



**"A riveting exposé of our digital age that plays like a Hitchcockian thriller – both chilling and very funny."** Henry Fitzherbert, Sunday Express

**"A rousing and fascinating call to arms to protect our privacy."** The Independent

**"A brilliant new documentary."** Henry Porter, The Observer



# ERASING DAVID

**HE HAS NOTHING TO HIDE  
BUT DOES HE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR?**

THE CHANNEL 4 BRITDOC FOUNDATION AND GREEN LIONS FILMS PRESENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE JOSEPH ROWNTREE REFORM TRUST A GREEN LIONS PRODUCTION "ERASING DAVID"  
A FILM BY DAVID BOND AND ASHLEY JONES MUSIC BY MICHAEL NYMAN EDITED BY STEVE BARCLAY AND WOJCIECH DUCZMAL CAMERA ANNEMARIE LEAN-VERCOE AND GAVIN NORTHOVER  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS BEADIE FINZI AND MAXYNE FRANKLIN CO-DIRECTOR MELINDA MCDUGALL PRODUCED BY ASHLEY JONES DIRECTED BY DAVID BOND PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY ERASINGDAVID.COM



**EDUCATIONAL PACK 2:  
A-LEVEL AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

# THE FILM AND THE PACK

David Bond is a man on the run.

After the government loses his personal data – his name, address, and bank account details – David decides to find out just how much privacy we have left. David disappears – and private investigators Cerberus are hired to hunt him; they are given only his name. Using only the information he's left behind, Cerberus have 30 days to catch David. ERASING DAVID is a film which asks the fundamental question: does the man with nothing to hide really have nothing to fear?

Inside this pack you'll find a range of worksheets and activities designed to help you explore in greater depth some of the issues raised in the film. Accompanying this pack – which is aimed at students in sixth form or degree-level education – is a PowerPoint presentation in the form of an 'issues guide'.

At its most basic, ERASING DAVID is a film about privacy. It's also a film about identity, security, liberty and rights – and what we mean by each of those terms. Whether you agree with David's arguments or not, in a world which is ever more monitored, it's surely worthwhile investigating these questions further.

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## THE ISSUES: IDENTITY



The film begins with David on a train, reflecting on the fact that the government have lost the details of his identity. In this context, identity seems simple enough – his name, his address, his bank account details.

But identity is undeniably about more than this. Do we really only have one identity? Or do we have several? How are these identities constructed? The film raises the question not merely of how identities are constructed, but who constructs them. In short, are you solely responsible for your own identity? Is the impression conveyed by the information on your Facebook or Bebo page 'you'? Or is there more, which – to paraphrase Toon Vanagt – you choose not to reveal.

How much of your identity is constructed by others? And is it possible that – even using only information you have given them – they could construct that identity in a way you might find unfamiliar? As Professor Timothy Garton-Ash states in the film (16:02), on its own one bit of information may not hurt you, but a number of pieces paint of picture. Is it necessarily a picture you like?

## DEFINING IDENTITY

Burke and Stets define identity as “the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person.” (Burke, P. & Stets, J., *Identity Theory*, Oxford University Press, 2009). Different disciplines (social psychology, philosophy, cultural studies) have different views on what identity is, and no one definition is exclusive. Burke and Stets' definition begs the question – who attributes the meanings that make you who you are?

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- HOW MANY KINDS OF IDENTITY DO YOU HAVE? Legal and cultural are two kinds. Can you think of any others.
- THE UK IDENTITY CARD SCHEME Construct your own identity card. What kind of information should such a document hold? How much is too much? And how do you decide what is too much?
- IDENTITY CARDS II If ID cards were introduced, who should be allowed to ask to see them, and why? What penalties should be imposed for non-compliance?
- IDENTITY THEFT is an often-discussed crime; evaluate your own security by looking at how much information you give away on the internet.

## FURTHER READING

- BBC News, 'Q&A: Identity cards', <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/3127696.stm>
- 'Facebook generation faces identity crisis', <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/113878.php>
- 'Personal identity', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-personal/#PsyApp>

# THE ISSUES: LIBERTY

In the film (19:21), we see David in conversation with Professor Angell of the London School of Economics. Here David notes that if we do not give up some information we simply cannot access any services. Fifty years ago, the philosopher **Isaiah Berlin** defined **two concepts of liberty**:

- 1 NEGATIVE LIBERTY – Freedom from interference.
- 2 POSITIVE LIBERTY – Freedom to realise your potential.

Examples of negative liberty include freedom of speech, freedom of assembly,

Berlin noted that the two inevitably come into conflict. **No-one has absolute negative liberty**; we have to accept state interference in our lives from birth, when our arrival in this world is registered (and probably facilitated by the NHS) to death, when our exit is again registered. In between we are compelled to accept a regime of taxation, law and state intervention. So we can see that our negative liberty is always restricted.

For Berlin, writing in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, there was a further danger. Some philosophers and politicians had come to see the claims of **positive liberty as rational**, and only discoverable by an educated, trained class. In other words, people didn't know what was good for them (a position held as early as Plato), and in order to realise their potential – and to realise the potential of the 'general will' (Rousseau) – a class of trained politicians were required to interpret what was best and to make laws accordingly. Philosophers such as **Berlin** and **Sir Karl Popper** saw in this the seeds of **totalitarianism**; belief in **expertise over democratic choice** is to imply that the **views of some are worthless**. This wasn't an attitude found only in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia; a famous British Labour politician, Douglas Jay, once said 'the gentleman in Whitehall knows best', whilst Margaret Thatcher, Conservative Prime Minister between 1979 and 1990, was fond of stating that '**There is no alternative**' (TINA) to her policies. Both Berlin and Popper – whilst accepting the need for some positive liberty – argued that these kind of attitudes, promoting intervention to the exclusion of negative liberty, could run the risk of trampling over citizen's rights. Clearly, there always needs to be a balance between negative and positive liberty.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- HOW FAR IS TOO FAR? Clearly we have to sacrifice some negative liberty in order to benefit from public services such as education or health. Do ID cards represent a step too far, or are they essential to security and proving people's entitlement to services?
- Choose one of these areas of policy and argue whether too much negative liberty has been sacrificed – or not! (Works best if each topic allocated to two people – one for, one against. For larger groups, use two-person teams).
  - 1 EDUCATION
  - 2 HEALTH
  - 3 TAXATION
  - 4 SECURITY
  - 5 CENSORSHIP
  - 6 MEDIA PIRACY
- Is it only the state which restricts your negative liberty? Can you think of any other individuals or organisations who do?
- Which is more important – negative or positive liberty?

## FURTHER READING

- Berlin, Isaiah, 'Two concepts of liberty' (1958). <http://www.nyu.edu/projects/nissenbaum/papers/twoconcepts.pdf>
- Mill, John Stuart, On Liberty (1860). <http://www.constitution.org/jsm/liberty.htm>
- Popper, Karl Raimund, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945). The *Guardian*, 'Civil liberties', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/civil-liberties>

## THE ISSUES: PRIVACY

In the film, we see David talking to a number of experts on privacy – including Toon Vanagt (11:47) and Frank Ahearn (08:07). Frank in particular shows David that living a 'normal' life means sacrificing your privacy – using a mobile phone can give away your location. Toon notes that using new media such as Twitter, people are becoming more careless about their privacy – letting people know their whereabouts much more freely than they would have done in the past.

This problem has even spawned an internet site, [PleaseRobMe.com](http://PleaseRobMe.com), which trawls Twitter posts to give away people's locations. Are we too careless with our location on the internet?

More fundamentally, Toon argues that privacy is about 'what you reveal about yourself to whom, and for what purpose' (11:47). This means how much of your identity will you reveal, and how much of your liberty are you willing to compromise.

Legally, privacy law is still catching up with the internet – and it's not clear if it will be able to do so. The issue of a privacy law in the UK (which does not exist at present) has raised much controversy – doesn't the idea of a privacy law actually limit others too (in terms of freedom of speech). Do people have an absolute right to privacy?



## THE IDEA OF A RIGHT TO PRIVACY

Debates over whether or not individuals have a right to privacy began in earnest after the rise of tabloid journalism; future US Supreme Court justice **Louis Brandeis** argued in an 1890 article that people did have '**the right to be let alone**'.

This debate has returned in the UK during the 2000s; a number of high-profile libel actions leading newspapers to argue that a right to privacy has been created by 'stealth' and is stifling freedom of expression. Is this true?

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Do we have an absolute right to privacy? If a high-profile celebrity privately held racist beliefs, would 'we' have a right to know?
- Should the UK have a privacy law? And if so, how would it deal with the amount of information individuals now make freely available over the internet?
- If there is a privacy law, or tighter regulation of the press, doesn't that undermine the right to free speech? Which is more important – privacy, or free speech?
- David Cameron famously responded to questions about drugs by saying all politicians have a right to a private life 'before politics'. Do they have the right to a private life after entering into politics?

## FURTHER READING

- Warren, Samuel D., and Brandeis, Louis D., 'The right to privacy', *Harvard Law Review* (1890) – online at [http://groups.csail.mit.edu/mac/classes/6.805/articles/privacy/Privacy\\_brand\\_warr2.html](http://groups.csail.mit.edu/mac/classes/6.805/articles/privacy/Privacy_brand_warr2.html)
- Privacy International, 'Privacy and Human Rights 2004', [http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/file.php/3472/W100\\_6\\_Reading8.pdf](http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/file.php/3472/W100_6_Reading8.pdf)
- Vallance, Chris, 'Surveillance fears for the UK', BBC News, 4 May 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/8029349.stm>

# LINKS

## THE FILM

[www.erasingdavid.com](http://www.erasingdavid.com)  
[www.wheris david.co.uk](http://www.wheris david.co.uk)

## IDENTITY

**The MIT Personas Project**

[personas.media.mit.edu](http://personas.media.mit.edu)

**The No2ID Campaign (UK)**

[www.no2ID.net](http://www.no2ID.net)

**Immigration and Passport Service ID cards site**

[http://www.ips.gov.uk/cps/rde/xchg/ips\\_live/hs.xsl/index.htm](http://www.ips.gov.uk/cps/rde/xchg/ips_live/hs.xsl/index.htm)

## LIBERTY

**Liberty UK**

[www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk](http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk)

## PRIVACY

**Privacy International**

<http://www.privacyinternational.org/>

**Frank Ahearn's website**

<http://www.frankahearn.com/>

**Open University Privacy resources**

<http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/mod/resource/view.php?id=282294&direct=1>

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