

Senator Sam Nunn
Remarks at Press Conference Releasing Advertisement
Re: Daytime TV Talk Shows
December 7, 1995

SENATOR NUNN: Thank you very much, Joe. I'm the first volunteer in the Bill Bennett-Joe Lieberman quest, which I think is extremely important for our nation and for our society's future.

My message today is very simple. First, on the problem side, television has a powerful effect on our society and particularly on our children. Second, trash television, with its emphasis on sex and violence and its lack of civility and its lack of decency, is spreading the message that conflict should be resolved by emotional outburst and by violence. That's the message getting through to our children.

This effect of television is compounded in its impact on millions of American children who simply do not have parents who are doing their job of supervising their children. Finally, trash television and family deterioration combined is a lethal combination that is having a tremendous effect on our society.

In effect, we are reaping what we are sowing. We're reaping in terms of the decline of decency, the decline of morality, the spread of all sorts of social illnesses in our society, including certainly violence and violent crime.

Now, on the solution side -- how do we stop this cultural erosion? Several suggestions today. First, as Joe Lieberman and Bill Bennett have said, and said repeatedly, the television executives and the producers of this trash television and of the excessive violence and sex that we see, not just in daytime talk shows but in all of our television programming, I think they should re-examine their own consciences, and ask themselves, "What are we doing to the society we live in?"

That's the question for them -- what are they doing? Is there anything they will not do for money? Is there anything they will not do for money?

Second, parents have a responsibility, and no matter what we do, no matter what TV executives do, no matter what the movie producers do, no matter what the advertisers do, there is no absolving the parents of their responsibility. They have the fundamental responsibility to exercise discipline over their children.

Third, the corporate executives that we talked about today whose dollars, in effect, finance this trash that is eroding our society, they have a duty beyond asking what audience

they're reaching and how many rating points they're getting for the sale of their products.

I suggest this morning that every corporate executive in America and every board of directors in America take some time from their schedules and actually watch what they're paying for, actually look at the programs that their dollars are buying and are spreading across this nation.

And in watching this programming, I suggest two questions that they should ask: Would I want my own children and grandchildren to watch this program that I'm spending corporate dollars for, and, second, is this program contributing to America's moral and cultural erosion? That is, I think, the bottom line, and those are the responsibilities, I think, of corporate executives and of board of directors.

Finally, just as programmers and advertisers and others have a First Amendment right to put this trash on television--and they do have that right-- there's also a corresponding right. The American public and all of us have a right to speak out and say we've had enough, we've had enough. The ultimate power of the American public is to stop buying the products of those who are contributing to the erosion of our own society.

And now, a colleague that I think has really taken a lead in this and a person that I'm very proud to be affiliated with in this endeavor, Bill Bennett.

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