



Scripts.com

Looking for Lenny

By Elan Gale

[Radio tuning]

[Big band music plays]

December 7th, 1941...

A date which will live...

In infamy.

[Announcer]

This is the news

that electrified the world.

Unconditional surrender.

Thanks, Jean,

I'll be there.

[Martin Luther king]

Injustice anywhere

is a threat

to justice everywhere.

The most shocking comedian

of our time,

Lenny Bruce.

Here he is.

No, I promise, continuity,

I'll behave myself.

[Kennedy]

Ask not

what your country

can do for you...

Will Elizabeth Taylor

become bar mitzvahed?

[Audience laughs]

[Announcer]

There are a few

isolated flare-ups

between whites

and negroes.

By the way, are there

any niggers here tonight?

[Audience laughs]

That's what we're doing

in Vietnam.

[Audience laughs]

[Man]

The United States

of America

was suddenly

and deliberately attacked.

[Bruce]

The reason I got busted,
arrested,
i picked on the wrong God.
There are words
that offend me.
Let's see,
governor faubus,
segregation offend me.
What has happened
to our moral values?
Don imus.

[Imus]

That's some nappy-headed
hoes, there.
You might be interested
in how
I became offensive.

[Piano music]

Lenny set the bar
for comedy, for everybody.
He pushed the envelope
at a time
when things
were tightening.
He opened the door for anybody
who ever stands in public
and speaks
and says anything.
The public
and their reputation
created the guy
that he became
and ultimately led
to his downfall.
People that paid to see
Lenny Bruce
came and they saw a man
starting to crumble.
Hold everything.
What's the matter?
It's all over.
What's all over?
The hair

on that man's head.

Oh, come on.

My grandfather knew Lincoln's
gettysburg address.

Well, what's so great
about that?

Everybody knows Lincoln's
gettysburg address.

Yeah, but he knew
his telephone number, too.

Ahhh.

Before Lenny Bruce,
comics were really people
who introduced strippers.
They would do ten jokes,
you know, and here's Sally,
and she's going
to show you her stuff.

When I first got into
stand up comedy on nbc,
you couldn't have

a cleavage
or your knees showing.

It's all different
than it was when we started
because, except for
a few comedians,
you couldn't use any
blue material.

You couldn't touch
on anything
that was controversial
in politics and religion.

What was I, 21
when I discovered Lenny Bruce,
and I started doing
stand-up at 17.

And the first few years
I heard of Lenny Bruce,
and I was like,

"who's this Lenny Bruce?"

"Who cares? Some old guy,
he died, whatever,
heroin overdose."

And then I went
to the museum,
the museum
of radio and television,
and I started watching.
And again,
you're just in awe
the moment you
start watching the guy,
because he did have
his own style,
and, you know,
his whole hip thing, man,
you know, dig.
Lenny was discovered
by Paul Desmond,
the alto saxophonist
with brubeck.
Lenny was working
a strip joint
in the San Fernando valley
as the emcee.
'Cause I remember he started out
doing impressions.
So many of the great comedians
started out doing impressions,
you know.
Guys like Eddie Murphy
and Jim Carrey. Me.
There were kids that,
eight and nine years old,
that were sniffing
airplane glue.
[Audience laughs]
To get high on, you know.
So I had sort of a fantasy
how it happened.
The kid is alone
in his room.
And it's Saturday.
The child is played
by George Macready.
[Audience laughs]
[In a gruff voice]

Well, let's see now,
I'm all alone
in the room,
and it's Saturday.
Mother's away
and what'll I do
that's good
and hostile?

Well, let's see, I'll...

[Audience laughs]

I'll make an airplane,
that's good.

I'll make a Lancaster.

Good structural design.

I'll get the balsa wood,

I'll sand it here.

I'll cut that off,

I'll get the struts now.

Now I'll get

a little airplane glue,

I'll rub it on

the rag and, uh...

Ah.

Hey now,

it's a nutty plane here.

I'm getting loaded.

Is this possible,

loaded on airplane glue?

Maybe it's just stuffy

in here,

I'll call my dog over.

Flicker?

[Audience laughs]

Flicker, come here, darling,

and smell this rag.

Smell it,

you freaky little doggy.

Smell that rag, flicker.

Flicker!

[Shouting]

Flicker!

It worked.

I'm the Louis pasteur

of junkiedom.

I'm out of my skull
for...
Well, there's much work
to be done now.
Horses hooves
to melt down,
noses to get ready,
cut to
the toy store.
Any toy store,
any hobby shop.
It might be your kid
who walked in that day.
Ding-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling.
Hello, Mr. schindler.
Nice store you got here.
Give me a nickel's worth
of pencils
and a big boy tablet,
and some erasers
and 2,000 tubes
of airplane glue.
[Audience laughs]
I loved his work.
He was brilliant.
And whenever I was
on the road
and he was in town,
I would rush over
and hear him.
We worked together
extensively starting
at gene Norman's club
on the strip, the crescendo.
And we were
the house comedians.
It was upstairs.
Lenny would be working
under, say, Peggy Lee
or jeri Southern.
Downstairs I'd be with
count basie or Stan kenton.
So we were together
all the time.

We were together
after the show
at the gaiety delicatessen.
We knew each other
pretty well.
We got to know Lenny.
We got to see
Lenny working.
And we enjoyed his work.
You know, we thought him
a pretty good comedian.
But not always.
Because you really didn't
know for sure
what was going to happen
on the night you went.
He was irreverent,
an individualistic,
and wasn't trying
to please anybody.
And people said
"too smart for the room.
Too dirty,
too this or that."
We were all
on the high wire.
We worked
without a net.
If I hired them,
then I put 'em on stage,
let them do
what they want to do.
You hired them
because you had faith
in what they
were doing.
So then don't tell them
what to say
and what not to say,
it's not my business.
If it wasn't for
Lenny Bruce,
you wouldn't have
Richard pryor

or George carlin.
You wouldn't have
these guys.
He really opened the doors
to what is today modern comedy.
He kicked that door down.
And as a result
usually it's the first guy
through the breech
that takes all
the bullets.
[Radio static]
Two persons really helped
Lenny Bruce during his career.
One in the press
and one on t.V.
Hugh Hefner
and Steve Allen,
were both very important
in Lenny Bruce's career.
Ladies and gentlemen,
here is a very
shocking comedian,
the most shocking comedian
of our time,
a young man who
is skyrocketing to fame,
Lenny Bruce.
Here he is.
[Audience applauds,
music plays]
[Gold]
He came from vaudeville,
that was the interesting thing,
and his mother, you know,
grew up in vaudeville,
and he grew up
in vaudeville.
And he just totally
bucked that trend
of, like,
ba-dum-bum jokes
and setup punch line,
"take my wife,"

and to get up there
and start talking
about yourself,
and to get really deep
and personal,
and talking about the world
you're living in,
and politicians
and racism
and class, it's like,
that's unbelievable.
Lenny went beyond
what any other mainstream
comics had done at the time.

[Lonow]

He began to speak in
the verbiage
that they would speak
at a table at canter's,
which nobody did.

You know, can I say
the word "fuck"?

Yeah.

Well, I couldn't
say the word "fuck"
in 1952, or four or five
before Lenny Bruce,
because they were
banned words.

It was a banned word.

And there were many.

But what happened
was his patter,
the type of speech
he used,
became very personal
on a level that
all the comics
of the fifties,
couldn't do, wouldn't do,
and they were, you know,
protective of the fact
that they wouldn't do that
in public.

You know, people
would be offended.
Holy shit, I can't
say that on stage.
Well, I guess Lenny
either wasn't offended,
or provoked it.
He went into a direction
no one had really gone into.
And, uh...
And mort Saul
in a sense was doing it,
but Lenny was pushing...Um,
pushing further.
He responded to injustice.
And suffering,
and I think of him
as an alchemist,
that he transformed
horror into humor.
What Lenny was doing
was talking about
what was happening
in the world.
He wasn't making
up bits.
He wasn't a comedian
that wrote routines.
He was doing an interesting
thing, and that is
what he was saying
to the audience
was the most important thing
on his mind at that time,
and he tried to make it
your most important thing.
He also attacked things
in his comedy
like the catholic church
in Boston,
the police commission
in New York.
He took on catholics,
Jews, protestants,

he took on everybody.
So they made him
the martyr,
but artistically speaking,
he went way beyond
anything that anyone
had done up until
that time.
Completely broke
every taboo pretty much.
"The bad taste award,
"should be given
to Lenny Bruce,
"who out shuttered
every other comedian
on television this year."
Okay, now another nice,
warm review.
But then finally a newspaper
with some integrity came forth,
and...
[Audience laughs]
"Last night,
a star was born."
It's almost always
a comedian
that is the first guy
to talk about social issues
that we don't
want to talk about.
Just because of the nature
of their job,
they stand on the stage
and they talk to people,
eventually it's
gonna get set.
Filmmakers take
a little while,
'cause doing a film
takes a lot longer,
uh, commentators
won't grab onto it
until it's been said
by a comedian.

Rock stars play music,
you know,
so it's comedians
that for the most part
in my book, tackle
the social issues
that we don't want
to discuss.
The job of comedy
is to attack the powerful.
To examine them.
To hopefully make them
examine themselves.
But more importantly
to make us
examine ourselves
and how we fit into this--
this huge thing
called life.
What Lenny did
was exactly that.
He challenged authority.
He held up a mirror
to what was going on
in society,
and the be-alls
of society
did not want this mirror
being held up.
He did a lot
of bits on religion,
the hypocrisy of some
of these evangelists who...
Preach give your money
to God,
and he pockets 70%,
stuff like that, you know.
We take you now
to the headquarters
of religions incorporated.
And seated around the desk
on Madison Avenue
sit the religious leaders
of our country.

Religion, big business,
we hear h.A. Addressing
the tight little group
on Madison Avenue.
For the first time
in 12 years,
catholicism is up
nine points.
[Audience laughs]
Judaism is up 15.
The big p, the pentecostals
are starting to move finally,
and now, gentlemen,
we've got Mr. netaya,
from our religious
novelty house in Chicago,
he's got
a beautiful seller.
The genuine Jewish star,
lucky cross,
and cigarette lighter combined.
[Audience laughs]
Lenny Bruce took
stand-up comedy
in dimensions
it had not been taken
since, in a smaller way,
lord Buckley did.
He wasn't just
being dirty,
he was using words,
you know...
Pointing out
the hypocrisy of words.
Like the--
he goes, you know--
fuck.
Oh, I'm sorry, I thought they
were talking to me, you dick.
[Laughs]
Homosexuality,
sexuality,
these things that conservative
America doesn't like to discuss

and definitely doesn't like
to discuss in detail
amongst even each other,
never mind bringing it out
in a public forum,
which Lenny was doing.

[Cymbal dings]

[Bruce]

two prepositions

"Two" is a preposition

"come" is a verb.

"Two" is a preposition.

"Come" is a verb.

"Two" is a preposition.

"Come" is a verb.

The verb intransitive.

To come.

To come.

I've heard these two words
my whole adult life,
and as a kid when I thought
I was sleeping.

To come, to come.

It's been like
a big drum solo.

Did you come?

Did you come, good?

[Drum beats, cymbal crashes]

Did you come good?

Did you come good?

[Audience laughs]

Did you come good?

[Drumbeats continue]

Did you come good?

[Drumming]

Did you come good?

Did you come good?

Did you come good?

...I come better

with you, sweetheart

than anyone in

the whole God damn world.

[Audience laughs]

I really came so good.

I really came so good,
'cause I love you.
[Singing]
I really came so good
I come better with you,
sweetheart
than anyone
in the whole world
I really came so good
so good
But don't come in me.
[Drum beats, audience laughs]
Don't come in me.
[Frantically]
Don't come in me
me-me-me
don't come in me
me-me-me,
don't come in me.
Don't come in me.
In me don't come...
In me in me.
[Cymbal crashes]
I can't come.
[Audience laughs]
'Cause you don't love me,
that's why I can't come.
I love ya, I just can't come,
that's my hang up.
I can't come
when I'm loaded, all right?
'Cause you don't love me.
Just what the hell
is the matter with you?
What has that
got to do with loving you?
I just can't come,
that's all.
[Audience laughs]
Now if anyone
in this room...
Finds those two
words decadent,
[Drum beats, cymbal dings]

Obscene,
[Cymbal dings]
Immoral, amoral,
asexual,
the words "to come"
really make you
feel uncomfortable,
you probably
can't come.
[Audience laughs]
And then you're
of no use,
'cause that's the purpose
of life.
To recreate it.
[Klein]
Lenny Bruce's political bent
and social consciousness
was not an accident.
It was a metamorphosis
of sorts.
[Titus]
He started in like
'46 and died in '66.
If you look at where
he goes,
right about 12 years, in,
bam, he starts writing
that's the colored people...
How to make your
colored friends
comfortable at parties.
He starts writing about--
takes about 10 to 12 years
to become
a really good comic.
The problem today
is a lot of comics
get onstage at
a coffee house
and already think
they're Lenny.
I want to hear your pain,
I want to hear your story,

but put it in joke form.
Lenny learned how
to write a joke
and create a concept first.
Then he became
Lenny Bruce.
And I think today,
you know, if you invoke
Lenny Bruce,
you should have
to go back and study him.
Don't just go back
to bearded Lenny,
you know,
with track marks.
Go to early Lenny,
when he was really, really,
really working his craft
as a brilliant comic.
And then you
can talk about him,
and then you can say,
yeah, I'm trying to do
what Lenny did.
He obviously knew
there were certain buttons
he could press,
that would get a reaction.
You know, kind of raise a hot
button, get things to go.
That it's going to draw
attention to him,
but maybe that's not
such a bad thing.
When comics throw up,
"oh, yeah, you know, like,
Lenny did it."
Yeah, but Lenny didn't talk
about pussy for ten minutes.
You know, Lenny talked
about racism and segregation,
and he says it
on national television,
at a time when there was like

cops showing up, you know,
down South, to protect kids
going to school.
There are words
that offend me.
Uh, let's see,
governor faubus,
segregation offend me.
Uh, nighttime television
offends me.
Some nighttime television.
[Audience laughs]
Uh, the shows that exploit
homosexuality, narcotics,
and prostitution
under the guise of helping
the societal problem.
He gave commentary on what was
going on in the world
with humor.
The important feature
about Lenny Bruce
that appealed to me
so much,
was that he made
his comedy meaningful.
He became not only
a comedian,
and for me
the important criteria
is making people laugh.
You're not a comedian
if you're a preacher
or a teacher.
But how much more complex
in that he pushed the envelope.
Back in the '50s,
things were very sanitized,
and very let's look pretty
for the camera.
But a lot of very ugly things
were not pretty for the camera.
The racism that went on
was definitely not

camera pretty.
That was a big thing
for my father.
Party's in swing,
and the humor comes from
the now becoming obscure
white person's concept
of how do you relax
colored people at parties.
And in the bit,
I play the white guy.
[Audience laughs]
I didn't get
your name.
Miller.
Miller, my name
is Mr. Anderson.
Anderson.
Glad to know you.
Pleasure indeed, sir.
Mm-hmm.
Pleasure indeed.
[Ice clinking in glass]
[Audience laughs]
You know that Joe Louis
was a hell of a fighter.
[Audience laughs]
Yeah, yeah, yeah.
You can say that again.
Joe Louis was
a hell of a fighter.
Credit to your race.
Don't forget it,
you son-of-gun.
Well, thank you
very much.
That's perfectly
all right.
Uh, here's
to bojangles.
[Glasses chink]
Yeah, here's
to bojangles.
[Audience laughs]

What the hell's
that guy?
You know that guy
on the cream of wheat box?
[Audience laughs]
Anything said in anger,
forget it.
There's no way
you can justify
it comedically.
You can't do it.
So Lenny Bruce could say
"cocksucker" or "nigger"
on stage.
In a comedy context people
could see he's not angry
at a specific person
or anything in general.
He's working something.
So it makes them pause
and absorb it
in a different way.
Are there any niggers
here tonight?
What did he say?
Are there any niggers
here tonight?
Jesus Christ, he had to get
that low for laughs?
[Sighs]
Have I ever talked about
the shvartzes of...
Or spoke about
the moulignons,
or placated some southerner
by absence of...
And rants and raves about
nigger, nigger, nigger?
Are there any niggers?
I know the one nigger
that works here,
i see him back there.
Oh, there's two
nigger customers and...

Ah, but between
those three niggers,
there's one kike.
[Whistles]
Thank God
for the kike.
[Audience laughs]
Uh, two kikes.
That's two kikes
and three niggers
and one spic.
One spic. Two-three spics,
one Mick, one Mick, one spic,
one hick, fic, funky,
spunky boogie.
And there's another kike.
Three kikes, three kikes,
one Guinea, one greaseball,
three greaseballs, two guineas,
two guineas, one hunky, funky,
lace-curtain Irish Mick.
That Mick, spic, funky,
hunky boogie.
Five more niggers,
five more niggers,
i pass for six niggers and
eight micks and four spics.
[Audience laughs]
He took these racist ideas,
the bigotry, homophobia,
he took it onstage,
broke it down,
and...Tried to have some
political and philosophical
approach.
I never liked
that routine.
And never really
quite agreed with it.
To become desensitized
is to be overthrown.
It is to be
beaten down.
And you've been

trampled upon.
I believe he would take
a lot of heat
for the racial remarks,
just because the world's
a lot smaller
because of all this media.
You know, people can tape you
on their cell phones now.
Now, if you do something
offensive and it's not funny,
then that's where pain
and trouble starts.
But then again,
my people are sensitive.
You know what I mean?
I made up a saying.
"Sticks and stones
"may break my bones,
"but words--
except for nigger--
will never hurt me."
As long as it's funny,
then it's okay.
Timing's everything.
And funny's funny,
no matter how racial it is.
Sexual or relig--
if it's funny, it's funny.
You can go totally racist,
and say something
you should be arrested for,
but yet all of a sudden,
it's hilarious
when it comes out
of your mouth.
That's an art
in its own,
to see Lisa lampanelli
up on stage,
ranting and raving
about every race.
Now I got to do
a "hispanic" joke

to even things out.

What's your real name, sir?

[Inaudible]

John? Juan.

Quit fronting.

[Audience laughs]

How many "hispanics"
does it take to clean
a bathroom?

None.

That's a nigger's job.

[Audience screams,
cheers]

My comedy, you know, I insult
everybody, you know.

Nobody is exempt,
it's equal opportunity.

But I know in my heart,
some people don't get it,
so I'm like "whatever."

But all I'm saying,
if you go to the n-word,
and you go to racial shit
right off the bat,
then there must be something
in there that made you do it.

Like when people
get drunk
and then they say,
"but I was drunk,"
it's like,
no, you called me a whore
when you were drunk
and you hit me in the clit
with a shovel when you--
you know, you must have that
in you.

What we've seen controversy
about in my opinion,
is bad jokes.

You see, to me, there's no
controversy
that Michael Richards
was screaming the word "nigger."

That's not really
controversy to me.
The controversy is that
he didn't have a punch line.
We're in nuremberg
and they're trying people
for comedy crimes.
There was nothing loveable
about him
when he went off
on a racist rant onstage
at a comedy club
in Los Angeles
over the weekend.
I don't get it.
It amazes me
that people will still go
to something like that.
It was such a surprise
to find out
that Kramer
was a racist.
Like there was no signs
of it, there were no hints.
Like I started watching
old seinfelds
for just any sort
of clue, you know,
as if there would
be like a racist
Seinfeld episode.
As if there'd be an episode
that was like...
[Sings Seinfeld theme]
Hey, Jerry.
Hi, Kramer.
You know who just moved
into the building?
An n-word.
Oh, no, there's an n-word
in the building.
We can't have an n-word
in the building,
what are we going to do?

I don't know, Jerry.
I'm scared.
I was talking to mitzi shore
shortly after that.
And I said, "wow, I'm sure
you heard about what happened
to Michael Richards."
And she goes, "oh, yeah."
And I said, "well, he got banned
from the laugh factory
and the improv.
You going to let him perform
here at the comedy store?"
She goes, "of course."
I said, "why?"
She goes,
"'cause it's freedom of speech,
he can say
what he wants."
I thought, all right,
well, I can understand that,
you know,
because technically, it is.
On the other hand,
it's, you know,
it's a sensitive word
and you're going to offend
a lot of people.
It was such a big deal
over nothing, really.
And I'm not saying,
people go, "what if you
were black?"
You know, first of all,
if someone wasn't there
with their cell phone
to tape it,
nobody would
have talked about it.
At the improv all of a sudden
he started yelling
about the Jews.
Well, when was that?
That was two weeks before,

oh, really?
But nobody talked
about that
no.
Because Jews, who cares
about Jews?
Exactly.
You just answered
your own question.
No one had a cell phone
in there.
I mean that's
the only thing,
no one shot it.
What's he doing now?
But there was
a talmudic scholar.
There was, because right
now someone's writing it
on parchment.
[Laughs]
Deer hides.
That's great, we'll roll it up
and dance around it.
Richard pryor, at the time
he used the n-word.
I asked him very openly,
I said, "Richard, why do you use
the n-word so much?"
He said, "Jamie,
the reason I'm saying it,
"I'm trying to take
the poison out of it.
I don't want people
to get to hurt."
But Michael Richards
was actually hurting people,
that's a different thing.
See, again, the difference
between Lenny Bruce
and let's say
a Michael Richards...
Michael Richards wasn't trying
to desensitize

the word "nigger."
He was calling
a black dude a nigger.
A Jewish person would never,
ever use that word.
We say "shvartze."
It's a whole other slur.
[Rimshot]
[Bruce]
The reason I
got busted, arrested,
i picked on
the wrong God.
If I would've picked
on the God
whose replica is in
the whoopee cushion store,
the tiki God,
the Hawaiian God,
those idiots,
their dumb God,
i would have been cool.
If I would have picked
on the God
whose belly is
slashed as a bank,
the Chinese, those idiots,
their yellow God.
But I picked on
the Western God,
the cute God,
the "in" God,
the Kennedy God.
And that's where
I screwed up.
The thought and time
that was put in
to stopping my father
from talking
was exemplary.
Happened in L.A.,
it happened in San Francisco,
it happened in New York.
And it was obviously

a concerted effort
to close him down.
Once they really started
going for him,
and they're--you know,
he'd be introducing the police
in the back of the room
at every show.
It was a first amendment issue.
It was more about...

Not just the words
as much as what he
was talking about,
and what they were
going after him for
was that he was messing
with the system.

Lenny Bruce by the time
that I met him
was a little guy who was
just being beaten up.
What I saw in him
was a guy who was being
relentlessly pursued
by bad guys
for bad reasons
and on trumped-up charges.

[Bruce]

Wanna dig what the judge said?
This was an obvious pay-off.
It was a complete bribe...

This cat says as soon
as I sit down after the intro,
"this looks like a sinister
character to me."

[Audience laughs]

I don't think he
ever understood
why it was upsetting people.

[Kaur]

When he was on stage
making points about things
or saying things,
that's just

how he talked.
He tried to treat
his audiences like adults.
And they wouldn't have it,
just like they wouldn't
have it today.
He was being called
a dirty comic,
and he had no concept
of himself as a dirty comic.
The Bruce prosecution
has to be seen in its time.
Uh, there was a guy
named father hill,
and he ran something
called operation yorkville.
Operation yorkville
was fueled by the church.
And Bruce made a lot of stuff
that offended,
not only the church,
but people that the church
did not want to see offended,
Jackie Kennedy.
I think that at the hauling ass,
dragging ass bit,
really drove everybody crazy.
He was being
financially exhausted.
He was becoming
obsessed with the law,
and venues
were closing down.
When he got busted,
the club manager got busted too
for obscenity.
[Kitty bruce]
Club owners got to the point
to where they were afraid
to hire him,
and towards the end sometimes,
there wasn't food,
and we would, uh...
It would get

a little bit weird.
And I would hide food
under the bed.
He worked a little
during that time,
but he really felt
like a has-been.
Lenny's getting busted
all over the country,
but what really just
sapped Lenny,
and which was really
a difficult trial,
was the New York trial.
You could see him
week-to-week slide down.
You could see him
week-to-week become
less coherent.
And he started to get
more and more involved
into drugs.
The last time I saw Lenny,
he was very out of it.
Very out of it,
and his whole act consisted of
him against the system.
And it looked like
he was heavily sedated.
So I got to talking
to him afterwards
with a friend of mine,
don Sherwood,
and he said to don,
"can you give me some
methadone?"
And my friend,
don Sherwood, said,
"Lenny, you're so bright.
"You're such an intellect,
you're so smart.
How can you give it all up
for drugs?"
And Lenny said,

I'll never forget it,
"once you've slept
on a feather bed,
you can't go back to sleeping
on the floor anymore."
I think at a certain point,
as he was progressively
working on his cases,
I don't think he ever tried
to upset people,
but I think he did get
a little obsessive
with trying
to prove his points,
and how he
would prove them.
He read all the cases.
He would prepare sometimes
his own legal papers.
I remember one night
I walked into the hotel room,
and Lenny said, "this is it,
this is it, this is the case.
And this is the case that's
going to make a difference.
And the case that was going
to make a difference
was an 1825 case
out of British books,
dealing with sheep on land.
And trespass.
And he had worked it out.
So that that case was
directly relevant to this case,
and that once the judges
saw this case,
this case
had to be thrown out.
And it was...You know.
But he believed it,
and he was furious
when we didn't use it.
And he was furious that we
couldn't understand him.

Also what he was doing,
which we didn't know
until later,
and then he wouldn't stop,
he was tape recording
everything that was
going on in court,
because he had figured out
that one of the reasons
he was being prosecuted,
and then being convicted,
was because the d.A.
Was changing the transcripts.
In other words, the witness
would testify,
then there'd be
a court transcript,
and it would not be
as Lenny remembered it.
And he had his own transcript,
and he thought his
own transcript
was more accurate.
The comedy of errors
is that a cop comes in
to the cafe a go-go
and tries to take
his performance down
in long hand.
And then he would
go to court,
and Lenny would say
that's not my act,
that's not what
I did.
Lenny begged
time and time again,
"please let me do
my routine for you."
But there wasn't a single judge
that would let him do it.
When he starts reading
transcripts from the trial,
you can really track

that he's no longer being funny,
he's really outraged.
He became obsessed
with the arrest itself.
It impacted the nature,
and not always
in a positive way,
it impacted the very nature
of his act.

[Bruce]

In one of his anecdotes
relating to New York policemen
dressed up as women
to apprehend mashers,
he stated, "this would never
stop a real rape artist,
because some of those cops
really have nice asses."
Now, I didn't say this.
He took me out of context.
What I said, I said there
were many trans--
dig how they hear,
now they--
here's what I said.

"There are many transvestites
posing as policemen."

[Audience laughs]

There's a big difference.
And I said, "and they are
doing this to thwart--"

[Approaching siren]

[Audience laughs]

Oh, really?

Well, I hope they got
a big van.

You're all going,
you know.

I think every performer
can relate to how nuts
he went at the end,
when in court.

You just want people
to understand.

You want to drill it
through their thick
fucking skulls.

And you have to read
line by line
in a transcript
to get it done...

I mean that's how crazy
he went with it.

[Man]

Yeah.

I think anyone can relate
to going to that point.

[Garbus]

He didn't act nuts.
He acted irrationally
in an irrational situation.
Now I don't know how else,
how more appropriate
you could be in
the situation.

He lived in a world
of justice,
I lived in a world
of the law.

They're two
different things.

And Lenny
didn't understand that.

He really believed
in the constitution.

I mean he really believed
in the government,
he really believed
in the legal system.

And he couldn't believe
in the injustice of it.

And he was just almost fighting
for his belief in the system,
rather than fighting
against the system.

[Man]

So you are saying then
that you feel the jury

had in fact heard of you
before the trial.

No, I don't feel that.

I have these affidavits,
and they're voice recorded,
where they all state--
six of them,
they have heard
of me before.

You feel that this
prejudiced the case?

No, I'm not concerned
with that.

I'm concerned with the fact
that crime was committed.

[Kaur]

The reason I think
he had such fight in him
is 'cause he believed
that he would win.
That he would get
vindicated because
he had this belief
in truth,
which is what
motivated him.

[Gov. Pataki]

When Lenny Bruce was convicted
back in the mid '60s,
the perception was it was
the heavy hand of government,
the right coming down
on someone
who was a spokesperson
more for the left.

Today, we have
a lot of political correctness,
where it's almost
the other way around,
where if you express
in private or in a forum
some politically
incorrect view,
all of a sudden you are

in some way reprimanded,
or held up
for some type of sanction.

[Imus]

Girls from rutgers,
man, they got tattoos...
Some hardcore hos.
That's some nappy-headed
hos there.

[Imus laughs]

Man, that's some--whew.
The girls from Tennessee,
they all look cute,
you know, so...
It's kind of like...

I don't know.

A spike Lee thing.

[Imus] Yeah.

The jigaboos
vs. Wannabees.

Isn't that that movie
that he had?

He needs to be fired
no matter what because
he injured a whole
group of people,
not just
a basketball team.

It's not the kind of language
I would ever use,
it's just not me.

But I don't think
they should have fired him.

The comedy that he brought
was talking about
a disenfranchised.

Talking about people
who are powerless,
that's the mistake.

That's the drama.

Do I think he should have
lost his job for it? No.

Who gives a shit?

Let him keep doing

his terrible radio show,
and let no one
listen to it.
Never apologize
for a joke.
I got protested at
Rochester institute
of technology
'cause there's a big
deaf population up there,
and I said on the radio
that deaf people
weren't really deaf,
they were retards trying
to make themselves be upgraded
by saying they're deaf.
So they came up to me,
they start protesting my show,
they start signing shit
at me,
I don't know
what they're saying,
and the news crew comes
to the radio station where I am,
and she's like, "are you
going to apologize?"
I'm like, "no. If they can't see
that I insult everybody
"and that I don't mean any harm,
they're not only deaf,
they're blind, too."
It was the best quote
of my life, by the way.
You have don imus
being compared to Lenny Bruce,
and what does he do?
He goes out and he hires
the same attorney,
Martin garbus.
Don imus had always been
an extraordinary fan of Bruce,
and he chose me because he saw
a connection
between Bruce

and the kind of work
that he does.
It's been characterized
as a free speech case,
but it's really
a contract case.
In so far as the fcc
is concerned,
in so far as free speech
is concerned,
he's perfectly safe.
The major issue
is the interpretation
of the contract.
And what the contract
says basically,
it says two
contradictory things.
It says, one,
that CBS hires don
to do the kind of shows
he's done in the past.
Because they understand
that there's an audience
for that kind
of material.
Then there's something else
in the contract,
which contradicts
what I just said
is in the contract,
which says they shouldn't--
uh, he should not do anything
which would hold CBS
up to scandal
or disrepute.
He was a shock jock.
You don't hire a guy
to paint a wall,
and then you come in
and go you painted the wall,
I wanted you to wallpaper.
You hired me
to paint the wall,

what are you
fucking talking about?
The really unfortunate
part of it
is that the media,
at no point or time,
did they talk about
what imus has devoted
a great deal
of his life to,
which is helping kids
who have cancer.
So to me, for a man
who's devoted
a lot of his life to a fairly
philanthropic cause,
to all of a sudden
be demonized.
That's where I think
the media
is entirely irresponsible.
It's funny to watch
the way the media,
will, you know,
these fucking vultures,
like Al roker saying
imus should be fired,
and meanwhile
those cunts at nbc
two weeks later
show the Cho manifesto,
even though that type
of shit
has been proven
to spawn copycats.
And Al roker
had nothing to say about that.
It was like,
"where's your anger?"
Where's the integrity
of the news department
with that, motherfucker?
Where is it?
I think it was overblown.

For the first three days,
there was no life to it.
And then some of the sponsors
started to get edgy.
And then Al sharpton
met with the CBS president,
and the day after,
he was fired.
Rumor has it. I heard from
a couple of good sources
that they fired him
after what Barack Obama said.
I don't think he should be
working for nbc
and have access to the public
airwaves after
making what were profoundly
derogatory statements.
Ann coulter.
She even thought
that firing him
was a little bit
too strong.
You know, good lord,
when Ann coulter defends
freedom of speech,
I'm just going to go
kill myself.
It's bad to the point
of scary frightening bad.
That you could just fire someone
for a dumb comment on the air.
I went to Iraq this year,
and we did shows for the troops,
and the week after
we left, 167 guys died.
And I think the day
the imus thing came out,
it was on the cover
of time magazine or something.
Are we really fucking worried
about the word "nigger"?
Are we really worried
about someone being called

a redneck or a cracker
or a kike?
What the fuck?
What's wrong?
And Lenny, it's weird,
because Lenny when
you watch him,
is so far ahead
of his time,
just so far ahead
of his time.
And, you know,
and he's dead now.
And that's what happens
to all those people
that are ahead
of their time.
Hi, welcome to
the comedy documentary.
[Laughs]
Holy shit.
You have Lenny Bruce
being censored by
the government
and by district attorneys
in the 1960s.
And you flash forward
40 years,
and you have don imus
who's being censored
by corporate America.
The argument is
is like,
should imus be allowed
to say what he's saying?
Yes, but that doesn't mean
that nbc has to put him on,
or anybody has
to put him on.
But he's put on not because
nbc thinks he's great,
or whatever, infinity
or whatever the hell it was,
'cause he was making money,

that's why.
That's not free speech
or no free speech,
that's just the marketplace.
The whole thing about imus
has to do with money.
Staples, the big office
supply chain,
telling our sister network,
cnbc, that quote:
"Recent comments on
the show
"have caused it
to discontinue
"its advertising
on 'imus in the morning.'"
Al sharpton actually said
something
that was very interesting
which was
he didn't try
and fire him.
He goes, "I never tried
to get don imus fired."
There was no federal
or government regulators
that fired him.
What fired him was when
advertisers were told
by their customers
that they're not going to
support them if they support
this kind of stuff.
Those advertisers were riled up
by media people.
I remember because
I went through this.
The people you are
referring to, bill,
had the ability
to rile up advertisers,
they would have--
I mean, you can't tell people
that don imus has the right

to say what he wants
but we don't have the right
to respond.
Free speech goes
both ways.
In the imus case,
this was public broadcasting
across the country.
And it's very different,
I think,
than when you have someone
at a club, speaking.
But even in that case,
the action wasn't taken
by government,
the action was taken
by his broadcast company.
I think you have corporate
sponsors and all that,
you got to be so freakin'
careful, it would make me sick.
And then you're a pandering,
watered-down douchebag
like Bob and tom,
it's horrible.
The special interest groups,
which under the guise
of sort of
caring about America,
are really driven by commerce
and money and big business.
And the sponsors directly,
have an incredible amount
of influence over what,
you know, over what
the powers that be
want to put in their film,
in their movies,
in their television shows,
and their radio broadcasts.
And I don't think things
have changed very much.
For a different set of reasons,
it's the same result,

and that's scary.
And so, you know,
I don't know where
that leaves, you know,
where that puts
Lenny's legacy, you know.
[Perelli]
I don't hear from him
for a long time,
it's August,
it's very hot.
And he calls up,
he says, "Frank?"
"Yeah?"
"You know what I got
a taste for?
"I got a taste for
that pasta...
That your mother
used to make."
"Yeah?" I said, "do you know

it's 7:

'Cause those guys
have no hours.
And he says, "yeah,"
he says, "but tell Mary--"
my mother, you know,
"that I'd appreciate it,"
so now I gotta wake up
my mother.
Right over here,
down the street here.
I said, "ma, would you
do me a favor?"
She says, "why certainly,
you're my son."
My mother was
a little wacky that way.
"Of course I would do that."
And she started
making the pasta
at seven in the morning,
packed it real nice,

went there,
and he pulls the bowl
out of my hand,
and like a horse eating oats,
puts his head in there...
[Eating sounds]
And when he came up,
he had all pasta here.
And then he says, "Frank,
I promise you next time..."
I said, "okay," but I wasn't
paying any attention.
And I says, "okay,"
and then I started to laugh.
He says, "schmuck,
what are you laughing at?"
I says, "you got all
that gravy around there."
He says, "well, what's
funny about that?"
"Oh, nothing.
Everybody does that."
But it does remind me
in an Italian neighborhood,
every Sunday
when you went out to play,
all the kids had pasta,
and they all had that
gravy around their mouth.
So I told him then he started
laughing and everything,
he said, "well,
I'll talk to you later.
We're going to do
something."
I went home,
and it was real hot.
And my father had some
homemade Italian wine,
he said,
"take a glass of this,"
and it knocked me out,
I fell on the bed,
went to sleep.

I get a call from
jojo d'amore.
And too bad he's
not alive,
'cause he could really
tell you a lot of things
about Lenny.
And he says, "Frank?"
"Yeah."
He says, "Lenny's dead."
I said, "what?"
He says, "he died
in the bathroom.
Somebody brought him
uncut heroin or something,"
and they didn't tell him,
and he was, uh...
One of those guys who
pumped it into his arm
and all that.
And he was dead.
And that was the end
of Lenny.

[Guitar music]

[Kaur]

I think Frankie called me,
and he asked me
to go tell Sally.
And Sally was staying
out at the beach
at that time
with kitty.

[Kitty bruce]

I was at singer sewing
in Santa Monica, California,
in a sewing class,
and I remember coming out
and seeing satsimran.
So I went out to the beach,
it was in Santa Monica,
venice, somewhere,
and kitty was there,
you know, "hi, kitty,
blah, blah, blah,

I'm just waiting
for your grandmother."
She was with my grandma Sally,
and she sat down and
there was like a water fountain,
and I was sitting there,
and they wanted me
to go into the car.
And something was just
like weird.
Sally came, and I mean,
I remember
just, I mean I just
said to her,
"Sally, Lenny's dead."
I mean, I just, I didn't
know how to cushion it,
or I just said it.
And so then we went back
to the apartment,
and she told kitty.
She said, "you remember
that daddy was always sick?"
And I said, "yes."
And she said,
"well, daddy died."
And I remember feeling
like it was
a really bad joke.
And I remember
screaming hysterically.
Um, I did not
take it well.
And the icky part
is in school,
kids were bringing
the newspaper,
and the--
when he died,
Phil spector
was kind enough,
he tried to buy
the negatives
from the LAPD,

from photos,
said that they
wouldn't be used
for the public to see.
And they repositioned
my father's body,
they stuck the needle
back into his arm
for 8x10 glossies,
and...You know made sure
that his jeans were pulled
way down
so that he would be
lying there naked
with the needle
in his arm.
His death was a hideous
publicity nightmare
which they would never
do today.
I'll always think
that that famous photo
of him naked
in his toilet, dead,
I'll always think
that's a posed shot.
They found him one way,
they pulled his pants down
before the photographers
got there, and said
take a photo of that.
They did it to
black guys all the time.
I don't think he wanted
to die,
I think he wanted
to get high,
and I think somebody
brought him some bad shit.
The beard, the heroin,
he died that way,
and you have to really--
he was portrayed that way
when he died,

but most of the time,
he wasn't like that.
That's a small--
that's unfortunately--
that is perceived
as a big part of his life,
but the way that he was
for a little time
for a few months when
he felt really bad,
at the end of his life,
actually he felt
a little better,
he wanted to make
that comeback.
He said,
"I'm a fighting Jew.
"I'm not someone
who's going to bow my head.
I'm a fighting Jew,"
and he fought to the end.
I said at the time, I said,
"Lenny died for our sins."
And I think it's true.
I feel that his
Christian sacrifice--
I say this because I think
he was crucified, you know,
has been so ill-served
in many ways,
by the kind of "anything goes"
profanity and vulgarity
you see today.
It would offend him that so many
comedians today
get their laughs
on the four-letter words.
Like Jesus, people took
what he said, bastardized it,
took his ideas,
bastardized it.
The national consciousness
of Lenny Bruce,
probably more people

know about him
maybe from
the movie, Lenny,
which was a total--
I won't say
a total fabrication,
but it wasn't--
I love Dustin Hoffman,
but he wasn't Lenny Bruce,
and so people have all
their preconceptions
and ideas of what they think
he was like.
I'm amazed that he's become
the figure he has.
I was amazed when
they made the film of him.
And I think what happened
is,
and what made me more aware,
is maybe,
that some people were
aware of the fact
of how seminal he was,
how important he was.
Lenny Bruce laughed
about that.
'Cause he said usually
when people march for you,
they lead you
to the chair.
So he didn't
believe in that,
and he certainly
didn't want to be seen
as a martyr.
Maybe as a comedian,
but as Lenny Bruce.
He wanted to be
Lenny Bruce himself.
My opinion is,
at the beginning,
he didn't have
any intention

of breaking new ground
and changing the world.
He just got up there
and said what
was in his heart,
and the world
started changing.
I don't think back then
Lenny Bruce was trying
to inspire anybody,
because when Lenny Bruce
was doing it,
there weren't
that many comics.
You know, buddy hackett
had told me a couple
great Lenny Bruce stories,
unfortunately buddy's
gone and I don't
remember the stories.
But I think Lenny
was just trying to stay alive.
And I don't think Lenny
had enough time
to really even
come into his own.
I think he wanted
to tell it like he saw it.
I don't think
he wanted to be a martyr.
I'm sure a part of him
knew at some point.
I mean how can you
be that...
That groundbreaking
and that profound
in so many different ways
and not know it's going
to have some
kind of impact?
You know it is.
I remember saying
to him that
people would realize.

I mean, unfortunately
it would be in some future time
that people would understand
who he was, and, you know,
he would be vindicated.
I remember I did
a show in San Francisco,
there's a big article,
some gay guy,
but a really uptight
gay guy.
I mean, just an
annoying little faggot.
Like Chris rock,
black people are niggers,
this guy was a faggot.
You know. A little faggot.
And keep that
on there, too.
Just a little
fucking queenie faggot.
Um, and it's silly to say
we have gay friends,
but we call them the gaybors,
they live right down the street,
they come over all the time,
okay, so I have gay friends.
This guy was a faggot.
And anyway, at the show
I was doing a whole bit about
how gay people are gay
because they're happy.
The word "gay"
means happy.
You're with your friends,
you still get blowjobs.
How great is that
to be with your friends
and get blowjobs?
Even gay guys,
they're still guys,
and I don't care what color,
what race you are,
you don't like foreplay,

you don't want to talk
after sex,
you blow your friend,
he blows me,
you go to sleep, whatever.
Um, and it was all
going on and on.
Why gays want
to get married?
Why do you want to be
miserable like us?
Do we look happy
to you?
I wish I was gay
because I don't know
what to buy my wife.
If you're a gay guy,
you know what to buy
another guy.
You buy him a sweater.
He doesn't like it,
you get to wear it.
So basically,
it was so pro gay,
but all this little faggot
heard was
me doing gay jokes.
And that's all that he heard,
you know what I mean?
And it's almost
like a buzz word.
Nigger, aids,
faggot, cunt,
you know,
there's a word,
and it doesn't matter
what you're saying.
Some people hear the word
and just shut down totally
to the rest
of your show.
I think we think we have
progressed more than we have
as far as the civil rights

movement to now,
or what Lenny Bruce
was enduring to now.
And I think that he'd
be repulsed
by what a dishonest nation
we are now.
I think on the surface
we've progressed.
And I think it's very cool
for white people to embrace
what is so appealing
about the black experience.
But I still think
there's that weird, like,
"ooh, I'm hanging out with
somebody black."
You know, that kind
of awkwardness,
for a lot of people.
I think it's few
and far between
where the races
have integrated
in a comfortable way.
Lenny Bruce should be taught
in universities.
All young people should listen
to a handful
of Lenny Bruce records,
and say,
you know, just be told,
"look, the reason that you
"get to write 'fuck'
on your pee chee notebook,
it's guys like him
took it on the snout
for guys like you."
There has never been a comedian
that pushes the boundaries
of taste, of political
correctness, etc., etc.,
who would not genuflect
in Lenny Bruce's presence.

Nobody.

They did a thing on the 100 most famous comedians,

and Lenny was right up there.

You have to pay him homage,

because he started it.

You know, he was first.

And he took the risks,

and didn't back down.

He'd get arrested

and do it again.

Many people wouldn't

have the balls to do that.

Like every comedian I think

that's my age,

or my generation

or younger,

they're influenced

by him.

Whether they know it,

or not.

All we have to worry about

when we're on stage,

is are we going

to get laughs.

Are we going to be funny?

It's all we have

to worry about.

Is this going

to be funny?

Are we going to get

laughs,

and can we go home feeling

like we're not terrible?

Right.

And, he, in his mind,

as he's telling

these jokes, going,

"am I going to be in jail

later tonight?"

Later tonight.

Right.

That's insane.

How am I going to shoot

heroin in jail?
Where do you get
heroin in jail?
If he paved a path
for anything,
it wasn't really
for comics.
He really paved a path
for people
being able to criticize
and say it.
Whereas they never
were able to before.
And it really wasn't about
his language
that he got arrested for.
It was about what
he was saying.
Lenny represented something
that is important.
Was important then,
and it's important now.
And I think your
documentary reflects that.
It's an indication
of the extent which
free speech requires
eternal vigilance.
We have George carlin, and
there's Richard pryor
and Eddie Murphy,
but before all those guys,
it was Lenny.
Lenny is a legend.
I wonder if he had
lived longer
what would have happened.
How cool would it have been
to have him live
as long as Milton berle and
sid Caesar and red buttons?
It would have been
the greatest blessing
comedy could have.

I'll say this last thing
about him.

Lenny Bruce was the kind
of comic
that at his best
when I watched him,
he makes me want to quit comedy
and be a welder,
because I know
I'll never be that good.
That's how good he was
at his best.

Are you trying to convert
when you work?

Oh, no.

Not at all.

I'm trying
to make a buck.

All right,
granted.

No.

Oh, how terrible
of you.

That's not my motivation
for being up there.

What is?

To have fun.

Yeah.

I really dig
being up there.

[Jazz music]

All alone
all alone

oh a joy to be
all alone

I'm happy alone
don't you see

I'll convince you
I don't know what

I get so dramatic about.

You're better

off alone, man, I gotta--
that's it, I want to get
a whole bunch of new suits.

You know, I've had the same
dumb suit for ten years.
You walk into her closet,
you can't even breathe.
That's it, I'll get
a whole bunch of suits,
I'll get a chick
that likes to hang out, man.
I'm having a vodka party.
That's smart. A vodka party,
bring it up, ball it up,
I'll get a chick.
I'll get a chick
who likes to drink.
Oh, my wife sure used
to look good,
standing up
against the sink.
She's the lowest, though.
I really put her down,
no, no, I really
miss her.
I don't want some
sharp chick
that can quote kerouac
and walk with poise.
I just want to hear
my old lady say,
"get up and fix
the sink.
It's still
making noise."
All alone
all alone
like a near-sighted dog
where's the bone
ah, but it's better
to be all alone
no more taking out
the garbage
hear her yakking
on the phone
I gave her everything
even my mother's ring

but to me
she was so petty
Sometimes I wish
that she were dead,
but it'd probably
take her two hours
two get ready.
[Audience laughs]
When she's old
then she's going to be sorry.
That's it.
Like she's young
and swinging now,
and she can get
a lot of guys,
but when she's old,
I can see her about
20 years from now.
How're you doing, Annie?
I haven't seen
you in a long time,
you look
pretty good, baby.
You're still
washing your hair
with Dutch cleanser,
I see.
[Audience laughs]
Yeah, you look good,
you gained a few pounds,
what happened
to your neck?
I heard you got married
a few times, huh?
Me, no, I've always
stayed single.
I've been investing
in property.
I picked up
a little place in Mexico,
maybe you've heard of it,
it's called acapulco,
I don't know.
[Audience laughs]

Where are you living,
a furnished room?
That's nice, you cook on
the radiator, the paper drapes.
Sit in the lobby
and watch television
and all.
That's cool, yeah.
Yeah, that's cool,
you have the diner's club,
you sign, you go first class
in those joints, I know it.
Yeah, that's it.
Her future spells
a murky gloom.
I'll be rich
and famous,
and she'll be living
in a furnished room,
but it's going to be
too late.
I won't hear
her moan.
I'll be living in my
Nob Hill mansion rich
and all alone.
All alone
all alone
I'll be rich
but so
all
alone
[Audience applauds]
Some people think that
Lenny's problems
with the law had to do
with dirty words.
Uh, it was the ideas
that got him into trouble.
Uh, in strip clubs,
you could hear the dirty words.
But you couldn't hear
the kind of insights,
the truly revealing insights

that were a part
of Lenny's act.
And when they did get him
into, into--
after the arrest
in Chicago
as a matter of fact,
in the months
that followed,
I was doing this editorial
series called
"the playboy philosophy,"
uh, I wrote about
the arrest,
and accused the administration
in Chicago
of being too interconnected
to the church.
And subsequently,
the cops came
and arrested me.
And charged me with
obscenity for a pictorial
we ran on Jane Mansfield,
which was no different
than any other pictorial
we've run
in the months before.
But it was because of our...
Defense of Lenny.
You have this brilliant guy
who got addicted to drugs.
And it's like
Jesus' words
still live every day,
they're important words,
because no one ever found Jesus
in a bathtub
with a needle hanging
out of his arm.
You know, all of a sudden,
the context of the guy changes.
And I think if you look
at Lenny's arrests and stuff,

it wasn't because
he was on stage saying things,
once the personality
becomes bigger
than the message,
then people will go after you.
And once he became
not Lenny Bruce,
brilliant comic,
but Lenny Bruce,
heroine addict,
that's when people
started attacking him,
because they saw a chink
in the armor
they could get to him.
That's what I think.
I think had he kept clean,
he could literally have changed
comedy
100 times more
than he did.
He got fucked
by the law,
a law which he respected.
But when you really look
at his body of work,
he loved the law.
And it was so sad
to me once I read
and found out more
about him
that he got fucked
by the law
that he respected
so much.
Because the puritanical way
they looked at things
back then
had no concept of what
this guy was doing on stage.
I mean, this guy was...
This guy was not just
a genius,

but he was
saying things
that no one
before him said,
said things then
about certain things
that were going on then
that he would say now
that no one would say.
No one will be
like Lenny Bruce again.
No one was before him.
And, you know,
it's a very simple thing to say,
but guys like myself
and thousands
of other comedians
with different styles,
they have to owe everything
to Lenny,
because even Richie pryor
who I knew and I loved,
because without Lenny
getting fucked,
nobody else would have
had the right to go on stage.
Who knows what laws
would have been passed.
It would have been insane.
So Lenny died,
basically, for us.
In a lot of ways,
it sounds hokey,
but he died
for the rest of us
to be able to say
what we wanted to say.
And I wish he was
hanging out with winters
now at 83.
You know, in the last
20 years.
You know,
everyone says that.

I wish hendrix played
another 35 years--
my God, imagine?
And on and on.
The list is endless.
But he set the bar,
he did it first,
and he got crucified...
By the first amendment,
which is something he respected
more than almost anybody
I can think of.
So it's a real tragedy.
Shakespearian.
For me, all comedy
comes from the heart.
And if you're going
to make social commentary,
it should be very personal.
You know, one of the reasons
I go on these trips to Iraq
is so I can be a witness
to what I'm talking about
and thinking about.
Not just reading it
in the paper
and commenting on it.
For me, when Lenny
was feeling his pain
and putting his pain
out there in his comedy,
that was the best stuff.
I really wonder if anybody
listened to early rush limbaugh
the way I did.
He was off his--
I mean, the stuff
that he would say
would be like,
"did you hear that?
That's insane."
And, uh, you know,
the Ann coulter of the world
frighten me because

he and-- Ann coulter
and rush limbaugh
don't have any jokes
on the end of that.
No, there's no comedy there.
They're actually serious.
Bill maher is not.
Howard stern is not.
I respect what anybody says,
don imus, spent his career
telling jokes.
As did Michael Richards.
You want to persecute somebody?
Go listen to what
Ann coulter's saying.
Go examine what,
you know,
limbaugh has said.
There are people worth
examining who are not joking.
We have our crosshairs
on the wrong people.
We really,
we truly do.
I mean, bill O'Reilly's
saying some very
interesting stuff.
No one seems to care.
It's okay if he says it.
Not okay--
the double standard
is alive and well, you know.
It makes me sad
on a certain level,
that Lenny could have died
for naught.
But I feel like moments
like this,
in situations like this,
where a group of people
come along
and want to talk about something
that is truly important
and interesting

and real and noteworthy,
is exactly why
I'm sitting here,
because I'm convinced
double standard killed him.
And tried to silence--
and trying to silence him.
Well, the thing
that was so bad
when they started arresting him
two or three times a week--
it just broke my heart
when he'd come home at night.
I just wanted to hug him
and let him cry on my shoulder,
things like that,
it was so pitiful.
When he came back from London,
it was even worse.
When they wouldn't
let him perform in London.
He flew over there
and then had to
come back the next day.
He was just broken hearted.
And I thought how fucking
unjust can you be in this world?
What's wrong
with these people?
But he was very upset by it,
very hurt by it.
My favorite thing was that
he had that kind of courage.
I just loved that.
I love it.
Because one person
can change the world.
One person.
People don't realize.
They think that it has to be
a group of people, you know,
but one person
can do it.
It was Harriet tubman.

It wasn't Harriet tubman
and her Uncle Joe.
You know?
One person can change--
it can change the world.
It wasn't Martin Luther King
and the temptations.
It was Martin Luther King,
you know.
So people have
to be brave.
They have to stand
for something.
They have to just
stand up.
And have courage.
He made, he ennobled
what I already think
is a nice high calling,
making people laugh.
He went beyond that,
he ennobled it.
He was like,
this guy is a genius,
this guy is out of sight.
He's just unbelievable.
He's not like
the ordinary comedian,
and yet he was
hilariously funny.
I think they were more
open-minded then,
it was a decade of hope,
you know what Kennedy said,
you know, at the end
of this decade,
we'll put someone
on the moon.
That's not where
we are now.
Now we're all closed off
and afraid
because of terrorism.
And so, at that time,

people felt like they
could do anything.
So I think that allowed
Lenny to say, as a comic,
and this is from my own head
as a comic,
you always want to try to find
the next level of your art,
if you look at it
as an art, right?
So, okay, I'm doing jokes
about shoes.
Nah, I'm not really
pushing the envelope,
I want to up it
a little bit.
As you get more confident
on stage, and as a performer,
you feel you can free
yourself up
to really go for something.
And so with
mort Saul and Shelly,
but mainly mort Saul,
kind of really being
the guy to go after
the politicians
before anybody
was really doing it
that way--
it was, like, unheard of
to go after the president.
Um, my bet is that Lenny
looked at that and go,
"I want to push
the envelope a little bit,"
you know.
And um, you know,
Lenny kind of really
pushed the envelope
about life.
Richard pryor pushed
the envelope
about his life.

You look at pryor,
it always comes back to him,
through him as
the prism,
there's a lot of
interesting observations
about mankind.
Lenny, like in terms
of you understood
how he thought,
but like not what he felt
and what he
was really about,
because it was always
observations
about outside forces--
religion, politics,
the ku klux klan,
whatever it might be, so.
So I think the time
allowed him,
combination of him
feeling like,
probably like
a good artist feels
like I want to push
the envelope of the art,
I want to be
the guy on top,
and the time-- combination
of that and the time
allowing him to do that,
you know,
where people were sort of
open-minded
to that kind of thing.
I told this to Oliver stone
many months ago.
I said my theory is
all the monuments
in DC have
those massive pillars.
I think that's to represent
the weight of freedom,

that it's so much weight
to bear on an American,
to bear the weight
and responsibility of freedom.
It's like putting
four cinder blocks
in your backpack.
That's like, [Groans].
It's an extra 50 pounds
just to lug freedom around,
and defend it
and maintain it.
You need to clip the grass,
you need to make sure the roof
doesn't leak,
you cannot squander it,
or take it for granted,
or hide behind it.
You must always be
in front of it.
And I think Lenny Bruce
was one of those guys
who always stood
in front of it.
Sometimes naively.
Or sometimes in
a confrontational way.
Well, let's see what happens
when we do pretend
the constitution's
going to work.
That we do pretend
that we're living
in the land of the free
and the home of the brave,
let's see what happens.
And he found out
what happens.
The cops pull
your pants down
and take an embarrassing
photo of you,
and you are looking
at enormous legal bills

and strife because
you said a word.
That girls say
all the time now
at girl scout meetings.
I mean...
He leaves behind
a real lesson.
And the only danger
in America is that we
we either don't--
we choose not to learn it
or we choose
to ignore it
or we choose
to forget it.
Or we choose
to ignore it