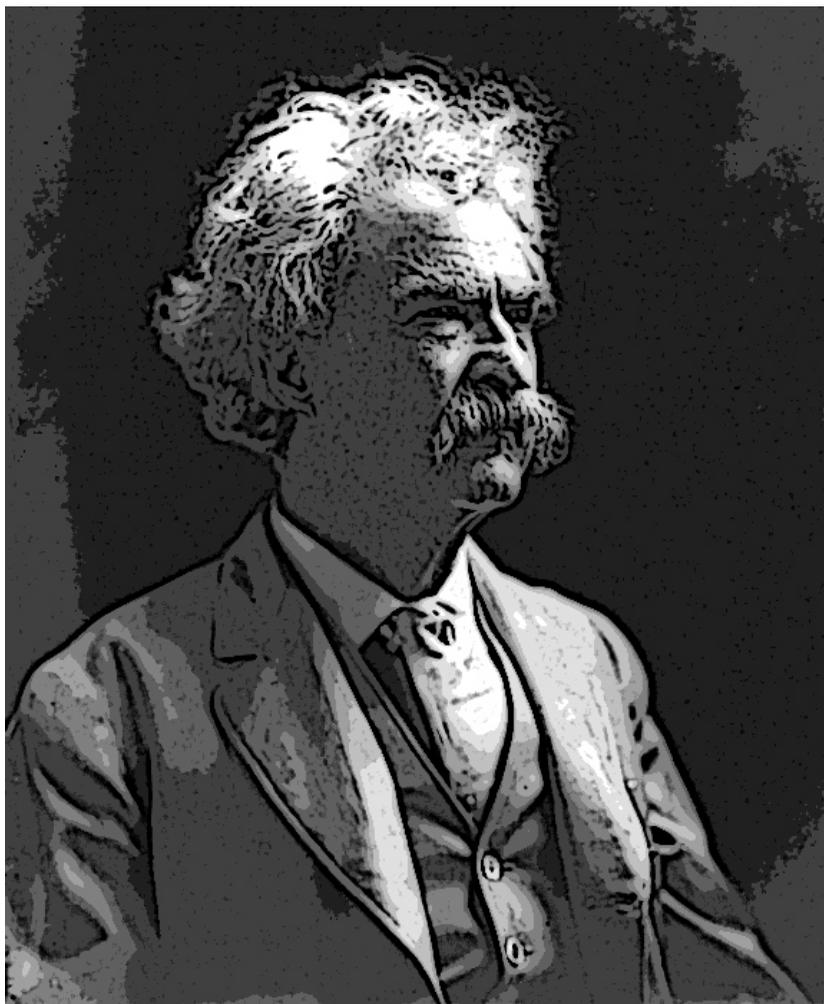


# MARK TWAIN

## on “the most interesting jack ass there is.”



Man is really the most interesting jackass there is. It's his idea, you see, that the Deity sits up nights and admires him. He's the Creator's pet...  
Now you might wonder why.

Well...it's his intellect.

Man is a reasoning animal..such as they claim, though I believe that's open to dispute. I've been studying this "reasoning animal" for years now and I find the results to be humiliating. Well for example I experimented with a cat and a dog. Taught them to be friends and put them in a cage. I introduced a rabbit and in an hour *they* were friends. Then I added a fox, a goose, a squirrel...some doves...a kangaroo, and finally a monkey.  
They lived together in peace.

Well next I captured an Irish Catholic and put him in a cage and just as soon as he seemed tame I added a Presbyterian, then a Turk from Constantinople, a Methodist from the wilds of Arkansas, a Buddhist from China, and finally a Salvation Army colonel. Why when I went back there wasn't a single specimen alive.

These reasoning animals had disagreed on a theological detail and carried the matter to a higher court. Because you see, Man is also a religious animal. He's the only one that's got the True Religion...several of them. He loves his neighbor as himself and cuts his throat if his theology isn't straight. Why he's made a graveyard of the globe in trying his honest best to smooth his brother's path to happiness...and Heaven. The other animals have no religion you know...gonna be left out.

I wonder why. Seems questionable taste.

Man is the only patriot. He sets himself apart in his own country and his own flag and sneers at the other nations. He keeps uniformed assassins on hand at great expense to grab slices of other people's countries and keep other countries from grabbing slices of his, with the result that there isn't an acres of ground on the globe that's under the possession of its rightful owner. And in the interim between campaigns he washes his hands and works for the brotherhood of Man...with his mouth.

Man is the only animal that deals in the atrocity of War. The only one that, for sordid wages, goes forth in cold blood to exterminate his own kind. He has a motto for this: Our country, right or wrong! Any man who fails to shout it is a traitor. Only the others are patriots.

Say...who is the country? Is it the government? In a republic the government is just a servant, a temporary one. Its function is to obey orders, not originate them. Only when a republic's life is in danger should a man uphold his government when it's wrong. Otherwise the nation has sold its honor for a phrase. And if that phrase needs help he gets another one: Even though the war be wrong, we are in it. We must fight it out. We cannot retire without dishonor. Why not even a burglar could have said that better.

Man is the only animal that blushes...or needs to. But you just have to remember that Man was made at the end of a week's work.

Watch an excerpt from Hal Holbrook's "Mark Twain Tonight!" on YouTube.

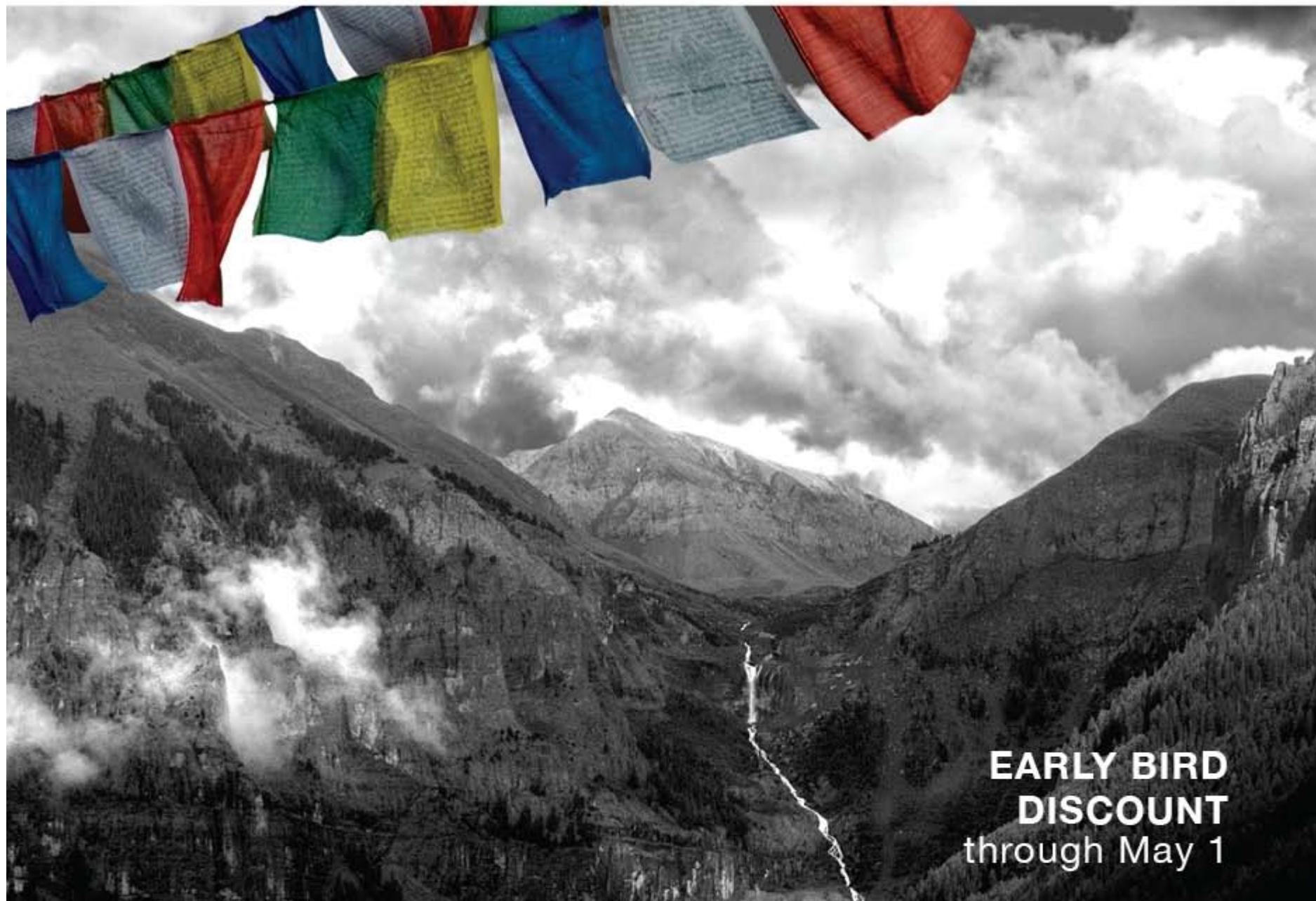
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F\\_rTMNnxwSE&feature=fvst](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_rTMNnxwSE&feature=fvst)



# MOUNTAINFILM

MAY 28-31  
2010

I N • T E L L U R I D E



**EARLY BIRD  
DISCOUNT**  
through May 1

CONRAD ANKER  
TIM DECHRISTOPHER  
LYNSEY DYER  
MAYA LIN  
GREG MORTENSON  
GEORGE PACKER  
RICK RIDGEWAY  
JOHN VAILLANT  
ED VIESTURS



Please visit us @ [mountainfilm.org](http://mountainfilm.org)