POV
Community Engagement & Education
DISCUSSION GUIDE

High Tech, Low Life
A Film by Stephen Maing

www.pbs.org/pov
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In 2006, there were roughly 110 million Internet users in China and the first official phase of China’s censorship barrier, commonly referred to as “The Great Firewall,” had been evolving for almost a decade and was finally completed. By 2008, the number jumped to 298 million users and rumors of young resourceful Chinese netizens circumventing the government’s censorship restrictions began circulating on the Internet.

I wanted to make a film that explored the relatively new intersection of youth, activism and technology but after getting to know Zola and Tiger Temple over the course of 4 years of filming, I realized their personal stories revealed a much different narrative about a startling new China that was also still reckoning with its painful Maoist past. For both Zola and Tiger Temple, transparency was a crucial way of showing they had nothing to hide and also gauging the potential risks of their work and actions.

When I first met Zola, a young tech-savvy Chinese blogger from Hunan Province, it seemed as though a film about him could easily be a comedy. It was immediately apparent that he had a uniquely entertaining way of expressing his individuality and progressive political views. But his story alone was not enough to contextualize the struggles he and other bloggers faced.

Upon meeting the older and more low-key Tiger Temple, I was struck by his dramatically different style and background. He is a wandering writer and self-professed romantic who regularly bikes across the mainland, and he is profoundly haunted by the persecution he and his family endured during the Cultural Revolution. What struck me about Tiger Temple and Zola was that, despite the significant generational gap between them, they shared a real curiosity about the world and a commitment to advancing freedom of speech in China—thought at times they took very different approaches to this common goal.

From 2008 to 2012, my crew and I were fortunate to observe these two individuals who had no set path or precedent to follow, but were writing their own narrative. What they each do involves the art of engagement, self-reflection and circumvention, as each strives to challenge the status quo. As a new director working in a very unpredictable environment, I took many cues from Zola and Tiger Temple. They walk into new and difficult situations, immerse themselves in situations and then find creative ways to talk about things not normally talked about—all without resorting to painting issues in black and white or being seen as political dissidents.
I’m interested in character-driven stories that unfold slowly and reveal larger systemic and cultural complexities. Part of the film’s central question was how to tell a personal and relateable story that presented the reality of censorship and perils of political dissidence in China through experiential observations, not expert interviews. A more important challenge to me was how to contextualize the risks they were taking without over-simplifying and over-dramatizing the varied contours of their day-to-day lives. Intimately representing people who represent other people as well as themselves in their own work was another challenge. I set out to film both men’s reporting trips, but also their everyday routines. Over long periods of filming, deep connections between their personal struggles and political personas began to emerge, so that their experiences began to echo each other and similarities between their very different generational outlooks began to be revealed.

*High Tech, Low Life* is about how average Chinese citizens have begun to empower themselves in China’s new media landscape. In some ways, Zola and Tiger Temple are two people you might find in any province in the country. Because of their sometimes vulnerable positions, our central concern was understanding the sensitive political landscape and making sure our presence would not create difficulties for them. We regularly discussed safety and how best to navigate each trip we took together. I will never forget the time I solemnly asked Zola, “How low-key should we keep things?” and he replied with a smile, “I already put some pictures online of you filming me. The authorities read my blog, so we’ll find out soon enough if they have a problem with this.” For both Zola and Tiger Temple, transparency was always crucial and a way of showing they had nothing to hide.

A different kind of challenge was trying to figure out how to balance traditional documentary needs like context, social issues and story development while wanting the visual language of the film to capture more intangible atmospheric qualities of space, texture and mood. Because the China I witnessed was so vastly contradictory from the China I had researched, I wanted the film to have a sort of visual poetry that would help deliver different kinds of information and create a richer nuanced experience - one that defied expectation and informed Zola and Tiger Temple’s essential story without interfering with it.

Despite the stark reality of censorship in China, Zola and Tiger Temple have often asserted that the worst form of censorship is self-censorship. Through their actions we begin to see that the boundaries of acceptable free speech may not always be known, but they are broader than once thought. Chinese ‘netizens’ have proven that there can be room for a more vibrant social dialogue and even critical political discourse – as long as they don’t organize public demonstrations or encourage social unrest. Even still, social media has enabled intrepid bloggers and activists like Zola and Tiger Temple to fill in the gaps of information and news like never before.

Since I completed the film in April 2012, the number of Internet users in China has skyrocketed to over 513 million, and roughly 300 million of them use some form of social media. Advancements in online censorship include increased numbers of Internet police and engineers as well as web monitors employed by privately owned Internet companies. Among the numerous new policies and regulations to control online content, it has formed the State Internet Information Office to organize these efforts and more effectively control online activity. As the new China hurtles toward a rapidly changing future, its government and online netizens surely will continue to try to outsmart each other, while people like Zola and Tiger Temple emerge as the forefathers of a brave new civil society.

**Stephen Maing**
Director, *High Tech, Low Life*
TABLE OF CONTENTS

2 Letter From the Filmmaker
5 Introduction
6 Potential Partners
6 Key Issues
6 Using This Guide
7 Background Information
7 The Great Firewall
10 Citizen Journalism
12 Capitalist Dreams and Social Harmony
13 Chinese Censorship
15 as a Tool for Political Control
15 Selected People Featured
in High Tech, Low Life
16 General Discussion Questions
17 Discussion Prompts
23 Taking Action
24 Resources
26 How to Buy the Film

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HIGH TECH, LOW LIFE (90 minutes) follows two of China’s first citizen reporters as they document the underside of the country’s rapid economic development. The bloggers draw attention to land grabs, pollution, rising poverty, violence against women and local corruption as they navigate evolving censorship regulations and push to extend the country’s limits on free speech. The film juxtaposes perspectives from vastly different generations. Young Zola’s goal of becoming an Internet celebrity contrasts with the older Tiger Temple’s commitment to achieving justice for China’s rural dispossessed. The portraits reveal tensions between the country’s tradition of personal sacrifice and an evolving sense of individualism.

As an outreach tool, the film looks at the changing practice of journalism as much as it looks at life in modern China. Zola and Tiger Temple function as independent one-man news stations, challenging audiences to examine the differences between blogging and reporting. Viewers are left with significant questions about what counts as journalism in the digital world and whether or not citizen reporters armed only with laptops, cell phones, digital cameras and their own motives can topple the “Great Firewall” of China.
High Tech, Low Life is well suited for use in a variety of settings and is especially recommended for use with:

- Your local PBS station
- Groups that have discussed previous PBS and POV films relating to China, free speech or government surveillance, including The Tank Man, Last Train Home, Up the Yangtze, Utopia, Part 3: The World’s Largest Shopping Mall, Escape from China, Please Vote for Me, China Blue, Better This World, If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front and The Camden 28.
- Groups focused on any of the issues listed in the Key Issues section
- High school students, youth groups and clubs
- Faith-based organizations and institutions
- Cultural, art and historical organizations, institutions and museums
- Civic, fraternal and community groups
- News organizations
- Academic departments and student groups at colleges, universities and high schools
- Community organizations with a mission to promote education and learning, such as local libraries

High Tech, Low Life is an excellent tool for outreach and will be of special interest to people looking to explore the following topics:

- blogging
- censorship
- China
- Communist Party of China
- democracy
- digital literacy
- freedom of speech
- generational differences
- government surveillance
- human rights
- independent media
- individualism
- Internet activism
- journalism
- political propaganda
- political protest
- social justice
- sociology
- technology

USING THIS GUIDE

This guide is an invitation to dialogue. It is based on a belief in the power of human connection, designed for people who want to use High Tech, Low Life to engage family, friends, classmates, colleagues and communities. In contrast to initiatives that foster debates in which participants try to convince others that they are right, this document envisions conversations undertaken in a spirit of openness in which people try to understand one another and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening actively.

The discussion prompts are intentionally crafted to help a wide range of audiences think more deeply about the issues in the film. Rather than attempting to address them all, choose one or two that best meet your needs and interests. And be sure to leave time to consider taking action. Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even in instances when conversations have been difficult.

For more detailed event planning and facilitation tips, visit www.pbs.org/pov/outreach
The Great Firewall

Over the last five years, the number of Internet users in China has more than tripled, making China the country with the largest population of people online. However, at the same time, a sophisticated system of censorship in China, commonly called the “Great Firewall,” has been put into place. While the Chinese government is fostering an increase in the use of digital technology with an eye to economic advancement, it has simultaneously become one of the most restrictive national governments in the world when it comes to policing online political communication.

The goal of China’s censorship system is to shut down Internet sites that are likely to contribute to social instability. Sensitive topics range from the wealth of China’s leaders, to the gap between rich and poor, to information on the Dalai Lama, Falun Gong and Chen Guangcheng. All major websites (including international websites) must comply with Chinese regulations or risk being shut down.

Access to The New York Times and Bloomberg L.P. websites has been blocked in China since both organizations released the net worth of high-ranking Chinese government officials in 2012. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are also blocked, and Skype conversations are monitored. Companies must comply with censorship laws if they wish to maintain Internet presences in China. For example, Google’s search engine in China recently stopped notifying users of keywords that might trigger censors. Words and phrases that have been blocked from online searches include protest, sex, Hillary Clinton, occupy, empty chair and jasmine. Freedom House, a non-governmental organization that collects information on democracy and human rights, reports that one study showed the Chinese government had deleted 13 percent of posts published across nearly 1,400 blog-hosting and bulletin-board platforms.
In 2010, writer and Internet freedom scholar Rebecca MacKinnon testified at a U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on human rights that “Internet and mobile phones have empowered many people around the world, and they do have the potential to facilitate greater freedom and democracy. But more connectivity doesn’t automatically lead to more freedom. Other political, legal and technical factors affect whether it’s possible for communication technology to live up to its potential.”

In an attempt to streamline the censorship process, the Chinese government formed the State Internet Information Office in 2011. It then relocated control of the Internet to that one office, when previously it had been spread among several lower-ranking government offices. Run by Minister Wang Chen, the State Internet Information Office has tightened China’s already resolute grip on Internet content.

Since the office was created, the Chinese government has deployed new technology that specifically targets the use of VPN (virtual private network) services, which are often used to circumvent the Great Firewall; VPN services conceal communication and prevent messages from being read by the Chinese government. As of 2012, some of the biggest Internet providers in China are cutting off connections where VPN services are detected. In late December 2012, Xi Jinping, current president of China and head of the ruling Communist party, announced new rules that require all Internet users to register their full names with service providers.

Persecution of bloggers and Internet journalists who participate in online activism is not uncommon. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, China is the country with the third highest number of journalists, bloggers and Internet activists in prison (Turkey and Iran are first and second, respectively), with 32 offenders behind bars as of December 2012. Actions that lead to imprisonment may be as innocuous as sending an email overseas describing a censorship policy. Justification for imprisonment is often limited to leaking state secrets, without further explanation.

**Zola at a local internet cafe in his hometown of Meitanba, Hunan Province.**

Photo courtesy of Stephen T. Maing
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**Tiger Temple leaves Beijing on bicycle every year to report on news in the countryside of China.**  
Photo courtesy of Stephen T. Maing
Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism, also sometimes called bottom-up journalism, grassroots journalism, open source journalism or participatory journalism, can range from blogging about local events to tweeting pictures of natural disasters. As Zola points out in the film *High Tech, Low Life*, citizen journalism often doesn’t go beyond mere observation and should not be mistaken for traditional journalism. Zola has written online that “although my blog might also count as news, I often do things that aren’t allowed of professional media. I put photos of my own face on pictures . . . I’m not objective.”

In an era when anyone with access to a computer and the Internet can create a blog and report on what he or she has seen, citizen journalism is booming around the world. While citizen journalists are not credentialed (a fact professional journalists sometimes bemoan), they can fill holes in mainstream media coverage. Some online newspapers have even created blogs where citizens can post their stories.

Zola says, “As for what a citizen reporter is, I don’t think the professionalism of a journalist applies. Just as long as his news reports aren’t done in a professional capacity, as long as he is willing to vouch for the information he provides and no matter how novel or far-out his news is, it’s all still reliable news and leads.

“As for what citizen news is, that would be unfiltered, independent, non-objective and diverse news recorded and distributed by citizens themselves; only with a variety of viewpoints can objectivity be most closely approached.”

Despite China’s efforts to silence citizen journalists who do not adhere to the country’s strict guidelines, there are instances where citizen journalism has altered the actions of the government. Hundreds of millions of messages are sent daily through Sina Weibo (similar to Twitter). The Chinese government has modified its actions on a small number of is-
sues because of massive pressure from Sina Weibo. Some citizen journalists have also broken through China’s censorship, and others have stopped violence against citizens and child slavery. In China, these successful cases are few and far between, but citizen journalists continue to risk persecution to post photos, articles and videos countering the state-run press.

**Sources:**

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Capitalist Dreams and Social Harmony

In the past few years, China has surpassed Japan to become the world's second largest economy and the world's largest exporter. When Mao Zedong came to power in 1949, more than four fifths of the employed population of China worked in agriculture. In 2011, slightly less than 35 percent of the workforce had an agricultural occupation.

The opening of the Chinese economy to the world in the late 1970s and early 1980s saw a drastic transition away from agriculture and toward industry. An influx of foreign investors created soaring demand for labor, and millions were lured out of the underdeveloped, western farmland to work in factory towns in the southern coastal regions. China’s newly liberalized economy boomed, which led to a massive migration to city centers. China’s urban population increased from 18 percent in 1978 to 47 percent in 2010.

As the population continues to urbanize, the gap between rural and urban wages is widening. By 2009, the average urban worker earned 3.36 times as much as his or her rural counterpart. China’s focus on industry often marginalizes rural farmers economically and socially, an issue Tiger Temple highlights in his blogs.

The rise of a dominant and growing middle and upper class has also led to a shift in policy focus and increased emphasis on economic stability as the road to political longevity. However, as journalist and Internet freedom activist Rebecca MacKinnon testified before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee in 2010, “The Chinese Communist Party fully recognizes that it is no longer possible for a nation to be economically competitive without being connected to the global Internet. Rather than try to restrict connectivity, modern authoritarian governments are working aggressively to use Internet and mobile technologies to their own advantage.”

Former president Hu Jintao’s approach to rapid technological progress was to create the “harmonious society” doctrine in 2006 in an attempt to create not just a prosperous society but a socially stable one. The doctrine aimed to narrow the wealth gap and reduce social strife.
Hu’s vision for a harmonious society imagines every person comfortable and happy and the Chinese government managing that harmony. While positives from the doctrine included a campaign against corporate corruption, many Chinese citizens see the doctrine as another way for the government to control its citizens. The goal of developing a harmonious society has often been invoked as a justification for an increase in censorship.

Sources:


Censorship as a Tool for Political Control

Article 35 of China’s constitution promises the rights to freedom of speech, press, assembly and demonstration. However, the rights in the constitution are not enforced unless a supplementary law is passed to do so, and there are laws in existence that undermine social media and press that may issue calls for collective action. The American Political Science Review reported in May 2013 that criticism of China’s government is actually not the target of the country’s censorship program. Rather, the target is collective expression (regardless of the content) that might lead to public gatherings or demonstration.

Some Internet freedom scholars and activists, such as Harvard researcher Gary King and Chinese journalist Michael Anti, believe that social media is actually a convenient tool for the Chinese government to use to censor content selectively and shape public discussion. For example, when a high speed train crash occurred in Wenzhou in July 2011, the subsequent outpouring of protest on social media was not blocked, as many of the protests were aimed at local government corruption. Instead, the central government, which had long been seeking to disband the country’s railway network and reconfigure it so that it would be more in line with other parts of China’s state-run economy, allowed five days of critical free speech about the case. Pressure to remove Liu Zhijun from his position as railway minister came to a head. Once Liu had been removed from office, the railway system was disbanded and restructured.

The Chinese government is not quick to answer questions about its censorship policy, though it did issue its first Internet security white paper on the Internet in May 2010. An excerpt from the paper reads, “The Chinese government attaches great importance to protecting the safe flow of Internet information, actively guides people to manage websites in accordance with the law and use the Internet in a wholesome and correct way.”

The paper goes on to stipulate that no individual or organization may disseminate information that endangers state security, subverts state power or damages state honor.

There are issues of Internet censorship and restriction around the world. Governments shut down websites, subpoena journalists’ phone records and filter Internet content. The Committee to Project Journalists reports that the African country Eritrea is the world’s most censored, followed by North Korea, Syria and Iran. The full list can be found here: http://www.cpj.org/reports/2012/05/10-most-censored-countries.php. Such censorship policies are often implemented in response to political unrest and/or under authoritarian rule.

In May 2013, the United States Justice Department came under fire after reports that government officials secretly had been seizing phone records of editors and reporters at the Associated Press. While the government has not disclosed an official reason for the seizure of those records, it is widely presumed to be linked to an investigation into a 2012 press leak about a C.I.A. operation in Yemen.
Sources:

http://english.gov.cn/2010-06/08/content_1622956.htm

Committee to Protect Journalists. “10 Most Censored Countries.”
http://www.cpj.org/reports/2012/05/10-most-censored-countries.php

http://www.cfr.org/china/media-censorship-china/p11515


TED. “Michael Anti: Behind the Great Firewall of China.”

Selected People Featured in *High Tech, Low Life*

Zhang Shihe (Tiger Temple)
57-year-old blogger from Beijing

Zhou Shuguang (Zola)
26-year-old blogger from Hunan province
Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen or pose a general question (examples below) and give people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion:

- What did you learn from this film? What insights did it provide?
- If a friend asked you what this film was about, what would you say?
- Describe a moment or scene in the film that you found particularly disturbing or moving. What was it about that scene that was especially compelling for you?
Understanding Journalism

What do you learn from the film about freedom of speech, the role of the press and the consequences of suppressing free expression?

Compare and contrast Zola’s and Tiger Temple’s motivations for blogging. How do their motives influence their selection of stories, relationships to the people who are the subject of those stories and the content of their reports?

If you saw a problem you wanted addressed, which blogger would you want to have cover the story and why?

Zola says, “The truth is, I don’t know what journalism is . . . I just record what I witness.” How would you distinguish journalism from other kinds of storytelling? Would you call Zola a journalist? Why or why not?

Cell phones are critical to the work of both Zola and Tiger Temple. In your view, how has the proliferation of cell phones with cameras and Internet connections affected journalism? What is the impact on governments that are accustomed to controlling the information available to their citizens?

How does the Chinese government control the public through censorship? How does it control the public when censorship is lifted?

Do you think the governments of other countries, such as the United States, censor their citizens?

Apple has secured a patent that could allow the police to disable iPhone cameras remotely. Do you think Apple or the U.S. government should be allowed to use this kind of technology?

Zola indicates that Facebook is blocked in China. Why would a government block access to Facebook? What content might concern officials?

Tiger Temple says that he “speaks on behalf” of the farmers who were once the heart of Mao’s agrarian revolution, but who now feel ignored. At Tiananmen, he helps raise money for the homeless, because he feels “a sense of responsibility for them beyond just writing articles. I’ve developed a con-
connection with them. I feel for them.” What are the benefits and drawbacks of a reporter getting personally involved in their stories? How might Tiger Temple’s experiences inform U.S. debates about advocacy journalism versus objective reporting? Is there something about the Chinese context that makes advocacy an appropriate approach for journalism?

The film reports, “Censorship and policing of Internet activity in China is conducted by multiple government ministries, as well as private sector companies. As of 2013, 69 citizens remain in jail for online activities.” What do you think it is about online activities that the Chinese government sees as threatening to its mandate to maintain stability?

Why do Tiger Temple and Zola insist that they are bloggers rather than reporters? How does the meaning of the word “journalist” change when most journalists work for the government or present only government-approved content?

Zola is apprehensive about being the subject of reports by foreign journalists. Without cooperation from people critical of the Chinese government, how can journalists create reports that don’t simply repeat the Chinese government “party line”? What responsibility do foreign journalists have to report on topics that might be censored by the Chinese government? What responsibility do they have to keep potential sources or subjects (like Zola) safe?

Zola says that his reporting “has helped some residents get a fair compensation from developers.” What role does/can journalism play in instigating change or achieving justice? What types of news reporting are most likely to spark action and why?

The Power and Perils of Blogging

Zola is 26, Tiger Temple is 57. What is the impact of their different ages on the way they approach blogging? Do you think age influences their willingness to “tell the truth” (as Tiger Temple puts it)?

Do you think Zola’s provocative and occasionally comedic approach to reporting can draw more attention more than a traditional reporting style might?

Zola says, “I used to be a nobody, until I discovered the Internet.” Reporting from an eviction site, he says, “One of my goals in coming here is to become famous.” How does Internet access contribute to a cult of celebrity? What are the benefits and drawbacks of this pursuit of fame?

One of Zola’s followers is not happy about his coverage of a rape victim. If you were going to comment on his blog, what would you say to Zola? Do you think that Zola’s provocative photo helped draw more attention to this murder case?

We see a beach scene with a young blogger burying Zola in sand. He says, “I can identify with his [Zola’s] outrageous and provocative behavior.” With what is he identifying? What is appealing about what Zola does? Why isn’t it appealing to everyone?

Both Tiger Temple and Zola are targets of government surveillance. Who are the targets where you live? Why are they targeted? Who defends them? Does the U.S. government have the right to monitor phone calls and collect information on American citizens?

Both Zola and Tiger Temple risk arrest for their blogging activities. In what circumstances, if any, would you risk arrest?
How do the bloggers’ choices affect their relationships with their respective families? In your view, what is the personal cost of blogging on both the bloggers and their families? Is there anything important enough to you that you would be willing to imperil your family’s safety or economic well-being to pursue it?

Tiger Temple labels Zola a “playful warrior.” What do you think he means? Do you agree with the description? Why or why not?

Zola takes a picture of himself appearing to jump over the Great Wall. What’s your interpretation of this picture? What are its messages?

In order to circumvent Chinese restrictions on publishing his blog, Zola has developed a significant level of technical expertise. Who among the people you know has similar levels of expertise? Should everyone be taught these skills? Why or why not?

Lessons From China

In defense of his emphasis on individualism, Zola explains, “Being selfish is the first step in conquering the Communist mindset.” How does “being selfish” challenge Communist thinking?

When Zola and Tiger Temple meet, they have a conversation about their different approaches. The older blogger describes his generation as caring “about our country, about the world” and the younger man interprets this to mean that his elders “don’t care about [their] own happiness.” In your view, what is it about Chinese history and culture that makes it seem as if caring about oneself and caring about the community are mutually exclusive?
Tiger Temple describes the collapse of a farmer’s house from flooding, saying, “Of course, it seems like a small issue in an insignificant place. But small problems reflect big problems, right?” What do you think he would identify as his country’s “big problems”?

Consider the list below of issues covered by the bloggers. Which of these are common to industrializing nations and which are uniquely Chinese? Can you find similar examples of these kinds of problems in the present-day United States or in the past in the United States? How were those situations ultimately resolved?

- The government banned herding, but didn’t provide adequate resources to allow herders to transition to farming or proper compensation for re-purposed land.
- Developers tear down homes to make way for new buildings, but don’t provide adequate compensation or relocation aid to homeowners.
- Officials embezzle funds and, as Tiger puts it in the film, “make a lot of money but we ordinary folks don’t get anything at all.”
- Industrial pollution damages resources on which farmers depend.
- As a result of flooding, a city’s sewage contaminates nearby farmland.
- A villager’s house is destroyed by flooding, but no government help is provided to assist him in relocating or making repairs.
- Construction workers building luxury apartments and offices are forced to rent substandard housing owned by their boss.
Zola’s mother tells her son, “Country comes first, then family. You’ll always be a part of your country. Think about how you can contribute to the Big Family. If you don’t have your country’s support, you won’t make it, no matter how hard you work.” Zola responds, “I’m saying the individual comes first, then the country.” Where would you rank country in relation to family and the individual? What other core things would make your list of obligations?

Zola’s father recalls his first job as a coal miner and says, “I’ve spent my life being forced to do things for other people’s sake, sometimes things that harmed me.” Can you think of any instances in which forced labor would be acceptable?

Tiger Temple says, “On the surface things seem better, but people still feel oppressed, tricked by economic growth, distracted, complacent because they feel powerless.” How is it that people can be “tricked” or “distracted” by economic growth? How do bloggers like Tiger Temple help people resist complacency?

Zola meets a man whose house is going to be demolished. The man has covered his walls with posters of Communist leaders, he says, “So, for those that want to tear down the house it would be like taking down the Communist Party.” Zola says, “This is very smart.” What do you think?
Tiger Temple interviews villagers on the losing end of a conflict between industrial development and farming. They say, “We’ve complained hundreds of times, but to the government we’re invisible . . . They tell us if we complain too much we may get arrested.” What channels for complaints about government exist where you live? Which kinds of complaints are acceptable and which can result in arrest?

Zola admires the courage of the Beijing taxi driver who sings an anti-government song, but he also suggests that this type of resistance won’t change anything. What do you think? Is there value in the taxi driver’s form of protest, or is he inviting trouble for no purpose?

Toward the end of the film, we find out that the Chinese government has created a new agency to monitor Internet activity. The official mission of the State Internet Information Office is to prevent disruptions to social stability. In your view, is maintaining social stability a reasonable aim for government? Should a government ever be permitted to censor media in order to preserve order? Why or why not?

Tiger Temple says, “Even though I question and criticize the system, my blog is about hope. It’s optimistic.” Where in the film do you see signs of optimism that injustices will be addressed?

Additional media literacy questions are available at: www.pbs.org/pov/educators/media-literacy.php
Taking Action

• Start your own citizen blog covering underreported stories in your community.

• Host a debate or panel discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of citizen journalism compared to traditional journalism.

• Investigate U.S. policy related to China’s “Great Firewall,” including regulations impacting U.S. companies (like Google) doing business with China. Create your own set of recommendations based on your research and share those recommendations with regulators and legislators.

• Screen *High Tech, Low Life* as part of a “teach in” on life in modern China and/or as part of a preparation program for exchange students (or others) heading to China for an extended period of time.
Tiger Temple and Zola

CHINA DIGITAL TIMES: CITIZEN JOURNALIST-BLOGGER TIGER TEMPLE  
http://chinadigitaltimes.net

This story discusses Tiger Temple.

NBC NEWS: TIGER TEMPLE: CHINA’S NETIZEN OF THE PEOPLE  
http://worldblog.nbcnews.com

This 2007 profile of Tiger Temple by Adrienne Mong includes links to his blog. Note: The blog is in Chinese; English speakers may want to use a program like Google Translate to access it.

NEW YORK TIMES: “A LONG RIDE TOWARD A NEW CHINA”  
http://www.nytimes.com


ZOLA’S BLOG  
www.zuola.com

The blog is in Chinese and its availability on the Web is sporadic. Zola’s English language blog [blog.zuola.com] is updated less frequently.

Blogging In and About China

CHINA BLOGS IN ENGLISH  
www.chinabloggers.info and www.chinabloglist.org

Each of these portals is curated by an individual blogger. They provide easy, if not completely reliable, links to most available English language blogs from and about China.

GLOBAL VOICES: CHINA  
http://globalvoicesonline.org/-/world/east-asia/china/  

This international community of bloggers who report on blogs and citizen media from around the world aggregates blogs from and about China.
Blogging and Citizen Journalism

**MEDIASHIFT**

In this 2006 post on the PBS MediaShift blog, Mark Glaser provides a concise overview of citizen journalism, defining terms and outlining related controversies.

**TACTICAL TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE**
www.tacticaltech.org

This European group provides toolkits to help activists use digital technologies and data to advance their causes. Of particular interest are the organization’s case studies of technology-based activism: http://informationactivism.org.

**WITNESS BLOG**
http://blog.witness.org/


**China**

**CHINA.ORG**
www.china.org.cn

This English language portal run by the Chinese government provides officially approved news, policy statements and background information about Chinese history and culture. Also of interest is the official website of the National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China: www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/news/index.htm. Media literacy students will want to discuss why these sites are available in English and who their target audience is.

**FRONTLINE: “YOUNG & RESTLESS IN CHINA”**
www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/youngchina/

This 2008 episode of FRONTLINE follows nine young people coming of age in China. The website includes a wide range of links to background information and resources, as well as a teacher’s guide.

**FRONTLINE: “THE TANK MAN”**
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tankman/

This 2006 episode of FRONTLINE recounts the story of a lone man staring down a procession of tanks in Tianamen Square, Beijing in 1989. In the search for this man 20 years later, *The Tank Man* uncovers additional stories about the clash between China’s communist government and those who advocate for a more open, democratic society.

**Chinese Censorship**

**SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE LAW: “GLOBAL INTERNET FREEDOM AND THE RULE OF LAW, PART II”**
http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/pdf/10-03-02MacKinnon’sTestimony.pdf

This congressional testimony on China’s censorship, delivered by Internet freedom scholar Rebecca MacKinnon, includes a comprehensive set of policy recommendations addressed to U.S. companies and the U.S. government.

**THE ECONOMIST:**
“CHINA’S INTERNET: A GIANT CAGE”
http://www.economist.com

This article offers insight into the role the Chinese government plays in the country’s digital landscape.
HOW TO BUY THE FILM

To buy the home or educational DVD, or to stream the film at home, visit http://hightechlowlifefilm.com/dvddigital

Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and beginning its 26th season on PBS in 2013, the award-winning POV series is the longest-running showcase on American television to feature the work of today’s best independent documentary filmmakers. Airing June through September with primetime specials during the year, POV has brought more than 300 acclaimed documentaries to millions nationwide and has a Webby Award-winning online series, POV’s Borders. Since 1988, POV has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today’s most pressing social issues. Visit www.pbs.org/pov.

POV Digital www.pbs.org/pov

POV’s award-winning website extends the life of our films online with interactive features, interviews, updates, video and educational content, as well as listings for television broadcasts, community screenings and films available online. The POV Blog is a gathering place for documentary fans and filmmakers to discuss their favorite films and get the latest news.

POV Community Engagement and Education

POV films can be seen at more than 450 events nationwide every year. Together with schools, organizations and local PBS stations, POV facilitates free community screenings and produces free resources to accompany our films, including discussion guides and curriculum-based lesson plans. With our community partners, we inspire dialogue around the most important social issues of our time.

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American Documentary, Inc. www.amdoc.org

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying, and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream-media outlets. AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic-engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, online, and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback to educational opportunities and community participation.

You can follow us on Twitter @POVengage for the latest news from POV Community Engagement & Education.

Front cover: Zola in the Grass. Photo courtesy of Stephen T. Maing

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