

## The Newsroom – Opening scene dialogue

[Panelist 1: Sharon]

[Panelist 2: Will]

[Panelist 3: Louis]

Louis: Sharon is a very funny woman but she has less faith in American individualism than I do.

Sharon: Wait a second...

Louis: By the way, I never said Barack Obama was a *socialist*. [Two of the three panelists, Sharon and Louis are speaking/debating simultaneously – impossible to sort out. The other panelist, Will, is listening but not participating and is seen biting his lip, looking a bit disgusted.]

Host: Will!

Will: Yes sir.

Host: Anything to add?

Will: I think we need a more precise definition of *perverted*. [audience laughs]

Host: O-K. [Pointing to the audience] We'll go onto the next question. You sir.

Steven: My name's Steven, I'm a junior, and my question is for Will McElroy. Do you consider yourself Democrat, a Republican, or Independent?

Will: I consider myself a New York Jets Fan Steven. [audience laughs]

Host: Since it's been brought up, you have almost religiously avoided stating, or even implying, a political allegiance. Is that because, as a news anchor you feel the integrity of your broadcaster would be compromised?

Will: That sounds like a good answer, I'll take it.

Host: There was a short piece on Vanity Fair's web site, by Marshal Westbrook, you probably saw it, where he calls you the Jay Leno of News Anchors. You're popular because you don't bother anyone.

Will: Yeah!

Host: How do you feel about that?

Will: Jealous of the size of Jay's audience. [local audience laughs]

Host: Are you willing to say here tonight, whether you lean *right* or *left*?

Will: I've voted for candidates run by both major parties.

Host: We'll move onto the next question... go ahead.

Jenny: Hello, my name is Jenny, I'm a Sophomore and this is for all three of you. Can you say in one sentence why America is the greatest country in the world?

Sharon: Diversity and opportunity.

Louis: Freedom AND Freedom, so let's keep it that way.

Host: Will?

Will: The New York Jets. [Laughter]

Host: NO! I'm going to hold you to an answer on that. *What makes America the greatest country in the world?*

Will: Well, Louis and Sharon said, "diversity and opportunity", AND "freedom and freedom". [Some minor laughter... a woman in the audience holds a small but readable sign in front of her that says, "IT'S NOT". Then lifts up another readable sign that says, "BUT IT CAN BE".]

Host: I'm not letting you go back to the airport without answering the question.

Will: [Looking a little hesitant] Well, our Constitution is a masterpiece, James Madison was a genius. The *Declaration of Independence* is, for me, the greatest piece of American writing. [Looking at the Host] You don't look satisfied.

Host: One's a set of laws and the other a *Declaration of War*. I want a *human moment* from you! [a moment passes in silence] What about the people?

Host: Why is...

Will: [Speaking over the Host] It's not the greatest country in the world Professor, that's my answer. [Some stunned faces in the audience]

Host: You're saying...

Will: [very pointedly] YES!

Host: Let's talk about...

Will: [Looking at Sharon] The NEA is a loser [the NEA being the National Education Association]. It accounts for a penny out of our paycheck, but he [pointing at Louis] gets to hit you with it anytime he wants. It don't cost money, it costs votes, it costs air-time and column inches. You know why people don't like liberals? Cause they loose! If liberals are so fuckin' smart how come they loose so god-damned always?

Sharon: Hey.

Will: [turning to look at Louis] And with a straight face you're going to tell students that America is so star spangled awesome that we're the only

ones in the world that have freedom? Canada has freedom, Japan has freedom, the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Australia... Belgium, has freedom. Two-hundred-seven sovereign states in the world and like a hundred-eighty have freedom.

Host: Alright...

Will: Oh yeah, you, sorority girl [the one who asked the question], just in case you wander into a voting booth one day, there's some things you should know. And one of them is, there is absolutely no evidence to support the statement that *we are the greatest country in the world*. We're seventh in literacy, twenty-seventh in math, twenty-second in science, forty-ninth in life expectancy, one-hundred-seventy-eighth in infant mortality, third in median house-hold-income, number four in labor force, and number four in exports. We lead the world in only three categories: Number of incarcerated citizens per capita; number of adults who believe angels are real; and defense spending – where we spend more than the next twenty-six countries combined, twenty-five of whom are allies. Now none of this is the fault of a twenty-year-old college student, but you, none-the-less, are, without a doubt, a member of the worst, period, generation, period, ever, period. So, when you ask “what makes us the greatest country in the world”, I don't know what the fuck you're talking about. Yosemite? [brief pause] It sure used to be. We stood up for ***what was right***. We fought for ***moral reasons***. We passed laws – struck down laws for ***moral reasons***. We waged wars on poverty, not poor people. We sacrificed, we cared about our neighbors, we put our money where our mouths were and ***we never beat our chest***. We built great big things, we made un-godly technological advances, explored the universe, cured disease, and then we cultivated the world's greatest artists and the world's greatest economy. We reached for the stars, acted like **MEN**. ***We aspired to intelligence, we didn't belittle it***, it didn't make us feel inferior. We didn't identify ourselves by who we voted for in the last election and ***we didn't scare so easy***. We were able to be all these things and do all these things because ***WE WERE INFORMED*** - by great men. Men who were revered. First step in solving any problem is recognizing there is one. America is not the greatest country in the world anymore! [turning to look at the Host] Enough?