

Spring 2005

Thich Nhat Hanh, Medea Benjamin, and
Jesse Jackson, Jr.—The Work Ahead
Wangari Maathai—Redefining Peace

yes!
a journal of positive futures

Amy Goodman
brings uncensored news to radio
and television

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Issue #33

Dear Reader,

The election of 2004 made it unmistakable—the media not only define the scope of our political conversation, they determine much of the public's perception of reality itself.

We focus on the media in this issue of *YES!* because it is clear that democracy cannot function when diverse, critical perspectives are excluded from the public conversation, nor when entire populations are absent from or mischaracterized in the popular media.

The importance of the media is reflected in the U.S. Constitution, which enshrines freedom of the press as one of our basic rights. It is why 3 million Americans contacted the Federal Communications Commission and Congress to demand a stop to rules that would have allowed more mergers and mega-media corporations. And it is why a growing media justice movement is demanding that those ordinarily excluded have a say in what is covered and whose voices get heard.

These movements show that the feisty, democratic spirit on which the U.S. was founded is alive and well.

At the local level, community-access television, community radio, low-power FM stations (legal and pirate), independent publications, and community internet sites proliferate. Community media centers, like the one in Grand Rapids (see page 21), teach young people to use the media, rather than be used by its advertisers and spin doctors. In Oakland, young organizers pressured a Clear Channel-owned station to allow young people of color to tell their own stories about criminal justice and other issues affecting their lives (see page 18).

Democracy Now! with host Amy Goodman (see page 24) has become one of the largest independent media networks in the country, reaching people through hundreds of radio stations and now also on satellite television.

The national media reform movement, led by Free Press (see page 33), the Center for Digital Democracy (see page 37), Prometheus Radio Project (see page 30), and others are building on the public's growing awareness that concentrated ownership of media outlets is bad for democracy. MoveOn's post-election poll of its members found media reform ranking second only to electoral reform as a top priority.

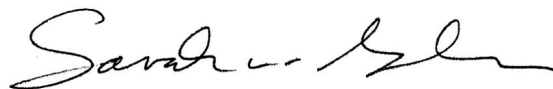
In coming months, major decisions will be made about the future of media, and you can weigh in. Your community might want to create its own wireless infrastructure to insure that all families, businesses, and schools can enjoy full Internet access (watch out—some of the big media corporations are trying to get state legislatures to make that illegal). When your local cable franchise comes up for renewal, you can ask for

more accountability and more community uses of the system.

At the national level, a new FCC chair will be appointed to replace Michael Powell, and citizen input can push the FCC in a new direction. FCC commissioners Michael Capps and Jonathan Adelstein continue to hold formal and informal hearings around the country, providing a focal point for education and activism on media policy. There is talk in Congress of bringing back the Fairness Doctrine, abolished in 1987, which required broadcasters to give equal airtime to opposing points of view. There is continued debate about who should control what part of the broadcast spectrum, with activists pointing out that the airwaves belong to the people and the public interest takes priority.

The opportunities are at all levels, and the stakes are high. If we are to have the public conversations essential to taking on serious dilemmas from climate change to criminal justice reform, we need forums for those conversations. The media can facilitate the conversations or shut them down. They can open up or constrain our beliefs about what is possible, what is desirable, who is deserving, and which perspectives are legitimate.

Our media are where we create our future. Our hope for a real conversation about our future lies with the scrappy independent writers, publishers, and broadcasters who have something to say and will not be silenced, and the activists who are insisting that media have the independence to give us the real stories of our time.



Sarah Ruth van Gelder
Executive Editor

P.S. I write this just before leaving for the World Social Forum, which meets annually under the banner "Another World is Possible." You can catch my reports at www.yesmagazine.org.

Linda Wolf





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Issue #33

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Ferruccio Sardella

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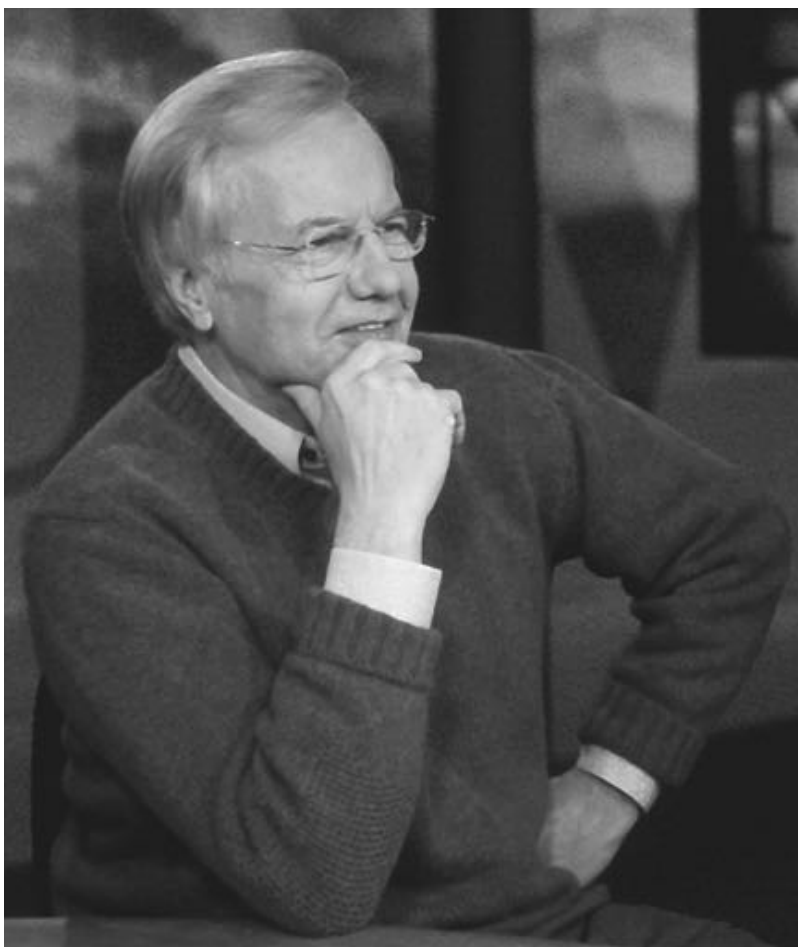


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Special support for this issue of *YES!* has been provided by the Glaser Progress Foundation and the Park Foundation.





readersforum



Did an article leave you delighted? Infuriated? Inspired to action?

Tell us what you think of the ideas you find in *YES!* and what you're doing to create a better world

Labor's Contribution Omitted

I appreciated Van Jones' article in the Winter 2005 issue of *YES!* On the heels of disheartening national election results, my spirits were boosted by Jones' sense of optimism and fight in "A Phoenix from the Ashes."

However, in giving accolades to the many progressive constituencies who came together in 2004, Jones notably failed to mention one group: organized labor.

Working people and our unions were one of the big stories of the 2004 election. From my hometown of Bellingham, Washington, to Miami, Florida, tens of thousands of union activists got co-workers registered to vote for the first time. We passed out millions of pieces of literature in the workplace and in neighborhoods and turned out the labor vote as never before.

In almost every state where unions still retain some strength, Bush was defeated. Union households voted more than 65 percent for Kerry—and even better in the "battleground" states. Progressives who won local and state offices often did so because unions worked hand-in-hand with greens, immigrant rights groups, and civil and women's rights activists.

Here in Washington state, the newest progressives elected to our legislature include union leaders such as Teamster Bob Hasegawa and Tami Green, a registered nurse and organizer for Service Employees International Union. They both won with a strong labor-neighbor door-knocking strategy and with

strong backing from environmental and civil rights organizations.

The lesson is not just that we need better candidates or better networking on the left, but we also need more union members. Building the labor movement, and fighting for the right of every worker to organize in her or his workplace, is a key part of any strategy to build a more powerful left.

The labor movement is essential to the campaign of resistance that Jones so eloquently describes. I hope to see more coverage of this vital coalition partner in future issues of *YES!*

Betsy Pernotto

**Member, International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, Local 17
Bellingham, Washington**

A Cell With a View

In the last few months I was moved to a cell with a view of the countryside instead of the rest of the prison.

Now this is what I see: The sunrise was beautiful, with brilliant pinks and deep purples changing and molding themselves around the shades of gray. The fog billowed up from the river and overflowed into the fields. Our resident hawk perched on the side of the gym as if it were a canyon wall. All the pigeons and chi-chi birds were a-flutter, sensing danger in the air. A cell with a view. What a change!

Thanks for the scholarship subscription to *YES!*

**Tom Dodson
Huntsville, Texas**

Nuclear is Not Sustainable Energy

I was surprised that Professor James Lovelock received equal time with Cameron Burns on nuclear power in the Fall 2004 issue. I'm dismayed that Mr. Lovelock was allowed to promote a highly dangerous technology, inextricably bound with nuclear weapons. More than half a century's experience with this technology shows clearly that one side of the coin (nuclear warheads) would not exist without the other (power), and vice versa. They feed on each other, hence the insurmountable conflict of interest at the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency, charged, on the one hand to promote nuclear power and, on the other, to regulate nuclear weapons proliferation.

After 10 years of working on the effects of low levels of ionizing radiation on living cells, I'm convinced that Lovelock's position is at least naive and, at its worst, dangerously irresponsible in dismissing opposition to nuclear power, a serious threat to life even at very small doses.

Those of us who would safeguard our ecosystem from the ravages of weapons tests (including U.S. plans for space nukes), and want no more Chelyabinsk, Windscales, Bohunice, Three Mile Islands, Chernobyls, or the thousands of "lesser" nuclear radiation releases worldwide, or the unresolved mega-problems of long-lasting nuclear wastes, need to reject the "environmentally friendly," rhetoric of a stealth nuclear industry awaiting its rebirth in the U.S. under the Bush Administration.

Secondly, I was shocked not to find a single word on cold fusion. The potential for this demonstrated free energy is unmatched by all alternative energies combined. New energy is predicated on the theory that there are fluctuations of electrical field energy embedded in the fabric of space; it is available everywhere and leaves zero pollution. Ignoring this discovery will surely result in endless American wars over oil.

John Otranto
Munich, Germany

Greenwashing China

Perhaps a more honest slogan for your magazine would be *Journal of Greenwashing*. To completely ignore China's massive growth in nuclear power is to erode the confidence of an educated reader. William Brent in the Fall 2004 issue must be aware of China's increased construction of nuclear power plants, having spent 20 years there. Yet his only mention of Chinese nuclear power is that it is considered renewable energy. Why does he not explain that the majority of the increase in renewables is actually nuclear? Positive articles can be useful only as long as they remain honest and based in reality.

Greg Mack
Moscow, Idaho

Brent Responds

The story in China has many moving pieces, not all of which can be addressed fully in one brief article. While it is true that China has plans to commission almost two nuclear reactors a year for the next 15 years, the pros and cons of nuclear power were, I think, addressed adequately elsewhere in the issue in which my article appeared. In addition, at the beginning of my article, I stated that I would "be honest about the complexities of China, while focus-

ing on the light, not the dark."

The questions you raise over nuclear power are worthwhile, whether in China or in the West (France, for example, relies on nuclear power for a third of its total). If nothing else, 20 years in China taught me pragmatism, and in the reality of rapid industrialization and extreme power shortage, China faces difficult choices. Does it adopt nuclear power or continue to build coal-fired plants that fast-track global warming? In this context, is nuclear relatively sustainable? The answers are certainly not easy. Let us also not forget that China's increasing anxiety over power supply is in part being fueled by the companies, many of which are based in the U.S., investing in manufacturing in China and their consumers who continue to demand cheaper products and higher-performing stock prices.

Will Brent

Left Coast Blinders?

I have enjoyed *YES!* However, everything you cover seems to be west of the Rockies. Aren't there a few people on the East Coast trying to save our beleaguered planet? After all, our older, civilized urban areas are more sustainable than your endless freeways. A small quibble—I'm just looking for fellow travelers closer to home.

Lee Allen
New York, New York

Editors' note: YES! would love to do more stories from around North America (and the globe). Please send us tips, leads, and the names of writers.

Working for Our Community

Friends of Flagstaff's Future was founded in 1995 by citizens who found themselves organizing around various issues again and again—the loss of community

open spaces and wildlife habitat as well as a proposal to build a large road through a beloved park.

We still focus on protection of open space and clean air and water, but we now focus also on a diverse and locally owned economy and what makes for a good place to live. We've grown from that circle of citizens into an organization with more than 800 dues-paying members and are considered an important stakeholder in many community processes. My philosophy on attracting increasing numbers of people to our work is in line with the stories and information shared in *YES!*—to show the positive alternatives that already exist or are possible.

Becky Daggett
Executive Director
Friends of Flagstaff's Future
Flagstaff, Arizona

What do you think of the articles in this issue of YES!? Please send letters to editors@yesmagazine.org or the address below

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“The *YES!* office is full of politically and socially engaged people.

—Michelle Burkhart
YES! Editorial Intern

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Uruguay Rejects Water Privatization



Supporters of Uruguayan president-elect Tabare Vazquez of the Broad Front wait for him to arrive at a rally in Maldonado, Uruguay

“Celebrate, Uruguayans, celebrate. Victory is yours.” That was how the new Uruguayan president-elect, Tabare Vazquez, addressed his followers after his victory in October’s elections.

Uruguayans were celebrating for two reasons. Through a national referendum, they had become the first country to outlaw water privatization by direct democracy and to declare water a “constitutional right.” And, for the first time in 170 years, the two-party system of Colorados and Blancos, who many said had become indistinguishable from one another, had ceded victory to a third party—the leftist coalition Frente Amplio (Broad Front), led by Vazquez.

The constitutional amendment, approved by 60 percent of the voters,

guarantees the participation of water users in every aspect of management and declared water a “public good” that would never be privatized.

The water referendum and the election of Vazquez are among the signs of Latin America’s turn away from the IMF and World Bank’s free-market economic policies. These institutions have encouraged, and sometimes insisted upon, privatization of national resources by transnational companies as a prerequisite for loans to developing countries.

In Cochabamba, Bolivia, last year, residents who were spending nearly half their wages on water took to the streets to successfully protest water privatization by the Bechtel Corporation.

In Argentina, Brazil, and Bolivia, voters rejected candidates who support neo-liberal policies in favor of center leftists who have promised more national control over natural resources.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez in January signed a decree to gradually eliminate the country’s giant estates, turning Venezuela’s four-year-old land reform law into a practical reality. President Chavez said that less than 5 percent of the country’s owners hold nearly 80 percent of the land.

Uruguay, once considered the Switzerland of South America, with economic stability and a highly developed welfare state, followed Argentina into economic collapse in 2002, with unemployment shooting up to 23 percent, poverty engulfing 40 percent of its population, and thousands leaving the country.

Like other South American countries, it also suffered the results of the U.S.-backed “dirty wars” of the 1970s, in which political activists were killed, imprisoned, disappeared, and exiled. Thousands of Uruguayans who had gone into exile returned to the country this year to take part in the historic election and referendum.

This tiny country has been a trailblazer before. It instituted free public education before England, women’s suffrage before France, and the eight-hour work day before the United States.

—Lisa Garrigues

Lisa Garrigues is a YES! contributing editor.

Communities Create Their Own Stores

As major department stores disappear from rural areas across the country,

community-owned stores are popping up in their places—and many of them are prospering.

When JC Penney closed its doors in Ely, Nevada, the 4,000 town residents were forced to drive 190 miles to shop for clothes and household goods. Unwilling to make this trip and unable to entice other department stores to fill the void, town leaders decided to form their own corporation and asked the community to invest in it. After they sold \$500 stock shares to neighbors and raised \$400,000, the community-owned department store Garnet Mercantile opened for business.

The residents of Ely took their cues from a handful of other community-owned department stores that have formed in Montana and Wyoming as chain stores have fled to more populous and prosperous areas over the last decade. In Plentywood, Montana, where the idea for community-owned department stores originated, residents bought 18 \$10,000 shares to form Little Muddy Dry Goods after the chain store Stage abandoned the town.

The community-owned department store The Merc in Powell, Wyoming, is only 22 miles from a Wal-Mart. Yet The Merc has seen success as residents opt to support the local business over the transnational corporation.

In the east, Middlebury, Vermont, and Greenfield, Massachusetts, are considering their own community-owned ventures. In Swanville, Minnesota, local residents raised \$300,000 to share ownership of the town's lone restaurant, Granny's Café.

Organizers attribute the success of these stores to a sense of community ownership, boards made up of local merchants, and the ability to modify the store's inventory to reflect the changing needs of the community.

In Austin, Texas, when Borders Books & Music threatened to move across the street from local mainstays Waterloo Records and the Book People, residents wanted to find out what

effect the chain would have on the community's economy. According to a study conducted by Civic Economics for the town, \$100 spent at Borders creates \$13 in local economic activity, while \$100 spent at the locally owned stores returns \$30 to the local economy.

—Megan Tady

Megan Tady is a former YES! intern.

Yes Men Strike Again

A spokesman claiming to speak for Dow Chemical declared on BBC TV in December that for the first time Dow would accept full responsibility for the 1984 disaster in which lethal gas escaped into the city of Bhopal, India, from a pesticide factory owned by Union Carbide, which became a Dow subsidiary in 1999. In what has been called one of the worst industrial disasters in history, the gas release killed thousands and left tens of thousands still suffering debilitating illness.

Jude Finisterra, who identified himself as a spokesman for the company, made the announcement on the 20th anniversary of the disaster. He outlined the company's plans to liquidate Union Carbide and use the \$12 billion proceeds to compensate victims and clean up the site. Finisterra also announced that the company would finally release the full chemical composition of the toxic cloud and the findings from studies that Union Carbide conducted shortly after the disaster.

In a few hours the story spread on news wires around the world, appearing twice on Reuters. It was heralded with jubilation in Bhopal and cost Dow a \$2 billion plunge on the Frankfurt stock exchange. That was until the BBC revealed one small problem with the story: Jude Finisterra did not represent Dow. His real name is Andy Bichelbaum; he is a member of the Yes Men.

Identifying themselves as "honest people" who "impersonate big time criminals in order to publicly humiliate them," the Yes Men earlier achieved

notoriety by masquerading as representatives of the World Trade Organization and announcing its abolition (see *YES!*, Winter 2005). Their pranks employ the following formula: A website purports to represent some organization; an unwary journalist or convention organizer requests a statement or appearance; a politically pointed prank ensues.

In an interview on Democracy Now!, Bichelbaum said the latest ruse began with their website, www.dowethics.com. Someone from the BBC e-mailed a request for an official statement on the disaster's anniversary. The BBC broadcast two apologies following the hoax, and Dow reiterated its disavowals of responsibility for Bhopal, later regaining all its lost stock price.

—Darrin Burgess

Darrin Burgess is a former YES! magazine intern. There is no connection between the Yes Men and YES! magazine.

Voters Raise Minimum Wage

At the beginning of this year, the minimum wage rose in five states—Illinois, New York, Oregon, Washington, and Vermont—bringing to 13 the number of states that have set a minimum wage higher than the federal minimum of \$5.15 an hour. Voters overwhelmingly approved initiatives to raise the minimum wage in Nevada and Florida last November, so low-wage earners in those states should also receive raises soon.

Yes Man Andy Bichelbaum, posing on BBC as a Dow Chemical spokesman, takes responsibility for the 1984 Bhopal gas leak and promises full compensation to victims



Florida's and Nevada's new laws require the minimum wage to rise automatically with inflation, as it already does in Washington and Oregon. The federal minimum wage has not risen since 1997 and, adjusted to constant dollars, has eroded by 40 percent since 1968.

A full-time worker would have to earn about \$9 per hour to reach the federal poverty level of \$18,838 for a family of four, but the National Low-Income Housing Coalition in 2001 estimated that a worker must earn \$13.87 an hour to afford the average cost of a two-bedroom apartment. In Florida, 300,000 workers earn less than the newly passed minimum wage of \$6.15 an hour, according to a study by the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), which led the Florida initiative campaign.

ACORN plans to put similar initiatives on the ballot soon in Ohio, Michigan, and Arizona, and expects the legislatures in New Jersey and Massachusetts to pass minimum wage increases this year, according to Jen

Prayers offered at a memorial for the victims of the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan



Junko Kimura

Kern, director of ACORN's Living Wage Resource Center.

Support for the initiatives was strong even in areas that voted heavily Republican. Majorities in both Florida and Nevada voted for President Bush, whose party opposes raising the minimum wage, yet voters in both

states supported the minimum wage increase by 71 percent and 68 percent respectively.

In Nevada, because the initiative would amend the state constitution, voters will have to approve it again in 2006 for it to take effect. Florida's legislature must decide when to enact its new minimum wage.

—Carolyn McConnell

Mayors Call for Abolition of Nuclear Weapons

To mark the 60th anniversary of the first detonation of the atom bomb, the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are asking mayors all over the world to call for negotiations to begin in 2005 on a treaty for the total elimination of nuclear weapons by 2020.

The United Nations will hold a conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in May. The U.S. anti-war coalition United for Peace and Justice and the anti-nuclear weapons group Abolition Now! have announced plans for a demonstration in New York's Central Park on May 1, 2005, the day before the United Nations conference begins.

Abolition Now! plans to bring to the conference a delegation of mayors who have signed on to the call for the elimination of nuclear weapons. So far, 600 mayors—including more than 60 from the United States—have joined the campaign.

—Monika Szymurska

For more information, go to www.abolitionnow.org. Monika Szymurska is Abolition 2000's outreach coordinator. Abolition Now! is a campaign of Abolition 2000.

Power Plants Agree to Slash Pollution

Operators of six coal-burning power plants in New York state have agreed to dramatically reduce emissions that cause smog and acid rain. New York Governor George Pataki and Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, who would like to take Pataki's job in two years, made

the announcement jointly. They said the agreements will reduce nitrogen oxide by 18,000 tons annually—the equivalent of removing 2.5 million cars from the state's roads—and cut sulfur dioxide by 123,000 tons annually—the equivalent of removing every diesel truck and bus from U.S. roads.

The agreements build on Spitzer's pioneering lawsuits in 1999 against 17 Midwestern power plants. Although those plants are outside of New York, state, Spitzer argued that their emissions harmed his state's air quality. One Midwestern company has settled, while other cases are still pending.

The Clean Air Act allows older plants to do routine maintenance without adhering to stricter pollution standards, with the expectation that the plants would eventually be retired and replaced. Spitzer charged that both the Midwestern and New York plants had been significantly modified to extend their life spans while continuing to pollute. In 2003, the Bush administration announced regulations, called the Clear Skies Initiative, that loosens pollution controls and enforcement under the Clean Air Act.

As part of the agreement with the New York state power companies, the plants will cut emissions by 70 to 90 percent by installing filters, switching to cleaner-burning coal, and shutting down some inefficient units. The companies also will pay millions to the state in fines and fees to support environmental projects. One company will turn over 2,500 acres of environmentally sensitive land in the Adirondacks to the state.

The American Lung Association of New York state estimates that the reduced emissions could result in about 63 fewer premature deaths of elderly New Yorkers each year, 460 fewer emergency room visits, 530 fewer cases of bronchitis in children, and 6,400 fewer asthma attacks.

—Carolyn McConnell



South Korea Pioneers Solar & Tidal Energy

South Korea is in the process of constructing both the world's largest solar power station and the largest tidal energy power plant. These projects will go a long way toward achieving the South Korean government's target of generating 5 percent of their energy from alternative energy within seven years.

Like Japan, South Korea has few fossil-fuel resources and is therefore dependent on oil and gas imports. The country is being hit hard by the rise in international crude oil prices.

Construction of the 15-megawatt solar power station is set to begin in February for completion in October 2006. Twelve companies are seeking to establish other solar power stations in the same province, to produce a total of 37 megawatts of solar energy.

The Korean government is developing a 254-megawatt wave power plant that generates electricity from the force and drop of waves and the temperature differences between layers of seawater. Yeom Gi-dae, a senior researcher of the Korean Ocean Research and Development Institute, said that these tidal technologies could generate 14 million kilowatts, over 20 percent of Korea's 2002 capacity of 50 million kilowatts, while causing little environmental damage. The plant is scheduled to be completed by 2009.

South Korea's claim to the largest solar plant may be short-lived. Israel has announced plans to build a solar power plant with more than six times greater capacity than the Korean plant.

—Rik Langendoen

For more information, see <http://alt-e.blogspot.com>.

Hybrids As Job Perk

The newest office perk helps fight air pollution and global warming, offering a juicy financial incentive for employees who buy a hybrid car. Santa Clara,



Court Mast

California, software-maker Hyperion started the trend by offering employees \$5,000 toward the purchase of a car that gets 45 miles per gallon and meets ultra-low emissions vehicle standards, like the Toyota Prius or the Honda Insight hybrids.

And now Timberland, the outdoor clothing company headquartered in New Hampshire, has announced its 6,000 employees will get \$3,000 incentives to buy hybrids, too.

"One of the most important steps an individual can take to improve the quality of our air is to drive a vehicle that goes further on a gallon or liter of gas," Hyperion's CEO Godfrey Sullivan said in a statement announcing the initiative. "One of the most important steps a company can take is to help them."

Hyperion, which has some 2,500 employees in 26 countries, has allocated \$1 million a year toward the incentives, which means as many as 200 employees could participate annually. The program has already proved popular, with 35 employees signing up in the first month.

—Katharine Mieszkowski

Katharine Mieszkowski is a senior writer for Salon.

U.S. to Become Net Food Importer

Figures released at the end of 2004 by the Department of Agriculture showed that in 2005, for the first time in more than 50 years, the U.S. will have no trade surplus in food. In 2001, the U.S. had a \$13.6 billion agricultural trade surplus. In 2004, that surplus was zero, and 2005 will likely see the U.S. become a net food importer.

The Department of Agriculture report attributed much of the falling surplus to increased U.S. demand for exotic spices and foodstuffs and such value-added products as beer and wine. The Department also notes that imports of beef, a traditionally strong American product, will rise to 47 percent of the U.S. beef market. In another example of the weakening U.S. position, Brazil reported that its soybean exports in the first 10 months of 2004 equaled projected U.S. exports for the entire year.

—Doug Pibel

Doug Pibel is a contributing editor of YES!

Unocal Settling Suits

Burmese villagers are set for a win in their decade-long struggle with oil giant Unocal over its responsibility for

A double tanker of gasoline will be saved annually for every 25 employees who buy hybrid cars under the incentive offered by Hyperion, according to company estimates



Burmese refugees chain themselves to a Unocal tanker in Los Angeles to protest human rights abuses and rainforest destruction linked to the oil company's southern Burmese pipeline

violence by the Burmese military in connection with the company's construction of an oil pipeline. Terms of the agreement to settle the villagers' lawsuits are still confidential, but both sides say it will compensate the plaintiffs and communities in the pipeline region.

EarthRights International, the Center for Constitutional Rights, and others had sued California-based Unocal on behalf of 14 villagers, accusing Unocal and the French energy company Total of being complicit in the military's tortures, rapes, and murders and benefiting from forced relocation and forced labor. Unocal has denied these charges and claims the pipeline has improved the lives of 45,000 villagers living in the region (see YES! Indicators, Winter 2003).

EarthRights International said it was "thrilled" and "ecstatic" about the settlement, but it is unclear whether it will set a precedent for similar cases brought against U.S. corporations. The federal case was filed under the 1789 Alien Tort Claims Act, originally intended to prosecute piracy.

Similar cases awaiting trial under that law include two lawsuits by Nigerians against Royal Dutch/Shell and Chevron. Both accuse the oil companies of being complicit in the Nigerian military's intimidation and violence

against environmental and human rights protestors.

Business and government interests have argued these cases could interfere with U.S. foreign policy. In 2002 the U.S. State Department encouraged the dismissal of a case between Exxon Mobil and citizens of Aceh province, Indonesia, on the grounds that it would harm U.S. business and set back the administration's war on terror. The citizens of Aceh claim abuses by the Indonesian military in the area surrounding Exxon's natural gas facilities, which the military guarded.

—Lisa Kundrat

For more information see www.businesshumanrights.org/Categories/lawlawsuits or www.earthrights.org.

Students Target Coke

The president of Oberlin College bowed to student pressure this fall and announced that the college would discontinue use and sale of Coca-Cola products on campus.

Oberlin's ban on Coke products puts it in the company of Bard College in New York and Lake Forest College in Illinois, where officials say they will not renew their contracts with Coke when they expire. Student groups at Evergreen State College in Washington state, the University of Montana

in Missoula, Rutgers University in New Jersey, and Leeds University in England have protested the presence of Coke on campuses and passed resolutions calling for its removal. These campuses are at the forefront of a growing movement to hold the Coca-Cola Company responsible for violence and intimidation of labor activists at Colombian bottling plants.

In 1996, Colombian paramilitary forces shot to death Isidro Gil at the gates of the Carepa Coca-Cola bottling plant where he worked. Gil was an activist and member of SINALTRAINAL, Colombia's food and beverage union. Paramilitary forces subsequently burned down the union's offices and forced employees of the bottling plant to resign from the union. In the years following Gil's murder, paramilitary forces have continued to kidnap, torture, and kill Coke bottling plant union leaders and members of their families.

United Students Against Sweatshops has brought the international "Unthinkable! Undrinkable!" campaign against Coke to campuses. The Steelworkers union is helping organize student protests and pressure on Coca-Cola board members during shareholder meetings on the issue of human rights violations at Colombian bottling plants.

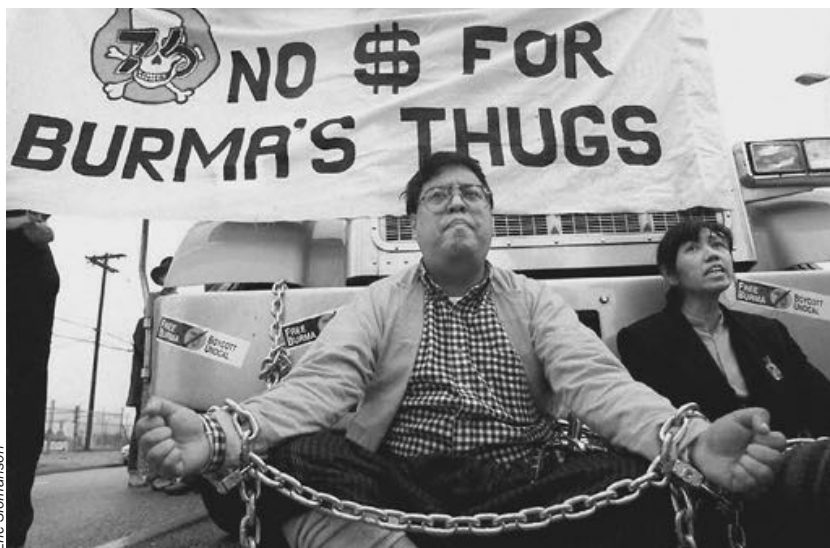
On March 31, 2004, while Coca-Cola CEO Douglas Daft gave a speech on business ethics at Yale University, 20 students and New Haven residents lay at his feet to symbolize those killed and tortured in Colombia.

Coca-Cola maintains that it has no control over labor and human rights violations at the Colombian bottling facilities, even though it is a major shareholder in the plants and employs several of the plants' executives.

Coca-Cola products include Canada Dry, Dasani water, Dr. Pepper, Evian, Minute Maid, Odwalla, Powerade, and Sprite.

—Krista Camenzind

Krista Camenzind is a former YES! intern.



Eric Sjomanson

the page that counts

Percent of Americans who say they have voluntarily made changes in their lives over the past five years that resulted in earning a smaller income: 49
Percent who are happy with the change: 60¹
Number of seconds it takes for a new blog to be created somewhere in the world: 7.4²
Value of free drug samples passed out to doctors in the U.S. in 2002: \$11.9 billion
Amount in sales of top-selling drugs prescribed to U.S. patients in 2002 for purposes not approved by the FDA: \$12.9 billion
Number of drug company sales representatives for every seven doctors in the U.S. as of 2003: 1³
Number of FDA staff monitoring the safety of FDA-approved drugs for every 31 million prescriptions filled in the U.S.: 1⁴
Percent growth of businesses owned 51 percent or more by minority women from 1997–2004: 54.6
Percent growth of all U.S. privately owned businesses during that same period: 9
Sales generated in 2004 by the 1.4 million U.S. businesses majority-owned by women of color: \$147 billion⁵
Weight of the moose that ran off a cliff in Norway and landed on Leo Henriksen's Mazda: 770 pounds⁶
Percent of voters who said the most urgent moral crisis facing the U.S. is materialism and greed: 33
Percent who said poverty and economic justice is our biggest moral crisis: 31
Percent who said gay marriage is the biggest moral crisis: 12
Percent who said the Iraq war was the issue that most affected their vote: 42
Percent who said gay marriage most affected their vote: 9⁷
Percent of the U.S. homeless population made up of families with children: 40
Percent of requests for emergency shelter by U.S. homeless families that went unmet last year: 32⁸
Percent of U.S. police chiefs who believe that drug enforcement efforts have failed to reduce the drug problem: 67⁹
Length of the nail a misfiring nail gun shot into the roof of a construction worker's mouth: 4 inches
Number of days he was unaware what was causing his headache: 6
Amount of money he will owe the hospital due to lack of medical insurance: \$80,000–100,000¹⁰
Year Social Security trustees in 1996 predicted the Social Security trust fund would be depleted: 2029
Year the trustees in 2000 predicted the trust fund would be depleted: 2037
Year the trustees in 2004 predicted the trust fund would be depleted: 2042¹¹
Number of boys and girls age 11 and 12 strip-searched in a public charter school in Texas: 10
Amount of missing money the school was searching for: \$10¹²
Percent decline of international graduate student applications in the U.S. from 2003–2004: 28
Percent of graduate schools taking policy action to address this drop: 72¹³
Number of galaxies discovered in 2004 by one research station across one-quarter of the sky: 110 million¹⁴
Estimated percent of the universe's matter not directly observable because it does not emit light: 90¹⁵

1. "The New American Dream Survey," Center for a New American Dream, Widmeyer Research and Polling, August 2004, www.newdream.org 2. www.technorati.com/about 3. "Prescription For Trouble: Drugmakers pushing risky off-label uses on physicians," by Alison Young, Chris Adams, researcher Tish Wells, Nov. 4, 2003, Knight Ridder, www.freep.com/news/health/drugs4_20031104.htm 4. "American consumers suffering as more new drugs debut in U.S., analysis shows," by Tony Pugh, Seth Borenstein, researcher Tish Wells, Knight Ridder, Dec. 17, 2004, www.realcities.com/mld/kwashington/news/columnists/tony_pugh/10443482.htm 5. Center for Women's Business Research, press release Nov. 16, 2004, www.womensbusinessresearch.org 6. Aftenposten, Norway, Norwegian News in English, February 24, 2003, www.aftenposten.no/english/local/article496559.ece 7. "American voters say urgent moral issues are peace, poverty and greed," Zogby International, Center for American Progress, Res Publica, and Pax Christie USA, Nov. 2004, www.zogby.com/soundbites/ReadClips.dbm?ID=10389 8. "The United States Conference of Mayors—Sodexo USA Hunger and Homelessness Survey 2004," www.usmayors.org 9. "Drugs and Crime Across America: Police Chiefs Speak Out," survey by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., for Drug Strategies and Police Foundation, Dec. 2004, www.drugstrategies.org 10. "Cause of 'toothache' was 4-inch nail in man's skull," by Erin Gartner, Associated Press, Jan. 17, 2005, http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/nationworld/2002152791_nail17.html 11. "Issue Guide: Social Security," the Economic Policy Institute, www.epinet.org/content.cfm?issueguide_socialsecurity 12. "10 Young Students Strip-Searched in Texas," Associated Press, Jan. 7, 2005, www.wtopnews.com/index.php?nid=316&sid=383213 13. Council of Graduate Schools study, Sept. 7, 2004 press release, www.cgsnet.org/pdf/Sept04FinalIntlAdmissionsSurveyReport.pdf 14. "What Just Happened?" *The New York Times*, Dec. 26, 2004, p.WK10 15. Sloan Digital Sky Survey, <http://cas.sdss.org/dr3/en/sdss/>



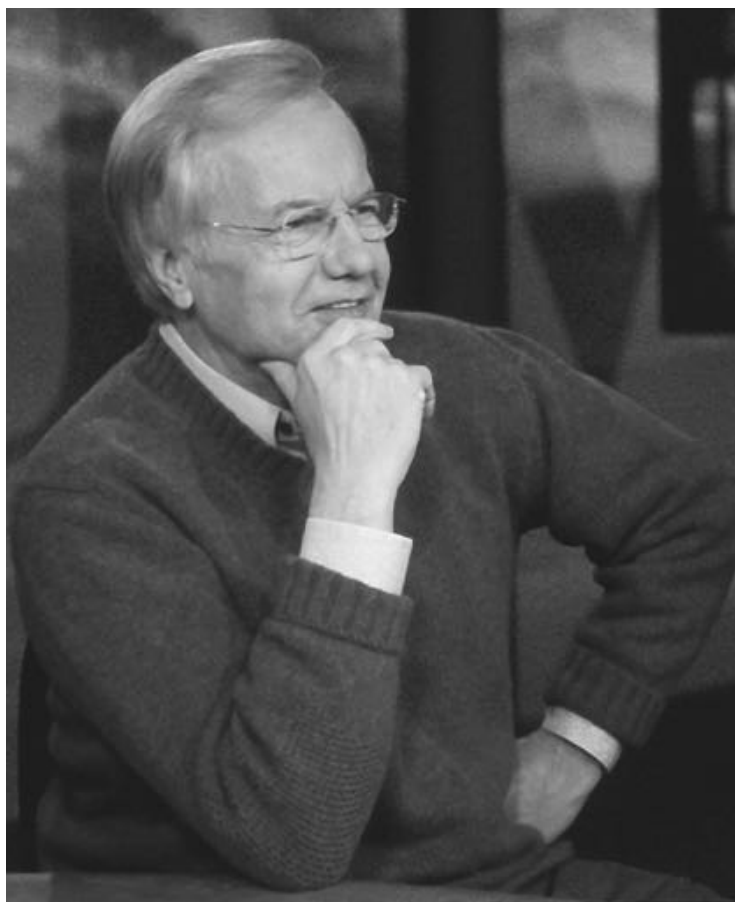
media that set us **free**

There's a reason journalism is the only
occupation protected by the U.S. Constitution.
To govern ourselves, we the people
need the truth, not what is
politically expedient



Bill Moyers

warns US that we could lose everything if we fail to protect our right to know.



for years, I.F. Stone was America's premier independent journalist, bringing down on his head the sustained wrath of the high and mighty for publishing in his little four-page *I.F. Stone's Weekly* the government's lies and contradictions culled from the government's own official documents. No matter how much they pummeled him, Izzy Stone said: "I have so much fun I ought to be arrested."

That's how I felt 25 years ago when my colleague Sherry Jones and I produced the first documentary ever about the purchase of government favors by political action committees. When we unfurled across the Capitol grounds yard after yard of computer printouts listing campaign contributions to every member of Congress, there was a loud outcry, including from several politicians who had been allies just a few years earlier when I worked at the White House.

I loved it, too, when Sherry and I connected the dots behind the Iran-Contra scandal. That documentary sent the right-wing posse in Washington running indignantly to congressional supporters of public television who accused PBS of committing—horrors!—journalism right on the air.

While everyone else was all over the Monica

media that set us free

Lewinsky imbroglio, Sherry and I took after the unbridled and illegal fundraising by Democrats in the campaign of 1996. This time it was Democrats who wanted me arrested.

But taking on political scandal is nothing compared to what can happen if you raise questions about corporate power in Washington.

When my colleagues and I started looking into the subject of pesticides and food for a Frontline documentary, my producer Marty Koughan learned that industry was attempting, behind closed doors, to dilute the findings of a National Academy of Sciences study on the effects of pesticide residues on children. Before we finished the documentary, the industry somehow purloined a copy of our draft script and mounted a sophisticated and expensive campaign to discredit our broadcast before it aired. Television reviewers and editorial page editors were flooded in advance with pro-industry propaganda. There was a whispering campaign. A *Washington Post* columnist took a dig at the broadcast on the morning of the day it aired—without even having seen it—and later confessed to me that the dirt had been supplied by a top lobbyist for the chemical industry. Some public television managers across the country were so unnerved by the blitz of disinformation they received from the industry that before the documentary had even aired, they protested to PBS with letters prepared by the industry.

Others used the American Cancer Society's good name in efforts to tarnish the journalism before it aired; including right-wing front groups who railed against what they called "junk science on PBS" and demanded Congress pull the plug on public television. PBS stood firm. The documentary aired, the journalism held up, and the National Academy of Sciences felt liberated to release the study that the industry had tried to demean.

They never give up. Sherry and I spent more than a year working on another documentary called *Trade Secrets*, based on revelations—found in the industry's archives—that big chemical companies had deliberately withheld from workers and consumers damaging information about toxic chemicals in their products.

Hoping to keep us from airing those secrets, the industry hired a public relations firm in Washington noted for using private detectives and former CIA, FBI, and drug enforcement officers to conduct investigations for corporations. Not only was a vicious campaign directed at me personally, but once again pressure was brought to bear on PBS through indus-

try allies in Congress. PBS stood firm, the documentary aired, and a year later the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences awarded *Trade Secrets* an Emmy for outstanding investigative journalism.

Covering chaos

Journalism has never been easy, and it's getting harder, for more reasons than you can shake a stick at.

One is the sheer magnitude of the issues we need to report and analyze. My friend Bill McKibben enjoys a conspicuous place in my pantheon of journalistic heroes for his writing about the environment. Recently in *Mother Jones*, Bill described how the problems we cover—conventional, manageable problems, like budget shortfalls, pollution, crime—may be about to convert to chaotic, unpredictable situations. He puts it this way: If you don't have a job, "that's a problem, and unemployment is a problem, and they can both be managed: You learn a new skill, the Federal Reserve lowers interest rates to spur the economy. But millions of skilled, well-paying jobs disappearing to Bangalore is a situation; it's not clear what, if anything, the system can do to turn it around."

Perhaps the most unmanageable of all problems, Bill McKibben writes, is the accelerating deterioration of the environment. While the present administration has committed a thousand acts of vandalism against our air, water, forests, and deserts, were we to change managers, Bill argues, some of that damage would abate. What won't go away, he continues, are the perils with huge momentum—the greenhouse effect, for instance. Scientists have been warning us about it since the 1980s. But now the melt of the Arctic seems to be releasing so much freshwater into the North Atlantic that even the Pentagon is alarmed that a weakening Gulf Stream could yield abrupt changes, the kind of climate change that threatens civilization. How do we journalists get a handle on something of that enormity?

Another reason journalism is getting harder is ideology. One of the biggest changes in my lifetime is that the delusional is no longer marginal. How do we fathom the mindset of extremists who blow to smithereens hundreds of children and teachers of Middle School Number One in Beslan, Russia? Or the radical utopianism of martyrs who crash hijacked planes into the World Trade Center? How do we explain the possibility that the election in November may have turned on several million good and decent citizens who believe in the Rapture Index? That's what I said—the Rapture Index; Google it and you will understand why the best-selling books in Amer-

Artwork page 12 by
Ferruccio Sardella
Photo page 13
by Robin Holland
courtesy of NOW with
Bill Moyers

ica today are the 12 volumes of the “Left Behind” series. These true believers subscribe to a fantastical theology concocted in the 19th century by a couple of immigrant preachers who took disparate passages from the Bible and wove them into a narrative millions of people believe to be literally true.

According to this narrative, Jesus will return to Earth only when certain conditions are met: when Israel has been established as a state; when Israel then occupies the rest of its “biblical lands;” when the third temple has been rebuilt on the site now occupied by the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa mosques; and, then, when legions of the Antichrist attack Israel. This will trigger a final showdown in the valley of Armageddon during which all the Jews who have not converted will be burned. Then the Messiah returns to earth. The Rapture occurs once the big battle begins. True believers “will be lifted out of their clothes and transported to heaven where, seated next to the right hand of God, they will watch their political and religious opponents suffer plagues of boils, sores, locusts, and frogs during the several years of tribulation which follow.”

I’m not making this up. We’ve reported on these people for our weekly broadcast on PBS, following some of them from Texas to the West Bank. They are sincere, serious, and polite as they tell you that they feel called to help bring the Rapture on as fulfillment of biblical prophecy. That’s why they have declared solidarity with Israel and the Jewish settlements and backed up their support with money and volunteers. It’s why they have staged confrontations at the old temple site in Jerusalem. It’s why the invasion of Iraq for them was a warm-up act, predicted in the ninth chapter of the Book of Revelations.

One estimate puts these people at about 15 percent of the electorate. Most are part of the core of George W. Bush’s base support. He knows who they are and what they want.

Ideology and secrecy

Journalists who try to tell these stories, connect these dots, and examine these links are demeaned, disparaged, and dismissed.

For one thing, you’ll get in trouble with the public. *The Chicago Tribune* recently conducted a national poll in which about half of those surveyed said there should be some kind of restraint on reporting about the prison abuse scandal in Iraq; I suggest those people don’t want the facts to disturb their belief system about American exceptionalism.

The poll also found that five or six of every 10

Americans “would embrace government controls of some kind on free speech, especially if it is found unpatriotic.” No wonder scoundrels find refuge in patriotism; it offers them immunity from criticism.

If raging ideologies are difficult to penetrate, so is secrecy. Secrecy is hardly new. But never has there been an administration like the one in power today—so disciplined in secrecy, so precisely in lock-step in keeping information from the people at large and, in defiance of the Constitution, from their representatives in Congress. The litany is long:

- The president’s chief of staff orders a review that leads to at least 6,000 documents being pulled from government websites.
- The Defense Department bans photos of military caskets being returned to the U.S.
- To hide the influence of Kenneth Lay, Enron, and other energy moguls, the vice president stonewalls his energy task force records.
- The CIA adds a new question to its standard employee polygraph exam, asking, “Do you have friends in the media?”
- There have been more than 1,200 presumably terrorist-related arrests and 750 people deported, and no one outside the government knows their names, or how many court docket entries have been erased or never entered.
- Secret federal court hearings are held with no public record of when or where or who is being tried.

Secrecy is contagious. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has announced that “certain security information included in the reactor oversight process” will no longer be publicly available.

New controls are being imposed on space surveillance data once found on NASA’s web site.

Secrecy is contagious—and scandalous. *The Washington Post* reports that nearly 600 times in recent years, a judicial committee has stripped information from reports intended to alert the public to conflicts of interest involving federal judges.

This “zeal for secrecy” I am talking about—and I have barely touched the surface—adds up to a victory for the terrorists. When they plunged those hijacked planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, they were out to hijack our Gross National Psychology. By pillaging and plundering our peace of mind they could panic us into abandoning those unique freedoms—freedom of speech, freedom of the press—that constitute the ability of democracy to self-correct and turn the ship of state before it hits the iceberg.

media that set us free

As deplorable as was the betrayal of their craft by Jayson Blair, Stephen Glass, and Jim Kelly, the greater offense was the seduction of mainstream media into helping the government dupe the public to support a war to disarm a dictator who was already disarmed. Now we are buying into the very paradigm of a “war on terror” that our government—with staggering banality, soaring hubris, and stunning bravado—employs to elicit public acquiescence while offering no criterion of success or failure, no knowledge of the cost, and no measure of democratic accountability.

I am reminded of the answer the veteran journalist Richard Reeves gave when asked by a college student to define “real news.” “Real news,” said Richard Reeves “is the news you and I need to keep our freedoms.” I am reminded of the line from the news photographer in Tom Stoppard’s play “Night and Day:” “People do terrible things to each other, but it’s worse in places where everybody is kept in the dark.”

I have become a nuisance on this issue—if not a fanatic—because I grew up in the South, where, for so long, truth-tellers were driven from the pulpit, the classroom, and the newsroom; it took a bloody civil war to drive home the truth of slavery, and still it took another 100 years of cruel segregation and oppression before the people freed by that war finally achieved equal rights under the law.

Not only did I grow up in the South, which paid such a high price for denial, but I served in the Johnson White House during the early escalation of the Vietnam War. We circled the wagons and grew intolerant of news that did not conform to the official view of reality, with tragic consequences for America and Vietnam.

Few days pass now that I do not remind myself that the greatest moments in press history came not when journalists made common cause with the state, but when they stood fearlessly independent of it.

Media monopoly

That’s why I have also become a nuisance, if not a fanatic, on the perils of media consolidation. My eyes were opened by the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which led to my first documentary on the subject, called *Free Speech for Sale*. On our weekly broadcast we’ve returned to the subject more than 30 times. I was astonished when the coupling of Time Warner and AOL—the biggest corporate merger of all time—brought an avalanche of gee-whiz coverage from a media intoxicated by uncritical enthusiasm. Not many people heard the quiet

voice of the cultural critic Todd Gitlin pointing out that the merger was not motivated by any impulse to improve news reporting, magazine journalism, or the quality of public discourse. Its purpose was to boost the customer base, the shareholders’ stock, and the personal wealth of top executives.

Not only was this brave new combination, in Gitlin’s words, “unlikely to arrest the slickening of news coverage, its pulverization into ever more streamlined and simple-minded snippets, its love affair with celebrities and show business,” the deal is likely to accelerate those trends, since the bottom line “usually abhors whatever is more demanding and complex, slower, more prone to ideas, more challenging to complacency.”

Sure enough, as merger has followed merger, journalism has been directed to other priorities than “the news we need to know to keep our freedoms.”

According to the non-partisan Project for Excellence in Journalism, newspapers have 2,200 fewer employees than in 1990. The number of full-time radio news employees dropped by 44 percent between 1994 and 2000. And the number of television network foreign bureaus is down by half.

Journalism professor Ed Wasserman, among others, has looked closely at the impact on journalism of this growing conglomeration of ownership. Wasserman acknowledges, as I do, that there is some world-class journalism being done today, but he speaks of “a palpable sense of decline, of rot, of a loss of spine, determination, gutlessness” that pervades our craft.

Journalism and the news business, he concludes, aren’t playing well together. Media owners have businesses to run, and “these media-owning corporations have enormous interests of their own that impinge on an ever-widening swath of public policy”—highly important things, ranging from campaign finance reform (who ends up with those millions of dollars spent on advertising?) to broadcast deregulation and antitrust policy, to virtually everything related to the Internet, intellectual property, globalization and free trade, even to minimum wage, affirmative action and environmental policy.

A profound transformation is happening. The framers of our nation never imagined what could happen if big government, big publishing, and big broadcasters ever saw eye-to-eye in putting the public’s need for news second to their own interests—and to the ideology of free-market economics.

Nor could they have foreseen the rise of a quasi-official partisan press serving as a mighty megaphone for the regime in power. Stretching from think tanks fund-

ed by corporations to the editorial pages of *The Wall Street Journal* to Rupert Murdoch's far-flung empire of tabloid journalism to the nattering know-nothings of talk radio, a ceaseless conveyor belt—often taking its cues from daily talking points supplied by the Republican National Committee—moves mountains of the official party line into the public discourse.

Citizen journalists

I've just read *We the Media*, by Dan Gillmor, a national columnist for the *San Jose Mercury News*. Gillmor argues persuasively that Big Media are losing their monopoly on the news, thanks to the Internet—that “citizen journalists” of all stripes, in their independent, unfiltered reports, are transforming the news from a lecture to a conversation. He's on to something.

In one sense we are discovering all over again the feisty spirit of our earliest days as a nation when the republic and a free press were growing up together. It took just a few hundred dollars to start a paper then. There were well over 1,000 of them by 1840. They were passionate, pugnacious and often deeply prejudiced; some spoke for Indian-haters, immigrant-bashers, bigots, jingoists, and land-grabbers.

But some called to the better angels of our nature—Tom Paine, for one, the penniless immigrant from England, who, in 1776, just before joining Washington's army, published the hard-hitting

pamphlet *Common Sense*, with its uncompromising case for American independence. It became our first best-seller because Paine was determined to reach ordinary people—to “put into language as plain as the alphabet” the idea that they mattered and could stand up for their rights.

I look up at the pictures of my grandchildren above my desk: Henry, age 12; of Thomas, age 10; of Nancy, 7; Jassie, 3; Sara Jane, nine months. I see the future looking back at me from those photographs and I say, “Father, forgive us, for we know not what we do.” And then I am stopped short by the thought: “That's not right. We do know what we are doing. We are stealing their future. Betraying their trust. Despoiling their world.”

I ask myself: Why? Is it because we don't care? Because we are greedy? Because we have lost our capacity for outrage, our ability to sustain indignation at injustice? What has happened to our moral imagination?

The news is not good these days. I can tell you, though, that as a journalist I know the news is never the end of the story. The news can be the truth that sets us free—not only to feel but to fight for the future we want. And the will to fight is the antidote to despair, the cure for cynicism, and the answer to those faces looking back at me from those photographs on my desk.

This article was adapted and updated from a presentation by Bill Moyers to a Society of Professional Journalists conference on September 11, 2004. Bill Moyers retired at the end of 2004 as host of the PBS program NOW With Bill Moyers.

Dipping a toe in the blogosphere

Micah L. Sifry

There's a reason why 20,000 new blogs are born everyday, why the number of these online journals has topped 6.5 million and is more than triple the number in existence just one year ago. Blogging is easy!

I discovered this one afternoon when, after about the 10th time of extolling the value of blogging to my executive director as a way for our organization to connect to the lively activist energy flowing through the web, he said on a conference call, “OK, how hard would it be to get a simple blog built? What would it cost? Maybe we should give it a try.”

I logged on to Blogger.com, a free service provided by Google. I clicked on the “Create a blog” button, picked out a title (we were going after George Bush's selling of government policy to the highest bidders, so we called it “GeorgeWBuy”), and then picked out a simple template from the ones provided. Twenty seconds later, the screen said, “Your blog has been created! You can now add your posts to it, create your personal profile, or customize how your blog looks.”

Laughing, I interrupted the call to say, “Um, go to GeorgeWBuy.blogspot.com. I just built the site. And it's free.”

A week later, one of my colleagues astonished me by using the same tool to build DailyDeLay.blogspot.com, focused on Tom DeLay.

When the editors of *YES!* asked me to write a profile of one of my favorite bloggers for this issue, I said I couldn't pick just one. The most important thing about blogging is not the popular sites with the biggest audiences or the quirky individual voices. It's the democratization of media.

Does all this blogging just produce more cacophony?

Not at all. Read a few bloggers and follow their blogrolls, or use any of the new tools (like Technorati, Feedster, or Bloglines) that help readers zero in on blogs covering their interests. You'll soon discover a world full of real people committing a profoundly revolutionary act: They're telling the truths of their lives in their unique human voices.

You can have a blog, too. Nothing is stopping you. C'mon in, the water's fine!

Micah L. Sifry is Public Campaign's senior analyst. His blog is at micah.sifry.com.



media that set us free



Malkia Cyril and Taishi Duchicela

speaking for ourselves

Young people in Oakland wanted to talk about real solutions to the poverty, racism, and powerlessness that they grew up with—but all the city’s hip-hop radio station offered was violence and mind-numbing entertainment



I am afraid for my son's life. He's only a baby, and as I watch his eyes begin to fully open I think of how brown boys like him are scapegoated by the media everyday. Every time I turn on the radio or television, I see young people of color turned into symbols of danger and violence to manipulate the public, shape policy, and make money off the creativity of urban youth culture. If nothing changes, my son will grow up with media images of himself as a vicious criminal who should either be silenced or locked up. Those biased images will affect the life-and-death decisions politicians make about the communities he lives in, the schools he goes to, the jobs he holds.

—Taishi Duchicela

In 2002, California proponents of increased policing and punishment introduced Measure FF. The timing was ironic, coming on the heels of the Oakland Riders scandal, in which a group of corrupt police officers were accused of brutalizing youth and people of color. Measure FF aimed to add 100 police officers to the streets of Oakland, California, where we live. In the months before the election, news coverage focused on rising homicide rates in Oakland and ignored cuts in services and education, the lack of jobs, and other conditions that contributed to crime and violence in Oakland. The voices and perspectives of young people of color were absent from public debate on this issue.

Nowhere was this lack more evident than on hip-hop station 106.1 KMEL, a station aimed at young listeners. KMEL had famously fired well-known progressive radio host Davy D. The station is owned by mammoth radio conglomerate Clear Channel, which owns more than 1,200 radio stations nationwide and is the world's largest entertainment promoter. In the Bay Area, Clear Channel owns nine radio stations, as well as the majority of concert venues and billboards. The station rarely featured the voices of progressive youth and artists, instead focusing on punishment and violence, without examining the context of that violence and the root causes of hopelessness and poverty. Young activists like us were tired of this lack of context and balance, especially while Clear Channel radio personalities shaped a public discussion about our lives with potentially devastating consequences.

When we discovered that Clear Channel grossed a total of \$8 billion in 2001, and, in the Bay Area, the majority of KMEL's 600,000 listeners were young people of color, we realized that KMEL was using media bias to profit from the culture and conditions of young people of color, while leaving us completely out of the dialogue on an issue that means life or death, prison or freedom, to many of us. We knew

that we needed access to the airwaves if we wanted to strengthen our movement for social justice. Our goals were to open KMEL to the voices of local youth organizing groups and artists, and increase balance and context in the policy debate on KMEL's talk show "Street Soldiers." To put it another way, we wanted to hold corporate owner Clear Channel accountable to the community it profits from.

Youth organizations, including HOMEY, an organization for the rights of youth in the Mission district of San Francisco; People United for a Better Oakland (PUEBLO); Mindz Eye, a group of local artists; Let's Get Free, a youth group active in exposing the Oakland Riders scandal; and our own organization, Oakland's Youth Media Council, formed the Community Coalition for Media Accountability.

We trained youth leaders to assess KMEL's content. After monitoring station content, we found that the voices of youth organizers (including those working against Measure FF) were indeed absent, and the shows focused disproportionately on episodic stories of violence while neglecting the larger policy debate.

Armed with what we'd found, the coalition confronted local Clear Channel executives with specific demands. We started small, asking that KMEL partner with the Coalition to produce a live radio broadcast led by young organizers of color about violence in Oakland. At first we got nowhere.

But we pressured Clear Channel through repeated face-to-face meetings with their executives as well as street, phone, and fax actions. We held a protest outside Clear Channel's offices, and when KMEL deejay Supersnake played a song called *Bomb, Bomb, Bomb* right after a discussion of President Bush's plans for war in Iraq, we organized listeners to call in and complain. We attracted significant news coverage of our demands, including a cover story in the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* in January 2003.

Finally, KMEL program director Michael Martin agreed to a two-hour live broadcast by youth. The

media that set us free

Youth Media Council and Let's Get Free coordinated the show, entitled "360 Degrees of Violence," featuring local artists, poets, youth organizers, and parents.

Young people spoke on Clear Channel-controlled airwaves about the war on terror and its effects on their lives. Donald Lacy talked about the death of his teenage daughter as an innocent bystander to street violence and the need for alternatives to incarceration as a solution to violence. And youth told a different story about Measure FF: They talked about recent state and local budget cuts and the loss of jobs and services in the Bay Area, and how jobs and services were greater community needs than more police. A few months later Measure FF was defeated.

Our victory represented a small but significant victory for the movement called media justice, which seeks to use media to re-enfranchise the disenfranchised, organize communities around issues

that matter to them, dismantle corporate control of culture, and re-invest media profits into impoverished communities. Media content shapes life-and-death conditions for marginalized communities, so it must be the starting point for youth-led media reform. At the Youth Media Council, we want to build collective power over media production, organize our communities for media accountability and transform biased media content. We know that media access without power means we are playing a game we can never win. Media justice is a power-building strategy that revolutionizes media so our communities can have a voice in creating solutions to the tough challenges we face. *Si se puede.*

Malkia Cyril is director of the Youth Media Council. Taishi Duchicela is a media justice advocate with the Council. Photo of Bay Area youth activists being interviewed on KPFA courtesy Amy Sonnie.

The Guerrilla News Network **Anna Lappé**

Days before the November election, a powerful music video spread across the Internet. By the time it aired on MTV, millions of viewers around the world had already seen it. Eminem—a rapper known more for his misogyny than his astute political analysis—had released one of the most powerful provoking messages of this presidential election year: *Mosh*.

Envisioned and produced by Guerrilla News Network's Ian Inaba, *Mosh* was classic GNN: marrying pop culture with powerful political messages. *Mosh* cuts between an American soldier returning home to redeployment notices, a single mother facing eviction, and a growing army of frustrated youth marching toward the voting booths.

Launched five years ago by Inaba, producer Josh Shore, filmmaker Stephen Marshall, and my brother, the journalist Anthony Lappé, GNN was founded to respond to what all four saw as a huge gap in mainstream journalism: It doesn't speak to young people.

Starting with their NewsVideos—MTV-style

short videos with political content—GNN hoped to make the news hip again and encourage their readers and viewers to question authority. "We try to show young people how to live your life as someone who questions power and do that responsibly," says Marshall.

This year has been GNN's biggest yet: Besides running their website, which now gets 25,000 unique daily visits, they published their first book, *True Lies* (Plume), made up of investigations of critical, unreported stories. They released their first documentary, an on-the-ground-look at Iraq called *Battleground: 21 Days on the Edge of Empire*, and completed their first feature film, *This Revolution*, starring Rosario Dawson and set against the backdrop of the Republican National Convention.

Not bad for four 30-somethings working on a shoestring budget, and enough to make a little sister proud.

Anna Lappé is the author, with Frances Moore Lappé, of *Hope's Edge: The Next Diet for a Small Planet*, and co-founder of the Small Planet Fund.

if you're not making television, it's making you



Dirk Koning



Instead of letting television define their reality, the kids in Grand Rapids are using community access equipment to tell their stories and put a new spin on their classroom studies

Over the past 25 years, hundreds of teens and adults have discovered that if you're not making television, it's making you. They've had this epiphany while volunteering at the Community Media Center's public-access station, GRTV, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. As they learned to angle a camera for a different perspective, edit for a desired effect, or schedule a broadcast to reach a certain audience, they realized that, all their lives—for good and for ill—television has been shaping their thinking, molding their culture, and persuading their purchases. Now instead they are the puppeteers.

Several are continuing to learn through the Center's Mobile Media Lab for Information Education (MoLLIE). At teachers' requests, MoLLIE brings

media that set us free

digital video cameras and laptops with editing software to grade and middle schools throughout the city. It's about replacing reports and dioramas with curriculum-based video presentations conceived, scripted, acted, costumed, staged, produced, filmed, and edited by teams of three to five students. It's about teaching kids to make TV and engaging their families with their schools when their MoLLIE video airs on GRTV's MoLLIE Matinee. It's mostly about fun, but it's also about helping kids experience the power of media to shape another's perspective.

They get the message on many levels. It starts when they see a first cut and wonder why on screen they don't look or sound like they thought they would. In later takes, they become conscious of their enunciation, volume, gestures, and facial expressions. In learning to communicate more effectively through media, they are learning to listen more critically to media. They shoot a story out of sequence or cheat a shot to make themselves look smaller or taller, and come to understand that the media they watch have been similarly manipulated to capture and shape their attention.

They have an outlet for their creativity and can make literal their acting out. This past fall, for

instance, two eighth-grade boys were forced to endure a class trip to a local production at the Grand Rapids Ballet. Their teacher was mortified when the boys mockingly imitated the dancers both in the theatre and on the bus trip home. Two weeks later, MoLLIE came to help the kids make mini-documentaries on earth science. The two boys chose to chronicle a volcanic eruption—through dance. While they achieved their goal of making everyone, including their teacher, laugh at their antics, they simultaneously demonstrated their complete mastery of volcanism, and, ironically, interpretive dance.

In another recent instance, MoLLIE teamed with the Media Center's GRIID (Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy) to develop and deliver their own curriculum on media literacy and voting. GRIID targeted an elementary school in a neighborhood that had traditionally low voter registration and turn-out. MoLLIE worked with fourth and fifth graders to help them produce videos on voting, American history, and relevant political issues. They invited a staff person from the city clerk's office to an evening celebration in which parents came to view their children's videos. At their children's urging, more than 40 parents registered to vote for the first time.

It takes a community media center

Dirk Koning



The Community Media Center will acquire this theatre this year for use in film sharings, lectures, media training, concerts, and as a recording studio.

The Community Media Center (CMC) was founded in 1981 as Grand Rapids Cable Access Center (known as GRTV). It is one of the first public access stations in the nation to expand beyond public access television to provide a range of media tools, training and transmission options for community members and nonprofit organizations.

Among them, the five affiliates offer numerous projects and services.

GRTV provides cable access production and broadcasting used by hundreds of volunteers annually. It houses Community Media Services, a fee-based video production company that creates multi-media presentations about nonprofit organizations and their issues; MoLLIE, a hands-on video production learning tool used in schools; Youth Kulture, a teen group that focuses on relevant issues and broadcasts programs of interest to youth; and CMC's educational services. Recently it launched "Classic Arts GR," an in-house monthly production showcasing the classic arts offerings in the city.

WYCE is a community radio station staffed by volunteer programmers who air folk, blues, jazz, rock and worldbeat music without commercial interruption, but with public-service announcements. WYCE promotes local musicians and bands and annually hosts several concerts, premiere among them the "Hat Trick" Series, during which the audience passes a hat to donate to a pre-selected nonprofit organization. Recently WYCE branched out in a collaboration with GRIID to provide a weekly talk radio program, "Catalyst Radio." The



media that set us free

MoLLIE has also teamed with another of the Community Media Center's affiliates, Grandnet, to deploy video excerpts to its Internet site. Staff use MoLLIE's wireless laptops to show the children their videos as they can be seen by others in the community and the world.

Put in the role of teacher, kids experience the power of media to transform and affect themselves and others. They can persuade their parents to exercise their rights, and they can teach their teachers the difference between active and passive learning. Throughout the Grand Rapids community, teachers are realizing new ways to use television as a teaching and evaluating tool. Rather than using their classroom television to convey information to passive, bored students, they are using MoLLIE production tools to enable students to master and demonstrate their understanding of required curriculum topics. In becoming active producers, students are learning science, English, social studies, and geography at the highest levels; partnering with classmates and experiencing teamwork in new ways; learning to communicate and to listen critically; and becoming absorbed in their subject matter in ways that make their lessons unforgettable.

MoLLIE is still too young to fully demonstrate the expected long-term outcomes of "her" classroom projects. However, at the Community Media Center we have already observed some rather remarkable changes. Teachers are eager to try the resource in their classrooms once they've seen it elsewhere. Parents are watching MoLLIE Matinee and becoming involved in their children's schools and school work. And students are becoming empowered, active learners.

More than any other generation, today's children are molded by television and other media. But in Grand Rapids, children are molding their own minds. They're making TV. Has it changed them? We won't know for several years, but one piece of evidence is rather telling: Twenty-six hundred children have handled costly MoLLIE cameras and laptops; they've walked the streets of their center-city neighborhoods with them or taken them out onto school grounds in the cold or rain. And not once in the past three years has a piece of equipment been damaged, stolen, or misused. The power of television, after all, is awesome, and, ultimately, worthy of their respect.

Dirk Koning is executive director of the Community Media Center (CMC). All photos courtesy of CMC.

format consists of feature interviews with community organizations and a community calendar.

GRID (Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy) provides media literacy training on numerous issue areas such as media and racism, violence, democracy, gender, and healthcare. It oversees a "Progressive Directory" of nearly 100 nonprofit organizations interested in staying current on proposed legislation and opportunities for activism, and has a lending library of political books, videos, and newspapers. For weeks prior to an election, GRID monitors network coverage of candidates and issues and reports its findings in its annual Teledemocracy report. It hosts a website of nonpartisan voter and candidate information, and provides a forum for televised candidate debates on GRTV.

GrandNet offers a web server and technology services for nonprofit organizations. It maintains a public computer lab and offers monthly classes in computer and Internet skills.

In 2005 CMC will acquire its fifth affiliate: the Wealthy Theatre. This 300-seat historic theatre was saved from a wrecking ball seven years ago but failed to thrive as a rental arts venue in its center-city neighborhood. The CMC will offer

film series, lectures and video presentations, walk-in computer and video production training and broadcast, concerts and a recording studio.

The Community Media Center is more than the sum of its parts. As one young volunteer said when he left for college last fall: "The Media Center bears the mission of 'building community through media,' and I had always assumed that meant through the programming resulting from our West side headquarters. As my days wind down at this place, I've come to realize that the real community-building had nothing to do with what was showing on channel 25. It was inside the walls of this place, on all the truck shoots over the years, the times in the edit room when you worked with someone to figure out why a video refused to capture, the conversations held over an equipment check-out. The community we have built here may not be as expansive as GRTV's coverage area, but it is just as diverse, and equally, if not more, important."

To learn more about the CMC and its affiliates and to view MoLLIE videos, visit www.grcmc.org. Executive director Koning can be reached at 616/459-4788, extension 101.





Unafraid to confront presidents, ambassadors, and CEOs with facts they'd prefer to ignore, Amy Goodman pursues a vision of journalism as truth seeker and gadfly. It puts her at odds with the powerful but at the forefront of a growing independent media network

all photos by Jason Houston



going to where the silence is

Amy Goodman interviewed by Carolyn McConnell

President Bush's plans to partially privatize Social Security have blanketed the media in recent months. A top headline on NPR's Morning Edition, for example, on December 16, was "Bush's plan to reform Social Security." The show aired a clip of Bush claiming that Social Security is in crisis and that our record budget deficits are caused by shortfalls in the program. Cut to next story—we heard no follow-up, no checking on whether there's any truth to the claim (in fact, the reverse is true—the Social Security trust fund is subsidizing the rest of the federal budget). It's as if there are no facts beyond what the president says. You'd never know by listening to Morning Edition's segment that there is a controversy over whether Social Security is really in crisis.

Contrast that with the December 15 radio and television broadcast of the independent news program Democracy Now! After listening to guests debating the merits of privatizing Social Security, the host, Amy Goodman, asks a question that shows she's done her homework:

"... Every leading Republican proposal acknowledges that private accounts by themselves do little to solve the system's projected shortfall ... Instead, these proposals rely on deep cuts in benefits to future retirees. ... The controller general of the Government Accountability Office ... said that the creation of private accounts for Social Security will not deal with the solvency and sustainability of the Social Security fund. Your response to that?"

It's a straightforward question, but it's the kind that sets Goodman's work apart day after day. It assumes there's a world of facts that listeners have a right to know and that her guests need to respond to. Spotting competitive spins on a controversial issue does not constitute good journalism. Facts coupled with a wide range of perspectives on those facts does. This simple journalistic premise underlies all of Goodman's work and has made her both the darling of the alternative media world and

a recipient of mainstream journalism's highest honors, including the Robert F. Kennedy Prize for International Reporting, the George Polk Award, and the Alfred duPont-Columbia Journalism Award.

Democracy Now! is now billing itself as the largest community media collaboration in the United States. It is broadcast on 300 stations—and growing—and three years ago branched out into television, through both the DISH TV and Direct TV satellite television networks.

CAROLYN: Over the years, you've broken many stories that other journalists failed to investigate. For example, when most media were reporting that Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the president of Haiti, had fled his country in February 2004, you broke the news that he had been forced to leave. How did you do that?

AMY: We covered the U.S.-backed coup in Haiti as soon as it began. Aristide was sent into exile in the Central African Republic on a U.S. plane. The U.S. government said he had chosen to leave the country. But when Aristide got to the Central African Republic, a remote part of Africa, we spoke with him and he said that he was a victim of a modern kidnapping in the service of a coup d'état backed by the United States. We broadcast that telephone call. Network reporters asked Rumsfeld, "Is it true what Democracy Now! is reporting?" and Rumsfeld had to respond. He said something like "That's ridiculous," but I've learned in my years as a journalist that when a politician says "That's ridiculous," you're probably on the right track.

Two weeks later, I went on a small plane with a delegation led by U.S. Representative Maxine Waters to return Aristide to this hemisphere. Democracy Now! aired the exclusive broadcast of this journey. When we returned from Africa with Aristide to Jamaica, where the Aristides had been invited by the prime minister, CNN called me on the tar-

media that set us free

It's absolutely critical in this age of the greatest media consolidation our country has ever seen to have different voices out there

mac to give a report. The Associated Press published our reports throughout the trip.

When network reporters use our stories to challenge Rumsfeld, when AP publishes our reports, and CNN broadcasts my report from Jamaica, that's what I call trickle-up journalism. Independent media can go to where the silence is and break the sound barrier, doing what the corporate networks refuse to do.

Democracy Now! continues to cover the invasion and occupation of Iraq with reports from unembedded journalists. We are called continually by mainstream journalists, both international press and press here, asking for our sources so they can follow up and take our stories.

Democracy Now! is not letting the Iraq war go from the foreground to the background, as many media are. Ultimately, what's important about our coverage is not whether we cover any individual story. It's really about drumbeat coverage and who gets interviewed regularly. It's not about the occasional exception. If I mention any story we covered, you might say, "Oh, I once saw that in *The New York Times*." You might well have, but that's not what sinks into people's consciousness. It's what's on the front page day after day and who is interviewed—who is framing the story. That's what we do so differently.

CAROLYN: It seems that one of the things that can keep a story going is connections among independent media. You've been lauded for helping support other independent media.

AMY: I deeply believe that none of us can do it alone. In conjunction with the publication of *Exception to the Rulers*, the book I wrote with my brother David, we've been on a 100-city tour. Every step of the way we have supported independent media. We work with independent bookstores, local radio and television. For example, on Columbus Day—or Indigenous People's Day—weekend, we went up to WOJB, an Ojibwe reservation radio station in northern Wisconsin, to do a fundraiser.

In Tampa, we helped WMNF, a community radio station, and Speak Up Tampa Bay, a public access television station, do a joint fundraiser. In northern California, when we did a sellout fundraiser at the Eureka municipal building, we worked with four stations—KIDE Native Radio; KHSU, Humboldt State University's NPR station; KMUD community radio; and Humboldt Community TV, the public access cable station—and an independent bookstore. I don't think they'd ever done an event together. It was an incredible moment of people feeling the power of independent media joining together.

CAROLYN: Do you see the launching of Air America as competition?

AMY: Oh no. The people at Air America are proud partisans, which is very different from what we do. But it's absolutely critical in this age of the greatest media consolidation our country has ever seen to have different voices out there.

I use the analogy of the Italian restaurants on my corner in New York City. When I first lived there, there was one Italian restaurant on the corner. Then across the street another Italian restaurant opened. The first Italian restaurant was terrified that they would lose business. But the business only grew. And then across the street another Italian restaurant opened. It only brought more people to that corner, because they knew it as an area to get Italian food, and it helped all the restaurants. Helping build diverse media outlets is about shoring up a democratic society.

CAROLYN: What inspires you to do the work you do?

AMY: My family inspires me. Both my parents were peace activists. My father deeply believed in community service. He worked to integrate the schools in New York. I would go with him at night to auditoriums, to meetings over busing and integration, where people would be screaming at each other. I watched him help guide the community to a less polarized position. My 107-year old grandmother inspires me to just keep going. The rest of my family, many of whom perished in the Holocaust, while others fled Europe before the Holocaust, inspire me with their belief that there could be a better world. Journalism is the avenue I chose to pursue that belief.

CAROLYN: The corporate media give you a measure of notice and grudging respect, but in the middle of



media that set us free



a generally admiring *Washington Post* profile you're described as "beaming from some alternative left galaxy." How far out of the margins do you think your work reaches?

AMY: I think that we're reaching mainstream America. People across the political spectrum respond to our work. In Tampa, when we did the event there, 2,500 people packed the performing arts center. Tampa Bay is the home of Centcom, the U.S. military's central command, and of McDill Airbase. Soldiers come out to our talks. In fact, I just had to take a call from a soldier as I was talking to you. Soldiers, military families, people in intelligence, government employees who are tired of information being manipulated and misrepresented, conservative Republicans who deeply care about issues of privacy and corporate control and an out-of-control war budget, all respond to our work. We're reaching out way beyond any easily categorized population. I don't think the lines are as easy to draw any more, as the growth of Democracy Now! shows.

CAROLYN: American journalists typically define their role in terms of objectivity. How do you define the proper role of journalism?

AMY: The corporate media are the furthest thing I know from objective. They beat the drums for war. Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) did a study of coverage the week before and after Colin Powell gave his pitch for war at the UN Security Council on February 5, 2003. Of the 393 interviews about the coming war on the four major nightly newscasts—NBC, ABC, CBS, and the PBS Newshour with Jim Lehrer—in this critical period right before invasion, only three interviews were with anti-war representatives. That is not mainstream media. That didn't represent mainstream America, when most people were in favor of pursuing diplomacy and inspections rather than going to war. That's extreme media.

The media in this country reflect the spectrum of opinion between the Democrats and the Republicans. That's as far as it goes. The Democrats joined the Republicans in authorizing the invasion of Iraq, and so on that issue there was no diversity of opin-





media that set us free

ion among people in power. Then, during the election campaign, media coverage of the war showed more debate on this issue. That was only because the Democrats had to distinguish themselves from the Republicans so they opened up the debate a bit. But now it closes down again.

Once the Democrats conceded the election, the media shut down on voting issues. They said, if Kerry conceded, what's to look at here? There's a great deal to look at. These are not Bush's or Kerry's votes to give up. They're the American people's votes,

and they deserve all of their votes to be counted. But in the absence of dissent from people in power, the media would not stake out their own territory and do their own investigation of the election.

Journalism is the only profession explicitly protected by the U.S. Constitution, because journalists are supposed to be the check and balance on government. We're supposed to be holding those in power accountable. We're not supposed to be their megaphone. That's what the corporate media have become.

Juan Gonzalez **Anthony Lappé**

In late 2003, a squad of New York-based national guardsmen came back from Iraq complaining of mysterious ailments, pains in their sides, rashes, and dizziness. When the Army refused to provide medical tests, the men turned to Juan Gonzalez, *New York Daily News* reporter and Democracy Now! co-host. The soldiers picked the right man. The award-winning reporter had broken the story of the White House cover-up of air-quality hazards around Ground Zero. Two years later, despite official denials, thousands of firemen, volunteers and residents are sick with respiratory problems.

The soldiers believed they had been exposed to depleted uranium (DU), the controversial radioactive metal used by the U.S. military in its munitions. In Iraq, they had slept for months just feet from a tank destroyed by DU rounds.

Gonzalez convinced the *Daily News* to pay for expensive medical tests. The result was a journalistic coup—and a medical nightmare. Four of the nine soldiers tested positive for DU. The front-page story forced the Army to begin testing all the soldiers from the unit. Tragically, in 2004, another soldier whom Gonzalez helped get tested had a child born missing one hand and most of the fingers on the other. He too tested positive for DU.

Not all of Gonzalez's battles have been with the "powers that be." In 2001, he resigned from Pacifica's WBAI radio station when it erupted in bitter inner-office warfare. But he returned a year later to help his co-host Amy Goodman propel their two-hour daily show to new-found national prominence.

What's less known is Gonzalez's tireless work to help the next generation of minority journalists. As president of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, Gonzalez pushed through an initiative he dubbed the Parity Project, to boost the employment of Latino journalists.

It's already seeing results. The first two newspapers to take part in the project increased the number of Latinos and other minority journalists by an average of 41 percent. Others are following suit. The soft-spoken Gonzalez hasn't been afraid of ruffling feathers, calling on his fellow minority journalists to work harder to reach out to white reporters and executives.

Jay Rosen, chair of New York University's journalism program, says of Gonzalez, "Some people are just temperamentally truth-tellers."

Someone buy this guy a cape.

Anthony Lappé is executive editor of the Guerrilla News Network.





media that set us free

When those in power—both Democrats and Republicans—continually alleged that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, Democracy Now! was reporting on all the voices that said there were no such weapons.

When I've been on shows like Hardball and Scarborough Country, representatives of the corporate media have said to me, "How were we supposed to know those claims were false, since the administration officials said they were true?" But it's not journalism's role to pass on opinions. It's journalism's role to get to the truth. Those in power are an increasingly small elite. That elite doesn't represent the mainstream view of people in this country or the world. Even if all those in power are in agreement, reporters should ask, is this true what they're saying?

CAROLYN: Do you think your work is going to need to change as a result of the elections?

AMY: No, I think we will continue to provide a forum for all different voices, paying particular attention to those who have been iced out of the media. I think the media should be a sanctuary for dissent. That's what makes this country healthy.

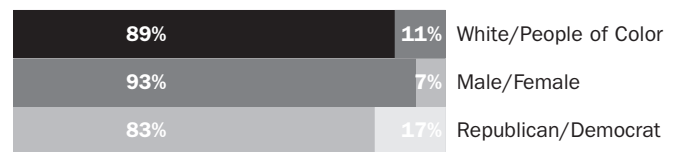
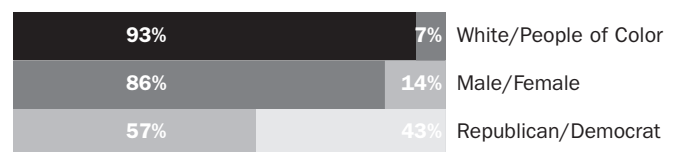
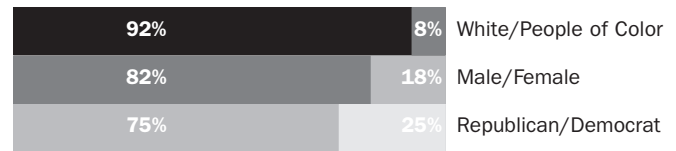
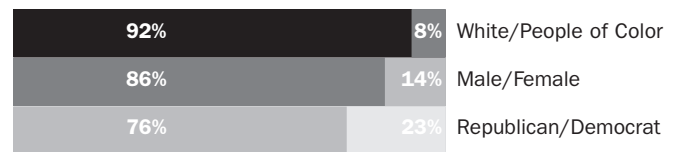
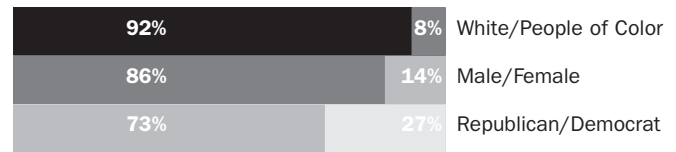
I think the media can build bridges in society between cultures and communities. But we need to hear people speaking for themselves. That breaks down bigotry and the stereotypes that fuel hatred. If you don't hear the voices of certain people, and you see them being demonized, it becomes easier to treat them as subhuman.

I think that the whole Abu Ghraib prison scandal began long before the first low-level soldier laid a finger on the Iraqi prisoners. I think it started here at home with an administration that demonizes whole populations. African Americans have always been targeted, and now Arab Americans, Muslims, people of South Asian descent are being targeted as well. The media rarely give voice to those populations. Instead, they bring us the small circle of pundits who know so little about so much, explaining the world to us.

I think what makes Democracy Now! special is that we are a daily, global, grassroots, unembedded news hour committed to airing the voices of people all over the world.

For more information on where you can listen to Democracy Now! or for transcripts of its programs, go to www.democracynow.org.

206/842-0216 • www.yesmagazine.org



Who's the expert? Julie Hollar

The news is defined by those who tell it. In mainstream U.S. media, journalists are supposed to remain "objective," and turn to outside sources to provide commentary and opinion about events and issues. But who are these special few who get to shape the debate? Unfortunately, the spectrum is extremely narrow.

Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting has conducted many studies analyzing the on-air sources of various news broadcasts over the years, with striking results. Across the board, the mainstream media skew white, right, and male.

This decidedly homogeneous group leaves little room for important voices of dissent. During the three weeks

leading up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, only 3 percent of U.S. sources on the evening news shows of ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, Fox, and PBS expressed anti-war opinions—even though more than a quarter of the U.S. public at the time opposed invasion.

Even National Public Radio fails to give voice to the public: A 2004 FAIR study found that nine of the top 10 most-frequently used sources on NPR were white male government officials. Corporate sources (6 percent) were given almost as much air time as public interest groups (7 percent), and four men were heard for every woman.

Julie Hollar is communications director of FAIR. Data in graph above courtesy FAIR.





media that set us free



presente! a radio station barn raising

A low-power radio station becomes a high-powered tool for farmworkers struggling in America's tomato fields for dignity and against poverty and modern-day slavery



Hannah Sassaman

In tiny crowded trailers on the edges of fields, in lonely bars and shops selling plantains and phone cards, over car radios and cheap receivers, a crowd of voices spilled through the warm tropical air of rural southwest Florida. "Coalition? Presente! Coalition? Presente! Coalition? Presente!" The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) was *presente*—definitely here.

For a minute, you could hear dead air—then the rustling of people moving behind the microphone. A new deejay's voice came on—a woman who apologized, in Spanish, for the rough transition. But, as she introduced a rousing Mexican folk song in



her strong voice, the crowd witnessing the birth of Radio Consciencia cheered. Coalition member after Coalition member took a turn at the microphone, greeting fellow workers all across the city in Spanish and a variety of indigenous Mexican and Guatemalan languages. This was the first broadcast of a new low-power radio station, a tool that the Coalition would use to fight for workers' rights in the tomato fields of southwest Florida and around the world.

The CIW began in 1993 as a small group of farmworkers who met weekly in a local church to discuss how to improve their community and their lives. The CIW's members, who today number about 2,500, spread throughout Florida, are largely Latinos, Haitians, and Mayan Indians. Most speak little or no English. They are isolated from friends and family. Most U.S. labor laws—including the 40-hour work week, the right to collectively organize, child labor protection, and unemployment insurance—don't apply to them, and even when they do, any worker who complains risks deportation.

As Luisa Fernandez, one Coalition member, explained to an Oxfam investigator, the tomato farmers even control the farmworkers' daily movements: "It is compulsory. Once you are in the field, you can't get back to your house. The boss is the one who takes you to the field and brings you back home."

They live eight, 10, 12 to a trailer, and pay exorbitant rent for the homes they use only when they are not picking tomatoes, from four in the morning until dark falls again. The farmworkers are paid 45 cents for each bucket of tomatoes they pick, averaging about \$50 for their dawn-to-dusk labor—about the same as they made in 1980. It is thanks to the CIW that tomato pickers earn that much; before the CIW began organizing, wages had fallen even lower.

As they fight for *un centavo más*—one penny more per bucket of tomatoes they pick—the Coalition counts the voices of the workers themselves as the most effective tools.

"When I first arrived, I was brought to South Carolina, where I was told I'd work in the fields picking cucumbers. What they didn't tell me was that I had just consented, without knowing, to being a prisoner and slave. I was yelled at daily, wasn't allowed to leave the premises and had guns pointed at me and others all the time," says Julia Gabriel, a petite 29-year-old Guatemalan Mayan farmworker. Gabriel first came to the U.S. in 1992 and found herself in debt bondage to the employer who had arranged for her to come. She was held captive among 70 undocument-

ed workers in a South Carolina labor compound for three months. After escaping, she became a key witness in the *U.S. v. Flores* case, which led to the federal Worker Exploitation Task Force in 1998 and Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act in 2000. Ten years later, she shares her story at rallies and interviews, and now over Radio Consciencia's airwaves, to dispel the myth that slavery is dead in America. This was one of five modern-day slavery operations the CIW helped bring to justice, resulting in freedom for over 500 workers from debt bondage.

In Spanish, Haitian Creole, and native Mexican and Guatemalan languages like Quanjolbal, Zapotec, and Quiche, the Coalition's members go door-to-door during the busy winter harvest season explaining the Coalition's efforts to win higher wages and better working conditions. The turnover is heavy—a new wave of migrant workers arrives every winter—and each new face in a trailer is a fresh challenge—but is also another potential partner in the Coalition's struggle for fair pay and decent treatment in the fields.

When CIW reaches workers, they have won impressive victories, including, in 1998, 13 to 25 percent raises for tomato pickers, and, in 2002, convictions of three crewleaders for forcing 700 workers into slavery in Florida citrus groves. But they needed another way to contact those workers they weren't reaching on foot.

That's where Prometheus was able to help. The Prometheus Radio Project, for which I'm an organizer, is a non-profit organization that fights for a more democratic radio dial. Founded in 1998 by veterans of the pirate radio movement, we were at the forefront of the grassroots struggle that led the FCC to create new low-power radio licenses to serve community needs that weren't being met by the big broadcasters. Now, we travel all over the country building these low-power, community radio stations for groups who need them.

Prometheus has done six of these building projects, called "Radio Barnraisings," in the spirit of neighbors coming together to build a barn. Prometheus folks work intimately with the nascent station founders, and help them find and build the necessary equipment cheaply and sustainably, so a team of volunteers with few resources besides a lot of heart can keep a station on the air permanently, for a community that really needs it.

The FCC finally issued the Coalition a permit for a station in 2003. Previous barnraisings with an anti-sprawl and environmental organization on the Chesapeake Bay, and a 25-year-old civil rights foun-

PAGE 30, TOP: Florida farmworkers celebrate the opening of Radio Consciencia, their low-power community radio station. BOTTOM: In the booth during the first broadcast of Radio Consciencia. Photos by Jacques-Jean Tiziou/www.jjtiziou.net

media that set us free

dation in Opelousas, Louisiana, prepared Prometheus for the technical challenges we'd meet. Yet our goal in Florida was not just to raise the Coalition's tower, wire their audio console, and test out equipment, but to gather hundreds of existing and potential radio pioneers from all across the southeast and around the world, and, together, give birth to this new station. All in the course of one long weekend.

In December 2003, members of Prometheus arrived in Immokalee and began holding workshops on radio transmissions, radio receivers, ground interrupters, fuses, and how to be a deejay. Meanwhile, CIW members taught us about their organizing strategies and successes. They described three general strikes, a 30-day hunger strike to protest their low pay, and a 230-mile march from Immokalee to Miami and back, before the Free Trade Area of the Americas meeting last year, to publicize the plight of farmworkers around the world

"Prometheus began to understand our struggle, and the workers learned which buttons to push to make our words take flight," said Gerardo Reyes Chaves, a Coalition staffer.

The radio activists and the farmworkers strategized for the larger media democracy movement by breaking into small groups and hashing out the problems in our local communities. One conversation on the most creative ways to challenge the licenses of local Clear Channel stations, conducted by a Montessori teacher from Puerto Rico, a gardener just released from jail for protesting the Free Trade Area of the Americas pact, and a local ham radio enthusiast, went on late into the night, in the back room of the empty office building we used as our conference center. The barnraising was building not only a local community, but a national community as well.

Meanwhile, a horde of volunteers was working on the mast that would hold the antenna and setting the cable that would link the studio, the transmitter, and the donated console. As the Sunday night deadline for the birth of the station approached, volunteers were still recording one last public service announcement and soldering one last cable. Somehow it all came together. The first broadcast of Radio Consciencia began.

The station quickly proved its importance during last year's hurricane season. A company called Balance hired over 600 people to work with cleanup and reconstruction in areas of Florida most affected by Hurricane Charley. One day, four of these workers stopped by the Coalition office and explained that they had not been paid, nor had another 300

workers. Radio Consciencia issued an on-air invitation to the people who had not received their checks to register at the Coalition and demand payment from the company.

"We put the announcement on-air at 5:00 pm and expected, at most, 30 to 40 people to respond that night. Two hours later, nearly 300 workers had arrived at our office," explained Chaves. Those 300, along with CIW organizers, confronted Balance management at its offices. The workers were promptly paid \$57,000 in back wages.

Regular CIW meetings that used to draw 40 workers now routinely draw hundreds.

The radio became a fundamental tool in the Coalition's Taco Bell boycott. YUM! Brands owns some of the world's biggest fast food franchises, including Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), Long John Silver, A&W, and Taco Bell. YUM! is the largest buyer of the tomatoes that the farmworkers of Immokalee pick. Because of its huge buying power, the company is able to demand low-priced tomatoes, which pushes wages down and increases pressure for poor working conditions.

In 2001, the CIW approached YUM! and asked for guarantees against forced labor and for a one-cent-per-pound wage increase for tomato pickers—to no avail. So the boycott began.

Radio Consciencia aired shows explaining the relation between Taco Bell's profits and the hardships of the workers who pick the tomatoes the company buys. The station also aired announcements about national tours to publicize the boycott and invited workers to participate in planning them.

Chaves, Luisa Fernandez, Julia Gabriel, and dozens of other Coalition leaders have spoken to groups of students from Monterey to Michigan to Maine asking them to work to ban Taco Bell franchises on their college campuses. Twenty-one campuses have bowed to the student pressure so far, banning Taco Bell or preventing Taco Bell franchises from opening, and students at more than 350 universities are organizing to "Boot the Bell."

As Prometheus fights to expand low-power FM radio, we depend on the Coalition's trust-building, storytelling methods to reach new media activists. The time is now to fight to expand this service to reach the communities that need it most, so we can tell our stories over our own airwaves.

Hannah Sassaman is an organizer with Prometheus Radio Project, www.prometheusradio.org, which in 2004 won a landmark court case that overturned new FCC regulations

media uprising

Josh Silver & Robert W. McChesney

When the Federal Communications Commission laid out plans to allow yet more corporate consolidation of the media, a grassroots movement emerged that crossed partisan lines, colors, and classes—Americans stood up together to say no

It was a media event that spread around the Internet like wildfire—Jon Stewart, comedian, begging the hosts of CNN's *Crossfire* to do real journalism, and stop "hurting America." Hosts Paul Begala and Tucker Carlson sat stunned, scrambling to make a convincing argument that their program does higher quality journalism than Stewart's comedy show.

This exchange struck a chord with the growing numbers of Americans of all political stripes who are losing patience with the corporate media's partisan hackery, celebrity obsession, failure to hold government accountable, narrow range of debate, unchecked commercialism, and lack of investigative journalism. And here it was, the rarest of moments when the media's failings were vocalized, live and unedited. The emperor had no clothes.

Corporate media's failure to inform the American people is an issue of catastrophic consequence, constituting what legendary journalist Bill Moyers describes as the greatest threat to our nation: "Democracy can't exist without an informed public." And misinformed they are. Most Americans don't know the consequences of our ballooning \$386 billion deficit and \$7.1 trillion national debt. The media are silent as Congress dishes out some \$125 billion every year in corporate welfare. A full 49 percent of Americans still believed in September 2004 that Iraq had WMDs.



David McNew

media that set us free

A growing number of citizens are taking action to stop media conglomerates from getting bigger; to strengthen alternative, independent and non-commercial media

Presidential candidates and allied groups shattered all campaign spending records in 2004, spending \$2 billion. Most of that money bought political ads from the biggest media companies—who gave us back election coverage that was an echo chamber of partisan spin and empty soundbites. Is it any surprise that surveys showed many Americans went to the polls lacking the facts to evaluate the candidates?

How did corporate media get to this point?

Over the past century, a handful of corporations have bought and leveraged their way into media empires with vast holdings in television, radio, movies, books, magazines, billboards, and concert venues. You know the biggest and the most notorious: Disney, NewsCorp, Viacom, General Electric, Clear Channel, Sinclair. Along with a handful of others, they control most of what Americans see and hear each day. Their monopoly access to the airwaves is brought to you by monopoly licenses and government subsidies doled out in one of the most corrupt policymaking processes imaginable, with laws routinely written by media lobbyists and passed by politicians steeped in campaign contributions and for whom the public interest is an afterthought.

Investigative journalism is expensive, so cut the newsroom budget and cover the cheap stuff like the Scott Peterson trial or Kobe Bryant's court case.

DeeDee Halleck Jonathan Lawson

For DeeDee Halleck, electronic media's attraction is its power to invigorate participatory democracy—a power vested in the use of the tools as much as in the programs produced. In four decades as a filmmaker, teacher, and activist, she has helped place new technologies—from home video and cable television to the Internet and digital satellite broadcasting—in the hands of social movements and regular folks. Along the way, she has inspired generations of grassroots media activists.

Halleck's long resume parallels the history of community broadcasting in the U.S. She helped found a string of grassroots media initiatives, including the public access cable series Paper Tiger TV (papertiger.org); the nation's first grassroots community television network, Deep Dish TV (deepdishtv.org); and the very first Independent Media Center in Seattle.

In the late 1970s, as president of the Association of Independent Video and Film Makers, she campaigned to allow independent producers and community media makers easier access to public television. Thanks to that campaign, we

have "sunshine" rules that make public TV and radio stations accountable to their communities and requirements for modest funding support of independent productions.

Now officially retired from a professorship at the University of California, San Diego, Halleck is apparently as busy as ever—maintaining connections with media policy activists in the U.S. and abroad, and producing for Deep Dish, including a new series of programs on the Iraq war titled Shocking and Awful. She continues to inspire others with seemingly inexhaustible creativity and commitment.

It was Halleck who first suggested transforming the radio news program Democracy Now! into a daily TV broadcast. "DeeDee makes us all believe that everything is possible," host Amy Goodman remembers. "There is no 'no' to DeeDee. Everything is just a creative challenge for her."

Jonathan Lawson co-directs Reclaim the Media (www.reclaimthemedia.org) in Seattle. Learn more about Dee Dee Halleck at her website, www.deedeehalleck.org

Avoid controversies that may criticize or scare away coveted advertisers. Cozy up to—don't criticize—government officials; they will dish out favorable legislation worth millions of dollars when they're not golfing with your CEO. And if you really cozy up, they may leak you the next big story. But don't expect the messy news of media's failures or corrupt lobbying to make it on the air or the printed page. The corporate-owned media have an abysmal track record for covering their own failings.

Millions speak up

Now roll the tape to June 2003 when media issues exploded into the public consciousness. FCC Chairman Michael Powell, at the urging of a business-friendly White House, proposed new rules that would loosen ownership limits and let Big Media get even bigger. When the FCC's two Democratic commissioners, Michael Copps and Jonathan Adelstein, held hearings around the nation, public opposition found an outlet. Grassroots organizations, including Media Alliance (San Francisco), Reclaim the Media (Seattle), Media Tank and Prometheus Radio Project (Philadelphia), and Media Democracy Chicago, held public events around the hearings, distributed information, and organized thousands of citizens to weigh in.

By the June 2 vote, nearly 3 million Americans—from NRA members to MoveOn activists—had faxed, e-mailed, or called members of Congress and the FCC denouncing the proposed rules. Conservatives like Senator Trent Lott stood next to liberal Senator Byron Dorgan to oppose media gigantism. The rules passed nonetheless in a partisan 3-2 vote, only to be rejected by the courts and Congress. In rejecting the rules, a federal appeals court referenced the public outcry and sent them back to the FCC. In January, 2005, the Bush administration decided to abandon its appeal of that ruling.

The ownership controversy lit a spark within the burgeoning media reform movement and showed the power of this issue: both in its importance to democracy and its appeal across political lines. Media reform ranked second only to election reform in MoveOn's post-election member survey. Last fall, Sinclair Broadcast Group was forced to hold back its brazenly biased "Stolen Honor" program days before the election. Almost every egregious action by big media corporations—once met with muted opposition—was greeted with a swift response from an increasingly unified, bipartisan, and vocal public.

What was once a handful of media reform organizations has been joined by organizations like MoveOn



and Common Cause, and conservative groups like the Parents Television Council. Liberals are concerned with declining journalistic standards, a narrow range of debate and a lack of dissent in the press. Conservatives are concerned with declining localism and increasing indecency. Both are fed up with the 30,000-plus advertisements the average child must tolerate each year. And millions of citizens understand that our bankrupt media system is the direct result of government policies made in the public's name but without our consent. The unprecedented reaction to the FCC's proposed ownership rules proved that public participation is the answer to the media problem.

But stopping media consolidation is just the beginning. The burgeoning media reform movement is organizing around a range of media issues: strengthening alternative, independent and non-commercial media; forcing media companies to serve the public interest; limiting advertising directed at our children; and making access to communications affordable and universal. All of these issues—and more—will be in play when Congress reopens the Telecommunications Act of 1996, as it is expected to do this year.

FCC commissioners Copps and Adelstein—two of the finest members in that agency's history—plan to convene more public hearings across the country to listen to the public, keep media issues in the news, and provide a basis for their consistent support of the public interest. This May, Free Press, the organization we founded to increase public participation in media

ABOVE: Controversial chair of the Federal Communications Commission, Michael Powell, recently resigned from the FCC.

PAGE 33: Members of Code Pink and other activists gather in Los Angeles, California, near the studios of Clear Channel-owned radio station KFI to protest media deregulation

media that set us free



Mario Tama

Wall Street Journal reporters and Dow Jones employees protest a contract dispute outside the company's annual meeting April 21, 2004 in New York City

policy debates, will host the Second National Conference for Media Reform, May 13–15 in St. Louis. We encourage the public to join us.

This much is clear: Media reform is a movement that has arrived, and its success is integral to everything we hold dear: a clean environment, health care for everyone, fair wages, and quality education, to name a few. It must be added to the list of priorities for those working on all of these issues. If you control the news, you control the views. Real reform will not succeed without all of us bringing renewed passion and commitment to building a media system that serves not just the large media corporations, but our families, our communities, and our democracy.

Josh Silver is the executive director of Free Press, www.freepress.net. Robert W. McChesney is founder and president of Free Press and the author of *The Problem of the Media*; *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*; and other books.

Ed Schultz Carolyn McConnell

Watch out Rush Limbaugh—you may just have a “prairie-dwelling, red-meat-eating, gun-toting” football-playing challenger. While likely still outnumbered by Rush’s Dittoheads, “Edheads” dedicated to liberal talk radio host Ed Schultz are on the rise. Schultz’ regular-guy humor, bombast, and red-state roots are making him something of an overnight sensation.

Just a year ago, Schultz launched his Fargo, North Dakota, brand of populism nationwide. Now his show reaches 70 markets across the country, and he can be heard on both XM and Sirius satellite radio. He just started broadcasting part-time from Washington, DC, and is currently in talks with MSNBC about a possible show on cable TV.

Schultz’ autobiography is irresistible: Big Ed (6’2,” 250 pounds) was a college quarterback and briefly an Oakland Raider before becoming a sportscaster, and then, after voting for Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, a right-wing political talk radio host. “I was pretty much a warmonger and a pretty greedy guy,” he told the *Washington Post*. “I always wanted to make

as much money as I possibly could and felt the downtrodden didn’t deserve a break.”

But then he met the woman who would become his second wife, who, he says, began to lead him out of the right-wing darkness. She took him to the Salvation Army shelter where she worked, so he could meet the “bums” he often railed against on his show. He found that many were veterans. Touring the Dakotas and meeting people losing their farms and struggling to make ends meet completed his political transformation.

Now, in his “Straight Talk from the Heartland” he rails against “mean-spirited and intentionally dishonest” conservative radio hosts and pounds at the Bush administration with facts. On January 19, he was the first host to broadcast from the new in-house radio studio at the liberal Center for American Progress in DC, which is being billed as a clubhouse for progressive talk radio hosts. Still, he says “the righties connect with Joe Beercan better than the Democrats do.” Ed Schultz seems to connect with Joe Beercan just fine.

10 steps to more democratic media

Jeffrey Chester & Gary O. Larson

Whether you care about the state of journalism, access to information, diversity of media ownership, privacy, innovation, or the health of noncommercial media

—all these and more will be up for grabs as Congress begins re-writing the Telecommunications Act of 1996 this year. Likewise, the Federal Communications Commission and even your local town or city council will be facing choices that will determine who gets to communicate what, to whom, over what medium during this “digital century.”

How, for example, will policy makers choose to define “public interest, convenience, and necessity,” a concept enshrined in U.S. communications law since 1934? Or will we see a rejection of a concept that has obliged the electronic media to serve the country?

Will we have a communications environment that reflects the highest aspirations of a democratic culture, including equality, diversity, and civic expression? Or one that serves primarily as an interactive vending machine for the latest products of Big Media and Madison Avenue?

The stakes have never been higher. The major media and telecommunications companies are lobbying for even greater corporate control. But we the people can change America’s “digital destiny” by promoting positive change in these ten areas:

1. Call for less, not more, media consolidation:

The bland homogeneity of commercial radio—dominated by Clear Channel, Infinity, et al—may soon be coming to TV sets and newsstands near you as media conglomerates seek to further consolidate their ownership of media outlets. Fox, NBC, Sinclair, and others are asking Congress to rewrite the Telecommunications Act, sweeping away limits on the number of media outlets they can control. You can join with Free Press, Common Cause, Mediachannel, Reclaim the Media, Media Tank, Media Alliance, and others opposing media consolidation (find contact information in the Resource Guide that follows).

2. Build Community Broadband: Broadband Internet access has replaced dial-up as the preferred means of reaching the Internet, but such connections (controlled by cable and local telephone companies) remain beyond the reach of many households. In response, towns across the United States are building “wi-fi” and other high-speed networks that make affordable Internet access available to homes as well as to schools, businesses, government agencies, and non-profits. Comcast, Verizon, and other monopoly broadband providers are lobbying to prevent competition from these municipal networks. You can organize your town to create a local network that puts the public before profits. See the Free Press Community Wireless pages (www.freepress.net/wifi/=PA).

3. Bring Back the Fairness Doctrine: For decades, broadcasters were required to offer diverse perspectives on important issues. But the broadcasters lobbied to kill what was called the “Fairness Doctrine,” giving rise to the lopsided news, analysis, and talk shows we have today. Representative Louise Slaughter of New York and others are working to restore some balance to broadcasting by restoring the Fairness Doctrine (see www.fairnessdoctrine.com).

4. Open Up the Cable TV Monopoly: Companies like Comcast and Time Warner control access to the majority of TV channels available to the seven out of 10 U.S. households that subscribe to cable television. But it’s almost impossible for independent programmers and alternative channels to gain entry. Much of the work of increasing access and community accountability of the cable companies takes place at the local level, where a few people can make a big difference. Check out one great model, Media Tank, at www.grassrootscable.com.

media that set us free

5. Restore Public Airwaves to the Public: Just as you can't own or sell the air we breathe, the airwaves belong to all of us. But because the broadcast spectrum is worth many billions of dollars, broadcasters and phone companies are actively lobbying to privatize this public resource. The future of an open Internet depends on the public's ability to use the spectrum, since more space will be needed for the burgeoning wireless networking movement. To learn more, see the New America Foundation's guide to spectrum policy at www.newamerica.net.

6. Claim Your Right to Information and Culture: Creativity, culture, and learning build on the information and creative expressions of others. With increasingly restrictive "intellectual property" laws, even excerpting material for educational purposes, for example, or making copies for personal use are threatened by the law called the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. Thus while information may "want to be free," the recording industry, Hollywood, and the TV industry want to make sure we pay for everything. Groups like Public Knowledge and the Electronic Freedom Foundation are representing the public interest in the digital copyright debates. Learn more at www.publicknowledge.org and www.eff.org.

7. Make Public Broadcasting Truly Public: Noncommercial public service media are endangered species. In an age of powerful consumerism, we need more, not less, not-for-profit media. Citizens for Independent Public Broadcasting (www.cipbonline.org) is working to ensure that the impending transition to digital television will bring more opportunities for community participation. You can also challenge your local PBS and NPR station to do more local programming.

8. Choose Open-Source Software Solutions: A major barrier to many people who would like to produce programming for the electronic media has been the sheer expense of broadcast-quality production. Now, low-cost digital alternatives are increasingly available. While there are differences of opinion concerning the merits of "open-source" (www.opensource.org) versus "free" (www.gnu.org) software, the two camps are united in their opposition to the bottlenecks and toll roads created by the proprietary products. Don't let our media future be ruled by Microsoft!

9. Keep Broadband Open: Big telephone and cable companies want to alter the Internet's basic DNA of openness and diversity by controlling the "last mile" that links your home and business to the Internet. The debate over open access—whether broadband providers must allow users to choose any Internet service provider and any Internet content—has finally reached the Supreme Court, which will hear the issue this spring. Learn more about this issue from the Media Access Project at www.mediaaccess.org.

10. Support Alternative Media: The mainstream media are by nature driven by advertising revenues and ensnared in corporate politics. That's why organizations such as Altnet, Democracy Now!, Free Speech TV, members of the Independent Press Association (including this magazine), and others are so vital, offering the public diverse viewpoints without fear or favor.

Jeff Chester is the executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy (www.democraticmedia.org). Gary O. Larson is a writer/researcher at the Center for Digital Democracy.



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resources for more democratic media

Lisa Kundrat



Ron Gilling/GlobalAware

Photographers
in Lusaka, Zambia,
smile at having their
pictures taken

media conferences

National Conference for Media Reform, May 13-15 2005, St. Louis, Missouri, will bring together activists, media creators, academics, and policy-makers for networking and movement-building. Participants will learn about media policy, build skills for media reform activism, and hear about models for successful campaigns and actions. Sponsored by **Free Press**, a national organization working to increase public involvement in decisions about media. Free Press offers action alerts. www.freepress.net, 866/666-1533

Allied Media Conference, June 17-19, 2005, Bowling Green State University in Ohio brings together grassroots media makers from across the U.S. for hands-on workshops, film screenings, artist

presentations, discussions, and workshops for educators on using independent media in the classroom. www.alliedmediaconference.com

independent news sources

AlterNet offers stories on human rights, climate change, civil liberties, the war on Iraq, medical news, and more. You can sign up to receive free e-mail newsletters on topics that interest you. The site also contains WireTap, an online magazine by and for youth. www.alternet.org

Columbia Journalism Review offers an array of news about the news, links to newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio from around the world, free research tools for journalists, and journalism job listings. www.cjr.org

Free Speech Radio News offers daily broadcasts of news from independent journalists around the world. Available through Pacifica network on the KU satellite. www.fsrn.org

Free Speech TV, an independent television channel available nationally via the DISH satellite network and on community access channels, provides documentaries examining social, political, cultural, and environmental issues from a perspective you won't find in corporate-owned media. www.freespeech.org

National Radio Project is an independent non-profit production, distribution, and training organization. Produces the syndicated public-affairs series Making Contact. NRP takes a critical and close look at stories being missed or glossed

over by the mainstream media. www.radioproject.org

MediaRights is a New York-based group using social justice documentaries to inspire people to work for change. Hosts the Media that Matters Film Festival, which screens short documentaries from independent filmmakers around the country. www.mediarights.org, 646/230-6288

Paper Tiger Television, based in NYC, makes documentary films and provides resources to learn how to make your own media and documentary films, including weekend digital video editing workshops. www.papertiger.org

PR Watch, a quarterly publication of the Center for Media & Democracy, is dedicated to investigative reporting on the public relations industry. It

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serves citizens, journalists and researchers seeking to recognize and combat manipulative and misleading PR practices. www.prwatch.org

media by youth

Video Machete is a Chicago-based collective of youth and adults that produces films that challenge the stories being told by the mainstream media, creating a youth-driven dialogue on criminal justice policies, education reform, immigration, gentrification, and other issues. www.videomachete.org

Youth Radio offers free classes to 14–17-year-olds in the San Francisco Bay area on radio broadcasting, web and television production, and how to be a deejay. They also offer community outreach to at-risk and incarcerated youth. Visit their website to read and hear broadcasts by youth. www.youthradio.org

Pacific News Service provides a channel for youth voices and opinions to enter into the public forum through print and broadcast journalism. Their website features stories from Yo! Youth Outlook Magazine. www.pacificnews.org

media advocacy

Alliance for Community Media represents over 1,000 Public, Educational, and Governmental (PEG) access channels on cable television systems, and the interests of those who use the channels, from charitable organizations to public schools to religious institutions to NASA. www.alliancecm.org, 202/393-2650

Center for Digital Democracy offers information and resources to get involved in broadband policy in order to keep digital media open to all.

Assists the public and non-profit groups and communities shift into digital technology. www.democraticmedia.org

Center for International Media Action (CIMA) offers research and consulting services and support for media activists. www.mediaactioncenter.org, 646/249-3027

Future of Music Coalition brings together members of the music, technology, policy, and copyright law communities to advocate for the rights of both the public and musicians. www.futureofmusic.org, 202/429-8855

Media Access Project (MAP) is a public interest telecommunications law firm that promotes the public's First Amendment right to hear and be heard on electronic media. www.mediaaccess.org, 202/232-4300

Media Alliance organizes campaigns to challenge media corporations' licenses, cable monopolies, and FCC policies. Offers actions alerts. www.media-alliance.org, 415/546-6334

Media Tank works to provide communities with tools to understand and participate in critical decisions about our nation's media system. Promotes media literacy, policy education, and local media culture through community workshops, lectures, screenings, forums, and resource materials. www.mediatank.org, 215/563-1100

Muniwireless.com provides information on community wireless and broadband projects around the U.S. and the world, current policy, and events and conferences like the Freedom to Connect conference March 30–31, 2005.

Prometheus Radio Project offers legal, technical, and organizational support to help groups start their own micro-radio stations and facilitates public participation in FCC rulemaking and legislative processes. www.prometheusradio.org, 215/727-9620

Reclaim the Media is a coalition of independent journalists and media activists in the Pacific Northwest, promoting press freedom and community media access. Publishes a daily media newswire, conducts media literacy workshops and media policy campaigns, and develops online, broadcast, and print materials for media education and activism. www.reclaimthedia.org

Third World Majority offers community digital storytelling curriculum and national youth digital storytelling workshops and festivals to train and provide resources for people of color to tell their own stories. www.cultureisaweapon.org, 510/465-6941

media literacy and critique

Action Coalition for Media Education (ACME) creates free monthly curriculum and discussion guides for media literacy education (censorship, advertising, etc), which can be downloaded from their website. They hope to create regional chapters all over the U.S., and thus far have chapters in New Mexico and Vermont. www.acmecoalition.org 505/828-3377

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) analyzes media practices that marginalize public interest, minority, and dissenting viewpoints. Exposes neglected news stories and defends working journalists when they are muzzled. Pub-

lishes the bimonthly magazine Extra! and media action alerts, and broadcasts CounterSpin, weekly on 125 radio stations. www.fair.org, 212/633-6700

Girls, Women + Media Project works to increase awareness of how pop culture and media represent, affect, employ, and serve girls and women, and to advocate for improvement. Offers lists of books, films, and speakers and runs the Involved Consumers Action Network, which provides action alerts on these issues. www.mediaandwomen.org

Institute for Public Accuracy, in order to broaden public debate, offers journalists a list of policy analysts, including experts from academia, public-interest groups, and grassroots organizations, reachable on short notice. www.accuracy.org, 415/552-5378

Media Channel features media criticism, breaking news, and investigative reporting from hundreds of organizations worldwide. www.mediachannel.org, 212/246-0202

Media Education Foundation produces and distributes video documentaries to encourage critical thinking and debate about the relationship between media ownership, commercial media content, free flows of information, and informed citizen participation. www.mediaed.org, 800/897-0089

New Mexico Media Literacy Project offers media literacy education to hundreds of thousands of children and adults across New Mexico and the nation. Provides speakers, multimedia workshops, videos, and CD-ROMs. www.nmmlp.org, 505/828-3129

Project Censored gathers stories that have been blocked

or ignored by the mainstream media. See their 25th anniversary edition, an overview of a quarter century's worth of censored news (Seven Stories Press, 2001).
www.projectcensored.org, 707/664-2500

Women in Media and News (WIMN) is a media analysis, training and advocacy organization. Offers female sources to reporters, speakers on representation of women in media, and a listserv on media analysis and reform. www.wimnonline.org

books

Hey Kidz! Buy This Book, by Anne Elizabeth Moore and illustrated by Megan Kelso, encourages short people to make sure their voices and ideas are heard and lends tips on how to question media messages creatively. Soft Skull Press, 2004.

In *The Creation of the Media*, Paul Starr shows how press and politics in America have been intertwined throughout U.S. history. Basic Books, 2004.

Into the Buzzsaw, edited by Kristina Borjesson, is a collection of stories from leading journalists exposing the reality of reporting in a corporate environment, including reporters who were pressured to tell stories a certain way and those who were fired when they refused. Prometheus Books, 2004 (revised edition).

The New Media Monopoly, by Ben Bagdikian, originally published 20 years ago, now in an updated and revised version, warns about the effects of corporate ownership and mass advertising. Beacon, 2004.

The Open Media Pamphlet Series includes *Media Control*, by Noam Chom-

sky, *Corporate Media and the Threat to Democracy*, by Robert W. McChesney, *Microradio and Democracy*, by Open Media co-founder Greg Ruggiero, and *The Progressive Guide to Alternative Media and Activism*, edited by Project Censored. See www.sevenstories.com/openmedia for a complete catalogue.

Stories that Changed America: Muckrakers of the 20th Century, edited by Carl Jensen, is a collection of short biographies on the people who told the stories that challenged Americans' perception of the world. Includes pieces on the lives and work of Betty Friedan, Malcolm X, John Steinbeck, Rachel Carson, Frances Moore Lappé and others. Seven Stories Press, 2000.

We the Media, by Dan Gillmor discusses how media is changing from the bottom-up as more and more people take a part in the conversation through the Internet. O'Reilly Media, Inc., 2004.

What Liberal Media? by Eric Alterman refutes a common assumption of public opinion. Basic Books, 2003.

films

Fear and Favor in the Newsroom shows how the free-flow of ideas and information in the newsroom is restricted as pressure from corporate owners of media outlets increases. Journalists who have been censored, reprimanded, or fired for investigating and reporting stories that offended the powerful tell their stories on this documentary narrated by Studs Terkel. www.fearandfavor.com

Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism reveals the continual lowering in

quality and complexity in the news as Fox News and other media empires control more news outlets and more of the information reaching the public. Includes interviews with former Fox employees. (Get it through our partner, the Film Connection; see below.) www.outfoxed.org, 800/525-8212

Independent Media in a Time of War is part of The Indymedia War and Peace Trilogy by the Hudson Mohawk Independent Media Center. Features a speech by Amy Goodman underscoring the

importance of including dissenting voices in media; illustrated by clips of mainstream media's portrayal of the Iraq war juxtaposed with clips from independent reporters. www.hm.indymedia.org (can also be downloaded from www.democracynow.org).

Weapons of Mass Deception, by Danny Schechter of Media-channel.org, documents the media's coverage of the Iraq war, and the gaps, bias, and misrepresentation of events that mislead the public. www.wmdthefilm.com

YES! and The Film Connection

Fair and Balanced

Outfoxed (2004)

This film provides an in-depth look at Fox News and the dangers of ever-larger corporations taking control of the public's right to know.



Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004)

This film disputes the claims made in Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 9/11. Watch the two together, and decide for yourself.

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all photos Radu Sighet



Redefining Peace Mia MacDonald

Wangari Maathai's Nobel Peace Prize brings trees, women, democracy, and the continent of Africa into the center of global discussions of peace





Wangari Maathai has always had an affinity for trees. As a child, she learned from her grandmother that a large fig tree near her family home in central Kenya was sacred and not to be disturbed. She gathered water for her mother at springs protected by the roots of trees. In the mid-1970s, Maathai, in an effort to meet the basic needs of rural women, began to plant trees with them. Her non-governmental Green Belt Movement has planted 30 million trees across Kenya, many of which still stand. In 2004 her work was internationally recognized with the Nobel Peace Prize.

“As trees grow, they give you hope and self-confidence,” Maathai said recently. “You feel good, like you have transformed the landscape.” So it should come as no surprise that within an hour of learning she had won the peace prize for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy, and peace, Maathai planted a tree. It was a nandi flame tree native to her home region of Nyeri, Kenya, where Maathai was when she heard the news. Never one to stand on ceremony, she knelt on the earth and dug her hands into the red soil, warm from the sun, and settled the tree into the ground. It was, she told the journalists and onlookers gathered, “the best way to celebrate.”

I was with Maathai that day. Rubbing the dirt from her hands, she took the occasion to turn her message to the world: “Honor this moment by planting trees,” she said as the media jammed her cell phone. “I’m sure millions of trees would be planted if every friend of the environment, and especially of me, did.”

Putting the pieces together

It was in the mid-1970s that Maathai became aware of Kenya’s ecological decline: watersheds drying up, streams disappearing, and the desert expanding south from the Sahara. On visits to Nyeri she found streams she had known as a child gone—dried up. Vast forests had been cleared for farms or plantations of fast-growing exotic trees that drained the ecosystem of water and degraded the soil.

Maathai began making connections others hadn’t. “Listening to the women talk about water, about energy, about nutrition, it all boiled down to the environment,” she told me recently. “I came to understand the linkage between environmental degradation and the felt needs of the communities.”

She hit on the idea of using trees to replenish the soil, provide fuel wood, protect watersheds and pro-

mote better nutrition (through growing fruit trees). “If you understand and you are disturbed, then you are moved to action,” she says. “That’s exactly what happened to me.”

Maathai set up a tree nursery in Karura Forest on the outskirts of Nairobi, later shifting it to her backyard. But the idea did not catch fire. In her book, *The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience*, Maathai recounts bringing seedlings to the annual agricultural show in Nairobi in 1975.



A number of people expressed interest in tree planting. Not one, though, followed up.

Disappointed, but not deterred, the National Council of Women of Kenya urged her to pursue the idea and in 1977, the Green Belt Movement was born. Planting trees seemed “reasonable, doable,” she says. But government foresters initially resisted. They didn’t believe uneducated rural women could plant and tend trees.

“People who are very educated find it very hard to be simple-minded,” Maathai says, laughing. Women, too, didn’t think they could do it. But Maathai showed them how, building on skills they already had.

The women, at first a few small groups, gathered seeds for trees in forests. Then they planted them in whatever they had at hand, including old tin cans or broken cups. (At the Nobel Peace Prize ceremonies,

Maathai told Oprah Winfrey in an interview, ruefully, that her then husband had looked askance at the tin cans of seedlings in and around their house. They later divorced.) The women watered the seedlings and gave them adequate sun. Then, when they were about a foot tall, they planted them on private land (theirs or others).

The trees grow—and branch out

When the tree was judged by Maathai or, in time, by her small field staff, to have survived, women were paid. It was a nominal amount, today less than 10 U.S. cents a tree. But in poor communities where unemployment was and still is rife, women’s options to earn money are few. Income from tree planting is important; it provides women a measure of independence and even power in households and communities.

In 1981, the Green Belt Movement got its first significant funding when the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) provided “seed money” that transformed the effort from a few tree nurseries to a large number with thousands of seedlings. The UNIFEM support also “helped us mobilize thousands of women” whom Maathai calls “foresters without diplomas.” In 1986, Maathai took

She was ridiculed publicly by parliament and then-President Daniel Arap Moi, who called her a mad woman and a “divorcée”



Wangari Maathai dances with traditionally dressed Kenyans as she returns to Nairobi from accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in Norway

her idea region-wide; with funding from the UN Environment Program, the Green Belt Movement launched the Pan African Green Belt Network. The Network offers training and hands-on experience to grassroots environment and development groups. A number of them, in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and other African countries, have integrated the Green Belt Movement's approach.

Over the years, the Green Belt Movement has incorporated other community activities into tree-planting efforts. Among these are cultivation of more nutritious, indigenous foods; low-tech but effective ways to harvest and store rainwater; training in entrepreneurship; and providing information on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Anything but garden variety

Maathai, the first African woman and first environmentalist to be honored with the peace prize, has always hewn to a singular path. The third child of a sharecropper father and subsistence farmer mother, Maathai began attending school at age seven. Her eldest brother, Nderitu, in school himself, suggested it. Although it was unusual for rural girls in British-ruled Kenya to study, her parents agreed.

Maathai excelled and found herself drawn to the sciences. After graduating near the top of her class from a convent high school, she was awarded a U.S. government scholarship designed to enable young Kenyans to be post-independence leaders.

Maathai studied in Kansas and Pennsylvania, earning bachelor's and master's degrees. In 1963, she watched Kenya gain independence on television, and she returned home in 1966. Then in her early 20s, Maathai joined the University of Nairobi as a researcher and then lecturer in veterinary anatomy. What followed was a series of firsts. In 1971, she became the first woman in east and central Africa to earn a Ph.D.; her doctorate is in biological sciences. A few years later she was appointed the university's first woman department chair. She got married and had three children, now in their 30s. Her daughter, Wanjira, works with the Green Belt Movement.

In the early 1990s, the Green Belt Movement launched a civic and environmental education program. In her Nobel Prize acceptance speech in December, she said the purpose of the program was to help people "make the connections between their own personal actions and the problems they witness in their environment and society." With this knowledge they wake up—like looking in a new mirror—

and can move beyond fear or inertia to action.

Maathai and the Green Belt Movement led high-profile campaigns to save Kenya's forests and green spaces. In 1991, for instance, the movement saved Nairobi's Uhuru Park from an enormous high-rise to be built by the ruling party. The dictatorship was still strong, and not amused. For their boldness, Maathai and Green Belt colleagues were subjected to stints in jail and harassment, including death threats. Many nights, Maathai stayed in safe houses. She was ridiculed publicly by parliament and then-President Daniel Arap Moi, who called her a mad woman and a "divorcée." At protests, government security forces and hired thugs regularly inflicted beatings—once to within a *panga* (club) blow of Maathai's life.

And yet, she was not put off. "It is as clear as day. You cannot protect the environment if you do not have democratic governance [or] democratic space," she says.

In 1992, partly as a result of Maathai's activism, Kenya legalized opposition political parties. In subsequent years, the regime, while still corrupt and cantankerous, showed signs of cracking. After a series of violent confrontations with Maathai and the Green Belt Movement over Karura Forest in 1999, the regime abandoned its illegal development plans. The forest stands today, vast and green, on the edge of Nairobi's throbbing streets.

Toward democracy and peace

Still, Maathai spent International Women's Day in 2001 in jail. President Moi, opening a women's seminar that same month, asserted that women's "little minds" slowed their progress. But Maathai has had the last laugh. She was elected to Parliament in 2002, then appointed deputy minister of environment and natural resources. In many ways, her world, and Kenya's, has turned upside down. The day Maathai and other members of the new government were inaugurated, Maathai recognized her police escorts. They had once been her jailors.

The night she was leaving for Oslo for the peace prize ceremonies, Maathai hit Nairobi's notorious rush hour traffic jam. The police were called to clear the traffic so she could reach a send-off celebration in time. Lillian Muchungi, a long-time Green Belt Movement staff member who had been arrested with Maathai, was disbelieving: "Now they are clearing the way for her. But how they used to fight us. Oh!"

Maathai told me she views the peace prize as recognition of a "long, long struggle"—an honor unlike

Maathai calls for a new relationship with the Earth, “to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own— indeed, embrace the whole of creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder”

any she had thought to receive. Kenya’s press deemed Maathai a model Kenyan who had made the country immensely proud. Ordinary Kenyans, both women and men, cheered. Many say Maathai is Kenya’s best hope of ending decades of stagnation, corruption, and environmental decline (calls for her to be made environment minister have not subsided).

“She’s an African iron core lady, a strong lady, brain-wise,” said Bernard Mungai, a Nairobi driver, in a typical reaction to the Nobel news. “She’s ready for everything. Women [like Maathai] will help Kenya catch up.” One self-help columnist urged young Kenyans to plant trees; “You never know,” she said, “where it might lead.”

Laurels and more work

Up close, Maathai’s decades of activism appear to have left few scars. Her unlined face makes her look much younger than her age. And while she retains the serious demeanor of a university professor, Maathai laughs easily and deeply, including at herself. When she smiles, which she does often, her face draws light upward, to her high cheekbones and large eyes. She likes to cook, enjoys a good joke and was an Oprah Winfrey fan before the two met in Oslo and hit it off. (Winfrey, along with Tom Cruise, co-hosted the Nobel Peace Prize concert.)

Although Maathai proved herself a star, with substance, at the peace prize festivities, there is little likelihood of her becoming ungrounded. At the glittery concert, Maathai joked as Winfrey and Cruise looked on: “Because I am used to the grassroots, digging holes and planting trees, it has not been very easy to be at the top!”

Admittedly, since becoming the Nobel laureate, Maathai has planted trees with such luminaries as Norway’s prime minister and Britain’s finance minister. But she also recently planted hundreds of seedlings in the Aberdare Forest, not far from Nyeri, and no ceremonial shovels were in sight.

No plans exist for resting on laurels. Maathai is still waging a battle to protect Kenya’s indigenous forests, which cover less than 2 percent of the land—a perilously low level. She is also working on resto-

ration of forests, using the Green Belt Movement model she perfected over nearly three decades.

In the Aberdare Forest, local Green Belt groups and others are working with the Forestry Department (once notoriously corrupt) and have raised and transplanted over 200,000 native tree seedlings. Maathai wants to expand the program to four other national forests at risk. “I used to get hoarse shouting from outside,” Maathai laughs. “Now that I am in [the government], I’m trying to tell them from inside that this is the way it should be.”

Possibilities for healing

In Oslo, Maathai called for a new relationship with the Earth, “to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own.” She called on her audience to “embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder....”

Maathai plans to use the Peace Prize to ensure that her words translate to action. While continuing her work in government, she plans to strengthen and expand the Green Belt Movement, including in post-conflict countries like Sudan. Despite the Green Belt Movement high profile in international NGO and donor circles, Maathai has always had to scramble to meet program and staff costs.

The Wangari Maathai Foundation, launched at the peace prize ceremonies, will extend the scope of Maathai’s work in three areas: the role of culture in environmental protection, reforestation (“greening the Earth”), and good governance, especially in Africa. Maathai also wants others around the world—environmentalists, women’s rights activists, democracy campaigners, peace advocates, Africans, and especially, African women—to claim the prize and use it. “We don’t need to wait until individually we receive a prize,” she says. “...we don’t work for recognition. We work because we believe in what we do.”

Mia MacDonald is a policy analyst and writer on gender, development, environment, and population issues, based in New York. She is a senior fellow at the Worldwatch Institute. More information about Maathai and the Green Belt Movement can be found at www.greenbeltmovement.org, www.wangari-maathai.com, and, in North America, www.gbma.org. The Wangari Maathai Foundation is at www.wangari-maathai.org.



T.C. Malhotra

Giving for Long-Term Recovery

Fran Korten

The tragic consequences of the tsunami have pulled the heart-strings of the world. Money has poured forth and aid organizations, religious groups, governments, and military units have swung into action.

But the world's attention span is short. Once the shocking images fade from the spotlight, aid drops off, while the consequences of the tragedy live on.

As you grapple with the question of what to do, let me say that contributions several months after a disaster, when others have turned elsewhere, can be as much help as the immediate response. And while groups specializing in disaster relief are often best at responding to immediate needs, groups grounded in the culture with a consistent track record of effective work on peace, justice,

and sustainability are best suited for the long-term rebuilding process.

Here's one such recommendation from a trusted friend. Sharif Abdullah, a former board member of the Positive Futures Network, has worked for many years for Sarvodaya, a large grassroots group in Sri Lanka that has years of experience working for peace and development in that war-torn country. We have carried stories in *YES!* on their remarkable work (see Joanna Macy's and A.T. Ariyaratne's articles in *YES!*, Summer 2002). You can give a tax deductible contribution at www.sarvodaya.org or by sending a check to: Sarvodaya USA, 5716 Manchester Avenue #3, Los Angeles, California 90045.

For a more general reference, I recommend the website of Grantmakers without Borders, www.gwob.net.

On that site you'll find listed 22 organizations with extensive experience in the field and a note on how each one is responding to this tragedy.

The suddenness and scale of the tsunami makes shockingly immediate our human vulnerabilities. But every day our world experiences other tsunamis of death and destruction, less visible, but no less real. As each of us struggles with how best to respond, I find it useful to remember that the test of a good society is the way it treats its most vulnerable members. To meet that test, our contributions, in all their forms, must not only alleviate the immediate suffering, but also build new institutions and transform our culture to manifest the values of justice, sustainability, and compassion.

Indian tsunami survivors try to get rice packets and relief material at Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu state



community

The Work Ahead

Tens of thousands of people put aside other work to mobilize for the election. Now what? Now that the new year and the new presidential term have begun, what is the work ahead? From labor, politics, religion, and civil society come these ideas about next steps

Mike Simons



Ditch Divisions; Create Community

Frances Moore Lappé & Richard R. Rowe

“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice,” Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. assured us. But, once interrupted, how do we extend the beautiful bend of this arc?

First, let’s ditch our obsession with division. Sixty percent in both Red and Blue states agree that “too much power is concentrated in large companies,” and two-thirds in both groups agree that we should “do whatever it takes to protect the environment.”

Clearly, a latent progressive consensus awaits enlivening. But to take off, our vision requires a compelling frame. The dominant “strict father” frame cultivated by the right tars progressives as coddlers of the poor, apologists for big government and weak on defense. Sure, it appeals to frightened people...but only until they realize “father” might be a bully bringing on the very dangers he claims to shield us from.

Americans are ready for a far more powerful frame grounded in what we intuitively know—that we are all in this together. We call it the “strong communities” frame, directly challenging the callous, dog-eat-dog individualism of the right telling us to turn over our fate to a market—not a free market, of course, but one controlled by an ever-narrowing handful of Wal-Marts and Monsantos.

The right has succeeded in casting progressives as elitist snobs. Our response?

- Refuse to indulge in ridicule; appeal to broad common concerns.
- Challenge the myth of market discipline, showing how corporatism of the right destroys community.

- Demonstrate that quality health care, good schools, jobs with dignity, and safe food, air, and water for all create strong communities, ensuring lasting security and our deepest moral values.

This bold reframing of politics is the critical first step to reconnect America with the historic arc bending toward ever greater inclusion and freedom—freedom for all to fulfill our inherent potential within strong communities.

Frances Moore Lappé is an author whose work can be found at www.smallplanetinstitute.org. Richard R. Rowe is a clinical psychologist and business leader, active in education reform.

Get Tough—For the Kids

Jonathan Rowe

Frank Luntz, the Republican focus group wizard, says a magic phrase for Republicans is “for the children.” Talk about kids, and voters are with you.

So what do people who care about our habitat talk about? The “environment.” “Sustainability.” They talk about abstractions that have zero affective content for those who have not bought in already. The environment is the world we inhabit. Sustainability is about the world our kids will inhabit. Why can’t we talk about them that way?

When I worked in Congress, I found the writing in most left wing and “progressive” publications pretty much useless without a lot of reworking. Either it was social criticism couched in the sectarian lingo of the left (“racist,” “homophobe,” “sustainability,” etc.) Or else it was policy analysis that spoke at people from on high.

I rarely found a phrase that actually might be effective on the political stump. Policy is not separate from the language in which it is expressed. If politicians can’t hear themselves saying something back home, then they are not likely to use it, and rightly so. The right understands this. They practice polemic in their policy talk. They speak from the popular psyche; the left speaks at it.

It’s a challenge for those who don’t much like the mainstream to embrace its standpoint and values. But who said this was going to be easy?

The left of course fancies itself as speaking for the people. But there’s a difference between “for” and “from.” The left views itself as the intellectual wing of the political realm. Science is the ultimate authority, as opposed to those Bible thumpers who listen to moral authority. Experts know best. Smart people know best.

Hence the spate of books making fun of George

Bush’s syntactical lapses and fudging of facts. But most Americans weren’t first in their class and didn’t always like the people who were. Politics isn’t the same as getting into Harvard or Yale. Those with the highest SATs don’t always win.

Nor do those with the most refined sensibilities. When the right cuts the budget the left uses such words as “heartless,” “cruel,” “insensitive.” Well, boohoo. A lot of Americans think toughness is a good thing in a leader, especially with Al Qaeda lurking. So why can’t we hear that? Why can’t we call them wimps when they whine about their upper-bracket taxes and, say, let polluters pressure them into weakening clean air standards?

It takes a tough man or woman to make sure our kids get clean air to breathe.

Jonathan Rowe is a YES! contributing editor.

Create a More Perfect Union

Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr

Progressives need to take the time to create and articulate a vision that will withstand the test of time and transcend two-, four- and six-year election cycles.

Progressives need to fight for “a more perfect union”—one nation, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for ALL. A nation where no matter where you are born or where you live, if you work hard, play by the rules, you can share in the American dream.

We can get there by fighting for fundamental individual rights, not just government programs. If we can summon the national will and imagination to put a man on the moon, we can give every American the fundamental right to quality education and health care and build a more perfect union.

Progressives need a foreign policy of aggressive engagement. We will stop at nothing to defend our nation, and aggressively promote human rights and the rule of law around the world. The war on terror isn’t just about capturing terrorists and bombing targets, which addresses only the symptoms. The war on terror must address the root causes by reducing poverty, eliminating hunger, and promoting democracy around the world. In other words, treat the soil in which the seeds of terror are sown. Aggressive engagement attacks both the roots of terrorism and the actual terrorists.

A message of fighting to put the human rights of education and health care in our Constitution as new American rights at home and a policy of aggressive engagement abroad will give progressives a

national appeal. We must not concede any region of the nation—especially those that need such policies the most.

Representative Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. represents the second congressional district of the state of Illinois.

Adopt the Language of Hope

Roberto Rodriguez

Contemplate these words: deceit, manipulation, power, *mentiroso* (liar), war, occupation, unaccountability, silencing, oblivious, consciousness, resistance, hope, laughter, creation, universe, reconnection, song, love, peace, fulfillment, sovereign. The words come to me spontaneously. Taken together, they must have a larger meaning. So too their order.

I write this because I'm concerned about my spiritual health—and about the spiritual, mental and physical health of those around me. Who can be happy at a time when militarization, dehumanization, environmental degradation and Big Brotherism have become governmental policy? Who can be hopeful when the taking of our rights is no longer even questioned, and when being incompetent in matters of war and governance is praised and rewarded? Who can be happy when our leaders give us song and dance, rather than the pursuit of truth?

Yet we move on, but not with our heads in the sand. I look at my own words and see movement, rather than reaction. Perhaps you should pause and create a list of words in your own midst. After you finish, come back to this column. Really.

What did you find? Any words that heal, soothe or bring a smile to your face?

Did the words character, honor, integrity, and courage make your list? What is liberatory and speaks of living in a sovereign manner? What speaks to life and uplifting visions of a different world? What speaks to change and of something bigger than the politicians and their every-four-years illusion?

Did you leave any room for poetry—flower and song—in your life? Is there anything there about walking barefoot, or in someone else's moccasins? Where would they lead us, and what would we learn if we followed their footprints? As writer Sandra Cisneros implores us: "Remember that we are capable of working for peace by being peaceful every day." Perhaps what we seek necessarily begins at home.

Do the words in our midst actually tell us something about ourselves? Can changing them really change us and our relations with others, and can that help bring peace to the world? Or is that the

epitome of naiveté and political correctness?

When our leaders tell us that it is necessary to fight permanent illegal and immoral wars, have their words lost their meaning, or have they simply lost their legitimacy and credibility?

If it's true that we are what we eat, then the same can be said about the words we use: They define who we are. Adopting a new vocabulary is a start—but not enough (governments and corporations regularly do this). We must change who we are, seek the root of the truth (what the Maya call *panche be*) and always fight to rehumanize the world we live in. The words will follow.

Regardless of how we all voted, this past election is history, and we're all living its consequences. If we want peace, if we don't want to live with regrets and in despair, then we must adopt not the language of fear, but the language of hope and dreams. To invoke a Puerto Rican expression: *pá'lante*. Forward.

Roberto Rodriguez's regular Column of the Americas, which he co-authors with Patrisia Gonzales, can be found at www.uexpress.com/columnoftheamericas. You can reach him at XColum@aol.com. Copyright 2005 Universal Press Syndicate.

Build the Alliances

David C. Korten

Slice and dice the results as one will, the 2004 election was won by a small, but dedicated and well-organized, alliance of dominionist theocrats, corporate plutocrats and neoconservative hawks of the far right dedicated to advancing Empire abroad and elite rule at home. Through media control and the expert use of sophisticated propaganda techniques, for nearly 40 years they have played to real and legitimate yearnings for meaning, spiritual values, and strong and secure families and communities to gain control of the Republican Party, neuter the Democratic Party, and advance an agenda destructive of the values they claim to serve.

Although there are some wonderful visionary Democratic politicians, there is little hope that the party will provide leadership in setting a new course for the nation so long as the corporate-dominated Democratic Leadership Council controls it and it depends on corporate funding.

Moreover, the real contest isn't between liberals and conservatives, Republicans and Democrats. It is between a group of ideological extremists who seek power by any means and the principled conservatives and principled liberals who share many basic values and are ready to work together to solve real problems.

The need of our time is to break free from political categories grounded in the mindset of 5,000 years of Empire and create a non-party political movement with a long-term agenda grounded in a vision of a just and sustainable future for all that reflects the best of both liberal and conservative values.

As suggested by Van Jones in “A Phoenix from the Ashes” (*YES!* Winter 2005) the foundation for such a movement now exists in the extraordinary alliance of organizations that formed in the build-up to the 2004 election to liberate the nation from the grip of the far right. We must devote serious attention to building this movement, constructing its vision and agenda, securing the integrity of the electoral process, opening the political system to a wider variety of parties and voices, rebuilding the Democratic Party to inject vision and vitality, and supporting moderate Republicans in wresting control of the Party of Lincoln from the far right.

David Korten is the author of *The Post-Corporate World* and chair and co-founder of the Positive Futures Network.

Set an Agenda with a Future

Medea Benjamin

Too often we are forced into a defensive mode fighting what we *don't* want: George Bush as president, a war in Iraq, trade agreements that harm workers and the environment, media that distort the truth. To be effective and keep hope alive, we must also focus on what we want and build that agenda with new models, new coalitions, new paradigms.

In the case of Iraq, we can oppose the war while laying the groundwork for a peace movement capable of stopping future wars. This includes supporting soldiers and military families speaking out, strengthening counter-recruitment efforts, making local connections with communities most affected by budget cuts, and encouraging schools and libraries to teach peace. See www.commondreams.org/views04/1213-20.htm for more ideas.

Elections? We can't just complain about black-box voting machines, voter suppression, and partisan election administrators. We have to get serious about electoral reform. Sign our 10-point Voter Bill of Rights at www.codepinkalert.org. Pick one item that grabs you—secure voting machines, instant-runoff voting, a national election day holiday, an end to felon disenfranchisement—find others working on this issue, and get results!

Tired of media that distort the truth? While we indignantly call, write, and protest the biases in the

mainstream media, we should also be energetic advocates for independent media. Volunteer your time, give financial support, spread a list of your favorite news sources to your friends, relatives, coworkers, neighbors—whoever will listen!

Economy? We must continue to throw sand in the wheels of corporate-dominated globalization and privatization of the commons. But let's also build the economy we want to see—fair trade, clean energy, local economies, green businesses. At Global Exchange, we're organizing Green Festivals around the country that bring together hundreds of model businesses, social and environmental groups, visionary thinkers, and thousands of community members in a lively exchange of ideas, commerce, and movement building (see www.greenfestivals.org).

The next four years will be fraught with new assaults on our environment, civil liberties, democratic values, and desire for peace. But a mix of positive vision, effective networking, and determined resistance can be a potent antidote to *Bush-itis*.

Medea Benjamin is cofounder of Global Exchange and Code Pink.

Challenge Low-Wage Globalization

David Foster

One of the enduring questions of the 2004 election is, “Why don't people vote their economic self-interest?” I believe that the analysts misunderstand how most working class families perceive their economic self-interest.

The Greatest Generation learned that the path to the middle class was through collective action—through unions and government programs like the GI Bill. Today's generation has learned that to stay in the middle class you shop at Wal-Mart.

It's the difference between a largely national economy in 1955 and a global economy in 2005. A national economy could embrace the philosophy of higher wages. A global economy embraces the philosophy of lower prices.

When so many “red state” lower middle-class voters cast their ballots for George Bush, they were telling us that the only economic message that made sense to them was to hold on to their shrinking piece of the pie by shopping at Wal-Mart.

If progressives really want Americans to vote their economic interest—and I believe we should—we need to agree on an economic message that challenges the destructive force of the global economy and provides Americans with a bold set of values and policies on how to civilize it.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Embed labor, human rights, and environmental standards in all trade agreements
- Define health care as a human right.
- Stop our dependence on foreign oil by adopting the Apollo Alliance program, creating 3 million new jobs through clean energy technologies.

There is one thing that Wal-Mart should have taught us—we'll never win the highest office with the cheapest ideas.

David Foster is director of District #11, United Steelworkers of America.

Make Time for Bread and Roses

John de Graaf

Most Americans, not only mothers, feel increasingly time crunched. *The Wall Street Journal* confirmed that Americans are working 20 percent longer today than in 1970, while work-time has declined in other industrial countries. Our vacations are disappearing—a recent Harris survey found that 37 percent of women earning less than \$40,000 a year (and 28 percent of all working women) receive no paid vacation at all. On average, Americans work nearly nine weeks (350 hours) more each year than western Europeans.

What might an agenda for free time look like? A new "It's About Time" coalition including the organizations Take Back Your Time, Work to Live, and Mothers Ought to Have Equal Rights, has proposed a "Time to Care" public policy initiative that would:

- Guarantee paid childbirth leave for all parents, and at least one week of paid sick leave and three weeks of annual vacation leave for all workers.
- Limit compulsory overtime.
- Guarantee hourly wage parity and protection of promotions and pro-rated benefits to make it easier for Americans to choose part-time work.
- Make Election Day a holiday so Americans can take time for civic and political participation.

A bold campaign for "Time to Care" would support families—marriages, friendships, and children all suffer from our lack of free time. Having more time would also promote community building and civic participation, environmental quality (studies show overworked Americans are less likely to recycle, more likely to use throwaways), health (lack of time for exercise and proper diets leads to obesity, while workplace stress costs the economy more than \$300 billion a year), religious and spiritual growth (as we would have time for reflection and spirituality), justice (poor and minority Americans are least likely to

have paid leave and other time protections), a higher quality of life (Americans would have the option to choose simpler, less materialistic lifestyles), and more jobs for those who need them (less overtime could result in more work for others who need it).

At one time, organized labor and enlightened church leaders championed campaigns for more time. When thousands of women textile workers walked out of the mills of Lawrence, Massachusetts, during the great strike of 1912, they carried signs that read: "We Want Bread, and Roses Too."

But somewhere along the line, we got "bread and butter" unionism focused solely on wages. The roses were left to wilt. Americans need the roses—we need more time for the things that matter most. It's all a matter of values.

John de Graaf is National Coordinator, Take Back Your Time, www.timeday.org.

Start a Dialogue; Take a Stand

Reverend Robert W. Edgar

The 2004 elections confirmed deep divisions in our nation, not only politically but in Christians' interpretation of God's will. Strongly felt differences over public and private moral values resulted in the painful spectacle of Christians demonizing one another.

National Council of Churches members, meeting in General Assembly days after the elections, asked the Council to engage Christians from across the spectrum in dialogue about Christian values. We will pursue this urgently needed conversation.

In the process, the NCC will continue to affirm boldly that regardless of who leads our country, Christians' faith requires work to eliminate poverty, preserve the environment, promote peace and protect human rights. For us this includes:

- Our Mobilization to Overcome Poverty, with particular attention to state and federal budget and tax fairness, a living wage, and the well-being of children.
- Interfaith work for eco-justice, including a first-time gathering in May of young adults for environmental justice. Foci in 2005 include land protection and water issues.
- Promotion of a peace-centered U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. must fix what it has broken in Iraq, ensure Afghanistan's stability, and lead boldly toward peace between Israelis and Palestinians. All over the world—from Korea to Iran, from Indonesia to Sudan—peacemakers are needed.
- Protection of human rights everywhere, de-



manding particular accountability from our own government for its treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, and in U.S. prisons.

- Rejection of a politics of fear that is used to rob Americans of their civil liberties, punish innocent immigrants, and justify unjust war at heavy human cost.

The NCC is planning a rollout of study materials for local churches on the current state of world affairs and the place of the United States within that world context. We also are planning continued work for better interfaith understanding through regular meetings with Jewish and Muslim leaders, co-sponsorship of the itineration, in April, of an Arab Christian-Muslim delegation, and development of a new curriculum on Islam for local churches.

Reverend Edgar is the general secretary of the National Council of Churches USA.

Remain Firm, Clear, Compassionate Thich Nhat Hanh

For those of you who voted for Kerry, we must look deeply to see the Kerry elements in Bush. In this long and difficult campaign, Bush has learned many things from Kerry and those who voted for him. They share what in my tradition we call interbeing. If there had been no election, Bush wouldn't have questioned his positions or his approach. He would have been able to assume that his way is best. But he almost lost the election, and he is aware that at least half of the American people don't believe in him. Now, because he almost lost, he is more humble and must realize that if he doesn't listen to the other half of the American people, there will be a big disturbance in the country. So we have to see that now all of us are in him. Those of you who didn't vote for him are in him, are a part of him after this very close presidential race.

We have to help our government so that a president elected by 51 percent of the population will not serve just that 51 percent but the whole country. We need to keep speaking out, daily letting our government know what we want, expressing our insight and understanding. We need to be very present, very firm and constantly let the government know we are here. We can support them in our own way, through being present, calm, lucid, and compassionate. Being compassionate doesn't mean we surrender and give up. It means we see clearly that our country, our government is us and it needs our help. Compassion

means acting with courage and deep love to help manifest what we know our country is capable of.

Historically it has happened that the agenda of the left has been realized by the right. We have to speak out and keep speaking out, and it is possible that the Republicans will accomplish what the Democrats, what the left, had hoped to realize had they won. We also need to remember that even if Kerry had been elected, he would also have had to partly realize the wish of those who voted for Bush, and it is not sure that he would have been able to stop the war in Iraq.

Nothing is lost because we are in President Bush. There is a loss only if we respond with anger and despair. We have to continue on, to continue our practice, and remain strong in our role as *bodhisattvas* helping the other half of our country by our firm, clear, and compassionate action for peace—the kind of peace in which both sides win because it is based on mutual understanding.

Thich Nhat Hanh is an author and teacher of Buddhism and nonviolence.



Anthony Harvey



Lessons for Our Survival

Daniel Garcia



Argentines bang pans in the streets of Buenos Aires in protest of President Fernando de la Rúa's declaration of a state of emergency

THE TAKE

a film by Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein
2004, www.nfb.ca/thetake

ARGENTINA: Hope In Hard Times

a film by Mark Dworkin and Melissa Young
2004, available from Bullfrog Films,
www.bullfrogfilms.com

The sound of thousands of banging pots and pans reverberating through the city of Buenos Aires on December 19, 2001, brought me out into the streets to witness and participate in an extraordinary time: the *Argentinazo*, when the Argentine people ousted their president and turned their country upside down.

The months preceding and following that event rumbled with popular frustration at the country's economic disaster: a huge national debt to foreign creditors, massive privatization, a rapidly sinking peso, the economic decline of the

middle class, growing unemployment and poverty, and corrupt politicians.

In the United States today, we face a huge national debt to foreign creditors, massive privatization, a rapidly sinking dollar, the economic decline of the middle class, growing unemployment and poverty, and fraught elections. Everyone from Alan Greenspan to the Chinese government has warned that the inevitable economic adjustment to our ballooning trade deficit could be painful. Americans have borrowed up to our eyeballs and are relying upon the goodwill of foreign creditors to keep our economy propped up. Meanwhile, President George W. Bush touts the privatized virtues of his "ownership society" in which more and more global resources are owned by fewer and fewer people.

Two important new documentaries filmed during the Argentine crisis of 2002, *Argentina: Hope in Hard Times* and *The Take*, follow the efforts of the Argentine people to create a different kind of "ownership" society out of the collapse of the old model, a recuperated society in which workers become owners of their factories and neighbors become owners of their communities. Both films offer lessons in what ordinary people can do in an economic crisis of the sort we may soon be facing.

Full disclosure: I did a one-day stint as a translator for *The Take* and introduced the directors of *Hope in Hard Times* to some of the people interviewed in the film. Seeing the faces of some of my Argentine friends and neighbors in these films brought back the difficulties and triumphs of that fragile and ferocious time, when all of us, myself included, had to throw out our preconceived notions and learn by doing.

The Take focuses on the "recuperation" of abandoned factories by their workers and on the struggle between the old and new politics that arose during the Argentine elections of 2003. It follows the story of Fredy, a worker at the Forja auto parts factory, who, with his fellow workers, took over the factory after the owner stopped paying their salaries. Klein and Lewis also introduce us to some of the other recuperated factories in Argentina where approximately 15,000 workers have formed cooperatives: Zanon, where workers rely on the enormous support of the community, and the much publicized sewing factory, Brukman, where the violent worker eviction is caught

on camera by the Klein-Lewis crew as they run with the crowds away from tear-gas lobbing police. (See my article in *YES!*, Fall 2002)

While these battles are happening on the ground, the film follows another, national battle: will Argentina re-elect a president whose adherence to IMF policies and the political and economic agenda of transnational corporations brought on the country's economic crisis? The film contrasts the Old Politics, an antiquated system where votes are bought and not earned, that relies on the search for a savior who promises security and order in a troubling time, and the grassroots work of the New Politics, where people roll up their shirtsleeves and do it themselves.

Argentina: Hope in Hard Times gives us a broader picture of what the New Politics and the New Economics looked like in Argentina during the economic collapse. Dworkin and Young show us not only workers running abandoned factories, but also unemployed workers building new communities on the outskirts of town, garbage-sifting cartoneros (cardboard recyclers) forming organizational alliances with the middle class, and unemployed urban professionals creating their own barter economy. The film also weaves in the historical importance of the "change of heart" that followed the Argentinazo, when people woke up, at least momentarily, from the fear and divisions that had been instilled in them during the military dictatorship, and looked to each other for solidarity and support. *Hope in Hard Times* reminds us that moral values are, like politics, not something imposed from above, but arise from our own recognition and need of one another. And they can be stronger than fear.

In Argentina, as elsewhere in

Latin America, popular resentment at IMF driven economic policies that favor corporate gain has pushed politicians towards making decisions that put the people first. President Nestor Kirchner's decision to try the "unorthodox" route of stimulating internal consumption, forming trade alliances with other Latin American countries and China, and telling creditors to wait their turn seems to be paying off. Unemployment and poverty are down, and investment—especially from Argentines—is up.

The Take, which was filmed over six months in Argentina, is polished and exciting documentary journalism, with a higher budget and bigger crew than *Hope in Hard Times*, but in its narrower focus it misses out on the range of grassroots activities that Young and Dworkin, who produced their film on a shoestring budget with a crew of two, manage to convey. For a thorough and inspiring picture of how people can begin to create a different kind of "ownership" society, I recommend seeing them both.

—Lisa Garrigues

Lisa Garrigues is a contributing editor of *YES!* She won a Project Censored award for her story on Argentina published in *YES!* in 2002.

BOILING POINT: How Politicians, Big Oil and Coal, Journalists, and Activists Are Fueling the Climate Crisis—and What We Can Do to Avoid Disaster

by Ross Gelbspan
Basic Books, 2004, 272 pages, \$22.00

Dwelling on reality is terribly unfashionable in today's political culture. But Ross Gelbspan is no slave to fashion. The beauty of his book *Boiling Point* is how it reminds us that scientific facts are inescapable, even when they are out of vogue. Ross is merciless about the urgency

of the science of global warming. He is unflinching in depicting the scale and scope of the crisis, calling it a "civilizational" issue. He pounds on political corruption, journalistic laziness, and activists' incrementalism for reinforcing the cycle of denial that prevents an appropriately scaled response to climate disruption.

Reading this book is at times like getting doused with a big bucket of cold water. Given the pathological denial that dominates this nation's climate policy, it's not bad therapy.

Here's why climate activists sometimes don't want to get up in the morning: the emission reductions called for in the Kyoto protocol are roughly a tenth of what it will take to stabilize the climate, and yet Kyoto is outside the realm of the politically possible in this country. Ouch. Realism, funders, and our own need for accomplishment call on us to do what is possible, and yet what is absolutely necessary from a scientific perspective is not "possible" from a conventional political perspective. So doing what's possible isn't nearly enough. We have to change what's possible.

Unfortunately, Ross says, "...[M]ost climate activists have retreated into approaches that are dismally inadequate to the magnitude of the challenge." Some of his critiques are right on, especially his focus on the absolute necessity to recast the climate issue in terms



of broader moral, social, economic values that reach well beyond the traditional focus of environmentalism. Indeed, many environmentalists are heeding this call.

Ross misses the mark in his dismissal of “market-based solutions” like emission trading, characterizing them as a retreat in the name of political expediency. Markets don’t know what the safe limit on emissions is—governments have to decide that, guided by science. But government doesn’t have enough money to fix the problem. By adopting scientifically responsible emission limits and markets for trading emission rights within those limits, government can pull private investment away from the problem and direct it toward solutions. Even modest, politically achievable emission limits can send powerful economic signals that will redirect private investment toward efficiency and renewables.

The best antidote to denial is action. We once heard a participant in a Climate Solutions focus group say, “I don’t think global warming is a big problem, because nobody’s doing anything about it.” If it were really as bad as Ross says, surely the responsible authorities would be taking action! So action to protect the climate isn’t just the result of greater awareness of the problem, it is a precondition of greater awareness. And much of *Boiling Point* is devoted to what the solutions could look like, if they were calibrated to the scale of the problem.

Ross tips his hat to three “big picture” solution strategies—“Contraction and Convergence,” the “Sky Trust,” and the “New Apollo Project.” He then offers some mostly fair criticisms of their weaknesses, but rejects these strategies too quickly. He tends to dismiss partial solutions.

While it’s tempting to think

that one universal solution set will emerge, I suspect we’ll have to muddle along, cherry-picking the best of various approaches and cobbling them together. Yes, we should be thinking big. But we should not expect panaceas.

Ross steps up to the plate with his own big proposal, the World Energy Modernization Plan. Like the others, it should not be subjected to the question, “Is this the solution?” We should ask, “Is there promise here, and how can that promise be delivered?” The plan has three parts: switching subsidies from fossil fuels to non-carbon alternatives; funding clean energy investment through a tax on currency transactions; and tightening fuel efficiency standards for national economies.

The first part—switching subsidies—is the “duh” piece of the proposal. But the fact that it’s obvious doesn’t make it easy. In fact, the proposal itself is not so much a policy prescription as an anticipated harbinger of changing will. That begs the question, how do we upend our political dynamics?

I’m all for part two: the “Tobin tax” on currency transactions to fund international clean energy investments. Public investment is no substitute for a climate policy in which emission limits drive private investment in solutions. But it would clearly grease the skids. Part three, the Fossil Fuel Efficiency Standard (FFES), is an intriguing twist on achieving deep emission reductions.

The book ends in a rhapsody on how rising to the climate challenge can fundamentally change the human prospect:

“We will either retreat into ourselves and scramble to defend our private security in an increasingly threatening environment, or we will move forward into a much more coherent and prosperous and

peaceful future. . . . The ultimate hope is that—especially given the centrality of energy to our modern lives—a meaningful solution to the climate crisis could potentially be the beginning of a much larger transformation of our social and economic dynamics.”

These last ten pages read like a dream sequence. If the dream seems remote, consider this: Unlike what we call reality, Ross’ dream observes non-negotiable physical limits on the capacity of the atmosphere to safely absorb carbon. It exhibits respect rather than reckless indifference to human and natural systems that are elaborately adapted to the prevailing climate—respect, that is, for life. That’s closer to a truth that can last than what we’ve got now.

Dreams, in the right hands, become visions. And visions can become futures.

—KC Golden

KC Golden is policy director for Climate Solutions, www.climatesolutions.org.

NO MORE THROW-AWAY PEOPLE: The Co-Production Imperative

by Edgar Cahn

Essential Books, 2004, 220 pages, \$13.95

It takes a brave iconoclast to defy the priesthood of mainstream economics and declare that valuable work can actually occur outside of the marketplace. It takes an even more daring activist to dream up a practical demonstration of this insight, and to spread the innovation around the world.

That, in brief, is what Edgar Cahn has achieved over the past 25 years by inventing a new “currency,” Time Dollars. The currency is the height of simplicity: Perform an hour of work—any work—and you earn one Time Dollar. A “bank account” keeps track of how many Time Dollars you have earned,

which you can then spend on any services that members of a Time Dollar community have to offer.

Cahn began his odyssey into the non-market universe in 1980 when he was flat on his back in the hospital, recovering from a heart attack. The cofounder of Antioch Law School and cofounder of National Legal Services, Cahn suddenly experienced a wave of revulsion at being inert and useless. An enormously capable man, he had suddenly become the passive recipient of everyone else's help. He realized, with a shock, that his was an everyday experience for the poor, disabled and elderly.

As he contemplated his own predicament, Cahn had a striking insight about the limitations of the "helping professions" and the market system. They objectify people. They do not engage their humanity or elicit the basic skills, energy, and simple decency that we all have. People who are old, poor, disabled or uneducated have worthwhile contributions to make to their communities. But how, practically speaking, can those gifts be mobilized?

Cahn became incensed that the market and social welfare system essentially discard people who have no marketable value. They offer patronizing charity or contemptuous neglect, but not dignified engagement. Markets are fantastically powerful in using money and contracts to mobilize material resources, but they are woefully inept in mobilizing human beings to address social needs and inequities.

With foundation support, Cahn launched Time Dollars in the late 1980s as a system of self-help for communities. Soon it had been endorsed by the U.S. Administration on Aging, and the federal government was helping promote the service-credit program. It was featured in *The New York Times* and

The Today Show. By 2000, some 70 communities in Great Britain, Japan, and the U.S. had registered programs on the Time Dollar web page (www.timedollar.org).

Time Dollars has been remarkably successful in diverse situations. The Chicago public schools used Time Dollars to organize after-school peer tutoring that not only made it cool to learn, but gave the tutors a new source of pride (see *YES!*, Fall 2002 and Spring 1997). An HMO in New York City, Elderplan, used the system to help senior members give health care to each other, reducing costs for everyone. In Baltimore, residents in public housing have used the system to provide help to each other and the local school. They also use Time Dollars to "buy" bus passes, furniture, and other goods.

What is notable about these and many other incarnations of Time Dollars programs is how they have mobilized a kind of parallel universe to the marketplace. Instead of eliciting the selfish, competitive spirits unleashed by the market system, the service credits have stimulated caring and social connection—while providing a means to get work of genuine value accomplished.

Now that Time Dollars has matured, Cahn wants to reflect upon the lessons learned. In a second, updated edition of *No More Throw-Away People*, Cahn reviews the history of Time Dollars and explains how it evolved and what it reveals about the importance of the "non-market economy." (To reflect its international appeal, Time Dollars is now part of a larger movement known as "Time Banking.")

More than a history of the program, *No More Throw-Away People* is a provocative analysis of the non-market economy and an inspirational tract for the social service

community. Cahn argues for a new framework to bridge the market and non-market realms through "co-production"—a way to humanize the marketplace while elevating the non-market universe of families, community and service.

It is inspiring to see Cahn carry on such a vigorous dialogue between thought and action. Realizing that theory is not enough, Cahn diligently road-tested and expanded the Time Dollars network. Now he uses that experience to develop a new theory of the non-market, or the commerce of the human spirit. It is time for mainstream economists to take note.

—David Bollier

David Bollier is editor of *OntheCommons.org* and author of *Brand Name Bullies: The Quest to Own and Control Culture* (John Wiley & Sons).



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Linda Wolf

December is always a nail-biter month here at *YES!*. As with many non-profits, it's our biggest month for contributions and the time we receive the most orders for gift subscriptions. By the end of December, we find out whether we're able to actually pay for all our programs for the year.

So now I want to thank you, our dear readers, for opening your hearts and your wallets. Your contributions in December—and throughout the year—carried us through. And now we're invigorated to embark on ambitious plans to bring our positive message and practical actions to an even wider audience in ever-more effective ways.

Many of you write notes along with your contributions. We love them! Several staff members, including myself, read every note. Your enthusiasm buoys our spirits as much as your contributions enable our work.

Now we are pleased to honor all of you who gave \$25 or more during 2004. We receive every gift—no matter how large or small—as an expression of your faith in the importance of our work. That means

a lot to all of us. I thank you for your contributions and appreciate all the ways you are working to bring forth a more just, sustainable, and compassionate world.

Fran Korten
Executive Director

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PFN Welcomes Michael Ramos

At the January board meeting of the Positive Futures Network, we welcomed Michael Ramos as our newest board member. Michael heads the social justice ministry of the Church Council of Greater Seattle. Several of us at PFN first got to know him when he played a key role in organizing the Jubilee celebration at the 1999 Seattle World Trade Organization meetings. His organizing skills helped get 10,000 people to stand in the cold rain, holding hands around the hall where the WTO delegates were gathered, singing in advocacy of debt forgiveness for the poorest countries of the world. Michael has also campaigned for living wages in Washington and in 2003 helped coordinate the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride. Born of Puerto Rican parents, Michael attended Columbia University in New York. We look forward to Michael's contributions to enriching our perspectives on social justice and strengthening our ties with the faith community.

—Fran Korten

Human Rights Award

The Kitsap County Council on Human Rights honored *YES!* co-founder and executive editor Sarah van Gelder with the 2004 Wall of Fame Award for her work at *YES!* magazine and with Suquamish Olalla Neighbors. Sarah's work helped restore ownership of a portion of land that had been Chief Seattle's home to the Suquamish Tribe. (See article Winter 2005 issue.)

—Susan Gleason

On The Road

Following on the heels of this issue on media and democracy, *YES!* executive director Fran Korten, will be speaking March 2, 2005 at Antioch University Seattle on "The Emerging Movement to Reclaim the Media." Marketing and outreach manager Susan Gleason and other *YES!* staff members will be participating in the National Conference on Media Reform May 13–15 in St. Louis.

—S.G.

YES! for Youth goes "super-size"

The *YES!* education program, created a few years ago to get positive, practical *YES!* stories to teachers and students, nearly tripled its reach in 2004. In 2003 we gave 580 teachers free one-year introductory subscriptions. This past year we gave subscriptions to more than 1,600 teachers. And our educator survey shows that hopeful *YES!* stories have reached more than 71,000 young people in just three years.

The program, funded by *YES!* subscribers, individual donors, and foundations, also provided more than 13,500 free single copies of *YES!* magazine to teachers and college youth at educational conferences.

The *YES!* Classroom Reader, a compilation of *YES!* stories with questions for reflection and glossaries, is available in print and online at the *YES!* Education Connection page on our website, www.yesmagazine.org.

—Kim Corrigan



Join the *YES!* Community

YES! has a new program for people who want to support our work by making a monthly or quarterly donation. We call these supporters our Dedicated Friends. Here, we introduce Eliza Carney, one of our Dedicated Friends, whose life so beautifully reflects the values we convey in YES!

Growing up in segregated South Carolina shaped Eliza Carney's views about society and spurred her decades-long dedication to social justice and electoral politics.

A mother of two and grandmother of four, Eliza spent most of her adult life in Tempe, Arizona.

"My baptism into social justice work came when I attended a Tempe City Council meeting. The mayor rudely tried to shut down some Mexican-American/Yaqui residents, who were protesting being overcharged for water. I raised my hand and said that, in light of the mayor's behavior, I was ashamed to be a citizen of Tempe. I felt the mayor was being unjust to these people."

Eliza later worked to help improve conditions in Latino communities in the area, and served as director of WHEAT, an organiza-

tion working to eradicate hunger.

Now living with her husband, Jim, in Fort Collins, Colorado, Eliza is working with the ABCD Institute of Northwestern University to help faith communities adopt asset-based community development, which helps people build on their existing strengths to improve their lives.

A long-term subscriber to *YES!*, Eliza finds inspiration in the stories of "ordinary people doing extraordinary things," and often shares those stories with others. She notes *YES!* is not just "feel-good journalism" but gives hope and direction to those who want to act.

Eliza is among a growing number of Dedicated Friends of *YES!* who make monthly or quarterly financial contributions to support the magazine and the programs that bring *YES!* materials into schools nationwide and into the hands of activist organizations to spread their messages. Having run a non-profit, she knows that when an organization has a steady stream of income, it can plan future programs with confidence. "Even if people can give just \$10 a month, that can make a big difference."



As a non-profit organization YES! relies on people like Eliza. If you would like to become a Dedicated Friend of YES!, just fill out the coupon below and send it in. Or call 800/937-4451 (ask for Ezra), or you can sign up at www.yesmagazine.org—just click on the "donate" button.

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Searching for simple and practical ways to live sustainably?
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Yes! But How?

Protecting Privacy

With so much in the news about threats to privacy, I make sure I don't share personal information with companies unless absolutely necessary. But I wonder if I am doing enough. Do you have suggestions?

The Electronic Privacy Information Center (www.epic.org) has compiled a list of steps consumers can take to protect their privacy. As well as engaging in "privacy self-defense" by not sharing personal information with businesses unless absolutely necessary, as you do, they suggest:

- Pay with cash where possible. Electronic transactions leave a detailed dossier of your activities that can be accessed by the government or sold to telemarketers.

- Install anti-spyware, anti-virus, and firewall software on your computer. If your computer is connected to the Internet, it is a target of malicious viruses and spyware. There are free spyware-scanning utilities available online. Anti-virus software is probably a necessary investment if you own a Windows-based PC. Firewalls keep unwanted people out of your computer and detect when malicious software on your own machine tries to communicate with others.

- Use a temporary rather than a permanent change of address. If you move in 2005, be sure to forward your mail by using a temporary change of address order rather than a permanent one. Junk mailers have access to the permanent change-of-address database.

- Call 888/567-8688 or visit www.optoutprescreen.com to stop receiving pre-screened credit and insurance offers.

- Choose supermarkets that don't use loyalty cards. Be loyal to supermarkets that offer discounts without requiring enrollment in a loyalty club. If you have to use a supermarket shopping card, be sure to exchange it with your friends or with strangers. Supermarkets use the rich data from these cards in ways you have no control over; these data have even been used in criminal cases.

- Opt out of financial, insurance, and brokerage information sharing. Be sure to call all of your banks, insurance companies, and brokerage companies and ask to opt out of having your financial information shared. This will cut down on the telemarketing and junk mail that you receive.

- Request a free copy of your credit report at www.annualcreditreport.com. All Americans are now

entitled to a free credit report from each of the three nationwide credit reporting agencies—Experian, Equifax, and Trans Union. Currently, these reports are available to residents of most western states. By September 2005, all Americans will have free access to their credit report.

- Enroll all of your phone numbers in the Federal Trade Commission's Do-Not-Call Registry. The Do-Not-Call Registry (www.donotcall.gov or 888/382-1222) offers a quick and effective shield against unwanted telemarketing. Be sure to enroll the numbers for your wireless phones, too.

- File a complaint. If you believe a company has violated your privacy, contact the Federal Trade Commission, your state attorney general, and the Better Business Bureau. Successful investigations improve privacy protections for all consumers.

Slugs

My garden is always infested with slugs. I'm tempted to use commercial slug killers, but I'm aware of how toxic these could be to birds. Are there nontoxic ways to get rid of the slugs in my garden?

There is no guaranteed way to rid your garden of slugs, commercial or

otherwise. You can only control the infestation. Here are some nontoxic, natural ways:

- Encourage toads, frogs, and beetles to live in your garden. They eat slugs.
- Water your garden in the morning, not at night. Slugs are most active at night and are most active in damp conditions.
- Set a small amount of beer in a wide, shallow jar buried in the soil up to its neck. Slugs are attracted to beer. They'll crawl into the beer-filled jar and drown.
- Place seaweed mulch around the base of plants or perimeter of bed. Seaweed is a natural repellent for slugs—slugs avoid the salt in it—and good for the soil.
- Use copper to fence slugs away from your flowers. Cut 2-inch strips of thin copper and wrap around the lower part of flower pots. You can also set the strips in the soil, like a fence. Be sure no vegetation hangs over the copper that slugs might use as a bridge to your flowers.

Unwanted Bulk Mail

I've been careful in keeping my mailbox free from junk mail. But ever since I moved into my new apartment, I've been receiving mail—mostly bulk mails—addressed to the former tenant. What can I do?

Apparently, the former tenant failed to fill out a Post Office Change of Address card. But don't worry. You can fill out one in his/her behalf.

In the card, indicate that the former tenant has moved and left no forwarding address. Sign the card with your name, making sure to identify yourself as the current resident.

Hand this signed card to your carrier. Your carrier can verify that the former tenant has moved without a forwarding address and that you are the current resident.

Reusing Greeting Cards

Years ago, I sent used greeting cards to Saint Jude's Ranch for them to recycle and sell. This month, I learned that Saint Jude no longer accepts these cards. Any ideas on what I can do with my used cards?

You're right. Saint Jude's Ranch (www.stjudesranch.org), a nonprofit youth home, no longer accepts used greeting cards. The number of used cards they received for their Recycled Card Program, in which youth cut off the front covers, glued on a new back cover, and sold the result—has been overwhelming. The cost of handling these cards is beginning to draw from their primary goal of caring for children.

Saint Jude instead encourages people to purchase their recycled cards or send in Campbell Soup labels, which they can trade for much-needed vans.

For your used cards, here are some recycling ideas:

Postcards. Cut off the backs of used cards and use the fronts as postcards.

New Card. Cut and paste parts of used cards onto new blank cards.

Gift Tags. Cut used cards into squares, punch holes in corners for string, and use these as gift tags.

Placemats. Cut out pictures from used cards, place these between clear contact papers, and press together to create placemats.

Used cards can also be recycled as bookmarks, as lacing toys for your children, and, using decoupage techniques, as a storage box.

Old Prescription Glasses

I have prescription glasses that I no longer use. So do my wife and children. Can I recycle them?

In the U.S., current laws prohibit re-dispensing prescription glasses

and other prescription products. Other countries, however, allow this.

Generally, old prescription glasses are cleaned, repaired and measured to determine the correction. These are then catalogued, sent overseas, and matched to people who may need them.

Contact your optician or civic clubs in your area. Chances are, they might have a program to collect prescription glasses for reuse. The Lions Club (www.lions.org), for example, has a program to collect used glasses from opticians. LensCrafters and Pearle also collect glasses.

Send your questions to:

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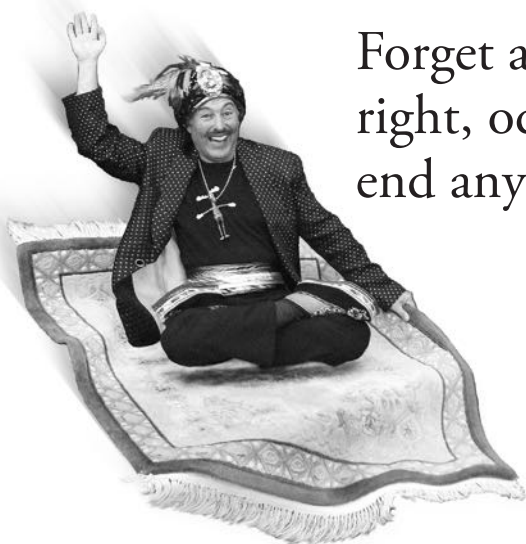


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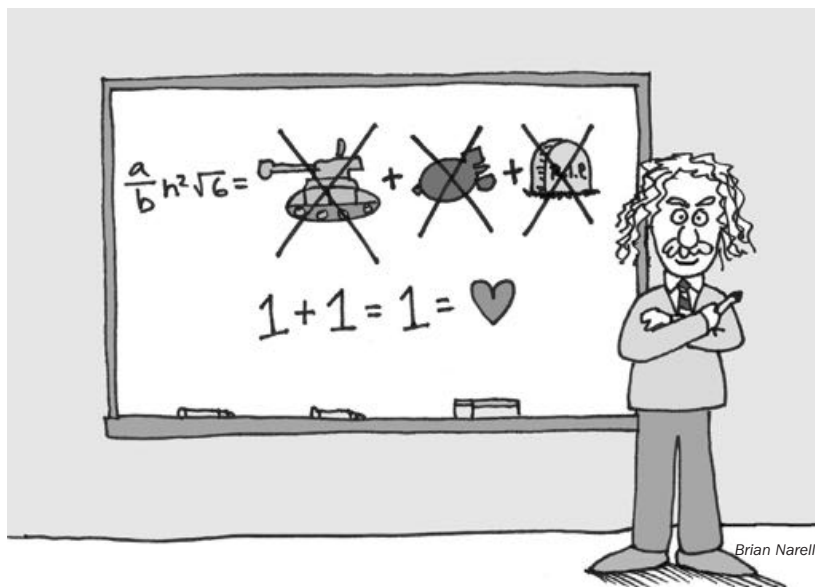
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Forget about getting even. If the Law of Karma is right, odds are it will all even out in the end anyway.



Swami Beyondananda

Don't get even—get odd!

It was Albert Einstein who said that a problem cannot be solved at the level at which it was created. So maybe serious problems have humorous solutions. Levity can help us rise to the occasion. Gravity only brings us down.

A look at history reveals a chain, chain, chain of foolishness dating back to the first dysfunction at the junction. Cain slew Abel. Over what? A guy preaches love thy neighbor, so they hang him on a cross.

And those of you who think that sage burning is a Native American practice should have been around during the dark ages, when they burned sages to keep everyone else in line.

And it persists today. We still have the ire in Ireland, the hurts in Herzegovina, the mess in Mesopotamia and a Holy War over possession of the Holy Land.

So how do we break this chain of foolishness? Laugh heartily at the foolish habit we have of getting even—and start getting odd.

Every positive change or great innovation has come from some odd individual with a laughable idea. Humans flying like birds . . . HA! An end to slavery . . . HA! Women voting . . . HA! An upstart start-up nation insisting on inalienable rights . . . HA!

When humorologists go back in history to find

the first laugh, they'll find it was an oddball nutcase who invented the wheel.

Meanwhile, we accept insanity as sane and normal. Like war. Think of how many years the U.S. stayed in Vietnam to "save face." I guess it takes an oddball to point out that war isn't face-saving, it's ass-losing. Take a look at the faces of those in charge. Would you lose your ass to save their face? Every war is justified as just—and that's what we've been left with: Just war.

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, Americans have been terrorized by the war on terrorism. Our Department of Homeland Insecurity has even color-coded danger, to make sure we "see red." Time to take "emerge 'n see" measures instead. Emerge from the habit of getting even and see the odd solution that is just ridiculous enough to work.

Here's the good news: Oddly enough, each of us is one-of-a-kind, totally unique just like everyone else. So let us use our unique oddness to do what has not yet been done . . . to weave a web of mass construction and reap a world-win.

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