



Justice Rising

Grassroots Solutions to Corporate Domination

"Eight out of ten big media giants share common memberships on boards of directors with each other".

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**A Publication of
the Alliance for
Democracy**

Information and Democracy Corporate Control and the Rise of Popular Media

by Jim Tarbell

Our cultural story determines our political future. The corporate right understood this when they financed a bevy of think tanks in the early 1970s to retake the political dialogue from the progressive movement of the 1960s. They popularized terms like "free trade" to describe the money-powered, global commercial empire that they are spreading across the planet. Starting thirty years ago, corporate-funded foundations began investing over a billion dollars to create media-savvy institutions like the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation and the Competitive Enterprise Institute, which provide a disproportionate amount of the experts quoted in America's mainstream media. They also established a stable of media watch groups like the Media Institute and Accuracy in Media, which perform the double task of making sure that American media maintains a pro-corporate stance and convincing the American public that the media has a pro-liberal bias.

It is a message that the major media owners appreciate. While terms and technologies of modern media are complex, i.e., spectrum (all radiated air-waves), blogs, channels, etc, the ownership is simple. In the past quarter century the ownership of America's mainstream media has decreased from fifty to only six corporations and these six have board interlocks with almost every major corporation in the country. With an eye to the bottom line these business groups have become amenable not only to use the free experts of the think tanks, but also the corporate video news releases that are becoming increasingly common.

Now corporate control is reaching into the public broadcasting system. Besides the flood of corporate underwriting that tax cuts have forced public media to depend upon and the pro-corporate agenda of the head of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, media watchers are concerned about corporate financed programs that are being pushed on public television. The Global Resource Action Center for the Environment (GRACE) warns that Monsanto and the American Farm Bureau

Federation are promoting a 20-part series "celebrating America's agriculture." GRACE worries that this agribusiness production will not show the "ugly reality of the excesses that come from the unregulated, large-scale industrialized agricultural system promoted by corporate America," but rather some popularized myth of bucolic America.

Fortunately, the "Freedom train," as John Nichols of Free Press calls the burgeoning media democracy movement, is on the roll. As he points out, everybody should be on board, "because if media is not your number one issue it has to be your number two." The quantity of groups involved is growing exponentially. Cooperation between alternative media allies is creating new media venues available to increasingly larger portions of the American public. Local media groups are calling publishers and broadcasters to account for biased reporting and creating their own new media venues. Diverse groups that have been isolated from media production are getting their stories out. Political uproar stopped the FCC's media consolidation plan although that fight is not over and everyone has to be prepared to stop plans to piecemeal those changes through.

These stories are in this *Justice Rising*. Read, learn, enjoy and most importantly, become the media and supplant the pseudo-experts promoted by the think tanks and funded by corporate money. Lay claim to a diverse and realistic American future.



graphic: Kjersten Jeppesen

Creating Media Democracy

by Ben Clark



graphic: © 2000 Zack Johnson

There's a lot to be gained by grassroots lobbying of the FCC and Congress

Last year, community-based activists mobilized in coalition with the Democratic party minority of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to fight FCC Chair Michael Powell's attempt to further consolidate media ownership. Demonstrations, public hearings,

congressional maneuvering and a federal lawsuit filed by activists eventually rolled back part of Powell's consolidation. However, so far, the movement has failed to win the more crucial battle of gaining more spectrum for public use and re-imposing public interest obligations on media corporations that use public airways and public rights of way to deliver their product to consumers.

The corporations meanwhile are prospering. The \$70 billion dollar digital television giveaway of the Clinton era is now bearing fruit for the corporate owners of broadcast licenses nationwide. They can now cram six different signals into their allocated spectrum but are paying not a penny more to the public for the privilege. No new public interest requirements have been imposed in exchange for this giveaway. Meanwhile cable and satellite corporations are charging the public for content which is already paid for by advertisers, or even more absurdly, by taxpayers and donations to so-called public radio and television.

Despite these corporate gains at the FCC, Mark Lloyd, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and formerly of the Civil Rights Communications Forum, thinks there's a lot to be gained by grassroots lobbying of the FCC and Congress. "Let's not whine about the [\$70 billion digital] giveaway, let's use it as leverage for fighting back," Lloyd advises activists. He points out that most members of the public are unaware that broadcasters

don't pay for their licenses. Once they find out, he believes the public will be in a good place to ask what local communities are going to receive from broadcasters in exchange for their use of the spectrum.

Many media democracy activists don't share Lloyd's faith in the FCC and Congress. They claim that unrelenting civil disobedi-

ence campaigns by groups like Free Radio Berkeley that broadcast from micro radio transmitters without FCC permission forced the government's hand on Low Power FM radio licenses and won the only new mandate for public service broadcasting passed by Congress and the FCC in decades.

Pete Tridish of the Prometheus Radio Project, a group that trains community organizations on how to set up legal Low Power FM (LPMF) stations, advocates that media activists take on the struggle for a share of the digital radio spectrum even as they fill up the small niche created by the legalization of some low-power stations. He notes that in Europe, as commercial broadcasters migrate to digital, the entire FM dial is being freed up, with significant space being allocated to public interest broadcasts.

Andrea Buffa, communications director at the activist organization Global Exchange in San Francisco, considers the direct action and civil disobedience part of a much broader fight for media democracy in the United States. "The first step is to get people to realize your media system doesn't have to consist of Survivor, Big Brother, Rush Limbaugh, and Howard Stern," she says. "Congress and the FCC have sold off the entire media infrastructure to corporate interests. Our goal should be to get US media policy out of the hands of the corporations and change the [access] architecture so that there are many ways for people to put on programming relevant to the cultural, economic, and political needs of their communities." She advocates reserving 50% of the digital TV and radio spectrum for non-commercial local programming, reinstating restrictions on media ownership, and preserving and expanding open access on Internet broadband services.

Simply changing the size of the big media corporation's pie slices by fighting media consolidation won't change the information diet of people trapped inside the US media system. Moving the growing media democracy movement into the messy struggle for gaining more spectrum rights for alternative and community media, defending existing allies within the mainstream and making sure that low-income people, communities of color, women and queers are part of the struggle is a tall order, but it's what we'll need to win.

Ben Clarke is a member of the board of The Media Alliance in San Francisco and co-edited the books September 11 and the US War: Beyond the Curtain of Smoke as well as Voice of Fire: Communiques and Interviews from the Zapatista National Liberation Army.

Formula for success

The media democracy movement needs to wage a three front struggle: 1.) Create and win media spectrum in existing and new technologies that is reserved for non-profit, non-commercial community-based media; 2.) Advance the presence of under-represented and misrepresented communities to create and control their own media image and content; 3.) Defend media workers who break the hidden censorship rules of the existing media so that alternative media viewpoints can penetrate the mainstream.

Big Media Interlocks with Corporate America

by Peter Phillips

Mainstream media is the term often used to describe the collective group of big TV, radio and newspapers in the United States. Mainstream implies that the news being produced is for the benefit and enlightenment of the mainstream population—the majority of people living in the US. Mainstream media include a number of communication mediums that carry almost all the news and information on world affairs that most Americans receive. The word media is plural, implying a diversity of news sources.

However, mainstream media no longer produce news for the mainstream population—nor should we consider the media as plural. Instead it is more accurate to speak of big media in the US today as the corporate media and to use the term in the singular tense—as it refers to the singular monolithic top-down power structure of self-interested news giants.

A research team at Sonoma State University has recently finished conducting a network analysis of the boards of directors of the ten big media organizations in the US. The team determined that only 118 people comprise the membership on the boards of directors of the ten big media giants. This is a small enough group to fit in a moderate size university classroom. These 118 individuals in turn sit on the corporate boards of 288 national and international corporations. NBC and the Washington Post both have board members who sit on Coca Cola and J. P. Morgan, while the Tribune Company, The New York Times and Gannett all have members who share a seat on Pepsi. It is kind of like one big happy family of interlocks and shared interests. In fact, eight out of ten big media giants share common memberships on boards of directors with each other. The following are but a few of the corporate board interlocks for the big ten media giants in the US:

- *New York Times*: Carlyle Group, Eli Lilly, Ford, Johnson and Johnson, Hallmark, Lehman Brothers, Staples, Pepsi;
- *Washington Post*: Lockheed Martin, Coca-Cola, Dun & Bradstreet, Gillette, G.E. Investments, J.P. Morgan, Moody's;
- Knight-Ridder: Adobe Systems, Echelon, H&R Block, Kimberly-Clark, Starwood Hotels;
- The Tribune (*Chicago & LA Times*): 3M, Allstate, Caterpillar, Conoco Phillips, Kraft, McDonalds, Pepsi, Quaker Oats, Shering Plough, Wells Fargo;
- News Corp (Fox): British Airways, Rothschild

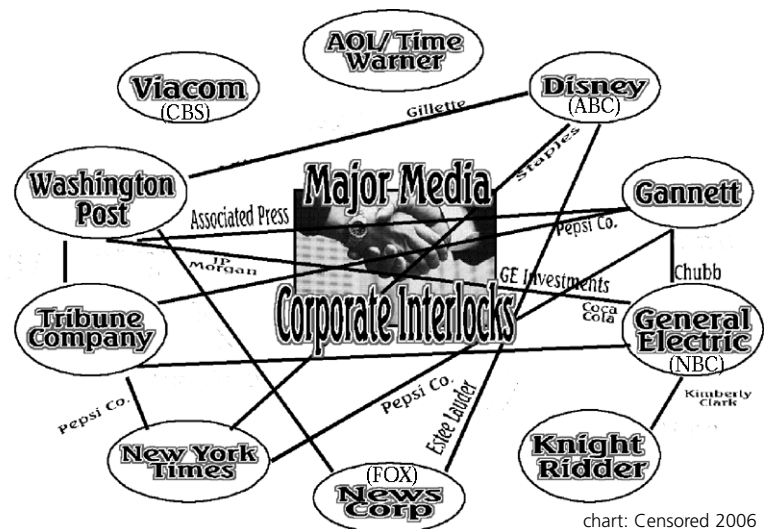


chart: Censored 2006

Investments;

- GE (NBC): Anheuser-Busch, Avon, Bechtel, Chevron/Texaco, Coca-Cola, Dell, GM, Home Depot, Kellogg, J.P. Morgan, Microsoft, Motorola, Procter & Gamble;
- Disney (ABC): Boeing, Northwest Airlines, Clorox, Estee Lauder, FedEx, Gillette, Halliburton, Kmart, McKesson, Staples, Yahoo;
- Viacom (CBS): American Express, Consolidated Edison, Oracle, Lafarge North America;
- Gannett: AP, Lockheed-Martin, Continental Airlines, Goldman Sachs, Prudential, Target, Pepsi;
- AOL-Time Warner (CNN): Citigroup, Estee Lauder, Colgate-Palmolive, Hilton.

Can we trust the news editors at the *Washington Post* to be fair and objective regarding news stories about Lockheed-Martin defense contract over-runs? Or can we assuredly believe that ABC will conduct critical investigative reporting on Halliburton's sole-source contracts in Iraq? If we believe the corporate media give us the full uncensored truth about key issues inside the special interests of American capitalism, then we might feel that they are meeting the democratic needs of mainstream America. However, if we believe — as increasingly more Americans do — that corporate media serves its own self-interests instead of those of the people, then we can no longer call it mainstream or refer to it as plural. Instead we need to say that corporate media is corporate America, and that we, the mainstream people, need to be looking at alternative independent sources for our news and information.

Peter Phillips is a professor of Sociology at Sonoma State University and director of Project Censored, a media research organization, www.projectcensored.org. Sonoma State University students Bridget Thornton and Brit Walters conducted the research on the media interlocks.

Corporate media is corporate America, and we, the mainstream people, need to be looking at alternative independent sources for our news and information.



The Competitive Enterprise Institute published this book and has received \$1,645,000 from ExxonMobil since 1998.

The public relations specialists of big oil and big coal have—for more than a decade—continued to insist that the issue of global warming is stuck in uncertainty,

Oil Pressure

Corporate PR and the Climate of Denial

by Ross Gelbspan

Given the scope and urgency of the heating of the planet, one would think that the press would be running stories about global warming at least three times a week.

One of the earliest manifestations of a warming atmosphere lies in more weather extremes—longer droughts, more frequent heat waves, more severe storms and more intense downpours.

These events are also playing a bigger part in news budgets. Witness the recent heatwave in Europe that claimed more than 30,000 lives, the prolonged drought in Australia that has cut crop yields in half, the current drought in

France that triggered water rationing in more than half the country and the increased intensity of hurricanes from warming surface waters.

Every time the media covers another weather disaster, they should insert a line that says: "Scientists associate this pattern of violent weather with global warming."

They don't. And the reason is not hard to find.

Climate change threatens the survival of the coal and oil industries—which together constitute one of the the biggest commercial enterprises in history. The science is unambiguous: climate stabilization requires that humanity cut its consumption of carbon fuels by about 70 percent. In other words, nature is telling us that humanity must switch, very soon, to an energy infrastructure based on wind, solar, hydrogen and other non-carbon sources.

In its struggle for survival, the fossil fuel lobby has targeted the press. The public relations specialists of big oil and big coal have—for more than a decade—continued to insist that the issue of global warming is stuck in uncertainty, in order to ensure that the press treats it as a subject of debate.

In the early 1990s, the coal industry launched a major campaign of deception and disinformation, paying a few scientists under the table to say climate change is not happening. That campaign has been carried forward more recently by ExxonMobil, which, in the last five years, has spent \$13 million to finance these few climate naysayers.

Because of the industry's insistence on "balance," the press, for the longest time, accorded the same weight to the "skeptics" as it did to mainstream scientists. Thus was the US media basically conned by the PR specialists of the carbon lobby.

The ethic of journalistic balance comes into

play when a story involves opinion: should abortion be legal? Should we have bi-lingual education or English immersion? Should we sanction gay marriage? At that point, a journalist is obligated to give each competing view its most articulate presentation and equivalent space.

But when a story involves a question of fact, a reporter's job is to find out what the facts are. In this case, what we know about the climate comes from more than 2,000 scientists from 100 countries reporting to the U.N. in what is the largest and most rigorously peer-reviewed scientific collaboration in history.

The US press today is in a state of low-grade denial of the climate crisis. The media acknowledge its existence even as they minimize its scope and urgency. Witness the pattern of coverage that provides occasional feature stories about the decimation of the forests in Alaska—but which continues to ignore the central diplomatic, political and economic conflicts around the issue.

While the disinformation campaign by the fossil fuel lobby explains some of this negligence by the press, I think one needs to look at the changing structure of media ownership as well.

With the conglomeratization of the news media, Wall Street is now the tail that increasingly wags the dog. As a result, marketing strategy is replacing news judgment in many media outlets. In order to attract readers and viewers, newspapers, radio and TV news outlets are featuring more celebrity coverage, self-help articles and trivial medical developments at the expense of serious news. At the same time, most news organizations are cutting staff, allowing reporters less time and fewer resources to cover complex stories.

Perhaps the US press would do a better job of covering global warming if it were only a bit more entertaining.

Ross Gelbspan was a reporter and editor for 31 years at The Philadelphia Bulletin, The Washington Post and The Boston Globe and won a Pulitzer Prize in 1984. His articles on the climate issue have appeared in Harpers, The Atlantic Monthly, The Nation, The American Prospect and other newspapers and magazines. His latest book, Boiling Point, was rated one of the top science books of 2004. Gelbspan maintains the website: www.heatisonline.org. See page 6 for DVD of Gelbspan's presentation to the AFD.

"A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce, or a tragedy or perhaps both." James Madison 1822



Medialink
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**Easing the Changes
Mitigating the Risks
Discover the Power of Video**

Your Corporate News & The No False News Campaign

by Bob Burton

Traditionally corporate public relations campaigns devoted considerable effort to devising strategies to get favorable stories covered and unfavorable ones buried. Increasingly they are providing news outlets with ready to air "news" funded and scripted by their corporate clients.

While controversy raged this year over US government funded propaganda projects – such as the use of video news releases (VNRs) – the overwhelming bulk of the fake news served up by the media is hustling the policies and products of corporations.

While fake news comes in many forms it is often difficult to detect and even harder to avoid. VNRs, for example, often consist of a PR person posing as a 'reporter' presenting a story, complete with 'interviews' and sponsor-approved footage.

To cover the possibility that some stations may not use the pre-packaged version most include the B-roll, the interviews, file footage and suggested script so that a local reporter can do the voiceover. Often the soundtrack will also be delivered as an audio news release to radio stations. Some companies also provide corporate-sponsored photos or graphics for media outlets for free use on their news websites, magazines or outlets.

Central to the success of fake news is the willingness of news outlets to conceal from their audience the identity of the real producers of their "news."

Why would news outlets use fake news in place of real news? On its website KEF Media Associates explains that cost-cutting in the newsroom has created the "opportunity" for more VNR's. "Because many of the cuts have been among producers and technicians whose job it is to fill the newscast time, demand has grown for news content supplied by outside sources," KEF states.

How many VNR's are produced is something of a mystery but some suggest it is as many as 4,000 a year. The biggest producer of VNRs by far is Medialink Worldwide, a \$36 million a year company headed by Larry Moskowitz.

"Each year, Medialink generates tens of thousands of broadcast news airings worldwide reaching

billions of viewers, listeners and readers on media as diverse as CNN, *The New York Times*, ABC, Sky News, *The Washington Post*, BBC, Bloomberg Radio, AOL, Yahoo! and China Central Television, the national television station of the People's Republic of China," Medialink stated in its 2003 annual report.

In the aftermath of a March exposé by the *New York Times* on the use of government produced VNRs, nervous PR executives participated in a phone teleconference hosted by the PR industry trade publication, O'Dwyers PR Daily.

While the *New York Times* focussed largely on government use of VNRs, those participating in the teleconference knew that it was corporations that buttered their bread. "Let's remember this debate, from everything I've seen, read, heard, and talked to, is purely the government," Moskowitz counselled his fellow VNR producers on the teleconference, adding, "I would hate to see it broaden."

While Congress has supported a one year ban on government funding of VNR's, corporate fake news has so far escaped unscathed.

Despite Congressional timidity, an important opportunity for preventing corporate fake news from polluting news broadcasts lies in a Federal Communication Commission review of disclosure standards on VNR's for radio and television broadcasters.

The No Fake News campaign by the Center for Media and Democracy and Free Press aims to persuade the FCC that media networks should disclose all broadcast material provided to them. In order to document the use of VNRs the campaign is seeking enthusiastic media monitors to help document instances of fake news use. With a little effort hopefully your reward will be the end of corporate PR dressed up as news.

For more information on the No Fake News campaign go to <http://www.prwatch.org/nofakenews>

Bob Burton works for the Center for Media and Democracy as the editor of SourceWatch (www.sourcewatch.org), a collaborative, online database on PR and spin that anyone can contribute to.

The overwhelming bulk of the fake news served up by the media is hustling the policies and products of corporations.



Media Commons

"They used to rob trains in the Old West. Now we rob spectrum." Senator John McCain.

The Commons are all the creation of nature and culture that we inherit jointly and freely and hold in trust for future generations. The media and the airways are such commons. They began as natural commons but became financially valuable because of cultural changes.

Media usually refers to an organized means of distribution of fact, opinion, and entertainment such as newspapers, magazines, films, radio, television, and the World Wide Web. It is a form of mass communication or mass media.

The airways (the broadcast spectrum) are part of the commons and are owned by the public. Therefore the public should have control over this resource and any revenues that it raises. The Radio Act of 1927 said: in exchange for free licenses, private companies would broadcast programs serving

**We must demand
the media be
returned to commons.**

Envisioning a Better World DVDs Great for TV, Meetings or Event showings!

The North Bridge AfD Chapter's two-session forum Envisioning a Better World in May 2005 featuring renowned speakers Ross Gelbspan and William Rivers Pitt are now available on DVD. The DVDs are \$10 each plus 60 cents shipping. Make out checks to North Bridge Alliance and mail to same at: 221 Monsen Road, Concord, MA 01742.

•**A Journalist's View of the Climate Crisis** by Ross Gelbspan, author of two bestselling books on climate change, *The Heat is On* and the recent *Boiling Point: How Politicians, Big Oil and Coal, Journalists and Activists Are Fueling the Climate Crisis, And What We Can Do to Avert Disaster*. The talk gives an encyclopedic overview of the current climate crisis and then offers three well thought out, practical solutions.

•**Corporate Control of the Media** by William Rivers Pitt, International best-selling author of *The War on Iraq: What Team Bush Doesn't Want You to Know* and *The Greatest Sedition is Silence*, and writer for the online journal truthout.org, Pitt speaks forcefully about the silence of the major media on issues of critical importance.

"the public interest, convenience and necessity." The airways themselves would remain public property, with the Federal Communications Commission acting as trustee. Broadcasters grew large and profitable under this arrangement, while their public interest obligations were reduced.

In the 1980s the FCC dropped the Fairness Doctrine which required broadcasters to air both sides of controversial issues. In 1995 Congress gave broadcasting corporations still more free spectrum, supposedly for digital TV. Now broadcasters have a new plan to "propertize" the airwaves with ownership assigned to them. Under this plan, the free temporary licenses broadcasters received in 1995 would become permanent entitlements: property they could now sell [probably to cell phone companies] and pocket the windfall. If the FCC treated the airwaves as a common asset, it would lease most of them at market rates for limited terms to the highest bidders. The billions of dollars raised could buy free air time for political candidates, fund non-commercial radio and TV and help education and the arts. This is not a new idea. In the 1990's, Congress auctioned off cell phone frequencies, raising billions of dollars for the federal treasury.

But if parts of the commons are sold or leased at a price, they are changed from a common into a commodity. The newest battleground on this is the web. Activists are struggling to keep the internet free and creating open source software in the public domain. Using technologies like WiFi [wireless fidelity], high speed internet access could be available to everyone for almost nothing. And with new digital technology, soon signal interference (which is the rationale behind exclusive leases of the broadcast spectrum) could be a thing of the past. Then the airwaves, too, could be an open access commons.

Though most of us would agree that returning the media to the commons is the right idea, corporate managers will not give up their grasp on the airwaves willingly. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 allowed for massive and unprecedented corporate media consolidation and deregulation that caused significant harm to our democracy and culture. Congress has said it will revisit the Telecommunications Act in 2006. The Act of 1996 promised more competition and diversity, but the opposite happened. Citizens, excluded from the process when the Act was negotiated in Congress, must have a seat at the table as Congress proposes to revisit this law. We must demand the media be returned to commons.

Jan Edwards is the creator of the "Timeline of Personhood Rights and Powers" and has spoken on corporate personhood across the country. She is a member of the Redwood Coast AfD. Contact her at janedwards@mcn.org.

Media Money Triangle

Corporate Media, Congress, and the FCC

Federal Marshals, armed to the teeth, storm private residences confiscating micro-radio transmitters, computers, and CD collections. Twenty-nine million dollars worth of lobbyists swarm the halls of Congress and the Federal Communications Commission to press for legislation allowing ever greater consolidation of the media and telecommunications industry.

Welcome to the world created by the unholy alliance of corporate media, the FCC and Congress.

by Ben Clarke
with 2004 research by Sakura Saunders

For 83 years the triangular relationship between the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), Congress, and the FCC has put the public on the receiving end more uniform content delivered through more channels. Founded in 1922 with a membership of 16 radio stations, by the year 2000 the NAB had annual revenues of more than \$35 million, and claimed to represent 85 percent of the network TV stations and 40 percent of all independent and public TV stations in the United States. Broadcast industry critics, campaign finance reformers, members of Congress, and the NAB itself all agree that the NAB and its members are one of the most effective lobbies in Washington. They have spent tens of millions of dollars on campaign contributions and lobbying expenses to push their policies through Congress and the FCC.

Common Cause points out that NAB members “control how, and if, members of Congress appear on television.” Continuing a twenty-year trend that has seen advertising expenses skyrocket, the total spent for political ads in 2004 was over \$1.5 billion. At roughly the same pace that advertising revenue has grown, broadcast TV coverage of substantive electoral issues has dwindled. NAB spokesperson, Jeff York claims that politicians prefer advertising to independent news coverage because, “They can control the message when they buy advertising. They have less control when it's live news.” York also argues that politicians refuse free airtime because they are afraid to confront their challengers.

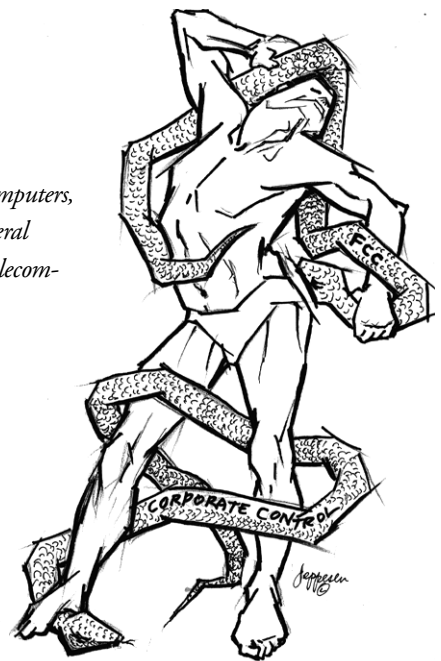
Last year, broadcasters donated \$3,592,069 to candidates. Over the past three years the big five Media companies, Disney (ABC), News Corp (Fox) GE (NBC & Telemundo), Viacom (ABC), Time Warner (CNN & WB) plus the NAB have spent over \$79,740,000 on lobbying. Contributions, lobbying, all expenses paid junkets, and above all favorable spin during the ever smaller news hole in which news issues are framed, are the payback provided by the broadcasters to the politicians.

Norman Solomon, media analyst for the media watchdog group FAIR, points out that Fox New's parent, NewsCorp had a large stake in the deregula-

tion rules because they already owned more stations than the rules allowed. Fox provided vehemently pro-war news coverage and editorials in the period before the Iraq invasion. Solomon comments, “This is the typical Karl Rove strategy of helping out those who further the agenda of the administration.” In another example, General Electric profited handsomely from its government contracts in Iraq. Meanwhile it owns NBC and spent over \$45 million dollars on lobbying in 2003 alone.

Common Cause also points out the members of the NAB “have the power to control how issues affecting their own operations are covered.” Recently, the NAB used its considerable influence to stop both a proposal to tax television broadcasters' analog spectrum and to stop a \$1.9 billion assessment in spectrum fees on corporate users of unauctioned spectrum. They helped defeat legislation to curtail direct-to-consumer advertisements of prescription drugs and maintained the blockade against Low Power FM. The NAB's biggest single financial coup was the \$70 billion giveaway of digital television bandwidth during the Clinton years. They supported the increase in media consolidation proposed at the FCC last year, and opposed almost any requirement on broadcasters to address the lack of diversity of station employees.

Not surprisingly, the paucity of meaningful campaign coverage and public affairs and public interest programming in general is a direct result of the successful lobbying by NAB members to keep commercial television for commercials. The Fairness Doctrine and the broadcast license renewal requirements to provide serious documentation of public affairs offerings were eliminated during the Reagan administration. What the NAB touts as public service programming is a “congressional families PSA project featuring spouses and children of members of Congress.” The NAB and its members have successfully expropriated a public resource—the nation's airwaves—and use that resource to further an economic, political, and cultural agenda contrary to the public interest.



graphic: Kjersten Jeppesen

The NAB...expropriated a public resource—the nation's airwaves—and use that resource to further an economic, political, and cultural agenda contrary to the public interest.

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JUSTICE RISING is a publication of **The Alliance for Democracy**, whose mission is to end the domination of our politics, our economics, the environment, and our culture by large corporations. The Alliance seeks to establish true economic and political democracy and to create a just society with a sustainable, equitable economy.

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Justice Rising



We were pleased by the generous comments we received on the first issue of *Justice Rising*, which dealt with Creating Honest Elections. Like all issues where corporate power is involved, this is an ongoing story. Nancy Matela at nmatela@pacifier.com continues to put out a daily news bulletin on this important topic if you want to keep updated. Citizens involved in reforming the electoral process in Ohio have collected 350,000 signatures to put three constitutional amendments on the ballot that would end partisan corruption in the elections there. Meanwhile the August issue of *Harpers* contains an article titled *None Dare Call It Stolen: Ohio, the Election and America's Servile Press*. In that piece Mark Crispin Miller takes American mainstream media to task for ignoring the obvious evidence of a stolen election in Ohio.

This brings us to this second issue of *Justice Rising* and the role of an imperial press that in many ways has become a central power broker in the expanding global commercial empire. The empire will be the topic of our third issue of *Justice Rising*—*Global Commercial Empire vs Popular Democracy*. In December, the Ministers of the World Trade Organization meet in Hong Kong and a month later the World Social Forum will meet in regional gatherings across the planet, including one in Caracas, Venezuela. It is a confrontation at the heart of our global future and at the center of our hopes to survive without catastrophe sweeping the planet. If you want to contribute, email rtp@mcn.org. The deadline is October first.

Let us know your thoughts on these issues. Letters to the editor will be a great way to stay updated on past themes and future possibilities.

AfD's Media Reform Project

by Joe Davis

Recognizing that democracy must be based on the free communication of truthful information about the issues that confront our society, the National Council of the Alliance for Democracy has given high priority to a Media Reform Project as a crucial element in working toward our mission "to establish true democracy, and to create a just society with a sustainable, equitable economy." The project will focus on:

1. Reducing the concentration of the media that allows commercial interests to dictate the content of news and information and limits the diversity of views presented.
2. Challenging corporate control of national media policy made possible by campaign contributions and massive lobbying efforts, which promote private interests rather than the public good.
3. Reinstating the Fairness Doctrine that was designed to protect the public's right to equal access to all points of view, but was eliminated during the Reagan Administration.
4. Ensuring that local stations serve the interests of the communities in which they operate.
5. Stopping Bush administration proposals to drastically reduce support for public broadcasting.

Action at the federal level will focus on Congress and the FCC. Changes at the local level

include renegotiating cable contracts, establishing media watch groups and creating our own media.

Alliance members and concerned citizens must be informed and ready to challenge:

- the FCC when they attempt to increase concentration of media ownership;
- the Corporation for Public Broadcasting when it advocates reduced funding for National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting System;
- privatization of broadband Internet access;
- elimination of low-power FM radio stations;
- further limitation of diversity and public control of the media through Congressional enactment of a new Telecommunications Act in 2006.

All of us, as concerned citizens, should:

- monitor and understand the ownership patterns of our local media;
- be cognizant of alternative sources of information;
- participate in creating a truly diversified democratic media that broadcasts information crucial to our self-governance;
- promote public access TV, local control over cable networks, listener-sponsored radio and television broadcasting and alternative local media.

For more information contact Joe Davis at joe.davis7@cox.net.

The Politicization of Public Broadcasting

by Ronnie Dugger

Kenneth Tomlinson, who has a long career working for official US propaganda agencies, is now the chair of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). After consulting the White House, but without consulting or informing his fellow board members, Tomlinson hired for CPB an obscure right-wing political operative, and paid him just over \$14,000 in US taxpayer money to judge the politics of Bill Moyers' NOW program on PBS. The operative duly reported back classifying guests as "anti-Bush," and calling Chuck Hagel, the occasionally moderate Republican senator from Nebraska, a liberal. Under



Patricia de Stacy Harrison, Former Co-Chair of the Republican National Committee is now President of CPB.

Tomlinson, the president of CPB is a former co-chair of the Republican National Committee.

PBS, as a result of the Tomlinson-led board's expenditure of \$5 million, now airs a talk show entirely produced and controlled by the editorial page editors of the *Wall Street Journal*. "Among the

big major newspapers, the *Wall Street Journal* has no op-ed page where different opinions can compete with its right-wing editorials. The Journal's PBS broadcast is just as homogeneous—right-wingers talking to each other," Bill Moyers said in a speech on May 15th. "Why not \$5 million to put the editors of *The Nation* on PBS? Or Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now!* You balance right-wing talk with left-wing talk."

The Bush Administration's penetration of public broadcasting via Tomlinson is the latest in a series of egregious episodes in the past few decades landmarking the corporate and conservative penetration and shaping of the mainline media. These include:

- the short-shrifting of election reporting, calibrated inversely with the relentlessly escalating prices and necessity of candidate-bought on-air political ads;
- Congress' stinginess in funding public broadcasting matched inversely to the ever-increasing commercialization of PBS and NPR;
- the supplanting of the Edward R. Murrow traditions of TV journalism by the cost-cutting and money-making values of corporate media conglomerates;
- the loud arrival and apparent acceptance of Rupert Murdoch's Fox News network on the public airways as a flimsily-disguised propaganda medium for the Republican Party.

In Washington, Moyers said last spring, he heard that the PBS funding authorization was going to be held off "until Moyers is dealt with." According

to Moyers, Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi protested that the CPB "has not seemed willing to deal with Bill Moyers." Moyers asked to confer with the CPB board three times, but "they wouldn't meet with me," he said.



Kenneth Y. Tomlinson, former head of Voice of America now Chairs CPB.

Tomlinson denied on Fox News that he had any conversations with any Bush administration officials about PBS. *The New York Times* reported that Tomlinson had solicited Karl Rove to help him kill a proposal to put people with local radio and TV experience on the CPB board and that furthermore, on the recommendation of a Bush Administration official, Tomlinson hired, as a senior CPB staffer, Mary Catherine Andrews, who, while still reporting to Rove, set up CPB's new ombudsperson's office.

Reportedly, when Tomlinson's CPB board commissioned two public opinion surveys about PBS and NPR, which showed high public regard for public broadcasting's quality and balance, CPB refused to release them. Evidently members of the House of Representatives butted headfirst into those same public attitudes this year when an initial move to cut funding for public broadcasting was slapped down by a bipartisan House majority.

Moyers, speaking at the recent National Conference for Media Reform, said: "A free press is one where it's OK to state the conclusion you're led to by the evidence," but the "rules of the game" permit Washington officials "to set the agenda for journalism." While putting out NOW, he said, "What people know depends on who owns the press—we keep coming back to the media business itself, to how mega-media corporations were pushing journalism further and further down the hierarchy of values, how giant radio cartels were silencing critics while shutting communities off from essential information, and how the mega-media companies were lobbying the FCC for the right to grow ever more powerful.

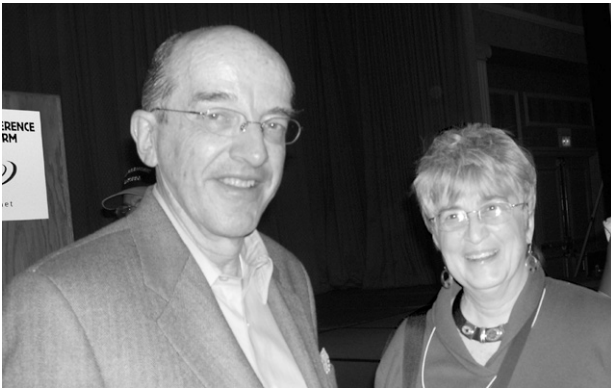
"Without public broadcasting," Moyers said, "all we would call news would be merely carefully controlled propaganda."

Ronnie Dugger, founding editor of *The Texas Observer* and co-founder of *AfD*, has written four books and hundreds of articles for *Harper's Magazine*, *The Nation*, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and other periodicals.

"What people know depends on who owns the press."

Bill Moyers

Media Reform Conference



FCC Commissioner Michael Copps and AfD co-chair Nancy Price celebrate the effort to end corporate domination. photo: Jim Tarbell

Gathered at the gateway through which the American Empire passed to conquer Indigenous, Spanish, English and Russian lands, 2500 media reformers in May 2005 took on the task of taming the imperial press that now urges global conquest by a commercial empire spearheaded by American corporate interests and military might. Six AfD members joined the optimistic throng. Opening the show, John Nichols, the exuberant impresario of Fress Press declared that we were all on the freedom train and the media is the key. Because, as he pointed out, "if media is not your first issue, it absolutely has to be your second." Then Josh Silver, Free Press Executive Director reminded the crowd that, "We have blocked the FCC, stopped Sinclair, stopped the payola pundits and changed the cable franchise rules. We are

Cultural Diversity vs. Free Trade: A Call to Action

Dealing with the upcoming WTO Ministerial in Hong Kong this December, Peter Grant, Canada's premier communications lawyer and author of *Blockbusters and Trade Wars* spoke of the need to stop the commodification of cultural goods. A litany of government measures/laws including public broadcasting and foreign ownership policies are threatened by international trade laws. Mary Bottari of Public Citizen pointed out that media issues on the table also include audio-visual and communications services, radio/TV/sound recording, transmission/news services, and photo services. She pointed out that while the media corporations are at the table and reporting the news, the public interest is not. Meanwhile, Garry Neil from the International Network for Cultural Diversity pointed out that UNESCO is overseeing an international convention that will protect each country's right to maintain media policies that promote cultural diversity.

Holding Media Accountable through Policy and Activism

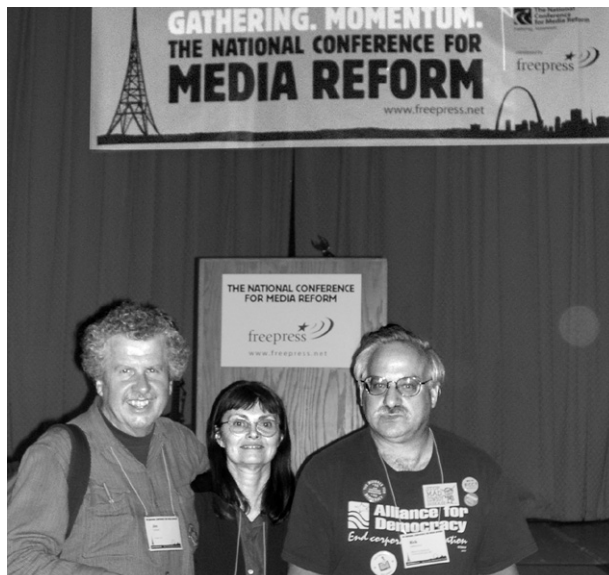
David Brock, who has been a John M. Olin Fellow at the Heritage Foundation and an editorial page writer at the *Washington Times* reported that the right-wing take over of the media is increasing and now a false article moves from print to radio to TV to Internet. Brock has set up Media Matters to analyze and fact check the content of specific media outlets. They have called publishers and broadcasters to account on false information and have been successful in getting retractions. They post their findings at mediamatters.org and encourage journalists to speak out and challenge publishers to take responsibility for content.

Recognizing that communication is a human right, unbalanced public programming can be challenged by initiating public debate when the licenses of radio and television stations come up for renewal.

A litany of government measures/laws including public broadcasting and foreign ownership policies are threatened by international trade laws.

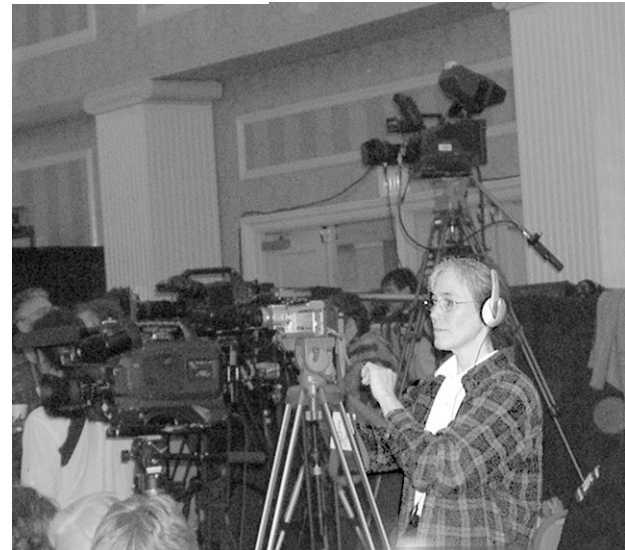


Bob McChesney welcomes Bill Moyers' performance outlining the politicization of the anchor chair." photo: Jim Tarbell



AfD members Jim Tarbell, Sue Skidmore and Rick LaMonica

photo: Nancy Price

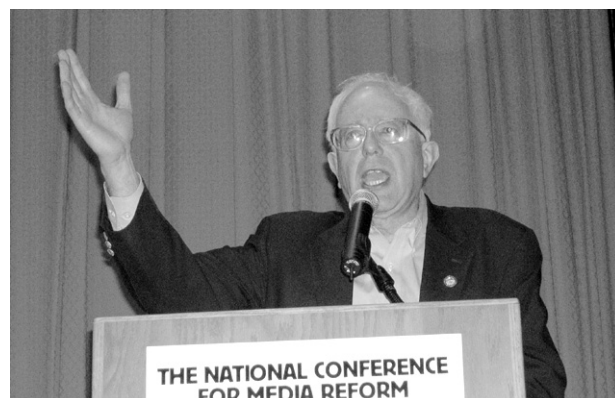


AfD Videographer Martha Spiess takes her place in the conference video pool. photo: Jim Tarbell

nce Meets in St. Louis

hering momentum for the coming key policy battle to rewrite the ecommunications Act in 2006". Then the convener of the gathering, Bob Chesney came on stage and exuded over the sold-out house and exclaimed that re were hundreds if not thousands of more people who wanted to come.

With that, three days of information sharing, networking, planning and partying an in earnest with a long list of workshops, forums, speeches and movies. It is all ilable at www.freepress.net. But if you do not want to download the whole thing, ur intrepid Alliance reporters, Joe Davis, Joanna Herlihy, Martha Spiess, Nancy ce and Jim Tarbell wrote summaries of the events they attended and synopses of ir reports appear below. Contact rtp@mcn.org if you want the complete reports.



Independent Congressman Bernie Sanders exhorts that poverty is a moral issue not covered in our media. photo: Jim Tarbell



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Media Activism 101

People are organizing around breaking through the corporate media by creating their own media using internet, community technology centers, story-telling and video and radio diaries. They are also confronting corporate media by monitoring. There is a need to change the rules: focus on policy, legislation, use of new technology, electronic privacy rights and intellectual property. Look at: grassrootscable.org and hearusnow.org.

Citizen Pressure and Media Policy

Democratic legislators have formed a Future of American Media Caucus to take back America's media. Congressman Bernie Sanders, who is running for US Senator from Vermont, accuses the media of trivializing issues and ignoring the concerns of millions of working Americans. He foresees the collapse of the middle class as people work longer hours for lower pay. Since this is not the reality portrayed on TV, they think they are alone, blame themselves, and become depoliticized.

FCC Past and Present

Federal Communications Commissioners Michael Copps and Jonathan Adelstein joined past commissioners Nicholas Johnson and Gloria Tristani for a fascinating insight into the workings of the FCC. They all thanked people for who participated in the great outpouring of opposition to media consolidation, but they warned that the fight is not over. Both Commissioners Copps and Adelstein predicted that there will be piecemeal attempts in the coming year to increase the dependence on marketplace mechanisms for media regulation, though these mechanisms have gutted the public good of the media. They emphasized that they need people to support them when those battles arise. It will only be with public participation that they can win this fight.

There will be piecemeal attempts in the coming year to increase the dependence on marketplace mechanisms for media regulation.

Videos of Conference Workshops

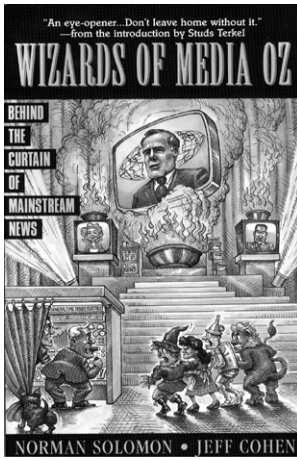
1. Cultural Diversity vs. Free Trade: A Call to Action (90 min.). Multinational entertainment companies and media conglomerates, "free trade" policies and profit-driven globalization. With James Counts Early, Peter Grant, Mary Bottari, and Garry Neil

2. The FCC Past and Present (90 min.) Pressing issues at the FCC, how citizens can best engage in the regulatory process. With Gloria Tristani, Jonathan Adelstein, Michael Copps, and Nicholas Johnson

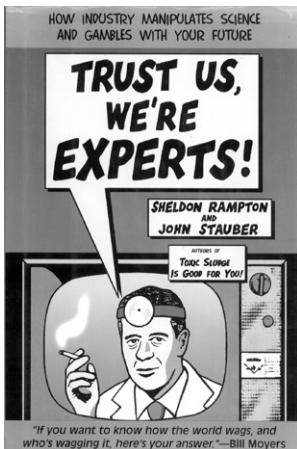
Two programs are available DVD-R or VHS format, \$15.98 donation to cover costs—each, check made out to "mspiess/afdmmedia", 7 Tidal Brook Rd, Freeport, ME 04032, Any additional funds obtained over postage/cost will be forwarded to Alliance for Democracy.



FCC Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein rocks out with the Patti Smith Band. photo: Jim Tarbell



The action guide offers things like a how-to look through TV and radio stations' public interest files.



Media Books From the Shelf

by Chris Calder

If good information is the drinking water of democracy, then what's coming out of the mass media's tap these days is pretty gross. We all need good media filters to get enough of the fresh, clean stuff to survive. With one exception, the following books written over the past decade constitute a how-to kit on building, or strengthening, our media.

My favorite is the 1997 book *Wizards of Media Oz*, by prolific media critics Norman Solomon and Jeff Cohen. It's light—meaning the authors can make you laugh while telling you how you're being screwed—yet packed with meaningful examples of how the mainstream media work hard winning hearts and minds to the corporate agenda. Solomon and Cohen serve up bunches of tidbits like: Ted Koppel acknowledging proudly that, as a reporter in Vietnam, he was privy to the secret bombing of Laos long before it became public; George Will fiercely resisting public disclosure that his wife was press secretary for the Dole presidential campaign in 1996; or NPR refusing to divulge how much money it receives from big sponsors like Archer-Daniels Midland, Wal-Mart and Merck, “as a courtesy to our underwriters.”

Digging deeper into the why's and how's of the situation is Ben Bagdikian's *The New Media Monopoly*. Bagdikian is a former editor at the *Washington Post* and dean emeritus of UC Berkeley's School of Journalism, yet his writing and sense of mission retain the fire of the unbought. I'll let Bagdikian's website say what his book's about: “Five huge corporations... have been a major force in creating conservative and far right politics in the country. They have...produced a coarse and vulgar culture that celebrates the most demeaning characteristics in the human psyche—greed, deceit, and cheating—as a legitimate way to win.” Bagdikian's fighting spirit alone makes *Monopoly* a worthwhile read.

Trust Us We're Experts, one in a series of books by PR watchers Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber is a sharp look at how modern “news” has at least one parent in the public relations industry. It starts with an invaluable, chilling account of the creation of “PR” in the US during (and for) World War I. We read Walter Lippman's cold-eyed explanation of why the republic was no longer safe in the hands of the people, and how Edward Bernays, renowned “Father of Public Relations” as well as nephew of Sigmund Freud, first plied the backdoors of the human psyche in the service of Big Business. This leads inexorably to the present day conjurings by Monsanto, Philip Morris, Merck, et al. *Trust Us* shows very clearly why taking the products of mass media for truth is much like confusing a Chicken McNugget with a live chicken.

If you want a detailed look at the nexus of big

money and big media, get *Networks of Influence*, published by the Center for Public Integrity. This comprehensive guide gives facts and figures on every significant media company in the US—who owns them, what outlets they control, which politicians they fund. For researchers into the topic, *Networks* is a must. It will also tell you who to write about the quality and content of your local paper, radio or TV station. It may be dry, but *Networks* is the straight stuff.

Now for the exception. *Our Media Not Theirs*, a small booklet by leading activists Robert McChesney and John Nichols, is media criticism that makes this reviewer ask, “Why bother?” *OMNT* is an indictment of the corporate media, which claims to offer a new way of fighting back, but delivers little beyond a discussion of something called the “Third Left,”—nothing more than a new label for old tactics. It reads like a legal brief, and assumes that sound logic will receive a fair hearing. This is belied by decades of a logical Left getting the crap knocked out of it. Very little is fair about the national media or politics in America today. Who cares less about fairness in media than its owners or, unfortunately, a great many of its soundly-indoctrinated consumers? *OMNT* made me cry out for a moratorium on carefully plotted argument and, instead, a rain of blistering satire on the porcine Karlroviens who would colonize our minds.

On the other hand, *The Future of Media* is an inspiring essay collection on media activism, with a practical “action guide” at the end. Especially fine contributions include Mark Lloyd's account of sly and often racist techniques of misinforming the public; John Dunbar's dissection of FCC subservience to corporate masters; Jeff Chester and Gary Larson's political history of the Internet; plus varied takes on the threats and possibilities the present media moment affords. The action guide offers things like a how-to look through TV and radio stations' public interest files, and expiration dates for broadcast licenses, cluing readers in to the best times to ramp up the pressure. Editors Robert McChesney, Russell Newman and Ben Scott have forged a righteous tool for raising awareness and a little hell.

Speaking of turning up the heat, there's *Be the Media*, a guide to creating your own radio program (or station), newspaper, music label, film etc. It's endorsed by activists far and wide as an effective source, and is available at www.bethemedia.com. Though we are all voracious consumers of ideas, we also have a few of our own.

Chris Calder is a freelance journalist and former small-town newspaper editor in Northern California.

Resources for Reform

by Kate Sims

In the mid '90s, the big media companies marched themselves over to the FCC and said, "It should not be our responsibility to keep the public informed. Our main obligation is to our shareholders to broadcast news and entertainment as quickly and cheaply as possible. Let's get rid of those pesky restrictions against mergers and acquisitions and let us do whatever we need to do to make money. Trust us, it'll be better for everyone in the long run."

Of course the FCC (initially) folded like a house of cards. But a few plucky and dedicated individuals saw the folly in such thinking and began to warn about the dangers of these trends and the consequences for our democracy. Today, what began as a few voices in the wilderness has become a thunder of voices calling out for a reform of our media system and a return to the principles that established the FCC in the first place.

With the St. Louis Media Reform Conference of 2005 under our belts, the pace of media reform activism has picked up a momentum that the originators of the movement could only have dreamt of a few years ago. People across the country, from all political backgrounds, are expressing a desire to become a part of this history-making event.

So who does one go to for good, understandable, reliable, organized information about media and its reformation? Here are some of the resources that I have found particularly helpful.

1. **Free Press:** www.freepress.net or www.media-reform.org: You cannot begin to inform yourself about media activism without first accessing the wisdom of Robert McChesney, the 'Johnny Appleseed' of the modern media reform movement. In 2002, together with John Nichols and Josh Silver, McChesney put together a well-organized and comprehensive website. Based out of Northampton, MA, it has a very readable history of broadcast media in the US and a very helpful "Beginner's Guide to Media Reform."

2. **Reclaim the Media:** www.reclaimthemediasite.org. Based out of Seattle, WA, this website probably has more media reform information per square inch than any other, but it is also very easy to follow. Take a look at their "About us" page to get a quick sense of who they are and what they do.

3. **Prometheus Radio Project:** www.prometheusradio.org. Based out of Philadelphia, this website provides fascinating



graphic: Kjersten Jeppesen

information about Low Power FM (LPFM): what it is, why it is so controversial, and how people throughout the world are using it to create their own media and to get the word out about what is happening in their communities.

4. **MediaAlliance:** www.media-alliance.org. Based out of San Francisco, Media Alliance is one of the oldest media reform organizations in the country. Their staff travel all over the country speaking on media issues, their website features many resources and links, and, true to their name, they work to build alliances with other activist organizations to heighten awareness of media issues in the general population.

5. **Independent Media Center:** www.indymedia.org. One cannot discuss media reform in the new century without mentioning the Independent Media Center (IMC). While members of the IMC may be media reform activists and advocates, the IMC itself is not a media reform organization, it IS media reform. I highly recommend going to their web homepage, clicking on "about" to find out more about their origins and then on "Frequently asked questions" to find out how you can get involved. Then, go back and click on the city nearest you to find out what people in your area are writing about.

All of these websites have many more links and resources than I can possibly list here. The best thing to do is to log on and poke around for yourself until you find the project and approach that interests you the most.

Kate Sims is the Research Coordinator for Project Censored at Sonoma State University.

The best thing to do is to log on and poke around for yourself until you find the project and approach that interests you the most.



DeeDee Halleck and Tan Baskaya in Istanbul, recording the World Tribunal on Iraq for the first global transmission by the Deep Dish Network.

Collaboration and "mutual aid" has prevailed and helped alternative media develop into a strong asset for progressive movements.

People-Powered TV

by Bill Haff

This spring, Independent World Television launched stage two of its five-stage plan for an innovative international news service. By 2007 programming will be available on satellite, digital cable, public stations and the Web.

The brainchild of Canadian TV producer Paul Jay, IWT will be financed by MoveOn-style individual donations, so its editorial staff will be free of corporate and government influence. Jay, a seasoned CBC-TV and film documentary producer, has used his connections to establish a comprehensive business plan. Now IWT looks forward to developing a network of supporters, and aims to inspire half a million people to contribute approximately \$50 each in 2006, allowing IWT to go on-air in 2007.

IWT's founding committee is an impressive who's who of activists and progressive commentators, from Amy Goodman to Gore Vidal. As it continues its outreach, IWT will no doubt add more names to the roster of distinguished associates. IWT's fundamental mission is to provide news to millions of everyday people, who are increasingly disenfranchised and ignored by the corporate media.

Learn more at www.iwtnews.com and spread the word.

Community Media

In our "Interest, Convenience and Necessity"

by DeeDee Halleck

In 1943, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) received an application for

the transfer of the "Blue Network," wholly owned by RCA (NBC) to American Broadcasting (ABC). Edward Noble, owner of American Broadcasting, sought to assure the FCC of his adherence to the vague, but beneficial sounding, defining phrase of the 1927 Radio Act, "the public interest, convenience and necessity." He included on his application a policy whereby: All classes and groups shall have their requests, either for sponsored or sustaining time, seriously considered "in accordance with true democratic principles."

That sure is a long way from NBC these days. The airwaves, satellites and cable lines form a corporate blockade of trivia and greed that have "manufactured consent" as Ed Herman and Noam Chomsky described several years ago. The fact that the administration was able to hoodwink the US public into believing their lies about Iraq is due in a great part to the role of the corporate media in creating the fear and jingoism that has sent us off to war. While the troops were being loaded on to their humvees, the channels of the US presented the "Fear Factor." One

also wonders in accordance with what "public interest, convenience and necessity and democratic principles" are nubile young starlets convinced to consume buckets of earthworms on reality TV.

But there are channels that attempt to fulfill the sort of civic promise of that idealistic rhetoric. The public, educational and government (PEG) access channels, the grassroots listener-supported and micro radio stations and the inter-active internet sites such as Indymedia have created a dynamic potential for citizens' media. This activity has taken advantage of the infrastructure which has been developing slowly, but with focus, for several decades. The cable franchises that each town

must sign with cable providers have developed into wedges to force the cable corporations into providing channel space and funding for local channels. On "Direct Broadcast Satellites" (DBS) activists have won a provision that requires all program services to devote 4% of their channel space to non-profit, educational and cultural programming. This has enabled channels such as the University of California, the University of Washington and Free Speech TV, an activist channel from Boulder, Colorado, to thrive. Perhaps the most recognized use of this space is the daily news program, *Democracy Now!* which uses the Free Speech satellite live broadcast to distribute their one hour program to community PEG channels and grassroots radio stations.

These creative outlets are not just nodes of alternative and diverse voices, but they are also more and more inspiring their constituents to take part in critical activism towards the structure of corporate media. The sold-out media reform gatherings in 2003 in Madison, Wisconsin and this spring in St. Louis have given impetus to a new media activism. There is a new-found sharing of resources and activities. Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) is collaborating with Paper Tiger Television and Prometheus Radio Project on similar local conferences. *The Nation* and Free Speech TV are working together on taping "keynote" speeches at progressive gatherings around the country. Deep Dish TV is making premium DVD sets on the war in Iraq for fund-raising sales on Pacifica radio channels. Prometheus Radio Project is celebrating "barn raisings" in which local communities initiate micro radio stations. Indymedia is streaming video of the anti-globalization actions in Scotland, which are picked up and transmitted on *Democracy Now!* to over 350 radio and television channels around the United States. There never has been this sort of dynamic synergy before. Collaboration and "mutual aid" have prevailed and helped alternative media develop into a strong asset for progressive movements. As the US moves into high definition and digital signals, it is an opportune time to rethink the Broadcasting Act and begin to define our "interests, conveniences and necessities." What do we want and need from the electronic tools that up till now have only been used to deceive and delude us?

DeeDee Halleck is a media activist, the founder of Paper Tiger Television and co-founder of the Deep Dish Satellite Network. She is Professor Emerita at the University of California, San Diego and the author of the recent book, Hand Held Visions: The Impossible Possibilities of Community Media.



The Door Is Open

Public Access TV Offers Ample Opportunity to get Your Message Out

by Elizabeth Swenson

If you ask activists which form of media has the least value, most will say television. But television offers one of the few forms of media that is free from corporate influence: public access channels.

Public access television, available through cable only, serves as an electronic town square. Any one person or organization can use this medium to communicate with others in their community. Access channels do not have a political point of view. They see themselves as the guardians of free speech, and fulfill their purpose when they have widespread community use and support.

The more than 2,000 community access channels in the United States got their beginning in the 1960s as cable television spread. In the 1970s, federal law incorporated the proviso that communities could require cable companies to provide access channels and allied funding. That era ended in 1996 when the cable industry was successful in getting the FCC to drop the funding requirements. Although communities may still negotiate for public access funding, they are dealing with giant corporations, and depend on local support to win that battle.

Public access channels do not receive federal funding, but depend on local government and cable subscribers. At opposite ends of the budget spectrum are centers with million-dollar plus budgets and operations with ten thousand dollar minus budgets.

Some community channels produce programs, but the main source of their programming comes from local independent producers and local residents who submit videos made elsewhere. Centers teach how to make television, lend equipment to those trained to use it, and will often facilitate or help with productions.

The local AfD chapter uses Fort Bragg's public access Channel 3 to sponsor *Democracy Now!* and shows videos of their monthly speakers at least four times over the month. The tape then goes into the Alliance's library, available for anyone to borrow.

Recently, Channel 3 played a significant role in two local elections. During the campaign for Measure H—the county ordinance that bans the growth of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)—the AfD sponsored a debate between Percy Schmeiser, the Canadian farmer sued by Monsanto, and a local mayor speaking against the measure. Percy presented convincing arguments for keeping the county free from GMOs, while the opposing speaker floundered. The video of the

event was shown several times on Channel 31 by request, and measure H, the first such law to be passed in the country, passed by a large majority.

During the 2004 city council campaign, the three candidates participated in a debate that Channel 3 cablecast live and then replayed several times. The sharp differences between two of the three candidates were revealed in the debate, and its airing educated voters in ways that would not have happened otherwise. The long-shot candidate, and an AfD member, won.

Channel 3 has also shown such documentaries as *End of Suburbia* and *Hijacking Catastrophe*. The channel fills gaps in local programming with a variety of satellite programs such as UCTV (public lectures, performances, educational programs from the University of California), Classic Arts programming, and sometimes Free Speech TV.

Given the current political climate, the survival of public access television is threatened. The telecommunications industry seeks major changes in current FCC regulations, and bills to do this are already in committee on both federal and state levels. Among the proposed changes are the elimination of not only franchise fees but also franchise agreements. There is, however, a large and growing movement to stop these unwise corporate moves. For more information, visit the web site of the Alliance for Community Media (www.alliancecm.org).

Elizabeth Swenson is director of MCCET, PEG Access Channel 3, Fort Bragg, CA.

iChannel Surfing to Democracy

by Don Baham

Oh that the tube could magically produce the sustenance of a people's democracy. If I had such a grandiose fantasy when I decided to become a community-access cable television talk show producer and host, it was completely out of my awareness.

What I had in mind was a glimmer that my life-long impetus to speak out for truth and justice in the face of their opposites might be facilitated by that instrument of lethargy and propaganda—television.

To my surprise, I just needed to attend a series of free classes at the Portland, Oregon public access channel studio to become certified. Then I was asked to host a half-hour interview/talk show. I thought: "Well, can I be another Larry King, Charley Rose, or Bill Moyers?" Pretty quickly I thought: "No, but I can be me—a Don Baham." So that's how "Conversations with Dr. Don" came into being. The show provides a forum for individuals to talk about the things that they think are important and that the mainstream media covers inadequately or not at all.

I've been producing and hosting a weekly show for one local access channel and a bi-weekly show on another. Each show is broadcast on a regular schedule multiple times per week. The show is also aired on five stations across the country.

Expenses are minimal and tax deductible. I get to feature the Alliance for Democracy as often as I choose. I get to meet a lot of interesting and fun people. So, go down to your local community access TV studio and become a free speech, democracy-loving guerrilla—like me.

Don Baham is a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, a Humanist Minister, and a Certified Transactional Analyst.

Local Organizing for Media Democracy

by Jonathan Lawson and Susan Gleason

Want to do something about the terrible media in the US, or in your town? You're not alone. In a just, democratic society, media should be fair, inclusive of multiple perspectives, broadly informative, and independent of powerful interests. It should encourage and enable us to participate as citizens. But the American public understands that our media are failing these basic tests. One recent poll shows that we believe, by a striking three-to-one margin, that news media are "often influenced by powerful people and organizations."

Media-savvy progressives urge each other not to trust the corporate media; meanwhile, Rush Limbaugh and his fellow travellers find daily audiences completely prepared to lap up their endless jeremiads against the "liberal media." This shared sense of media's failures may seem disheartening, but it is fertile ground for effective activism which can turn public discontent into community empowerment.

Media organizing: start local

Social movement-style organizing focused on media has come into its own in the past several years. Its rise has been fueled by the growing realization that media as an issue underlies all other struggles for justice, because of the media's power to frame public debate. By organizing at the local level around media issues, grassroots activists can engage people's media grievances where they already are—and place the tools of media activism directly at the service of long-term social justice struggles for a more just society.

Choose your remedy

- The most basic form of community media activism is media literacy education—community members helping each other to become more insightful, critical media consumers—to read between the lines of the *New York Times*, *CNN* or *NPR* to identify institutional filters or biases.
- Media watchdog projects apply and extend media literacy skills by tracking news coverage on particular outlets or by issue, seeking to identify patterns of selectiveness or bias.
- Community media, whether radio, TV, newspapers or internet-based, allows regular folks to find their own voices, sidestepping mainstream filters to speak unpopular truths or tell marginalized stories.
- Training in media strategies offers real power to community groups struggling to get their voices into the media.
- Media policy advocacy uses lobbying and commu-



graphic: Media Tank/GrassrootsCable.com

nity organizing to change the legal and regulatory structures (such as media ownership rules) that place invisible limits on what we see and hear.

Identify community needs

Before launching into one or another of these types of projects, local organizers should assess the media interests and complaints of social change groups. Often, groups working on criminal justice issues, the environment, or other issues, will already have articulate critiques of local and national media. Youth organizations or immigrants' rights groups may have critiques others haven't considered.

What are the most pressing local concerns regarding the media—the need for more fair and accurate coverage, more media analysis and debunking, or the inclusion of more diverse community voices? And what about access to creating and distributing community media content? Does your community desperately need its own community radio or public access TV channel?

Allies, resources and opportunities

There are many natural allies for media activist organizing. Unions representing media and communications workers have much to lose as media ownership consolidation heralds unionbusting and the downsizing of local news departments. Local chapters of NOW, the ACLU, and other human rights groups may have pre-existing programs around media issues. Almost everywhere you can find independent media makers already engaged in creating alternatives to the corporate media cartels, including community broadcasting, newspapers, blogs or Indymedia centers. Organize local events to pull these folks together. Host media-critical speaking events and discussions, at which potential media activists can meet and network. Collaborate with others to organize a conference or public hearing about community media needs. Introduce media and democracy panels, workshops, and speakers to other events and conferences already being planned.

Susan Gleason and Jonathan Lawson are co-directors of Reclaim the Media in Seattle. Susan is also marketing and outreach manager with YES! Magazine; Jonathan works in public affairs for the Washington Federation of State Employees/AFSCME

Collaborate with others to organize a conference or public hearing about community media needs.

Creating a Role in the Media for Youth

by Theodora Ruhs

Our nation's discourse takes place in the media's collage of sound and images. However, participation in this discourse is highly limited to a privileged class of people with access to both the means of production and the media space in which to display those productions. It is further limited within the mass corporate media by the denial of voices and viewpoints different from those that correspond with corporate sponsorship. This means that there are a lot of people unable to participate.

Youth are noticeably absent from public dialogue. A large portion of America's youth (18% of which are currently living under the poverty line) does not have access to the means to create their own media.

With a goal to create a more inclusive and truly representative democracy, we need to level the playing field and give everyone the education to be both media producers and successful navigators of the meanings encapsulated in those productions. That is the start, but these things alone will not give equal access to our modern public sphere. There also needs to be a fundamental change in how our media systems are operated to allow for more diverse content from a wider range of voices, including the young. Many young people are very active in virtual online communities, which proves they have a lot to say. Most people, however, are not going to be looking at livejournal.com.

The place to start is community media. This forum can give young people visibility where it counts most, where they are most likely going to be able to help promote change: in their local communities. It is up to media activists to make sure this happens. Here is a plan that can get high school kids involved.

1.) Find a way to invite them to join in. (2.) Ask them to choose a topic that they feel is important in their lives and in their communities. (3.) Ask them to research this story in as many different venues as they can. (4.) Do they see any differences between stories in

different venues, i.e. different newspapers, TV news, radio, mass media, independent media, etc. Why? (5.) Do they feel that there is any part of the story that has been left out, or emphasized by different venues? What are they? Why? (6.) Give them a camera or a microphone or both and teach them to use the equipment. (7.) Send them out in to the community to do interviews and observations in order to discover the story for themselves. (8.) Discuss ways to put gathered material together into a cohesive piece. Have them prepare scripts and/or storyboards. (9.) Give them computers and editing software and teach them to edit. (10.) Give finished work to local community media outlets. Ask outlets to give the kids a chance to talk about the work they did. (11). See what happens.

There is a need to teach young people to be media producers and give them a sense that their voices are valid within our public discourse. With the energy only young people possess, they will be eager to speak out and help create change. There are several programs such as the Educational Video Center (EVC) in New York City and Youth Radio in Berkeley that are working towards this goal. This is a growing movement but it needs to be much larger. This should be part of the regular activities of every high school student. To learn to participate in such a way will prepare them to be active citizens for the rest of their lives.

Theodora Ruhs recently graduated from NYU with an M.A. in Media Ecology. She wrote her thesis on media education and adolescent development, using media education to deal with identity struggles for adolescents by giving them a voice and a place within community. She has been involved in independent and community media for the last six years.

Radio on Corporate Power

by Jim Tarbell

Corporations and Democracy on KXYX & Z in Philo, CA grew out of a kitchen table conversation after three of us attended a Program on Corporations, Law and Democracy workshop on Rethinking Corporations, Rethinking Democracy. That was seven years ago and we are still at it every two weeks. It is a great educational device and makes fantastic radio. It offers local people the opportunity to participate in national debates via phone call-ins. We can call almost anyone we ever wanted to talk to and just the theme of the show gets them on the air. We have interviewed Howard Zinn, Helen Caldicott, Ralph Nader, Robert McChesney and hundreds of others. We cover local corporate issues and have produced live broadcasts from the streets of Quito, Ecuador, the Dade County Jail and the Republican National Convention in New York City.

The show has helped start multiple Alliance chapters, educated thousands of active citizens and created a broad awareness of corporate power issues that affect us both locally and internationally. It helped organize a couple of busloads of people to go to the WTO demonstrations in Seattle in 1999 and has been invaluable as an educational tool in elections.

We had little radio experience when we began, but we learned quickly. Anybody can do it and we heartily recommend that more people give it a try. Listener-sponsored radio stations, Low Power FM radio stations, local AM and FM radio stations are all looking for good radio and the time has come to spread the word about corporate power. If you would like help starting a program we would be happy to help. Email us at rtp@mcn.org.

Youth Media Online

- The Educational Video Center, www.evc.org/ • Youth Radio, www.youthradio.org/ • Youth Media Council, www.youthmediacouncil.org/ • Center for Media Literacy, www.medialit.org/ • The New Mexico Media Literacy Project, www.nmmlp.org/ • Alliance for a Media Literate America, www.amlainfo.org/. Additional list of resources and programs can be found on the Free Child Project's website at www.freechild.org/YouthMediaOrgs.htm.

Dialogue

Creating a Democratic Revolution

by Howard Ward

"Revising our current assumptions is the beginning of the Democratic Revolution" - Lawrence Goodwin

We will never create a "movement that coheres" until we...begin using a 'cooperative-dialogue' approach.

The Alliance and like-minded activists could greatly aid their effectiveness by joining an already growing coalition building a Dialogue movement, which is bringing people together in local communities, online, and around the globe. This conversational technique uses new forms of dialogue that enable us to explore and inquire into the many challenges we face, in a more profound and effective manner. Dialogue is about seeing, exploring and learning together. The action that is appropriate will then come out of the clarity and understanding that occurs in the dialogue.

We will never create a "movement that coheres" until we move away from our traditional "adversarial" forms of communicating with one another and begin using a "cooperative-dialogue" approach. The simple fact is that debate and argument are miserable failures for creating a cohesive movement. Einstein summed up the situation when he said, "Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them. We must learn to see the world anew." Margaret Wheatley, one of the many people doing excellent work in this area points out that, "All social change begins with a conversation." We may be running out of time with our current form of conversation. The choices before us boil down to either continuing to use a fragmented and defective approach, which isn't producing the results we desire, or using our collective wisdom in dialogue.

Riane Eisler suggests that we stand at the threshold of a new integrated politics of partnership. David Korten points out that new levels of human potential are being held back by the persistence of cultural myths that lead to dangerously distorted interpretations of physical and social reality. Francis Moore Lappe says the solution we seek is 'not' a model, it's a path—and the key to that path is dialogue.

Fortunately, a dialogue only needs the willingness of the people involved to try dialogue, a large room and copies of dialogue guidelines. Put the chairs in a circle and you are ready to go for two to two-and-a-half hours. Meeting frequency and subject is whatever the group chooses. Anyone who familiarizes him or herself with the process can facilitate, although everyone should co-facilitate.



2004 National Conference on Dialogue and Deliberation

The following suggestions come from the Eugene Oregon Dialogue Group at <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~mears/about.html>

1) Dialogue starts from a willingness to be tentative about what you know. 2) The focus of dialogue is on 'what is' rather than ideas or opinions. 3) You can participate by verbally or silently sharing perceptions. 4) Dialogue is letting the issue unfold in affection and mutual respect. 5) When a reaction arises, neither suppress nor defend it, but suspend it in the mind and in the group, keeping it constantly available for observation and questioning. 6) Dialogue is 'being together' and 'seeing together' in an unfolding relationship.

In general, our conversations with our fellow citizens who hold views contrary to ours tend to focus on assertions which we try to defend or convince the other person of. This doesn't work for changing understanding because the focus of each person is on proving a point rather than listening and understanding. It draws attention away from looking at the reality together. As Daniel Yankelovich said so well: "Dialogue forces participants to reconcile their views with their most basic values, it obliges them to confront their own wishful thinking, and it exposes them to a variety of ways of seeing and framing issues—an indispensable way to escape polarization and gridlock."

In order to learn together and help bring about a change in understanding, we need a different approach: An approach that gives everyone a chance, in a "safe environment," to confront their own wishful thinking; An approach where we ask questions of each other and truly listen and explore together. That approach is cooperative dialogue.

For more information see *The Bohm Dialogue Proposal* at www.muc.de/~heuvel/dialogue/dialogue_proposal.html and the National Coalition For Dialogue & Deliberation at www.thataway.org/resources/understand/models/models.html. I am also available by e-mail to answer questions or to offer suggestions at knowself@earthlink.net.

Howard Ward participated in the David Bohm Dialogue/Seminars given in the late 1980s in Ojai California and has been active since that time organizing and promoting Cooperative Dialogue.

Tapestry of the Commons

An interactive exploration of Private Property and Common Wealth. Build the tapestry and present the concepts to your community, or request a presentation for your AfD chapter. Now in the internet commons on the AfD website, www.thealliancefordemocracy.org.



graphic: Peter Veres

Slave Nation

In 1776, while Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry and John Adams wrote and talked about freedom, slaves in the American colonies were trying to escape to ships bound for Britain. Such facts are absent from standard American histories. The publication of history, and the selection of what aspects and interpretation of history will be taught in schools, has long been a place where powerful interests have struggled to keep a lid on "people's history." There may be no better example of a victory for the side of the people than the recent publication of *Slave Nation*, by Alfred W. and Ruth G. Blumrosen.

According to *Slave Nation*, in 1772 there was no momentum toward independence in the American colonies of Great Britain. A judge in London changed that. The anti-slavery movement in England had been helping slaves. One slave, the African-born Virginian James Somerset, had escaped his master in London and had then been recaptured. The anti-slavery group got a writ of habeas corpus, claiming the abduction had the status of a kidnapping. Lord Mansfield, the judge, asked the slaver to free the slave, hinting strongly that English law forbade slavery, and that all slaves brought to Britain might have to be freed if an official ruling on slavery was made. The slaver refused, demanding the return of his "property."

In June 1772, in what is known as the Somerset case, Mansfield ruled that any person set-

ting foot on English soil became free, no matter what the prior status of the person. *Slave Nation* demonstrates that the Somerset case led directly to the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

In 1772 Virginia was the most populous and prosperous of the American colonies. Its wealthy elite were tobacco growing slavers. Its leading politicians consisted largely of such slavers who were also lawyers. They were shocked by the Somerset decision. These Virginians believed their way of wealth was at stake. They decided in March of 1773 to create a Committee of Correspondence to begin communicating with other colonies. Their goal was protection from Parliamentary law in general and any freeing of the slaves in particular. Among the plotters were Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, and the most influential drug-lord-slaving family in Virginia, the Randolphs (a family Jefferson married into).

But they were careful not to use the word slavery in their public propaganda. Instead they created the phrase "ancient, legal and constitutional rights" to include the right to own slaves. This became a code in the South for maintaining slavery.

Slave Nation tells a compelling story and provides enough detail to convince open-minded readers of its conclusions. Much of the proof is in 50 pages of footnotes in the back of the book. The question of slavery and its place in America is taken through the Articles of Confederation all the way to the writing of the Constitution, which made slavery a national institution.

The Somerset case (but not its implications in the colonies) is covered in greater detail in another recent book, *Though the Heavens May Fall* by Steven Wise. Those who want to see how the anti-slavery movement succeeded in Great Britain will also want to read *Bury the Chains* by Adam Hochschild.

William P. Meyers is the author of The Santa Clara Blues: Corporate Personhood Versus Democracy. He serves on the Point Arena, CA school board and the board of the California Center for Community Democracy.

The publication of history, and the selection of what aspects and interpretation of history will be taught in schools, has long been a place where powerful interests have struggled to keep a lid on "people's history."



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The Bill of Media Rights

As Congress moves toward reopening the 1996 Telecommunications Act, organizations representing millions of Americans have put forward the Bill of Media Rights. The Bill is a milestone in the media reform movement that presents a positive and unified vision for a competitive, diverse, and independent media to better serve our nation's democracy and culture, today and tomorrow.

The American public has a right to:

- Journalism that fully informs the public, is independent of the government and acts as its watchdog, and protects journalists who dissent from their employers.
- Newspapers, television and radio stations, cable and satellite systems, and broadcast and cable networks operated by multiple, diverse, and independent owners that compete vigorously and employ a diverse workforce.
- Radio and television programming produced

by independent creators that is original, challenging, controversial, and diverse.

- Programming, stories, and speech produced by communities and citizens.
- Internet service provided by multiple, independent providers who compete vigorously and offer access to the entire Internet over a broadband connection, with freedom to attach within the home any legal device to the net connection and run any legal application.
- Public broadcasting insulated from political and commercial interests that is well-funded and especially serves communities underserved by privately-owned broadcasters.
- Regulatory policies emphasizing media education and citizen empowerment, not government censorship, as the best ways to avoid unwanted content.
- Electoral and civic, children's, educational, independently produced, local and community programming, as well as programming that serves Americans with disabilities and other underserved communities.
- Media that reflect the presence and voices of people of color, women, labor, immigrants,

Americans with disabilities, and other communities often under represented.

- Maximum access and opportunity to use the public airwaves and spectrum.
- Meaningful participation in government media policy, including disclosure of the ways broadcasters comply with their public interest obligations, ascertain their community's needs, and create programming to serve those needs.
- Television and radio stations that are locally owned and operated, reflective of and responsible to the diverse communities they serve, and able to respond quickly to local emergencies.
- Well-funded local public access channels and community radio, including low-power FM radio stations.
- Universal, affordable Internet access for news, education, and government information, so that all citizens can better participate in our democracy and culture.
- Frequent, rigorous license and franchise renewal processes for local broadcasters and cable operators that meaningfully include the public.

See www.citizensmediarights.org for more information.

We the People