

## **IN DEBT WE TRUST EXPOSES ROOTS OF DEBT CRISIS AS MILLIONS FACE FORECLOSURES AND CREDIT SQUEEZE**

### **DOCUMENTARY SCREENS AT THE QUAD IN NEW YORK APRIL 4<sup>th</sup> And 5<sup>th</sup>**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*Pound of flesh: An impossible payment demanded by an unscrupulous lender. In modern times, a demand for payment that can only be met with great suffering. Example: Loan sharks taking their pound of flesh.*

**\*\*\*In Debt We Trust documentary sparks a national campaign against credit card rip offs, shady payday loans, more mortgage scandal. Facing record foreclosures and first negative savings rate since the Depression, investigative film targets “financialization” and calls for action\*\*\***

New York, NY, March 2007—As America faces the “morning after” the crash of subprime mortgage loans that could send an expected 1.1 million homes into foreclosure, the root causes of the scandal are laid bare in Danny Schechter’s Globalvision documentary film, *In Debt We Trust: America Before the Bubble Bursts*. Schechter is available for interviews. **(There are also clips for TV stations and a sound track album for radio that includes a podcast by the director.)**

Big banks, credit card companies and fly-by-night lenders have buried many unsuspecting Americans in debt by using deceptive interest rates that quickly skyrocket, big late fees, and other tricks. Half of us don’t pay off our credit cards each month, and the average household owes \$30,000 in consumer debt.

The 88-minute documentary by award winning investigative journalist and “News Dissector” Danny Schechter is being distributed to theaters and communities as part of a new national campaign, Americans for Debt Relief Now, that aims to help Americans win freedom from the desperation of this overwhelming debt.

Featuring many of the country’s top consumer organizations and debt experts, the campaign offers a website, [www.StopTheSqueeze.org](http://www.StopTheSqueeze.org), stocked with 10 tips developed with Dr. Robert Manning, author of *Credit Card Nation*, that debtors can use to recover their finances, their lives and the fabric of our nation from the debt-industrial complex.

**In Debt We Trust** shows how debt is strangling the lives of tens of millions of Americans, and consolidating power into fewer and fewer hands by a credit and loan complex not unlike the military-industrial complex. This has been called the “financialization” of America — producing a kind of “modern serfdom” and widening the gap between the haves and have-nots.

The movie launches in April and May with two-day theater bookings in New York, Rochester, Los Angeles, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and other cities, with church and college showings and living room parties being organized nationwide. **The film screens in New York at the QUAD Cinema, 34 West 13<sup>th</sup> St, on April 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:50 PM.**

A two-and-a-half minute movie trailer is available at [www.InDebtWeTrust.com/trailer.php](http://www.InDebtWeTrust.com/trailer.php).

In Los Angeles, American Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal congregations are joining the campaign to show the film, while across the country, church-led “debt revivals” try to help congregants escape debt traps from which there is seemingly no way out.

In *Debt We Trust*, by Emmy-award winning producer Danny Schechter (*Weapons of Mass Deception*), examines how exorbitant interest rates grew in an unregulated environment, including payday loans that charge 10% fees each week, equal to an annual interest rate of well over 500%. It shows how people are tricked into going deeply into debt at interest rates so high they can never pay it off.

*In Debt We Trust* challenges the values of a consumer culture that seduces the public into turning a blind eye to:

- The exorbitant interest rates charged on payday loans to our nation's soldiers, some over 50%;
- New bankruptcy rules that make it harder for Americans to get a second chance, and have actually disqualified Hurricane Katrina flood victims from filing for debt relief;
- Practices that trick individuals into turning their homes into ATM machines by parlaying existing debt into still more debt;
- A majority of college students that graduate over \$20,000 in the red—and that's just consumer debt, not including \$30,000 in typical student loans—contributing to total national consumer debt that has climbed past \$3 trillion; and,
- Lobbyists for big money funds who work to stop Congress from regulating usurious interest rates that lead to home-improvement mortgage scams, a wave of foreclosures and the resulting gentrification of poor neighborhoods.

"The banks, the credit card companies, the lenders all extend easy credit and portray it as a necessary practice for modern life," says film producer and director Danny Schechter, who formerly produced for ABC News and CNN and has directed 20 independent films. "The problem arises when these companies later demand their pound of flesh from a public groaning under the weight of all this debt."

As timely as the latest headlines, investigative, fast-paced, musically charged, and deeply informative, *In Debt We Trust* is filmmaking with an angry edge and a broad, well-reported scope by an internationally recognized independent journalist and filmmaker. It deals with an issue relevant to Americans of all races and classes. It tells a story and sounds an alarm.

To watch a trailer of the film and find nearby screenings, visit [www.InDebtWeTrust.com](http://www.InDebtWeTrust.com). The website also offers links for copies of the film for showing, a downloadable discussion guide, and an index of statistics showing the depth of the problem. For more information on the campaign, see [www.StopTheSqueeze.org](http://www.StopTheSqueeze.org).

Excerpts from an interview with filmmaker Danny Schechter

"In *Debt We Trust* started out to be a film about what I thought were other people's problems. I came to realize how deeply they affect me as well. Making this film has led me to understand how many policies and practices are tied to a growing national debt burden, and impact my personal finances.

"Even as a former network TV journalist and long-time investigative reporter, I was shocked and outraged when I started probing the roots of these issues. This problem involves tens of millions of people and billions of dollars, yet it is downplayed and rarely discussed in all of its disastrous dimensions. It's about the transfer of wealth from working people into the vaults and accounts of a relatively small number of financial institutions and real estate interests. The lenders are profiting by charging usurious rates and doing so legally, in part, because they have mastered the art and science of marketing products and then manipulating media, politicians, and political institutions.

“Most everyone I’ve told about the film tells me how they’ve come to be personally ensnared in the debt trap. What’s been called the “democratization of credit” has led to the democratization of dependency. It has created an unsustainable society, trapping millions in a financial hole they can’t escape from and often do not understand.

“My hope is that this film will spark a national response—a demand for economic fairness and justice, regulation in the public interest, along with a heightened sense of personal responsibility by consumers seduced by the false promise of “free money.”

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