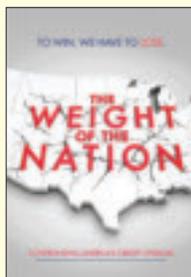


The Weight of the Nation ★★★1/2

(2011) 3 discs. 276 min. DVD: \$19.98. HBO Home Entertainment (avail from most distributors). Closed captioned. ISBN: 0-7806-9508-9.

Combining interviews with experts and ordinary citizens, this four-part HBO-aired series aims to objectively address the subject of obesity among Americans—a growing problem that has sparked widespread discussion. Made in conjunction with the Institute of Medicine, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institutes of Health, *The Weight of the Nation* is—not surprisingly—hardly dispassionate, labeling the situation an “epidemic” that threatens the nation’s well-being, while also arguing for a concerted effort to deal with the crisis. The first episode, “Consequences,” looks at the genetic realities and lifestyle choices that have led to over half the population becoming clinically overweight, resulting in higher rates of diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. “Choices” explores various means of weight loss—some good, others dangerous—ranging from diet and exercise to surgery. “Children in Crisis” focuses on the alarming increase in childhood obesity and the serious health conditions that follow in its wake. And the final episode, “Challenges,” offers suggestions for responses at the government, industry, and individual levels. *The Weight of the Nation* offers no simple solutions, but it does present a wealth of compelling data that will help viewers make responsible decisions. Accompanied by a dozen bonus related short films (running 100-plus minutes) and a 20-page booklet, this boxed set is somewhat like a super-sized meal—but one that’s good for you, and very reasonably priced. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (F. Swietek)



tips are also offered to help dads and other support members meaningfully participate during pregnancy. A truly comprehensive guide (much of the content is reinforced with onscreen lists and animations), *Understanding Pregnancy* will answer many questions while reassuring parents and pointing them in the right direction for dealing with a wide range of issues—from body image to constipation, from getting a tattoo (don’t!) to avoiding cat litter. DVD extras include a 34-minute condensed version of the presentation, as well as an animated “fetal development tour” featurette. Highly recommended. Aud: H, C, P. (M. Puffer-Rothenberg)

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY

Mississippi Queen: The GLBT Community and Ex-Gay Ministries in the South

★★★1/2

(2010) 63 min. DVD: \$169.95. Films Media Group. PPR. Closed captioned. ISBN: 978-1-62102-624-2.

With *Mississippi Queen*, Paige Williams joins a growing list of filmmakers using a nonfiction documentary platform in order to vent personal issues. For Williams, a lesbian, the difficulties are grounded in her thorny relationship with her Mississippi-based parents, Judy and Jerry, devout Southern Baptists who founded a so-called “ex-gay ministry” after she left home (the film unfortunately skims over the question of how the enterprise operates). Williams attempts to draw her mother and father into expressing their differences with her, but this simply results in embarrassing exchanges between irritated adults engaged in perpetually parallel conversations. Williams also drags in her wife, who voices constant annoyance about the barely concealed contempt she feels from Judy and Jerry. When Williams mercifully turns the camera away from her domestic troubles, the documentary is much more effective, presenting sincere interviews with men and women who went through the ex-gay ministry regimen in an attempt to suppress their homosexuality. Detailing their experiences, these individuals eventually acknowledge that their efforts to convert left them closer to celibate asexuality than full-fledged heterosexuality. While these conversations are genuinely fascinating, the home-movie elements ultimately detract from the documentary’s value. An optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Tales of the Waria ★★★

(2011) 56 min. In Indonesian w/English subtitles. DVD: \$25; individuals; \$75 w/PPR; public libraries; \$295 w/PPR; institutions. Transit Media.

Kathy Huang’s sympathetic documentary gives voice to Indonesia’s *waria* community: i.e., men who live openly as women. Since the country is predominantly Muslim, *waria*

Song of the Soul: Stories of Hospice in South Africa ★★★1/2

(2010) 40 min. DVD: \$248. Icarus Films. PPR.

When Janet Parrott arrived in South Africa in 2009 to shoot this profoundly moving documentary, an estimated 5.6 million residents were living with HIV and AIDS. Relying primarily on the first-person accounts of nurses, social workers, patients and their family members (including children), Parrott provides a glimpse of how the country’s urban and rural hospices are providing a lifeline for people who struggle to stay alive amidst crushing poverty and a continuing social stigma against those with the disease. Despite the odds, the caregivers push on with indefatigable spirit, and their energy empowers many individuals to find new courage and strength in dealing with their illness. *Song of the Soul* features tragic scenes, most notably during a visit with an elderly woman who must care for her six grandchildren because all of her own children have died from AIDS; in weak health herself, she cries that she can barely keep her family together on her meager savings. But the documentary also offers a stirring sense of hope for a better future, thanks to the South African government’s acknowledgment (albeit belatedly) of the crisis, and a commitment to improved education and wider availability of antiretroviral drugs. Highly recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

Tai Chi: Discover the Ancient Art ★★★

(2012) 107 min. DVD: \$14.98. True Mind (avail from most distributors). ISBN: 978-1-934708-88-0.

Filmed in a lovely statue garden in the French countryside, *Tai Chi: Discover the An-*

cient Art offers lessons in the ancient Chinese martial art and system of movement. Tai Chi Chuan (which literally means “supreme ultimate fist”) brings together opposing yin and yang energies, with the practitioner serving as a central axis for those energies to be put into balance through movement. Aside from brief comments on the history of Tai Chi (which was once for nobility and warriors only), the program offers extensively detailed instruction from Master Jian Liu Jun in both long and short form Tai Chi routines, backed with plenty of helpful tips. Also newly available is *Qi Jong: Discover the Ancient Art*, which also features Master Jian Liu Jun. Recommended. Aud: P. (T. Keogh)

CHILDBIRTH & PARENTING

Understanding Pregnancy: A Comprehensive Guide ★★★1/2

(2012) 75 min. DVD: \$149.95; public libraries; \$279.95; high schools, colleges & universities. InJoy. PPR. Closed captioned.

InJoy’s latest guide to pregnancy covers fetal development, medical care and tests, the importance of good nutrition, related physical and emotional changes, and things to avoid. Eight ethnically and economically diverse moms are interviewed and shown eating right, exercising, coping with assorted discomforts, calling the doctor with questions, and just hanging out. An upbeat female narrator ties it all together, maintaining a cheerful tone even when she’s talking about heartburn (“A chewable antacid ... might be your new after-dinner mint!”). Partner