

# How to Restore Truth in Media Reporting?

The media democracy movement

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Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

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The late New York University media scholar Neil Postman once said about America, “We are the best entertained least informed society in the world.” From Jessica Simpson’s weight and Brangelina’s escapades, to Britney Spears’ sister and the Obama’s First Puppy, Americans are fed a steady “news” diet of useless information laden with personal anecdotes, scandals, and gossip.

Since the middle of the 1980’s, Project Censored at Sonoma State University has annually researched this phenomenon making list of the most important censored news stories and the most insignificant. Topics and in-depth reports that matter little to anyone in any meaningful way are given massive amounts of media coverage in the corporate media. In recent years, this has only become more obvious.

For instance, CNN’s coverage of celebrity Anna Nicole Smith’s untimely death in early 2007 is arguably one of the most egregious examples of an over abused news story. The magnitude of corporate media attention paid to Smith’s death were clearly out of synch with the coverage the story deserved, which was at most a simple passing mention. Instead, CNN broadcast “breaking” stories of Smith’s death uninterrupted, without commercials, for almost two hours, with commentary by lead anchors and journalists. This marked among the longest uninterrupted “news” broadcasts at CNN since the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Anna Nicole Smith and 9/11 are now strange bedfellows, milestone bookends of corporate news culture.

While news outlets were obsessing over Smith’s death, most big media giants were missing a far more important story. The US ambassador to Iraq misplaced \$12 billion in shrink-wrapped one hundred dollar bills that were flown to Baghdad. This garnered little attention due to the media’s morbid infatuation with Smith’s passing. This is clearly news judgment gone terribly awry if not an outright retreat from journalistic standards. The once trivial and absurd are now mainstreamed as “news.” More young people turn to late night comics’ fake news to learn the truth or tune out to so-called reality shows often scripted as Roman Holiday spectacles of the surreal. Welcome to the Infotainment Society: American Media in the 21st century.

The British tabloid *News of the World* published an exclusive photo of Olympic gold medalist Michael Phelps smoking marijuana from a bong on Sunday, February 1, 2009, with the headline, “What a Dope.” The picture was allegedly taken during a November house party while Phelps was visiting the University of South Carolina. The incident occurred nearly three months after the swimmer won eight gold medals for America at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, China. Phelps quickly apologized to the public for his “regrettable behavior.” The bong owner reportedly tried to sell it on eBay for \$100,000. In the weeks following, Phelps

lost his sponsorship from Kellogg's cereal.

Photos of Jessica Simpson performing at a Florida Chili Cook-off looking a bit heavier than usual surfaced during the week of January 26, 2009. The purportedly unflattering shots of a curvier looking Simpson in an outfit that included "a muffin-top-inducing leopard belt" immediately made news headlines. Was she pregnant? Was she picking up eating habits from her NFL star boyfriend? Or was she simply hungry for publicity? President Obama even noticed Simpson was "in a weight battle" during a pre-super bowl interview.

The US is not only becoming a nation of obese people, but is on the verge of another phenomenon the equivalent of cultural and mental obesity. We are a nation awash in a sea of information yet we have a paucity of understanding. We are a country where over a quarter of the population know the names of all five members of the fictitious family from The Simpsons yet only one in a thousand can name all the rights protected under the first amendment to the US Constitution. Journalistic values have been sold out to commercial interests and not even our core, national and constitutionally protected values are sacred.

And at the same time important news stories are ignored or remain unreported. A report (9/2/08) from The World Bank admits that in 2005 three billion one hundred and forty million people live on less than \$2.50 a day and about 44% of these people survive on less than \$1.25. Complete and total wretchedness can be the only description for the circumstances faced by so many, especially those in urban areas. Simple items like phone calls, nutritious food, vacations, television, dental care, and inoculations are beyond the possible for billions of people.

Starvation.net logs the increasing impacts of world hunger and starvation. Over 30,000 people a day (85% children under 5) die of malnutrition, curable diseases, and starvation. The numbers of unnecessary deaths has exceeded three hundred million people over the past forty years.

Farmers around the world grow more than enough food to feed the entire world adequately. Global grain production yielded a record 2.3 billion tons in 2007, up 4% from the year before, yet, billions of people go hungry every day. Grain.org describes the core reasons for continuing hunger in a recent article "Making a Killing from Hunger."

It turns out that while farmers grow enough food to feed the world, commodity speculators and huge grain traders like Cargill control the global food prices and distribution. Starvation is profitable for corporations when demands for food push the prices up. Cargill announced that profits for commodity trading for the first quarter of 2008 were 86% above 2007. World food prices grew 22% from June 2007 to June 2008 and a significant portion of the increase was propelled by the \$175 billion invested in commodity futures that speculate on price instead of seeking to feed the hungry. The result is wild food price spirals, both up and down, with food insecurity remaining widespread.

For a family on the bottom rung of poverty a small price increase is the difference between life and death, yet neither US presidential candidate has declared a war on starvation. Instead both candidates talk about national security and the continuation of the war on terror as if this were the primary election issue. Given that ten times as many innocent people died on 9/11/01 than those in the World Trade centers, where is the Manhattan project for global hunger? Where is the commitment to national security through unilateral starvation relief? Where is the outrage in the corporate media with pictures of dying children

and an analysis of who benefits from hunger?

While news stories on realities of global hunger remain under-covered in the US topics close to home are often ignored as well. For example, racial inequality remains problematic in the US. People of color continue to experience disproportionately high rates of poverty, unemployment, police profiling, repressive incarceration and school segregation.

According to a new Civil Rights report, “Reviving the Goal of an Integrated Society: A 21st Century Challenge,” by Gary Orfield, schools in the US are currently 44% non-white, and minorities are rapidly emerging as the majority of public school students. Latinos and Blacks are the two largest minority groups. However, Black and Latino students attend schools more segregated today than during the civil rights era. Over fifty years after the US Supreme Court case: Brown VS Board of Education, schools remain separate and not equal. Orfield’s study shows that public schools in the Western states, including California, suffer from the most severe segregation in the US, rather than schools in the southern states as many people believe.

This new form of segregation is primarily based on how urban areas are geographically organized—as Cornel West so passionately describes— into vanilla suburbs and chocolate cities.

Schools remain highly unequal, both in terms of money, and qualified teachers and curriculum. Unequal education leads to diminished access to colleges and future jobs. Non-white schools are segregated by poverty as well as race. These “chocolate” low-income public schools are where most of the nation’s drop-outs occur, leading to large numbers of virtually unemployable young people of color struggling to survive in a troubled economy.

Diminished opportunity for students of color invariably creates greater privileges for whites. White privilege is a concept that is challenging for many whites to accept. Whites like to think of themselves as hard working individuals whose achievements are due to deserved personal efforts. In many cases this is partly true; hard work in college often pays off in many ways. Nonetheless many whites find it difficult to accept that geographically and structurally based racism remains a significant barrier for many students of color. Whites often say racism is in the past, and we need not think about it today. Yet, inequality stares at us daily from the barrios, ghettos, and from behind prisons walls.

The corporate media in the US likes to think of themselves as the official most accurate news reporting of the day. The New York Times motto of “all the news that’s fit to print” is a clear example of this perspective. However with corporate media coverage that increasingly focuses on a narrow range of celebrity updates, news from “official” government sources, and sensationalized crimes and disasters the self-justification of being the most fit is no longer valid in the US.

We need to broaden our understanding of censorship in the US. The dictionary definition of direct government control of news as censorship is no longer adequate. The private corporate media in the US significantly under covers and/or deliberately censors numerous important news stories every year. The corporate media in the United States are ignoring valid news stories, based on university quality research. It appears that certain topics are simply forbidden inside the mainstream corporate media today. To openly cover these news stories would stir up questions regarding “inconvenient truths” that many in the US power structure want to avoid.

Other inconvenient truths which remain taboo for corporate media includes civilian death rates in Iraq and questions on 9/11. Researchers from Johns Hopkins University and a professional survey company in Great Britain, Opinion Research Business (ORB) report that the United States is directly responsible for over one million Iraqi deaths since our invasion six and half years ago. In a January 2008 report, ORB reported that, "survey work confirms our earlier estimate that over 1,000,000 Iraqi citizens have died as a result of the conflict which started in 2003.... We now estimate that the death toll between March 2003 and August 2007 is likely to have been of the order of 1,033,000." A 2006 Johns Hopkins study confirmed that US aerial bombing in civilian neighborhoods caused over a third of these deaths and that over half the deaths are directly attributable to US forces. Iraqi civilian death levels in the summer of 2009 likely now exceed 1.2 million.

The common theme of the most censored stories over the past year is the systemic erosion of human rights and civil liberties in both the US and the world at large. The corporate media ignored the fact that habeas corpus can now be suspended for anyone by order of the President. With the approval of Congress, the Military Commissions Act (MCA) of 2006, signed by Bush on October 17, 2006, allows for the suspension of habeas corpus for US citizens and non-citizens alike. While media, including a lead editorial in the New York Times October 19, 2006, have given false comfort that American citizens will not be the victims of the measures legalized by this Act, the law is quite clear that 'any person' can be targeted. The text in the MCA allows for the institution of a military alternative to the constitutional justice system for "any person" regardless of American citizenship. The MCA effectively does away with habeas corpus rights for all people living in the US deemed by the President to be enemy combatants.

A law enacted last year allowing the government to more easily institute martial law is another civil liberties story ignored by the corporate media in 2007. The John Warner Defense Authorization Act of 2007 allows the president to station military troops anywhere in the United States and take control of state-based National Guard units without the consent of the governor or local authorities, in order to "suppress public disorder." The law in effect repealed the Posse Comitatus Act, which had placed strict prohibitions on military involvement in domestic law enforcement in the US since just after the Civil War.

Additionally, under the code-name Operation FALCON (Federal and Local Cops Organized Nationally) three federally coordinated mass arrests occurred between April 2005 and October 2006. In an unprecedented move, more than 30,000 "fugitives" were arrested in the largest dragnets in the nation's history. The operations, coordinated by the Justice Department and Homeland Security, directly involved over 960 agencies (state, local and federal) and are the first time in US history that all of the domestic police agencies have been put under the direct control of the federal government.

Finally, the term "terrorism" has been dangerously expanded to include any acts that interfere, or promotes interference, with the operations of animal enterprises. The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA), signed into law on November 27, 2006 expands the definition of an "animal enterprise" to any business that "uses or sells animals or animal products." The law essentially defines protesters, boycotters or picketers of businesses in the US as terrorists.

Most people in the US believe in our Bill of Rights and value personal freedoms. Yet, our corporate media in the recent past have failed to adequately inform us about important changes in our civil rights and liberties. Despite our busy lives we want to be informed about

serious decisions made by the powerful, and rely on the corporate media to keep us abreast of significant changes. When a media fails to cover these issues, what else can we call it but censorship?

On October 25, 2005 the American Civil Liberties (ACLU) posted to their website 44 autopsy reports, acquired from American military sources, covering the deaths of civilians who died while in US military prisons in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2002-2004. The autopsy reports provided proof of widespread torture by US forces. A press release by ACLU announcing the deaths was immediately picked up by Associate Press (AP) wire service making the story available to US corporate media nationwide. A thorough check of Nexus-Lexus and Proquest library data bases showed that at least 98 percent of the daily papers in the US did not to pick up the story, nor did AP ever conduct follow up coverage on the issue.

So not only do daily newspaper fail to cover the inconvenient truths presented by their own wire service but the wire service itself is filled with internal bias. AP is a non-profit cooperative news wire service. The AP with 3,700 employees has 242 bureaus worldwide that deliver news reports 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to 121 countries in 5 languages including English, German, Dutch, French, and Spanish. In the US alone, AP reaches 1,700 daily, weekly, non-English, college newspapers, and 5,000 radio and television stations. AP reaches over a billion people every day via print, radio, or television.

Alison Weir, Joy Ellison, and Peter Weir of the organization If Americans Knew conducted research on the AP's reporting of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The study was a statistical analysis of the AP newswire in the year 2004, looking comparatively at the numbers of Israeli and Palestinian deaths reported. In 2004 there were 141 reports of Israeli deaths in AP headlines and lead paragraphs, while in reality there were only 108 Israeli deaths. During this same period, 543 Palestinian deaths were reported by AP, while 821 Palestinians had actually been killed. The ratio of actual number of Israeli conflict deaths to Palestinian deaths in 2004 was 1:7, yet AP reported deaths of Israelis to Palestinians at a 2:1 ratio.

The same could be said of AP's reporting of children's deaths. Nine reports of Israeli children's deaths were reported by the AP in headlines and leading paragraphs in 2004, while eight actually occurred. Only 27 Palestinian children deaths were reported by AP when actually 179 children died. While there were 22 times more Palestinian children's deaths than Israeli children's deaths, the AP reported 113 percent of Israeli children's deaths and 15 percent of Palestinian children's deaths.

On February 29, 2004 AP widely reported that President Aristide was ousted by Haitian rebels and that the United States provided an escort to take him out of the country to a safe asylum. Within 24 hours an entirely different story emerged through independent radio. Instead of the US being the supportive facilitator of Aristide's safety, Pacifica Radio News reported that Aristide was actually kidnapped by US forces.

AP quickly changed their story. On March 1, 2004 an AP report by Deb Riechman said, "White House officials said Aristide left willingly and that the United States aided his safe departure. But in a telephone interview with the Associated Press, Aristide said: "No. I was forced to leave."

The last AP report of Aristide's claiming that he had been kidnapped by the US in a State Department coup was on June 27, 2004. Since then there have been 60 news articles by AP



including Aristide's name. Of these stories none mentioned Aristide's claim that he was kidnapped by the United States military. None mention the US backing of the coup. AP's bias in favor of the State Department's version of the Aristide's removal seems to be a deliberate case of AP-sanctioned forgetting.

AP is a massive institutionalized bureaucracy that feeds news stories to nearly every newspaper and radio/TV station in the United States. They are so large that top-down control of single news stories is practically impossible. However, research clearly indicates a built-in bias favoring official US government positions.

There is a literal truth emergency in the United States, not only regarding distant wars, torture camps, and doctored intelligence, but also around issues that most intimately impact our lives at home. For example, few Americans know that there has been a thirty-five year decline in real wages for most workers in the country, while the top 10% now enjoy unparalleled wealth with strikingly low tax burdens.

George Seldes once said, "Journalism's job is not impartial 'balanced' reporting. Journalism's job is to tell the people what is really going on." Michael Moore's top-grossing movie Sicko is one example of telling the people what is really going on. Health care activists know that US health insurance is an extremely large and obscenely lucrative industry with the top nine companies "earning" \$93 billion in profits in 2006 alone. The health-care industry represents the country's third-largest economic sector, trailing only energy and retail among the 1,000 largest US firms.

Nevertheless, 16% of Americans still have no health insurance whatsoever and that number will not soon decline, as insurance costs continue to rise two to three times faster than inflation. The consequences are immediate and tragic. Unpaid medical bills are now the number one cause of personal bankruptcy in the country, and the Institute of Medicine estimates that nearly eighteen thousand Americans die prematurely each year because they lack coverage and access to adequate care.

US private health care services differ markedly from other industrialized countries where single payer systems provide everyone with medical care as a basic human right. Unfortunately, objective media coverage and comparisons of single-payer public health care with our current profit-driven corporate system are

almost non-existent at this time. To protect their bloated bottom lines, private insurance companies and HMOs invest heavily in lobbyists and corporate-friendly political candidates that promote their "indispensable" role in any future health care reforms. Besides their insider political influence, these firms deploy massive advertising budgets to discourage media investigations of the economic interests shaping our health policies today

Tens of thousands of American engaged in various social justice issues constantly witness how corporate media marginalize, denigrate or simply ignore their concerns. Activist groups working on issues like 9/11 truth, election fraud, impeachment, war propaganda, civil liberties/torture, and many corporate-caused environmental crises have been systematically excluded from mainstream news and the national conversation leading to a genuine truth emergency in the country as a whole.

Now, however, a growing number of activists are finally saying "enough!" and joining forces to address this truth emergency by developing new journalistic systems and practices of

their own. They are working to reveal the common corporate denominators behind the diverse crises we face and to develop networks of trustworthy news sources that tell the people what is really going on. These activists know we need a journalism that moves beyond forensic inquiries into particular crimes and atrocities, and exposes wider patterns of corruption, propaganda and illicit political control to rouse the nation to reject a malignant corporate status quo.

An international truth emergency, now in evidence, is the result of fraudulent elections, compromised 9/11 investigations, illegal preemptive wars, and continued top down corporate media propaganda across the spectrum on public issues. Glenn Beck recently was able to say on national Fox News television (date) that 9/11 Truth people openly supported the shooting at the Holocaust Museum. Beck claimed that 9/11 truth proponents see James von Brunn as a "hero." Beck's statement is completely without factual merit and represents a hyperrealist slamming of a group already slanderously pre-labeled by the corporate media as "conspiracy theorists."

Conspiracies tend to be actions by small groups of individuals rather than massive collective plots by entire governments. However, small groups can be dangerous, especially when the individuals have significant power in huge public and private bureaucracies. Corporate boards of directors meet in closed rooms to plan to how best to maximize profit. If they knowingly make plans that hurt others, violate laws, undermine ethics, or show favoritism to friends, they are involved in a conspiracy.

The main method of critics of unofficial investigations into 9/11, election fraud, and other controversial issues is to lump together all the questions and/or lines of inquiry as if they all have equal validity. Obviously, they do not. This, however, allows critics to dismiss fact-based, transparent inquiries into major problems with official explanations of these crucial matters by focusing on the most absurd claims only. These are fallacies of overgeneralization, straw persons, appeals to authority, and red herrings that provide distractions from actual fact-based, scientific investigations. These tactics avoid the debates about truth entirely. We the people must not be afraid to openly discuss, research, and validate these issues.

Here is a case in point: former Brigham Young University physics professor Dr. Steven E. Jones and some 700 scientific professionals in the fields of architecture, engineering, and physics have now concluded that the official explanation for the collapse of the World Trade Center (WTC) buildings is implausible according to laws of physics. Especially troubling is the collapse of WTC 7, a forty-seven-story building that was not hit by planes, yet dropped in its own "footprint" in 6.6 seconds in the same manner as a controlled demolition.

To support his theory, Jones and eight other scientists conducted chemical research on the dust from the World Trade centers. Their research results were published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal Open Chemical Physics Journal, Volume 2, 2009. The authors write, "We have discovered distinctive red/gray chips in all the samples. The properties of these chips were analyzed using optical microscopy, scanning electron microscopy (SEM), X-ray energy dispersive spectroscopy (XEDS), and differential scanning calorimetry (DSC). The red portion of these chips is found to be an unreacted thermite material and highly energetic." Thermite is a pyrotechnic composition of a metal powder and a metal oxide, which produces an aluminothermic reaction known as a thermite reaction and is used in controlled demolitions of buildings. This should be a part of our political discourse given how much of the policy in the past eight years has been based on assumptions about 9/11.

These are some of the reasons we are in a truth emergency, which is predicated on the inability of many to distinguish between what is real and what is not. Corporate media, Fox in particular, offers “news” that creates a hyper-reality of real world problems and issues. Consumers of corporate news media—especially those whose understandings are framed primarily from that medium alone—are embedded in a state of excited delirium of knowinglessness. This lack of factual awareness of issues like election fraud in 2000 and 2004, and the increasing evidence of 9/11 Commission report inaccuracies, leaves people politically paralyzed.

To counter knowinglessness, media activists need to include truth emergency issues as important elements of radical-progressive media reform efforts. We must not be afraid of corporate media labeling and instead build truth from the bottom up. Critical thinking and fact-finding are the basis of democracy, and we must stand for the maximization of informed participatory democracy at the lowest possible level in society.

The Truth Emergency Movement held its first national strategy summit in Santa Cruz, California on January 25-27, 2008. Further presence was represented at the National Conference for Media Reform in Minneapolis, Minnesota in early June, 2008.

At the Santa Cruz Summit, organizers gathered key media constituencies to devise coherent decentralized models for distribution of suppressed news, synergistic truth-telling, and collaborative strategies to disclose, legitimize and popularize deeper historical narratives on power and inequality in the US.

The truth movement is seeking to discover, in this moment of Constitutional crisis, ecological peril and widening war, ways in which top investigative journalists whistleblowers and independent media activists can transform how Americans perceive and defend their world.

#### Meta Narratives/Understandings from the Santa Cruz Truth Emergency Conference

At the Santa Cruz conference, a process was employed to bring the opinions, goals and needs of all the 300+ individual attendees together for purposes of comparison.

Individuals were asked to summarize their feelings and thoughts, discuss them with fellow panelists, and submit them to a central area for organization. Participants quickly discovered tremendous synergies in their desires, as a shape and form began to emerge out of the once scattered statements. These meta-narratives are outlined below including some of the key quotes which helped to form them:

#### Vox Populi: The Voice of the People

Democracy needs to dictate that it's own media is of the same construct. The distance between the media and the people it seeks to inform generally describes the disparity of the needs of democracy filled. We extolled the virtue of co-operation in media — “Unity to get out the truth” “We need to rethink the institutions which control our lives,” pushing society past the entertainment, material centered existence which modern commercial media has sold us. We must “Provide an immune response to the virus/cancer of corporate control.” Reforming the media so that it has its own safeguards, from the inside, against the decline of truth. Undemocratic media is a form of mind control for the powerful.

#### Mindfulness: Personal and Community



A powerful force exists within each of us, that is an ability to choose and consider at each point in our lives the greater extent of each of our decisions. While understanding that every human potentiality is likely impossible, mindfulness has been promoted in most every culture in the world, and the truth movement seems to be no exception.

Mindfulness is the interdependence, interconnectedness, of all the issues, of all the people. We honor the power of dialogue, listening and collaborative active work. We must get to know and find the others.

#### Democratic Renaissance

The system must work for the people: including the FCC/Media, elections and the economy. Responsibility for change lies on the electorate. The US as a democracy requires that human freedom is always acting, fighting on the side of right.

The people must continually act, not wait for others to do so or politicians to solve our problems. Threats to liberty are constantly unfolding, so the activist culture must be always be leading the fight. We must “put truth back on the table”, as truth is the foundation on which progress and mindfulness will be built. “Now is the opportunity thru shared public grassroots efforts to create/articulate public/shared social/personal positive change thru humor and mutual respect.”

#### New Media Solutions: From the Ground Up

There would be no Truth Emergency had the media, ostensibly an organization set up to profit from public awareness, not become that which it had deplored: a mouthpiece for corporate and political interests. New solutions for this deficiency are being explored by independent news outlets all over the world, as diverse as pamphlet publishers handing out leaflets to individuals building new news.

The Internet has been a strong tool for this expansion, but still does not reach a broad enough audience to be as complete of a solution as most people feel needs to be found. This suggests no magic bullet, but a multi headed approach, which needs to be taken: community radio, public access cable, print, Internet, word of mouth.

Foremost, we call for the “Visibility of independent Media- reporting reality, truth, factual issues.” We need for the media to be both a gadfly and to give positive credit where it is due, so that it will encourage people to do the right thing, not just to avoid disgrace.

We hope for “standards and training for truthful journalism,” interested in the benefits of collaboration. Requiring the “FCC to serve the public better,” rather than serving the goals of the highest bidder in its’ bandwidth auctions. Secrecy in the function of preserving the competitive advantage is antithetical to the needs of the people. The people should not have to be “at the right place at the right time” to receive accurate news from competing sources.

We cry for “progressive collaboration- tell truth to all citizens,” as there is but “One planet, One People, One Future.” Indeed, global awareness to the greater effects of our acts and choices may be a powerful catalyst for worldwide progress.

We challenge the global elite “built on domination, greed and alienation by long standing groups who maintain secrecy, control and the preponderance of wealth.”

We must reframe existing narratives and myths and tell the truth from the bottom up by engaging our collective voice.

#### Environmental Interests: Not Any One of Ours

The ecological reality of the planet essentially frames the future: we have this one Earth, and it is apparently undergoing serious changes due to our ignorance and hubris. Whereas the long term effects of our environmental wastefulness may be never known, most individuals seem to know precisely where to point the finger. "Unregulated Capitalism (Profit Motive) is killing the earth and all life.

"Life vs. Profit, ominously calls for regulations to prevent massive abridgments in responsibility as to make money a life or death decision." We recognize an undeniable truth, that "We are reaching ecological limits." "We are all one human family," and that our species success rises and falls on the backs of each other." Americans must see that our position of luxury is in fact a responsibility to others in less advantaged situations.

#### Economic Evolution: Quality not Quantity

The consolidation of media and business has not escaped the watchful eyes of the Truth Movement. Visualizing the idea that profit-seeking institutions will generally have similar interests goes a long way to understanding the insidious nature of media consolidation. "Consolidation of wealth and power (including media) keeps the general public from knowing and accessing the truth."

We must "eliminate corporate dominance," especially that one particularly viscous relationship between lawmakers and profiteers. Referencing the founding fathers concerns about religion, we ask for the "separation of corporations and government."

Imperialism is unacceptable coming from America. "The empire is in us; we have to get it out." By continuing to participate in the great resource and money grab—by not actively refusing the coercive forces of corporate society and continuing to buy filthy goods and crooked services, filling our cars with gas and bellies with corn and beef, we live the empire. Only through our constant and active denial of these values will they fail and allow the liberty and opportunity of Democratic primacy. "Empire, not geography is a process internalized!"

#### Change: Ours for the Taking

"If the New World Order is so great, why don't they share the plan?" "The World is a Dangerous place: we can feel it" "We need to counter the corporate political party's meta-narrative that what is good for corporations is good for America- Trust us!"

"We must reach and motivate folks to talk about the need to decide how we spend our national money."

#### Consider Radical Ideas: For Radical Times

"The US is too large and diverse to have such an overpowering federal government."

We must "march away from Washington. " We must "build and expand the perspective the what we are facing is the elite engaging in class warfare from the top down. We must take over media power to tell the truth.

On the final day of the Truth Emergency Conference January 2008 participants entered into

actions teams to formulate specific ideas for truth actions steps needed in the US.

Key Action Steps;

Take Back the Media.

Reform our national media policy.

Build a spiritual component into the Truth Movement

Reduce consumerism by knowing the four Rs—Reduce Reuse Recycle and Rot.

Support a consciousness around the terms we use for the Truth Movement.

Build a Truth Emergency website that uses news feeds from trustworthy dependable non-corporate sources that provides the daily news adequate for anyone in a democratic society. Enough truth sites already exist on the internet and we need to poll ourselves on those sites that are consistently the most trustworthy/truthful sites. From there formulate an internet based news service that pulls the best of the truth sites into one comprehensive service for daily news. The goal is to move from corporate top-down daily news sources going to most people to on-site grass roots supported and self-generated bottom up news sources for everyone that feeds our spirituality, non-consumerist behaviors, democratic knowledge, mindfulness, self actualization, diversity and social justice/equality.

Summary from Santa Cruz

It is amazing what 300 Truth Emergency activists can do in three days. We were able to build understandings from numerous different political perspectives, several serious truth issues constituencies and varying levels of spiritual and activist sentimentalities into a comprehensive understanding of the important of a Truth Emergency movement. The statements include philosophical, spiritual and practical levels of understand that was generated from a broad selection of people from all over the United States and several countries.

Truth Emergency Polls the Media Reform Conference

During the 2008 National Conference for Media Reform (NCMR) in Minneapolis, Project Censored interns conducted a sociological survey designed to gauge conference participant thoughts on the status quo of the news media as well as the truthfulness of corporate media news. The also survey sought to determine the level of belief and support in a Truth Emergency in the US and the varying degrees of support for key truth issues.

Project Censored researchers looked to NCMR 2008 as an opportunity to explore media democracy activist feelings concerning the corporate media's systematic failure to support full disclosure on important key issues in society.

This survey was completed by 376 randomly selected NCMR attendees out of the 3500 people registered for the conference. The survey has a statistical accuracy of plus or minus 5% at a 95% confidence interval in that all the people at the NCMR hold the same beliefs. The survey instrument used is attached below.

For discussion purpose, questions are grouped by their intention and reviewed in the

context of other similar questions. They are numbered as they were on the survey form on the table of results below.

Strong support was sought for the premise of a Truth Emergency in the US. We asked: The corporate media has failed to keep the American people informed on important issues facing the nation and a Truth Emergency exists in the United States.

The response was staggering. Ninety-Nine percent strongly agreed, or agreed with the first question, with only seven percent of responders disagreed with the characterization of current events as a Truth Emergency. This indicates to us that the attendees at the Media Reform Conference strongly believe in the failure of corporate media and support the idea that a truth emergency exists in the US, and that every possible avenue should be investigated to bring access to truth and fair reporting.

Truth Emergency has a number of issues that most direly threaten Democracy. Further surveys conducted within the Truth Emergency context may focus on other subjects such as undocumented workers, health insurance profiteering, mortgage officer impropriety, judicial and executive malfeasance, energy policy corruption and other hot-button topics.

On this initial survey several truth emergency topics were covered:

7. Unanswered questions regarding 9/11 are an important truth emergency issue in the US.
8. Discovering the truth about the reasons the Bush Administration decided to invade Iraq is an important truth emergency issue in the US.
9. Investigating allegations of election fraud in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections is an important truth emergency issue in the US.
10. Addressing torture by US officials as a violation of basic human rights is an important truth emergency issue in the US.
11. Full health care for all residences of the US is a vital truth emergency issue.
12. Who profits from the increasing cost of gasoline is a vital truth emergency issue in the US.

Response varied a little more on this panel of issues. Torture received the most widespread condemnation, with 98% of respondents agreeing that its use constitutes a Truth Emergency. Over 90% of the NCMR participants agreed with the statements on health care concern, election fraud, gas pricing and Iraq lies. The 9/11 questions was the most polarized, drawing the lowest overall agreement and the most negative responses. However, still over 79% of the responders strongly agree or agreed that unanswered questions on 9/11 constitute part of a truth emergency in the US.

Movement Strategy questions showed strong understanding and support from the media democracy crowd as well.

3. A media democracy movement is occurring in the US that specifically supports the expansion and development of independent media from the bottom up.

Strongly Agree and Agree was 91%.

4. Reform of the Federal Communication Commission and changing of laws to break up concentrated corporate media in the US is an important strategy for the media democracy movement.

Strongly Agree and Agree was 95%.

5. The media democracy movement can have both a reform segment and an activist independent media segment.

Strongly Agree and Agree was 89%.

6. The media democracy movement should focus on using the internet to build independent news sources.

Strongly Agree and Agree was 83%.

14. A Truth Emergency exists in the United States and can best be addressed by deep investigative research done by independent media.

Strongly Agree and Agree was 93%.

Discovering the most effective ways to chisel at the bulwark of corrupt corporate media will require continuing thought and effort. It is clear from our survey that media democracy activists strongly support the continuing development of independent media combined with aggressive reform efforts as part of an overall media democracy movement. Activist also believe that both reform and grassroots independent media efforts will fit within an ongoing truth emergency theme that conducts deep investigative research into critical social justice issues. One activist said, "we cannot be afraid, democracy is in the balance."

While we recognize that this survey was done at an independent media activist "reform" conference and we fully expected lots of agreement on the questions, we were amazed at the total agreement for grassroots media efforts in addition to reform work.

The overall positive response (87% agreement) to our own Project Censored yearbook was heartening and further validates the importance of our annual effort.

Question 15, A military-industrial-media complex exists in the US for the promotion of the US military domination of the world, received a 87% approval rating. This result show that research done my Project Censored (Phillips 2006) showing the continuing powerful global dominance group inside the US government, the US media and the national policy structure is clearly widely believe by participants at the Media Reform conference.

The continuing media conferences organized by Free Press have been an outstanding effort to push media reform lobbying efforts in the US. Undoubtedly these efforts on internet neutrality, media consolidation, and FCC rule making have had some significant successes. Our survey shows that there is continuing strong support for these efforts by the 3,500 participants at the Media Reform Conference in Minneapolis in June of 2008.

However, efforts by the Santa Cruz Truth Emergency Conference organizers to hold a informational panel in Minneapolis were denied by Free Press. While this may will have been due to an over whelming number of proposals for panels at the June conference, it may also have been due to a shyness towards some of the truth issues represented among the Santa



Cruz Truth Emergency organizers.

Our survey shows that the media reform activists in Minneapolis addition to supporting continued development of grass roots media, also strongly support the building of a national Truth Emergency Movement and are not shy at all towards finding the truth on key issues that the corporate media is failing to cover. We think that both these areas, independent media development, and the Truth Emergency Movement should be more widely addressed at future media democracy conferences.

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