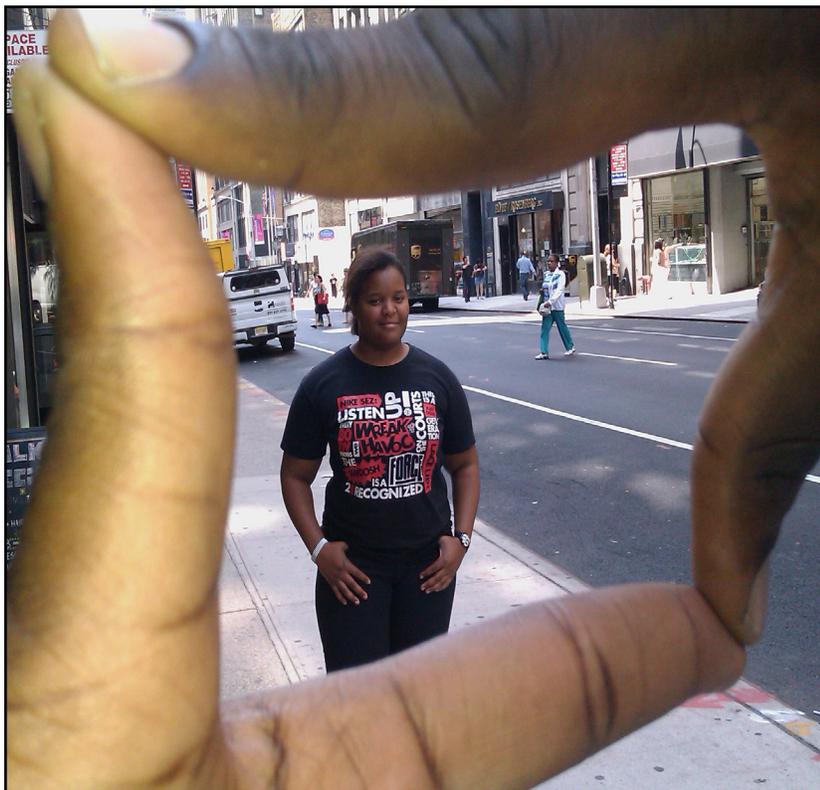
## 1. DEFINING THE FRAME 20 minutes

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*Making media is about communication, getting a message out to an audience. In this workshop, we're going to get familiar with a visual tool that will help us unpack the messages and the ideologies carried by media. We are going to start with the idea of a frame.*

*What is a frame? What does it do?*

Youth responses often include: "windows," "picture frames," "frames in a film strip," and "the way that a camera operator frames a shot."

**The FRAME defines what you are looking at, just as a literal frame would when placed around a picture. It dictates what you see and what you don't.**



Show youth how to create a frame with the thumb and forefinger of each of their hands.

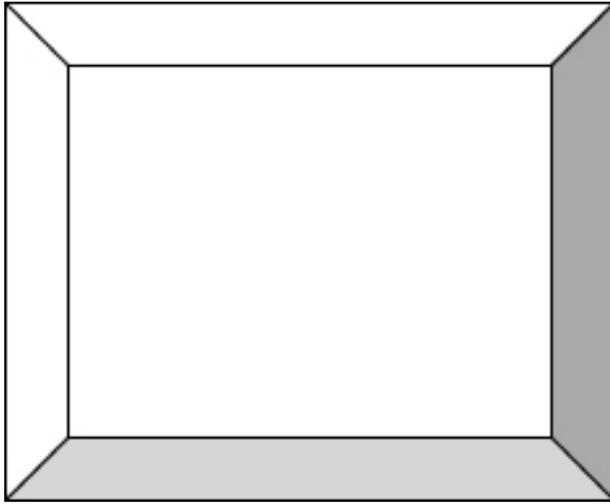
Spend a minute or two framing things with your fingers.

Ask participants to frame an image and to describe what they see when they look through their finger frame.

Emphasize that the conscious decisions that they made of what to include and exclude resulted in the image they framed.

*How does the frame affect what they see? Does it help to emphasize certain things? And minimize others?*

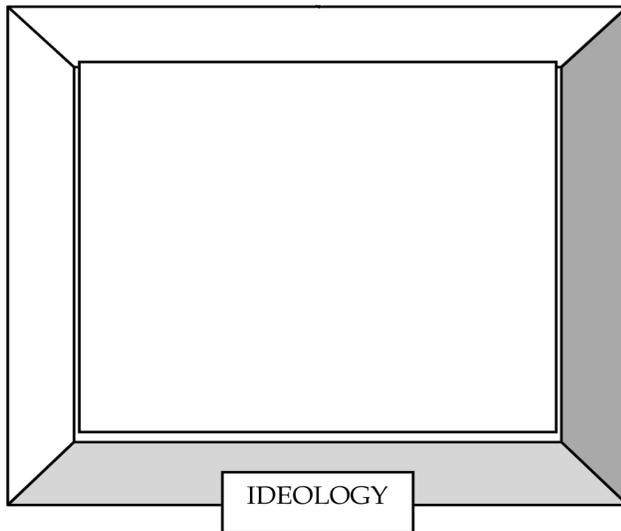
Draw a frame on newsprint paper:



*Okay. So here's a frame. But now we're going to talk about a different kind of frame. Not the kind of frame that shapes and defines what you literally see but what you think about.*

*This is an "Ideological frame."*

Add the word IDEOLOGY to your drawing.



*What does IDEOLOGY mean?*

After several youth comments, reveal the definition written on newsprint paper:

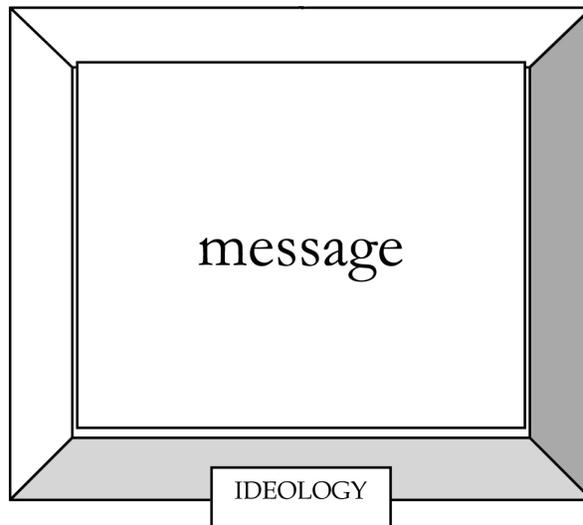
**An IDEOLOGY is a set of beliefs, ideas or values. Those beliefs, ideas or values affect the way we see the world, and form our "worldview." It is often considered the "common sense" and used to describe political beliefs such as capitalism, socialism, sexism, communism, etc.**

*How can media have an ideological frame? What does that mean?*

Take responses and discuss.

*Much like how a physical frame (picture frame, window, viewfinder) defines what we're looking at, media is framed by ideologies. So when people make media, IDEOLOGY is what FRAMES it. It guides WHAT or WHO we include in the piece, and HOW we present or represent the issue.*

Write MESSAGE inside the frame.



*Okay. Now, we're going to look at some media to get a better idea of how ideologies frame messages.*

*We're going to watch a minute-long television commercial called "Fair and Lovely"*

The commercial is a great example to explore these complex concepts as the ideology and messages are very clear in it. The ad is for skin lightening cream. A Father accompanies his daughter on a job interview and she is rejected. He then buys her lightening cream and she is transformed.



*Although the commercial is in Hindi, you will be able to understand its story and message even without knowing the language.*

View commercial. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-9tcXpWIDE>

Many of the youth participants were shocked and offended by the commercial and couldn't believe how blatant the ad was in its message that lighter skin is better and more beautiful.

*What was the simple message of the "Fair & Lovely" ad?*

Young people said:

- Lighter skin is better than darker skin
- Women need to focus on their appearance
- You'll never be a success in this world with dark skin
- The higher the class you are, the lighter the skin you need

*What other types of messages do we get from media? What techniques are used to get them across?*

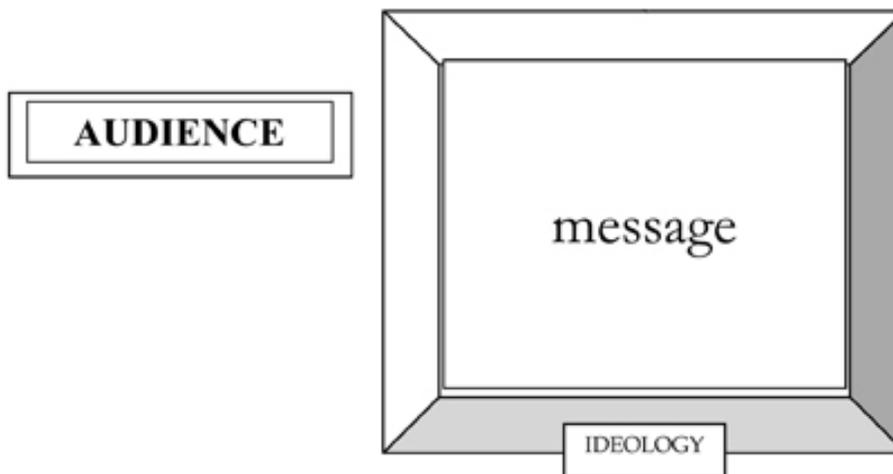
Here are some examples of common messages young people say they see in the media:

- It's cool to be popular.
- Being thin is desirable.
- If you have bad breath you will never get a date.
- Boys play with cars and guns and girls play with dolls.
- Buying things will make you happy.
- Being professional means speaking without an "accent."

*So we can recognize that the ideologies (beliefs and values) that frame these messages.*

*Who is the media-maker sending messages to?*

Write audience outside the frame.



*Even though your media might reach many kinds of audiences, media makers generally target a primary audience with their message.*

Who is the primary target of the Fair and Lovely ad?

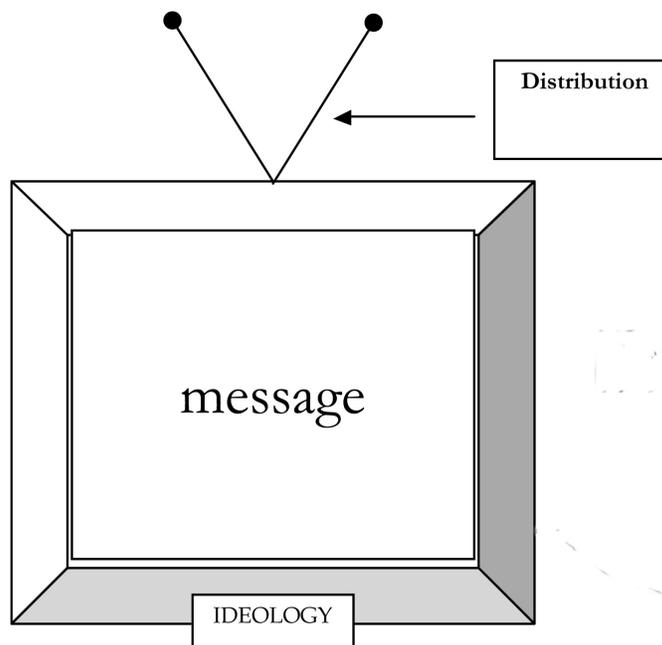
- Young girls.
- Women of color.
- Professional women trying to get ahead.

What are some examples that you see of messages being targeted to particular audiences?

- Car ads for men.
- Medicine ads for older people.
- Beauty products for girls and women.
- McDonald's ads for kids.

Which audiences receive which messages has a lot to do with methods of distribution.

Add the antennae to the top of the frame, and label them distribution.



DISTRIBUTION is about getting the media in front of audiences. It involves where and how the piece is published or exhibited, who has access to it, and how it is promoted.

*What are some different distribution methods, and how do they work to get the message to different audiences?*

Today, there are many ways to distribute media, such as, billboards, posters, print, television, radio, the internet, etc.

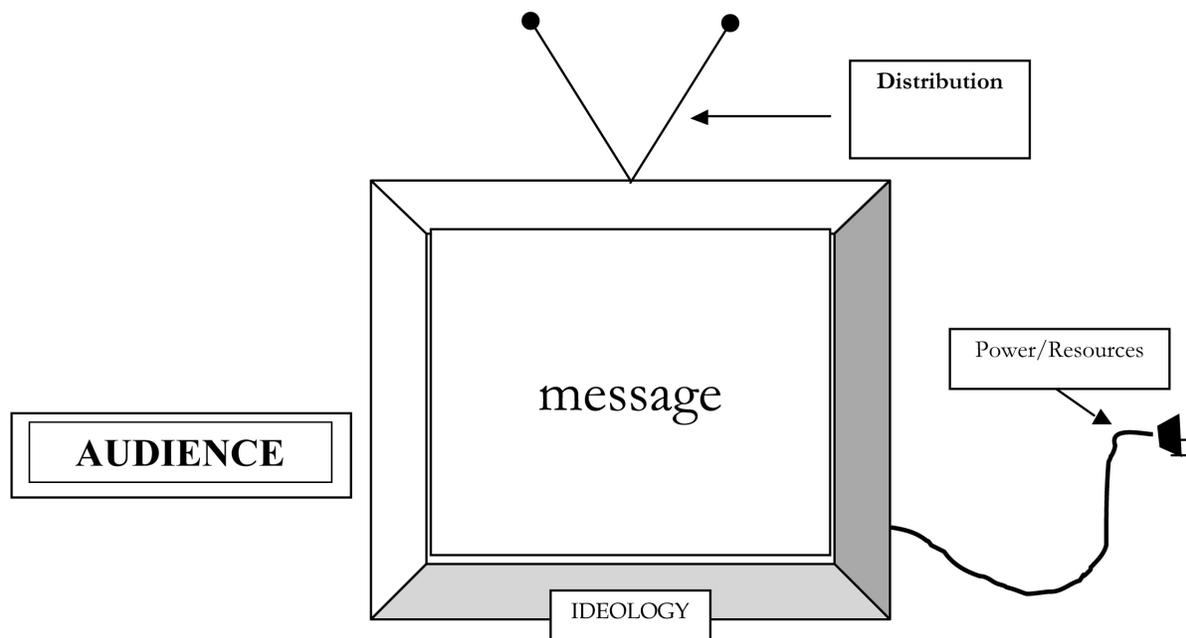
Refer to some of the examples previously discussed in the workshop.

Look at one of the distribution methods in depth.

Many of the examples young people cite are television commercials. In those cases, distribution could encompass factors such as the timeslot and program that the commercial is programmed with, which channels it appears on, if it appears on free-to-air channels or on pay channels, if it is distributed in multiple languages or only one, etc.

*So now our TV Tool is almost ready to use, we just need one more thing before it will work. Power. Power!*

Add the power cable to the diagram. Label it power/resources.



*Power and resources refer to what and who was behind making this media. This might have to do with who supported its production financially, but it could also cover non-money resources, such as work, expertise, and influence.*

Discuss the types of power and resources behind the production of your examples.

Have youth try to summarize the different parts of the TV Tool.

It's fine if they don't get it all yet, participants will get a chance to try it out some more in the next two critical viewing activities.

## 2. CRITICAL VIEWING ACTIVITY- "USING THE TV TOOL" 40 minutes

Now we're going to use the TV Tool to help us unpack media's ideological framework.

We are going to practice using the TV Tool by analyzing a music video by Toby Keith called "American Soldier."

While you're watching, think about what the clip's message, audience, distribution, and resources look like. What are the ideologies that this piece is framed by?

Like the Fair and Lovely ad, we chose this top ten video by country artist Toby Keith because of its clear ideological frame. In "American Soldier", a father gets the call that he is being sent overseas to fight in a war. This is intercut with scenes of U.S. soldiers fighting in past wars, and Toby Keith singing in an airplane hanger.



Screen "American Soldier" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWrMeBR8W-c>

Use the different areas of the TV Tool to guide the discussion and write the participants' replies in the drawing you did on newsprint.

*So what are the messages of American Soldier?*

- Be proud to be an American.
- Real Americans fight for their country
- Real men are soldiers
- Sacrificing for your country is the highest honour.
- Throughout American history common people have stepped up to the challenge and become heroes.
- White people are real Americans.
- Women take care of kids and stand by their men in times of hardship.

Although youth are able to identify messages in the video they don't always see at first the subtle ways that it sends them. Ask specific questions about the relationship between the filmmaking and the message.

### FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

*One verse of American Soldier goes:*

*"But if dying's asked of me,  
I'll bear that cross with an honor/  
Cause freedom don't come free/  
I'm an American Soldier,  
an American,  
Beside my Brothers and my Sisters  
I will proudly take a stand.  
When liberty's in jeopardy  
I'll always do what's right.*

*You can find the full lyrics at <http://www.cowboylyrics.com/lyrics/keith-toby/american-soldier-10316.html>*

*How does the video convey this message through filmmaking techniques? Be as specific as possible.*

- The camera is always moving (circling and zoom) to make things seem important.
- They use historical re-enactments of major American wars.
- They use low angle shots to make the people look bigger and stronger.
- They use fade ins and outs to build drama.

*What are some ideologies that the music video American Soldier carries? What belief or value systems does this piece represent?*

Some of the key ideologies discussed by youth have been:

- Patriarchy
- Patriotism
- Militarism
- Christianity
- Imperialism

*Who is the target audience?*

Push participants to identify specific groups that this piece is intended for and to point to the clip to support their responses.

- Americans
- White Americans
- Families of Soldiers
- Country music fans
- The “common people”
- Republicans

For the last two parts of the TV Tool, the facilitator may need to help with some of the answers:

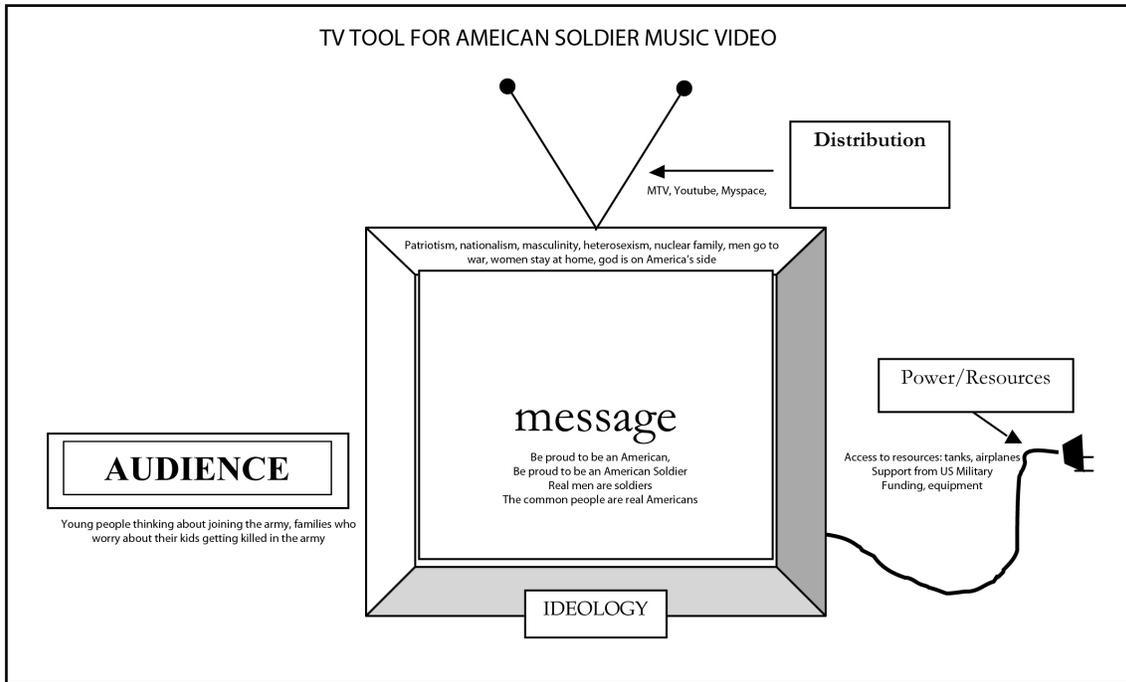
*How is it distributed?*

Toby Keith has also charted more than forty singles on the Billboard Hot Country Songs charts, including nineteen Number One hits including “American Soldier”, and sixteen additional Top Ten hits. The video was also a major hit on CMT (Country Music Television). The YouTube clip has had over 2 million hits. Toby Keith has performed the hit song throughout the world including concerts for US Soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq.

*What type of resources went into making this video?*

Help youth to identify financial and other forms of power that supported the production of the clip. Notably in “American Soldier”, the co-operation of the US Military is evident in the staging of Toby Keith in the aircraft hangar. Responses might also include more abstract ideas such as the power of institutions like the family, and other forms of cultural and institutional power.

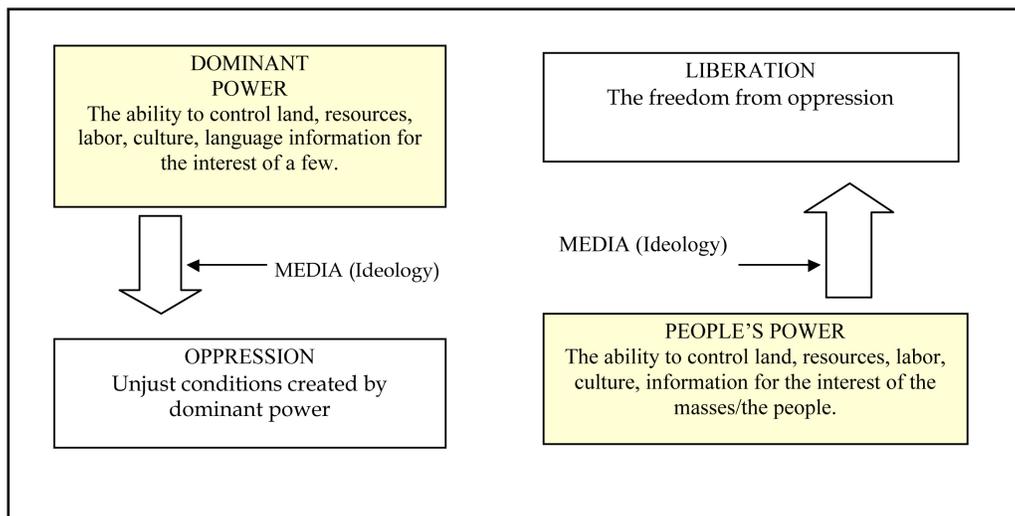
Here's the TV TOOL filled out for American Soldier:



Once your TV Tool is filled out, take time to step back and make connections between each of the elements - such as Ideology and Audience, or Audience and Distribution.

### 3. TV TOOL PART 2: EXPLORING A SOCIAL JUSTICE FRAME *40 minutes*

Review GAP's Media Power Framework (See the POWER workshop.)



First read the definitions on the left side of the Framework: Dominant Power and Oppression.

*The dominant frame refers to how issues are represented in our society at large. The values of the dominant frame are presented as though they apply to everyone, but are actually often are the values of elites or ruling powers in society, such as corporations or the state. We still battle prejudices related to race, gender, and class in this frame.*

*The Toby Keith music video is an example of media with a Dominant Frame.*

*Now move to the People's Power and Liberation side of the Framework.*

*A people's power, or social justice frame, arises from people in communities who are trying to represent their own issues, often struggling against the way the Dominant Frame has defined them.*

*We are now going to break into small teams and each of you are going to get a video created with a Social Justice Frame and you are going to use the TV Tool to analyze it.*

Split the group into teams of 2-4. Give each group a different piece short video, markers, and newsprint to design their own TV Tool, which they will then present to the whole group.

Choose media with a Social Justice Frame. This content should reflect the themes or issues your organization is working with.

We suggest the following samples to use:

- “P.H.A.T.W.A.” a music video by rapper Narcicyst about racial profiling of Arabs after 9/11. <http://vimeo.com/4072264>
- “Long Way Home”, an animated segment by G.A.P. youth about U.S. veterans of the war in Iraq. <http://listenup.org/screeningroom/index.php?view=79a6d3f1aeb4b93a03c85b69ed44b62#> (NOTE: the 2-minute animated section begins in the middle of the documentary)
- “Get By”, a music video by Talib Kweli about the struggles of “ordinary” people to make it in America after 9/11. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVtpXvzzXiA>
- “Among the First to Die”, by filmmaker Paul Barrera (Third World Newsreel (2005, 8 min., Color, US) about the life and death of one of the first American casualties of the War against Terror - Lance Corporal Jose Gutierrez, a 28 year old Guatemalan, who joined the Marines because “he wanted to give back.” <http://www.twn.org/catalog/pages/cpage.aspx?rec=1134&card=price>
- “Homeland Insecurity” by Third World Newsreel, Producer: Third World Newsreel, 2001, 6 min., Color, US. A recent string of hate crimes in the months following September 11th is set within the historical context of jingoism and nationalism in the United States. <http://www.twn.org/catalog/pages/cpage.aspx?rec=710&card=price>

Each team should work together to build out their analysis of the piece by filling in the IDEOLOGIES, MESSAGE, AUDIENCE, DISTRIBUTION, POWER & RESOURCES. Groups can move through these categories in any sequence they like.

The facilitator should occasionally check in on the various groups to see how they are doing but allow them to grapple with the ideas in each video on their own. Only if a group is really struggling should you intervene - and then begin with questions rather than answers.

When each team has completed their TV Tool, reconvene the whole group.

Each team should screen the video and then present their TV Tool analysis. When a team finishes sharing their analysis ask other participants have any questions or if they have anything to add. Additionally, if there is time, you might ask if anyone disagrees with a particular interpretation provided by a team.

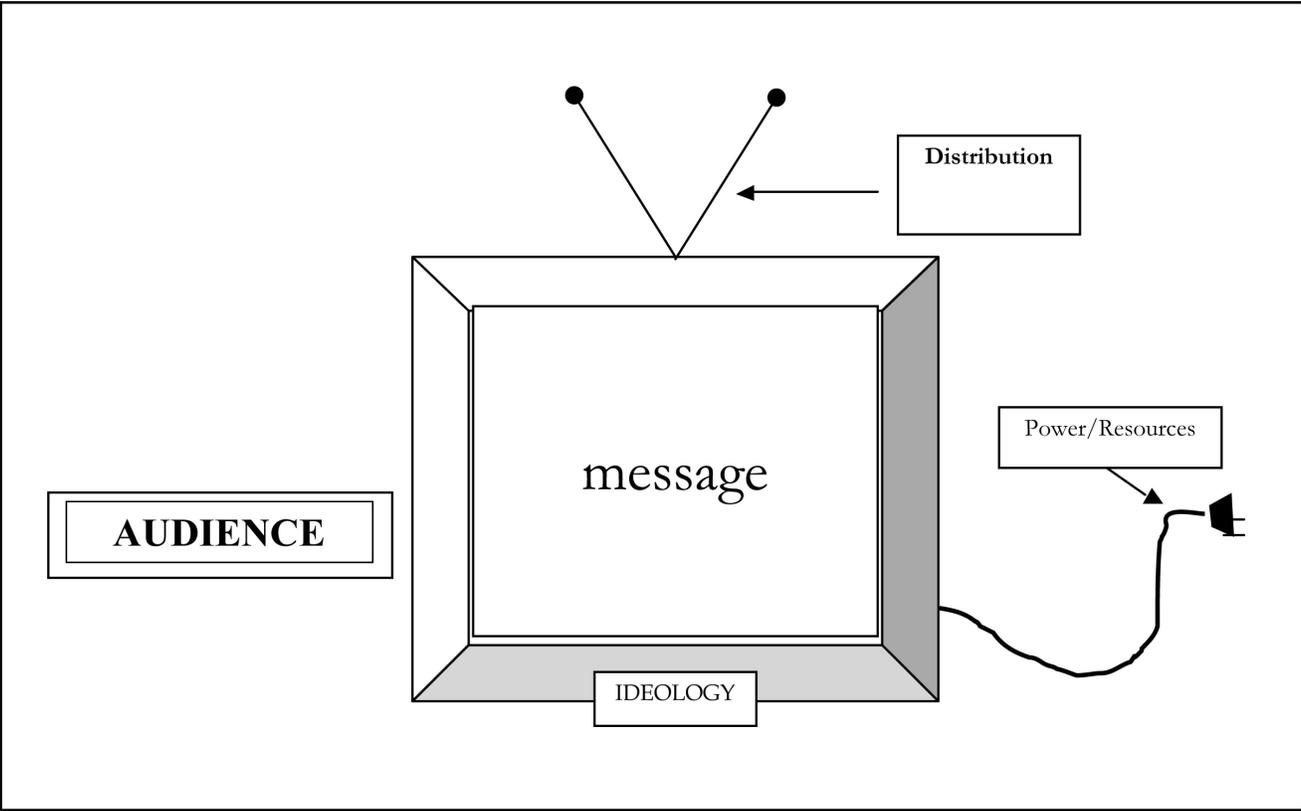
## 4. WRAP-UP *10 mins*

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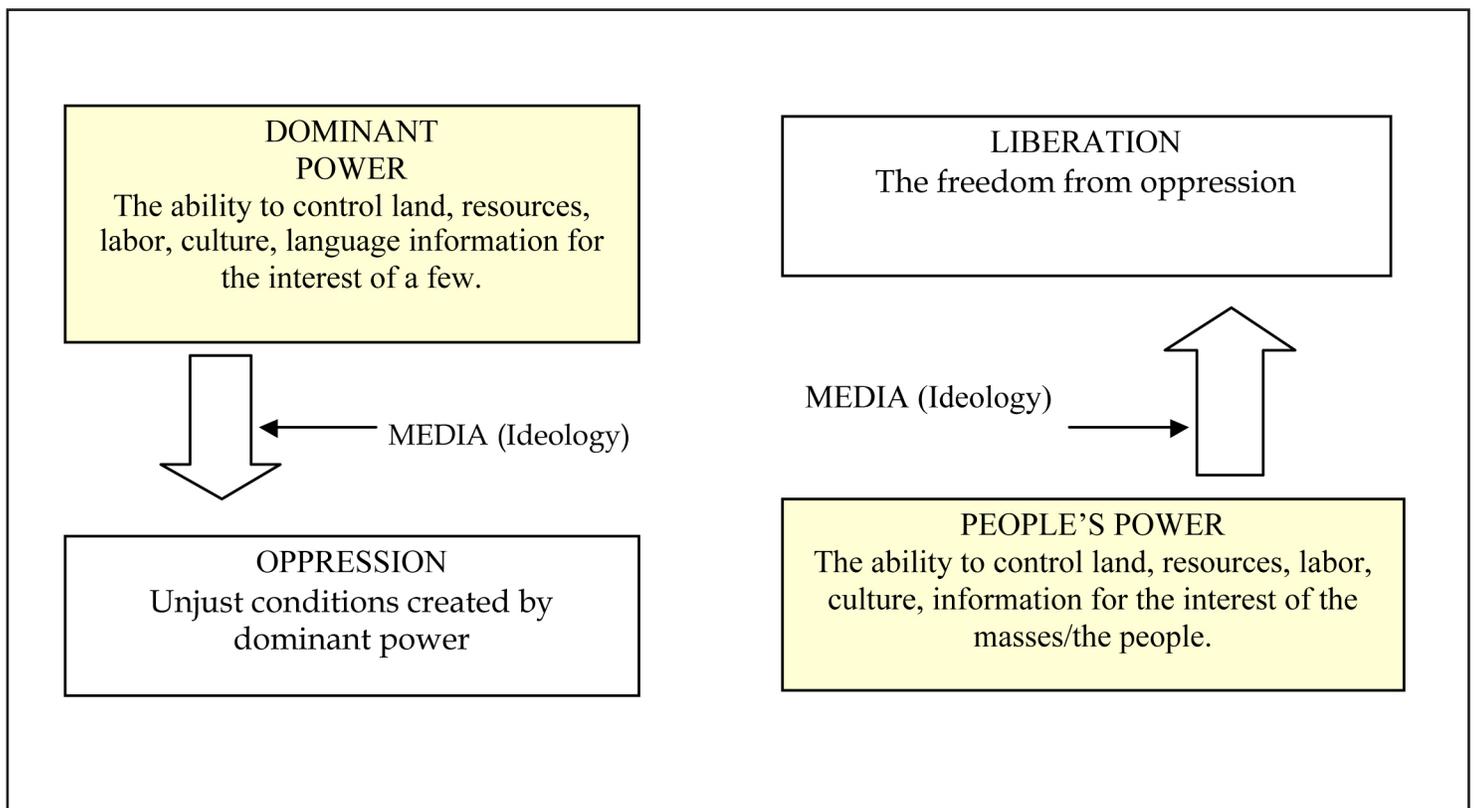
*As media-makers that are committed to social justice values, it's not only our role to create media that reflects those values and our stories fairly, but it is also important for us to be savvy about the messages and frame being used in the media. We hope that through these workshops, each of you becomes critical users of the media - able to dissect media from the Dominant Frame as well as become equipped with the critical tools to make your own.*

- *How helpful was the TV Tool for analyzing media?*
- *How were the pieces you analyzed in your small teams similar or different from American Soldier?*
- *Was it harder to use the TV Tool for media with a Social Justice Frame than for "American Soldier"?*
- *Using the TV Tool to identify your audience, ideology, distribution methods, and resources, what story would you like to tell?*

# APPENDIX A: GAP TV TOOL



# APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY MAPPING TOOL





# PEOPLE POWER



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