



# The Power of Choice

*The Life and Ideas of Milton Friedman*

A Conversation with  
Executive Producers, Bob Chitester and Tom Skinner,  
and Producer, Kathy Anderson

## *What about the life of Milton Friedman inspired you to produce this documentary?*

BOB CHITESTER: Milton gave an intellectual framework to my instinctive desire not to be told what to do. I'm saddened when young idealistic students embrace paternalistic government as an agent for change after telling their parents "Bug off, I can run my own life." Hopefully, Milton's ideas will help them understand that individuals acting as free agents can build a better society without sacrificing their own freedom.

TOM SKINNER: I came to this project knowing very little about Milton or Rose Friedman or the incredible impact of Milton's ideas on the world stage. I came away amazed that one person, who was not a world leader, who had never held public office nor led an army could have such an influence on the lives of so many. In the end, this project was a labor of love for us all.

KATHY ANDERSON: I had known of Milton Friedman since my first economics class in college during the late 1960s. He was incredibly controversial then, but so were the times. Milton was just a college kid in 1929, when the Great Depression hit, throwing millions of people out of work. It was then that Milton – a scholarship student – realized economics could be used to ease or even solve complicated human problems.

## *How would you describe "The Power of Choice: The Life and Ideas of Milton Friedman"? What does the documentary set out to accomplish?*

CHITESTER: Consider Dr. Friedman's advice, "Never question the motive of those who disagree with you." It embodies his sense of decency and his belief that questioning motives only distracts from the difficult task of clearly defining an idea and the careful marshalling of evidence to test its validity. "The Power of Choice" is a testament to the wisdom of this approach and Friedman's success in applying it.

SKINNER: This is not only the story of the life of Milton and Rose Friedman, but also the story of how Milton struggled to convince people of the power of his ideas. It is the story of how Milton evolved from a quiet academic to a public persona whose ideas improved the lives of millions of people. We also set out to engage important Americans in an evaluation of Milton's work. In the end, viewers will come away with a new appreciation of two wonderful people who really did change the world.

ANDERSON: We also wanted to demonstrate the impact of his ideas in the world today. We went to Chile, the most controversial chapter of his life, and found the strongest economy in Latin America. We went to the former Soviet Republic of Estonia and found that political freedom and economic reform had transformed it into the most competitive new member of the European Union. In the U.S. we saw that school vouchers in Milwaukee improved not only the private schools, but also the public schools.

*"There are very few people over the generations who have ideas that are sufficiently original to materially alter the direction of civilization. Milton is one of those very few people."*

**Alan Greenspan,**  
Former Chairman,  
Federal Reserve



***What do you feel is Dr. Friedman's greatest contribution to our country?***

CHITESTER: Milton set forth ideas without regard to their popularity or acceptability. He was equally tough on himself and others in his search for tools of analysis that consistently and accurately predict outcomes in both micro and macro economics. And he never compromised the resulting analysis to please those in power. Such courage is essential to the survival of a free society.

SKINNER: He convinced millions by offering proof positive that the free market works. He actually demonstrated, during the Reagan administration, that less government is better government and that the private sector and the free market can solve problems far more efficiently than government. And I must add, "Free to Choose" (1980), his PBS television series, introduced millions to his ideas, presenting them in an easy to understand format.

ANDERSON: The soundness of his scientific work is reflected in his 1976 Nobel Prize for economics. The soundness of his belief in free markets and personal freedom is reflected around the world today in countries that are opening their economies and seeing millions of their people climb out of desperate poverty.