

Reviewing Project Censored's Latest Top 25 Censored Stories

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Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

For 33 years, Sonoma State University's (SSU) [Project Censored](#) (PC) has engaged in pioneering research on, and advocacy for, First Amendment issues. Founded by Carl Jensen in 1976, it's now headed by Professor Ben Frymer. On July 1, he took over from Professor Peter Phillips who stepped down after 13 years of distinguished service as Director.

PC works cooperatively "with numerous independent (US) media groups," primarily to train SSU students "in media research and First Amendment issues and the advocacy for, and protection of, free press rights in the United States."

For over three decades, it's "trained over 1,500 students in investigative research" and continues doing it through "a partnership of faculty, students, and the community," cooperatively engaged in "research on important national news stories that are underreported, ignored, misrepresented, or censored by the US corporate media."

Each year, it ranks the top 25 and publishes them in its yearbook, "[Censored: Media Democracy in Action.](#)" The latest "[Censored 2010: The Top 25 Censored Stories of 2008 - 09](#)" just out is the subject of this review. The book may now be purchased locally, online, and most easily at projectcensored.org/store.

The current edition is larger than even, and includes the year's honorable mention choices as well as additional chapters covered below.

In the preface, Peter Phillips and former Associate Director Mickey Huff highlight Censored 2010's theme in explaining the corporate media's emphasis on commercialism, the "inane," the "irrelevant," and their willful suppression of real news and information on vital issues.

Their betrayal of the public trust reveals them to be "a gossip rag or screed sheet, a veritable three-ring circus sideshow of spectacle and distraction," and a "dying system" relying on disinformation, faux reporting over real journalism, and the main threat to democracy in America that can't flourish without a free and open media able to supply everyone with real news and information.

In its annual editions and daily on its web site (projectcensored.org), PC offers the best of what the corporate media censor or suppress. Censored 2010 offers more of it than ever, and credit for it goes to Peter Phillips, Mickey Huff, and the entire Project Censored team. As Dahr Jamail ends his introduction, "we are (indeed) fortunate to have (a valued) ally like Project Censored."

Tricia Boreta and Peter Phillips explain why:

- because “the absence of real news from corporate media has never been so complete;
- Lies, deception, propaganda, superficial coverage, and overt censorship are on the rise;” and as a result
- democracy is being willfully destroyed.

But PC isn't standing pat, and allied with 28 professors nationally have incorporated PC “curricula and investigative procedures into their classrooms.” They, and a free and open Internet, are the future. But not without a long tough struggle against powerful dark forces determined to hold on and control all news and information sources. It's for public outrage and committed organizations like PC to stop them. It's our country and our choice.

Zombie Newspapers – Dead A Generation Ago, Their Corpses Are Showing Up

Buffalo State College Journalism Professor Michael Niman highlighted the decline of US dailies at a time of economic crisis. Some have shut down. Most have downsized, while others are going virtual over print. However, “the collapse of journalism is old news. Newspapers have been dead for quite a while.” We're just now seeing their corpses, but the concentration of media monopolies, the proliferation of one-newspaper towns (in 98% of US cities), and the destruction of media diversity made it predictable.

Content is heavily censored by conglomerates controlling media empires for profit, “not to inform, educate, and agitate....” With no competition, they cut staff, use wire services over their own reporting, and lost “significance as sources of (real) news.” Avoiding controversy and pleasing advertisers counts most, and on political issues they “suck up to power and don't ask (hard) questions....”

The relevant one for consumers is “why the hell should we pay for their misinformation?” In increasing numbers, they've stopped, preferring instead to get reliable information from independent print and online sources.

It shows that “while there might not be a future for soulless, zombie monopoly newspapers, there is a future for journalism.” Niman sheds no tears for the corporate kind and hopes that many credible alternatives will replace them.

PC's Top 25 2008 – 2009 Stories

(1) US Congress Sells Out to Wall Street

Americans get the best democracy money can money, coming more than ever today from Wall Street. “Since 2001, eight of the most troubled firms have donated \$64.2 million to congressional candidates, presidential candidates and the Republican and Democratic parties.” Is it surprising that they own them? As senators, Barack Obama and John McCain got “a combined total of \$3.1 million.”

Influential House and Senate finance and banking committee members got \$5.2 million from bailout recipients like Goldman Sachs, Citibank, AIG, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and others. In the last election cycle, Obama received at least \$4.3 million from the same ones, investments that yielded big returns.

From 1998 – 2007, financial and banking companies “spent \$1.7 billion on federal campaign contributions and another \$3.4 billion on lobbyists.” In 1999, Glass-Steagall was repealed, the landmark 1933 law that curbed speculation and separated commercial from investment banks and insurance companies. In January 2000, the Commodity Futures Modernization Act legitimized swap agreements and other hybrid instruments, at the core of today’s problems by preventing regulatory oversight of derivatives and leveraging, thus letting Wall Street legally pillage and speculate, so they did.

The result was a financial coup d’etat “cement(ing) the gradual takeover of the government by a small class of connected insiders” who choose candidates, control elections, weaken financial regulations, and run the country for their own self-interest. As a result, Washington today is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Wall Street financial giants. What they want, they get, no questions asked.

(2) US Schools Are More Segregated Today than in the 1950s

According to a UCLA Civil Rights report, “schools in the US are 44 percent non-white, and....Latinos and blacks, the two largest minority groups, attend schools more segregated today than during the civil rights movement forty years ago.” The result is:

- unequal education denies disadvantaged youths access to college and better jobs;
- growing numbers of them become “virtually unemployable” for anything more than menial labor or the military; and
- they’re vulnerable to future poverty, poor health, gangs, crime, and incarceration in America’s gulag prison system in each of the 50 states.

The report stresses the need for “leaders who recognize that we have a common destiny in an America where our children grow up together, knowing and respecting each other, and are all given the educational tools that prepare them for success in our society.”

Instead, Barack Obama, like his predecessor, backs privatizing public education, destroying a 374 year tradition in America, ending government responsibility for it, and making it another business profit center at the expense of future generations of disadvantaged youths.

(3) Toxic Waste Behind Somali Pirates

By blaming the victims, the international community and dominant media have ignored the “unregulated (IUU) fleets from around the world that have been poaching and dumping toxic waste in Somali waters since the fall of the Somali government eighteen years ago.” Foreign interests have been using hundreds of vessels to loot “the country’s food supply,” according to the High Seas Task Force (HSTF), stealing “an estimated \$450 million in seafood from Somali waters annually” and ruining the livelihoods of Somali fishermen.

Instead of rectifying the problem, the UN passed “aggressive resolutions that entitle and encourage transgressors to wage war on Somali pirates.” NATO, the EU, and other countries issued similar orders. Starving Somalis are responding as they have every right to do, yet are called criminals for defending their own waters and protecting their rights.

(4) Nuclear Waste Pools in North Carolina

Progress Energy's North Carolina Shearon Harris nuclear plant "contains the largest radioactive waste storage pools in the country." If the cooling system malfunctions, "the resulting fire would be virtually unquenchable and could trigger a nuclear meltdown." According to Helen Caldicott and other experts, the likelihood of one happening somewhere is virtually certain – the result of human error, faulty maintenance, a terrorist attack, or for some other reason. If a major city is located downwind, forced evacuation would follow and residents prevented ever from returning because of irremediable toxic radiation.

According to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), Shearon Harris has a history of unresolved safety issues and numerous emergency shutdowns. Problems there "continue with chilling regularity." Yet the NRC ignores the potential risks. As a result, the plant is "a nuclear time bomb," and millions in the region are at risk.

(5) Europe Blocks US Toxic Products

Unlike in America, European countries "are moving toward a....model of insisting on environmental and consumer safety" that requires assessing thousands of chemicals for their potential toxic effects. New regulations will mandate that companies seeking market access eliminate toxic substances and produce safer electronics, automobiles, toys and cosmetics.

Without compliance henceforth, the products of hundreds of US companies may be excluded from European markets, and according to Mark Schapiro, author of *Exposed: The Toxic Chemistry of Everyday Products* and *What's at Stake for American Power*, "only five percent of all chemicals in the US have undergone even minimal testing." Further, new EPA requirements consider the "costs to industry" in assessing an "unreasonable threat to public health" as a reason to side with industry and keep regulations minimal to nil.

The divergence between US and European regulation has made America "the dumping ground for toxic toys, electronics and cosmetics. We produce and consume the toxic materials, from which other countries around the world are protected."

(6) Lobbyists Buy Congress

In 2008, The Center for Responsive Politics reported that "special interests paid Washington lobbyists \$3.2 billion in 2008," higher than any year on record and 13.7% more than 2007. It amounts to \$17.4 million for each day Congress was in session, or \$32,523 per legislator day.

Health interests spent the most for the third consecutive year, \$478.5 million, followed by the FIRE sector (finance, insurance and real estate) at \$453.5 million. It's a small investment yielding big returns for these and other industries, competing at the public trough for as much as they can get. The payoff is in the billions, and for Wall Street pledged trillions as well as interest free money from the banker-owned Federal Reserve.

(7) Obama's Military Appointments Have Corrupted Past

After promising not to politicize intelligence and to keep lobbyists out of top government posts, Obama appointed many "former lobbyists or former board members of companies directly doing business with the Pentagon" and retained Robert Gates as Defense Secretary

despite his history at CIA of having cooked the books for political reasons.

According to Agency insiders who knew him, he “corrupted the intelligence product” to suit the White House and further his own self-interest. He facilitated Iran-Contra and helped boost military spending by exaggerating the Soviet threat. He frustrated independent counsel Lawrence Walsh enough to write that despite Gates’ touted memory, he “denied recollection of facts thirty-three times,” and when GHW Bush nominated him for CIA Director, a virtual insurrection among CIA analysts erupted over his penchant for having politicized intelligence.

Obama’s Deputy Defense Secretary, William Lynn, is just as tainted. The former Raytheon vice president and company lobbyist got Senator Charles Grassley to object over his “very questionable accounting practices” as Pentagon Comptroller during the Clinton years.

Obama’s Undersecretary of Defense, Robert Hale, served as Assistant Air Force Secretary Financial Comptroller under Clinton, and according to author Andrew Hughes, he and Lynn “lost enough taxpayer money to pay for Obama’s stimulus plan four times over.” They now again oversee DOD spending.

The list goes on and includes National Intelligence chief, Admiral Dennis Blair, who backed Indonesia’s terror, mass-killing, and occupation of East Timor in 1998. General James Jones is a Trilateralist and former NATO commander. Obama’s entire national security team is composed of recycled appointees very much committed to continued imperial wars and outlandish amounts of military spending for them.

(8) Bailed Out Banks and America’s Wealthiest Cheat IRS Out of Billions

It’s an old story. “Only the little people pay taxes,” according to former tax cheat Leona Hemsley (1920 – 2007), and rarely does anyone like her get caught.

In 2008, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) “reported that eighty-three of the top publicly held US companies have operations in tax havens like the Cayman Islands, Bermuda, and the Virgin Islands. AIG, Bank of America, Citigroup, and 11 others got government bailouts. In addition, Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS) helped wealthy clients “cheat the IRS out of over \$20 billion in recent years, according to the Department of Justice.”

Other notorious tax havens include Austria, Luxembourg, the Channel Islands, Singapore, Hong Kong, Andorra, Monaco, Gibraltar, the Bahamas, the Cook Islands, and Turks and Caicos. In 2008, they saved Goldman Sachs billions of dollars through “changes in (its) geographic earnings mix.” For many other companies, it’s much the same through legal provisions in the tax code. According to some estimates, “trillions of dollars in both corporate profits and personal wealth have migrated offshore, (and) the offshore banking world now harbors \$11.5 trillion in individual wealth alone....”

(9) US Arms Used for (Israel’s) War Crimes in Gaza

For decades, America has supplied Israel with tens of billions in aid, interest-free loans, and the latest in new weapons and technology, including illegal white phosphorous shells used against Gazan civilians during Operation Cast Lead.

In addition, Washington supplies F-16 fighters, attack helicopters, tactical missiles, 1,000 or

more bunker-buster bombs, a wide variety of other munitions, and undisclosed new weapons for testing in real time combat situations against Palestinian or other Arab civilians.

In Gaza, shell fragments revealed names of US defense contractors, including Raytheon. Another was marked the Pine Bluff Arsenal in Arkansas. In shocking support for Israel's war of aggression, in violation of international and US law, both Houses of Congress overwhelmingly endorsed its continuation, and Obama stayed silent in the run-up to his January 20 inauguration.

(10) Ecuador Declares Foreign Debt Illegitimate

"In November 2008, Ecuador became the first country to undertake an examination of the legitimacy and structure of its foreign debt." In violation of Ecuadorean law, predatory international lenders were involved in hundreds of illegitimate irregularities. Billions in foreign debt at exorbitant interest rates resulted in debt service far exceeding the principal borrowed, at a staggering human cost. In December, President Rafael Correa announced his country would default. In April 2009, he was re-elected overwhelmingly.

Ecuador exposed the corrupted international finance system that could set a precedent for the poorest of indebted countries. Correa asked other Latin American nations "to forge a united response (and for) the United Nations to help develop international norms to regulate the foreign debt market."

The April 2008 House passed Jubilee Act was a positive step forward. However, the Senate failed to pass its S. 2166 version, then cleared the legislation from its books.

In June 2009, Ecuador agreed with 91% of its creditors to pay 35 cents on the dollar for its debt. Other countries may now follow suit, especially the most impacted by the global economic crisis.

(11) Private Corporations Profit from the Occupation of Palestine

US, Israeli, and other international corporations profit from the occupation of Palestine. They "lead real estate deals, develop the Israeli (settlements) and infrastructure," and help solidify the continued land theft, economic exploitation, and apartheid separation of Muslims and Jews, in violation of international law.

In addition to Gaza under siege, West Bank Palestinians have endured an oppressive 42-year military occupation. On their own, with virtually no outside support outside of growing grassroots movements, they keep waging a heroic struggle for their self-determination and freedom.

(12) Mysterious Death of Mike Connell – Karl Rove's Election Thief

As Karl Rove's chief IT consultant, Connell was a key figure in the theft of the 2004 election for George Bush. Under subpoena to testify on his role in Ohio, he died mysteriously in a December 19, 2008 plane crash.

IT expert Stephen Spoonamore, a conservative Republican, explained how Connell's vote tabulation system worked. It "allowed (for) the introduction of an additional single computer between computer A and computer B (called a) man in the middle" attack. The subsequent

centralized collection of all incoming statewide tabulations made it easy for a single operator, or a preprogrammed 'force balancing computer' to change the results in any way desired by the team controlling Computer C."

Spoonamore explained that Connell's system exists solely for one purpose - to commit crime. Clear evidence of the 2004 electoral theft confirms that's precisely what happened.

(13) Katrina's Hidden Race War

After Hurricane Katrina, a Nation magazine report explained that "white vigilante groups patrolled the streets of New Orleans....shooting at least eleven African American men." Falsely portrayed as looters and thugs, they were gunned down in cold blood by "gun-toting white males," yet city police didn't intervene or investigate the crimes.

In addition, Blackwater mercenaries were deployed in New Orleans right after the storm. In full battle gear, they terrorized black residents, removed them from choice areas for development, and assured they didn't return. Protected by immunity, they were licensed to kill if disobeyed.

(14) Congress Invested in Defense Contracts

According to the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics, over 151 congressional members have invested up to \$195 million in major defense contractors, thus profiting from America's imperial wars.

Major investors include:

- Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) - \$49.1 million;
- Senator John Kerry (D-MA) - \$38.2 million;
- Rep. Robin Hayes (R-NC) - \$37.1 million;
- Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI) - \$8.4 million;
- Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) - \$7.6 million;
- Rep. Jane Harmon (D-CA) - \$6.3 million;
- Rep. Tom Petri (R-WI) - \$5.8 million; and
- Rep. John Carter (R-TX) - \$5 million.

(15) World Bank's Carbon Trade Fiasco

On the pretext of environmental protection, "the World Bank is brokering carbon emission trading arrangements that destroy indigenous farmlands around the world" and do nothing to cut pollution or reduce the threat of climate change.

The scheme is similar to Obama's cap and trade bill (HR 2454: American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009) that lets corporate polluters reap huge windfall profits by charging consumers more for energy and fuel. It also facilitates new carbon trading derivatives speculation, yet does nothing to address environmental issues. On June 26, HR 2454 passed

the House, but so far it's stalled in the Senate.

(16) US Repression of Haiti Continues

Two months after the Bush administration forcibly deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide on February 29, 2004, the UN Security Council authorized Blue Helmet peacekeepers to occupy the country. It was likely the first time ever to support and enforce a coup d'état against a democratically elected president. To this day, Haitians have been denied their freedom under a repressive UN occupation. The Obama administration continues to endorse it.

(17) The ICC Facilitates US Covert War in Sudan

Huge potential oil reserves explain the significance of Darfur. Washington's genocide claim is a hoax. It's part of America's chess game with China for control of the region's resources, something both nations covet. Beijing already gets up to 30% of its oil from Africa by offering no-strings attached dollar credits compared to exploitive IMF and World Bank terms, and America's usual one-way kinds.

Under cover from the ICC's fraudulent indictment of Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir for war crimes and other contrived reasons, America has exploited the region militarily for geopolitical advantage. The ICC stands exposed as an imperial tool, not the independent body it should be.

(18) Ecuador's Constitutional Rights of Nature

"In September 2008, Ecuador became the first country (ever) to declare constitutional rights to nature, thus codifying a new system of environmental protection."

Its Constitution declares nature:

"has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution. (This right) is independent of the obligation on natural and juridical persons or the State to indemnify the people that depend on the natural systems."

This redefinition affirms that nature must receive equal parity by law and not just be a resource for exploitation. Yet these Rights of Nature contain flaws because President Rafael Correa refused to let communities protect their own ecosystems. As a result, corporate predators can exploit the loophole and are expert at taking advantage. The new Mining Law already permits large-scale, open pit metal mining in the Andean highlands and Amazon rainforest.

Nonetheless, Ecuador's Rights of Nature hold hope that other nations may adopt them and start a process to more fully protect the environment.

(19) Bank Bailout Recipients Spent to Defeat Labor

After receiving \$25 billion in federal bailout funds, Bank of America organized opposition to

the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) – legislation to guarantee workers the right to bargain more fairly and collectively with management than since passage of the landmark 1935 National Labor Relations (Wagner) Act.

Business is firmly opposed. On March 10, S. 560: Employee Free Choice Act of 2009 was introduced in the Senate. It was referred to the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee where it's pending. Given the Obama administration's opposition, its passage looks doubtful.

(20) Secret Control of the Presidential Debates

Since 1987, the Republican and Democrat-controlled Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) has run the process, dictates terms, and excludes unwanted participants. During the 2008 presidential cycle, the Obama and McCain teams secretly cut a deal on who could participate, permissible topics, and the debate format structure.

Since independent candidate Ross Perot participated in 1992, the exercise has been pre-scripted theater without disturbing questions, shielding major party candidates from unwanted criticism, and excluding independent ones, like Ralph Nader, from participating. Before he died, Walter Cronkite called the CPD an "unconscionable fraud."

(20) Recession Causes States to Cut Welfare

Faced with huge budget shortfalls and little help from Washington, states have been forced to make major expenditure cuts, many affecting vital social services, including health care, education, and welfare.

Yet cutting Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) began prior to the present crisis so funds could be redirected to other priorities. Nationally, welfare rolls dropped over 40% between 2001 and June 2008, and in some states, like Georgia, up to 90%.

By allotting states fixed block grant amounts regardless of need and setting a five year limit for recipients, the 1997 law was deeply flawed as a way to free states and Washington from their obligation to provide welfare to the needy. As a result, America's social safety net is fast disappearing.

(22) Obama's Trilateral Commission Team

In 1973, David Rockefeller founded the Trilateral Commission (TC) to counter a threat of too much democracy. Jimmy Carter was a charter member. Current and past ones include nearly all presidential candidates of both parties; leading senators and congressmen; key members of the media; top intelligence officials; key government agency ones from Treasury, Defense, State, Commerce, and the Judiciary; numerous top business executives, and others from academia, labor, and various NGOs.

Eleven TC members are in the Obama administration, including Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner, UN Ambassador Susan Rice, National Security Advisor Gen. James Jones, National Intelligence Director Adm. Dennis Blair, Paul Volker, and five top State Department officials, including Richard Holbrooke and Dennis Ross.

Along with Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) members, they're the dominant forces in America. They decide who's elected to high office, appointed to key government positions,

how the country will be run, and for whose benefit.

(23) Activists Slam World Water Forum as a Corporate-Driven Fraud

Organized every three years since 1997, the corporate-controlled World Water Forum (WWF)'s main goal is the global privatization of water in coordination with the World Water Council (WWC), dominated by two of the world's largest water companies, Suez and Veolia, as well as the World Bank and corporate segments of the UN.

WWC "promotes extraordinarily expensive and destructive dam and water diversion projects" as well as an agenda to put water services in private hands through the establishment of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). Operating in countries like Argentina, Bolivia, El Salvador and America, the result has been "huge price hikes, water pollution, depletion and cut-offs (that) deny people the right to water" if they can't pay the exorbitant cost.

Activists like Maude Barlow ask "Is water a commodity (to be sold) to the highest bidder or part of our commons, a public trust and a human right?" The global struggle is committed for the latter.

(24) Dollar Glut Finances US Military Expansion

Economist/author Michael Hudson first addressed this topic in his 1972 book, "Super Imperialism," updated in a 2003 edition. He then revisited it in his award-winning article explaining the "inter-related dynamics" of:

- "surplus (US) dollars pouring into the rest of the world for yet further financial speculation and corporate takeovers;"
- global central banks "recyl(ing) these dollar inflows (into) US Treasury bonds to finance the federal US budget deficit; and most important (but suppressed in the US media),
- the military character of the US payments deficit and the domestic federal budget deficit."

The net result is that the global dollar glut finances US corporate takeovers, speculative excesses, reckless spending, foreign wars, hundreds of worldwide bases, and a culture of militarism and belligerence at the expense of democratic freedom, beneficial social change, and human and civil rights.

Today, the world's largest "free lunch....is the ability of the US Treasury to issue (trillions of dollars) in exchange for foreign exports, the sale of foreign companies and real estate to US buyers, (and) US military purchases abroad." They comprise the balance-of-payments deficit that's "free to the extent that foreign central banks recycle (their) surplus dollars into Treasury bonds and other US securities...."

(25) Fast Track Oil Exploitation in Western Amazon

Home to the world's "most biodiverse and intact rainforest," the Western Amazon "may soon be covered with oilrigs and pipelines" since vast parts of it will be opened for oil and gas exploration, "putting some of the planet's most pristine and biodiverse forests at risk,

conservationists have warned.” Five nations are threatened, including Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Western Brazil, in areas called “the lungs of the planet,” where the lives of indigenous people are also threatened.

2010 Honorable Mentions

- Demining Stops in Lebanon – to clear over one million Israeli-dropped cluster bombs during the last days of its 2006 war;
- Cuba Years Ahead in Eat Local Movement – the result of thousands of urban cooperative gardens replacing expensive imported food;
- Military Corporate Legacy of the New Secretary of Education – Arne Duncan privatized and militarized education as CEO of Chicago’s public schools;
- Latin American Leaders Refute US Drug War – they propose a new paradigm to replace America’s failed one;
- Guantanamo Worsens Since Obama – after promising to close Guantanamo and end torture, prison conditions there are as bad or worse than before;
- Fault Lines Intersect Nuke Plant Near NYC – sitting atop newly identified fault lines shows New York is more at risk than previously imagined;
- Battle for the Future of SEIU – it pits rank-and-file members against the failure and power aspirations of its leadership;
- Constitution-Free Zone for Two-Thirds of US Population – more evidence of DHS abusing its authority at the expense of constitutionally-guaranteed rights;
- Coal vs. Wind in West Virginia – An energy battle may result;
- Father Roy Excommunicated? – Roy Bourgeois has been threatened by the Vatican unless he recants his support for ordaining women in the priesthood;
- Air Force Embraces Coal – as a result, the transportation fuel of the future may be coal-based;
- Terrorizing Dissenters at the RNC – St. Paul, MN, the site of the 2008 Republican Convention, was turned into a police state for the event;
- UN Negligence is Killing Child Refugees in Kosovo – three UN-established refugee camps sit atop a toxic waste dump killing dozens and causing 50 miscarriages because of suspected lead poisoning; and
- Secret US Forces Carried Out Assassinations – under Dick Cheney, the Bush administration ran an “executive assassination ring” in Iraq, Afghanistan, Latin America, and other parts of the world.

An Entire Section is devoted to updating previous PC Stories, including the top one for 2009 on “More than One Million Killed in Iraq.” Occupation and violence keep elevating and depriving Iraqis of their freedom.

Infotainment Society: Junk Food News and News Abuse for 2008/2009

In 1984, PC Director Carl Jensen called it a “Twinkie, not very nourishing for the consumer.” He now says it’s a “major problem in journalism and corporate media, particularly on

today's cable and television news." The late Communications Professor George Gerbner (1919 – 2005) once said "they have everything to sell and nothing to tell." And famed comedian Ernie Kovacs (1919 – 1962) once explained why television is called a medium – "because it's neither rare or well done."

PC's Former Associate Director Mickey Huff and Frances Capell discuss the Top Ten Junk Food News Stories and Top Five News Abuse Stories for 2008 and 2009. In quoting a Chinese proverb, they conclude: "Unless we change direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed."

Stories of Hope and Change

PC examines "strategies that appear to be improving the health of the community, whether local or global" at a time when real solutions more than ever are needed. Examples covered include "events or programs that are actually working for people and that increase the healthy functioning of governments, economies, the environment and the human condition."

It proves that organized people can beat organized money for constructive change as effectively as when famed Chicago community organizer/activist Saul Alinsky (1909 – 1972) once explained it.

Examples include:

- citizen groups in all 18 Iraqi provinces successfully promoting peaceful elections;
- New York grassroots organizers and volunteers using the state's fusion voting laws to win over citizens for higher wages, fair taxes, affordable housing, civil rights, and campaign finance reform;
- 1,500 campaign donors pledging "not to donate to any federal candidate unless they support legislation making congressional elections citizen-funded, not special-interest funded;"
- pro-Israeli groups like Americans for Peace Now (APN) and J Street calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza during Operation Cast Lead last December and January;
- Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI) introducing a bill to strengthen federal whistleblower protections;
- Canada's Stephen Harper-led government apologizing for the treatment of native peoples;
- a successful democracy movement in Brazil;
- a European-led "revolution in chemical regulation" requiring thousands of chemicals to be assessed for potential toxicity;
- a federal appeals court telling the EPA that its pollutants standards are "contrary to law and unsupported by adequately reasoned decision making;"
- a New York Times/CBS poll showing that the majority of Americans want Washington to provide universal single-payer health coverage, and most physicians back it, including 17,000 doctors, medical students, and health

professional members of Physicians for a National Health Program;

- brain research on Buddhist monks revealing the benefits of meditation;
- evidence that the human brain is hardwired to reward caring, cooperation, and service;
- at a time of agribusiness dominance and rising prices, urban farms have become an important resource for providing cheap, local amounts of food for growing numbers of people;
- these gardens have proliferated in Cuba, an idea that could become a world model for “localized food sovereignty and sustainability;”
- communities are making food a matter of local interest;
- grassroots efforts are achieving good food policies in America;
- community stewardship of water is reclaiming a tradition of local control;
- Bangladesh’s successful model of fair water governance;
- the US Conference of Mayors voting to encourage municipal water use over high-cost corporate-controlled sources;
- sustainability efforts by a central Appalachian Network for a low-carbon regional economy;
- successful holistic range management methods for more productive ranches, healthy ecosystems, biodiversity, healthy water, mineral cycles and land;
- Canadian native communities gaining power over regional resources;
- Congress approving a massive public lands bill to protect two million acres of wilderness in nine states and 1,000 miles of rivers;
- Ireland and British Columbia, Canada banning uranium mining;
- Brazil pledging to reduce deforestation by 70% over the next decade;
- the first US Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) requiring that Northeast power plants buy permits for carbon emissions;
- soil being used to reduce CO₂;
- America becoming the world’s largest wind-energy producer;
- Portugal building the world’s largest solar photovoltaic farm to supply enough electricity for 30,000 homes;
- rising investment levels being made in renewable energy;
- community banks functioning as an alternative to Wall Street giants;
- the Common Good Bank model distributing profits back to the community and making all lending and spending decisions through participatory democracy;
- cooperatives turning wage slaves into worker-owners;

- calls increasing for a minimum corporate tax that could raise billions of dollars to stimulate economic growth;
- Ecuador questioning the legitimacy of foreign debt;
- Washington possibly losing its right to appoint future World Bank presidents;
- Net Neutrality hopes for passage increasing, but not without stiff corporate opposition against it;
- community land trust solutions offering hope for the foreclosure crisis; also, in *Landmark National Bank v. Kesler* (August 2009), the Kansas Supreme Court ruled unanimously against Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems' (MERS) right to bring a foreclosure action; over half of all new residential mortgages are registered with MERS; the ruling applies to other mortgage holders in Kansas, but it sets a precedent that other states may follow;
- the Pathway to Housing program calling for a “housing first” approach to address the problem of chronic homelessness;
- in opposition to America’s war on drugs, a Latin American Commission on Drugs calling for a new paradigm; and
- Ecuador becoming the first country to declare constitutional rights for nature.

Truth Emergency: Inside the Military Industrial Media Empire

Former PC Director Peter Phillips and former Associate Director Mickey Huff discuss the terrible toll from America’s imperial wars, with special emphasis on the carnage in Iraq. In America today, a “literal Truth Emergency” exists given the absence of “a truly free press” to report accurately on events and developments abroad or at home at a time of grave economic crisis, affecting growing millions, and misdirected spending for militarism and banker bailouts.

In January 2008, a Truth Emergency Movement held its first summit to devise ways to promote and distribute truths to a population starved for them and defeat the military-industrial-media complex’s dominance. They quoted famed journalist George Seldes (1890 – 1995) saying that “Journalism’s job is not impartial ‘balanced’ reporting. Journalism’s job is to tell the people what is really going on.”

It’s for committed alternative sources to counteract corporate media propaganda, and for a popular super-majority to rely on them for real news, information, and analysis to stay informed. Otherwise, a free and open society is impossible.

Pentagon Propaganda, Spin, and Lies about America’s Imperial Wars

They come from dominant domestic and international media sources; so-called National Public Radio, Public Broadcasting, and the BBC; state propaganda services like Voice of America; many figures in academia and the clergy; and ideologically driven conservative and extremist organizations that control most vital information given the public. Without them, imperial wars aren’t possible because enough popular opposition could be marshaled against them. Most Americans today distrust the popular media. It’s time they directed that sentiment for real change.

Fear & Favor: Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)

FAIR's Peter Hart writes about how the global economic crisis has impacted corporate newsrooms and the media overall as "owners who gambled on debt-financed expansions" have been hammered by shrinking advertising and subscriber revenues, with no light at the end of the tunnel in sight.

Surveys show that large majorities of broadcast and print journalists say financial pressures have increased, and about one-fourth cite considerable owner and advertiser influence in their newsrooms.

Consider Fox News, for example. A summer 2001 Seth Ackerman FAIR article cited its "extraordinary right-wing tilt (as) The Most Biased Name in News." Its founder and president, Roger Ailes, was described by former GHW Bush aide Lee Atwater as operating on "two speeds - attack and destroy." Reputedly, he only hires on-air staff who assure him they're Republicans, yet Fox insists its reporting is "fair and balanced."

The UK-Based Index on Censorship

Currently, defamation is casting a chill on free speech as a recurring theme. In the past year, UK libel law favored claimants by being hostile to free expression. In addition, "libel tourism," letting overseas plaintiffs sue in British courts, has turned the country into a virtual "international tribunal for defamation," but not without countermeasures from other countries, including in America where New York, Illinois, and Florida passed laws protecting their residents from English libel suits. Congress is also considering a law to make them unconstitutional.

The Index on Censorship magazine devoted an entire issue to the state of defamation around the world, and found that while the spirit for reform is strong, scant change followed.

The Hyperreality of a Failing Corporate Media System

Andrew Hobbs and Peter Phillips explain that "Hyperreality is the inability to distinguish between what is real and what is not," typical of how the corporate media operate, especially Fox News. Since most people rely on television for information, they're "embedded in a state of excited delirium and knowinglessness," the same sentiment expressed by an old TV sitcom law professor complaining about new students "com(ing) in(to his classroom) with a head full of mush...."

In the corporate media, model democrats like Hugo Chavez are called strongmen, autocrats and dictators. Figures like Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck become folk heroes for the extreme right. Others as bad get prime time exposure while real journalists are nowhere in sight.

Is PC a Left-Leaning, Conspiracy-Oriented Organization?

Peter Phillips and Mickey Huff would agree about a conspiracy for truth over propaganda, lies, disinformation, and junk news. Each year, "over 200 faculty and students from multiple disciplines and political orientations work with PC," and since 1976 "Over 1,500 students have been trained in media research techniques," ones that produce real journalism, not the fake, deceptive corporate-controlled kind that delivers everything but what people need to know.

They quote media scholar Robert McChesney saying in his book, Rich Media, Poor Democracy:

“A media system set up to serve the needs of Wall Street and Madison Avenue cannot and does not serve the needs of the preponderance of the population.” Stories getting almost no coverage are those on what “the political and economic elites are in agreement.”

Phillips and Huff add: “Without media freedom, not only can democracy not thrive, it simply cannot exist.”

Electoral Fraud, Eroding Democracy, and Media Complicity in 2008

At a time of the latest technology and corporate-controlled electronic voting, it's easier than ever to rig elections, and convincing evidence shows that's precisely what happened in 2000 and 2004. Not only did the Supreme Court hijack the 2000 election, but the Florida recount showed Gore won the state and the election. Fraud was even more extreme in 2004, denying John Kerry the office he won.

The process repeated in 2008 in the form of millions of disappeared votes with electronic ease. Without verifiable paper receipts or paper ballots, however, recount checks aren't possible. Today, America's privatized voting process lets corporate interests decide at the ballot box who's elected and who's not. It's even easier when the losing side won't complain and when the dominant media support the sham.

Expanding Investigative Research for Independent Media and Human Betterment

PC Director Peter Phillips explains that “Investigative research is the use of social science research methods to conduct data collection and analysis of important socio-economic issues for broad public dissemination – much like in-depth investigative reporting.”

In an academic setting, it uses alternative media channels to get vital information to the public, and asks key questions like:

- who has most power;
- whose decisions most affect our lives;
- how are power positions gotten;
- what advantages do they have; and
- how do they affect others in society?

In the West and especially America, class, race, socio-economic status, ethnicity and gender advantage an elite few over most others, and having a black president makes no difference. Today, inequality is endemic in the country, and evidence shows it's growing more entrenched.

Human Trafficking and Domestic Prostitution

By far, prostitution is the leading form of human trafficking in America, accounting for nearly half of it. The rest shows up in domestic service, agriculture, sweatshops, factories, restaurant and hotel work, and various other types of human exploitation. It persists for lack of regulation, work condition monitoring, and a growing demand for cheap labor and plentiful sex enabling unscrupulous scoundrels and criminal networks to exploit powerless people, including children, for profit.

The US Department of Justice (DOJ) states that the average entry prostitution age is from 12 – 14, and a congressional finding estimated that up to 300,000 children are at risk at any time. In addition, the lack of safe and legal migration facilitates trafficking, and few societal protections are available for victims. The profiteers take full advantage.

Water as Commodity or Commons?

Attracting many thousands from around the world, the World Water Council's (WWC) fifth World Water Forum (WWF) was billed as "the world's biggest ever water-related event." Yet it was one of the year's least reported stories because of vocal opposition to its privatization agenda that will make water available only to those who can afford the exorbitant cost. As part of the commons, clean water is a human right, not a commodity to be exploited for profit.

In her book *Water Wars*, Vandana Shiva says:

"Water is a commons because it is the ecological basis of all life and because its sustainability and equitable allocation depends on cooperation among community members."

Author Maude Barlow adds:

"You cannot trade or sell a human right or deny it to someone on the basis of an inability to pay."

WWF participants plan to do just that by charging prices unaffordable to billions.

Lesbian and Gay Standpoint Films

Writer James Joseph Dean examines them from 1980 – 2000, "focus(ing) on lesbian and gay characters' lives from the point of view of a lesbian and gay subculture." Throughout this period, Hollywood began normalizing homosexuality images, but "almost always isolate(d) the gay and lesbian from a larger lesbian and gay subculture" and continued to portray heterosexuality "as the normative identity of the majority." As human beings, Dean argues that society must afford gays and lesbians normal and equal recognition and tolerance.

Final Comments

The Project Censored team has made PC a national treasure, dedicated to media democracy in a free and open society. As guardians of power, today's dominant media system is in crisis because it's bottom-line driven, unresponsive to public needs, and concerned only about the interests of wealth and power.

As a result, fiction substitutes for fact. News is carefully filtered, dissent marginalized and denigrated, and supporting the powerful substitutes for full and accurate reporting. The fallout has imperial wars called liberating ones. Civil liberties are suppressed for our own good. Washington has become a wholly-owned subsidiary of Wall Street, and patriotism means supporting militarism, violence as a way of life, global dominance, lawlessness, torture, and an Orwellian society in which “war is peace, freedom is slavery, (and) ignorance is strength.”

Democracy requires a free, open, vibrant, and diverse media, elements totally absent under our corporate-driven system. PC holds it accountable by revealing what it suppresses.

Support Project Censored and the Media Freedom Foundation (MFF) that works closely with PC. Read Censored 2010: The Top 25 Censored Stories of 2008 – 09, and follow PC daily at projectcensored.org and MFF at mediafreedominternational.org. They’re our best hope to restore freedom in a healthy and functioning democracy, something very much absent in today’s corporate-dominated America.

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