

Michael Moore Plans Bush-bin Laden Film

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LOS ANGELES, Mar 28, 2003 (United Press International via COMTEX) -- Filmmaker Michael Moore's next project might be more controversial than his Oscar-winning documentary "Bowling for Columbine."

According to a report in Friday's Daily Variety, Moore is working on a documentary about the "the murky relationship" between former President George Bush and the family of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. The paper said the movie, "Fahrenheit 911," will suggest that the bin Laden family profited greatly from the association.

Moore's anti-war, anti-Bush Oscar acceptance speech provoked a mixture of cheers and boos at the Academy Awards last Sunday.

In addition to the Best Documentary Oscar, "Bowling for Columbine" also had an extraordinarily robust bottom line. Made for about \$3 million, it has grossed nearly \$40 million worldwide -- making it one of the most commercially successful documentaries of all time.

Variety reported that Moore is working out a deal with Mel Gibson's production company, Icon Productions, to finance "Fahrenheit 911."

According to Moore, the former president had a business relationship with Osama bin Laden's father, Mohammed bin Laden, a Saudi construction magnate who left \$300 million to Osama bin Laden. It has been widely reported that bin Laden used the inheritance to finance global terrorism.

Moore said the bin Laden family was heavily invested in the Carlyle Group, a private global investment firm that the filmmaker said frequently buys failing defense companies and then sells them at a profit. Former President Bush has reportedly served as a senior adviser with the firm.

"The senior Bush kept his ties with the bin Laden family up until two months after Sept. 11," said Moore.

Moore told Variety the primary focus of the new project will be to examine what has happened to the United States since the Sept. 11 terrorist attack. He accused the Bush administration of using a tragic event to push its agenda.

"It (the new project) certainly does deal with the Bush and bin Laden ties," said Moore. "It asks a number of questions that I don't have the answers to yet, but which I intend to find out."

Moore said he expects the new movie to be in U.S. theaters in time for the 2004 presidential election.

While some critics accused Moore of being anti-American for his Oscar speech, Moore told Variety business has been very good for his movie and his best-selling book "Stupid White Men: And Other Sorry Excuses for the State of the Nation."

"I expressed exactly what was in the film and instead of being blacklisted, I've not only gotten a deal to fund 'Fahrenheit 911' but offers on the film after," he said. "Presales on ('Bowling for Columbine's') video release ran ahead of 'Chicago' this week, and my book is returning to the top spot on the New York Times best-seller list."

Moore said the success of his documentary and book reflects majority public support for his political argument.

"It's because the majority of Americans agree with me, see the economy in the

toilet and didn't vote for George W," he said. "People are now realizing you can question your government while still caring about the soldiers."

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