

Issue No. 4, Vol. No. 1

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# EDucate!

A Quarterly on **E**ducation & **D**evelopment

## MEDIA, EDUCATION & SOCIETY

How the  
media  
shapes  
our  
lives?



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**EDucate!**

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This pioneering magazine has been created to challenge ethically, morally and intellectually the inequalities in the existing paradigms of education and development in order to liberate people's thoughts and actions.

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# OPEN letters

I got a taste of your educative magazine 'EDucate!' during my recent visit to Pakistan. I think that the contents are well suited for the modern day process to the advancement of education and thought towards a progressive society free of biased mind. It will go a long way to arouse the mind and soul of those who have been wandering in darkness before.

**Dr. Isiaka A. Ogunwande,**  
Department of Chemistry, University  
of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

I really enjoyed your interview except that you did not drill Prof. Chomsky's response to your last question. His response really eliminates/nullifies the role of leaders such as Linen, Gandhi and the likes (purposely not mentioning Khomaini, Hitler, and Reagan).

**Reza Ziaee,**  
UK

I was quite taken by some of the questions in Chomsky interview as I have asked the very same myself. I am living in New Zealand and have spent most of my life here even though I was born in Australia and I am an Australian citizen.

I am at a loss for how to reach out to people and raise their awareness on important issues, but I believe it starts with finding common ground. Sadly, I find that a lot of people over here are too busy with their own concerns to 'find time' to listen to things that affect their own future. I guess my main question to you or Prof. Chomsky would be how do you get people to listen? Any advice? Good luck in your endeavors.

**Michael Ross,**  
UK

Please accept my sincere congratulations for a job well done. The issue before me is Issue No. 3, Vol. No. 1. The whole issue is a collector's item. Those of us who are interested in the work and philosophy of Noam Chomsky would definitely keep it in their personal collection.

**We welcome your comments, critique and suggestions.**

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Include your full name, address, e-mail, and daytime phone number. We may edit letters for brevity and clarity, and use them in all print and electronic media.

**Syed Ahmed Naqvi,**  
Nawab Shah, Sindh, Pakistan

The Chomsky interview was GREAT! It was amazingly intelligent and immediately went much deeper into many issues. Good intelligent work!

**Nabil,**  
Pakistan

EDucate! for Pakistani youth is an eye opener. When I was first introduced to EDucate! (fortunately the first issue), I knew that it would bring about a great change in the way I think, and it did. Since the first issue to the Chomsky Special, I feel a major difference in the way I think and my attitude towards the realities of life. The youth of today are much hypnotized by the corporate world and the consumerism fabricated by it. Education seems to have become the product of the society rather than being the producer of it and the education system seems to serve the so-called elite class only. EDucate! is thus serving greatly in educating people the way it should be.

**Noman Nasrullah, Student,**  
Pakistan

## Reflections from a Reader

I just wanted to tell you how moved I was by EDucate's interview with Professor Chomsky, especially the way the questions really came from the heart. Like Mr. Rizvi, I have taught and met with people who are illiterate or have low literacy: a few prisoners, also immigrants from Mexico and Central America, some of whom were child laborers. Very quickly the flame of the spirit rises up when any human being, no matter how poor, is recognized by another in a deep, sincere way.

To see this is both a sacred responsibility and a source of extreme discomfort for those of us who have privilege and education. (The contrasts between my students and myself were not as large, I think, as what you experience in Pakistan.) After a while (perhaps a year) of feeling the discomfort and uncertainty acutely, I began to feel that I was able to give my students, and even sometimes their children and friends, something of value to them.

Of course, one should never be complacent. You give what you can, and perhaps over time, you are able to give more, and also to receive more - true friendship and solidarity.

Thank you for your beautiful honesty.

**Janet Weil,**  
USA

# Editor's Note

In the present times, nothing affects our lives more than the overwhelming influx of information. Be it the print or electronic media or for that matter any other evolving form of media (Internet, video games etc), we cannot help being exposed to a relentless litany of trashy ads, couch-potato sitcoms, violence-laden programs, all contributing to, in one way or the other, corporatization and consumerization of our societies especially the youth. David Edwards, in his book *Burning All Illusions*, elucidates this notion, "The global media system plays a[n] explicit role in generating a passive, depoliticized populace that prefers personal consumption to social understanding and activity, a mass more likely to take orders than to make waves. Lacking any necessarily 'conspiratorial' intent, and merely following rational market calculations, the media system simply exists to provide light escapist entertainment."

This issue of *EDucate!* examines the issue of mainstream global media and how it determines the way we think, the way we consume, the way we make choices and decisions and the way we pursue our everyday lives. Our cover story "Democratizing Global Media: Generating a Discourse" brings together an in-depth analysis of individuals, intellectuals, media critics and social analysts regarding the role global media in our society, its impact on our perceptions and societal realities and how our current educational processes, relationships and spaces can be used to address the challenges and opportunities of the media. Those who participated in this dialogue, possess a diverse portfolio of rich academic/intellectual experiences and knowledge pertaining to media, education and social activism. They include Robert McChesney, Edward Herman, Javed Jabbar, David Barsamian, Noam Chomsky, Stephen Fein, Michael Albert, Howard Zinn and many others. Hopefully our featured discourse will assist learners and educators in better understanding the issue of global media and trigger further debates/dialogues on the subject.

Since the essence of this issue is global media and its impact on our societies, the readers will find the content addressing various dimensions of the subject. We have also included names and links of useful books and websites that will help in developing a better understanding of media dynamics especially for those interested in further researching the field.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank our subscribers and contributors for their valuable input and support. Without them we could not have accomplished what we have in one year of publication. As *EDucate!* commences its second year, our aspiration and commitment to generate a medium for initiating social change remain undeterred. We seek your help in furthering our cause.

  
Ambreena Aziz

# DEMOCRATIZING GLOBAL MEDIA

## Generating a Discourse

Apparently we live in an age of action-packed technologies, swift scientific breakthroughs, burgeoning Third-World development and most importantly multifaceted media<sup>1</sup> communications. In common jargon, it is termed the Information Age, the Exciting New Era, the Globalized World, the Digitalized Planet and so on. But sadly the other side of this kaleidoscope is totally monochrome; it's a world full of poverty, oppression and injustice. It is a world dominated by larger-than-life mega-corporations that have taken control of not only our minds but also our common choices concerning trivial matters of life.

Gumisai Mutume notes, "the world faces the spectrum of a global commercial media sector swamping the traditional national press and promoting the commercial values of international capital, according to media analysts. They warn that the development of such a juggernaut hardly augurs well for any diversity of opinion and freedom of expression, and threatens to muffle the voices of the world's poor majority in a continually globalizing world. Some nine super-corporations already virtually control the industry and, together with 40 or so smaller players, produce the bulk of the world's newspapers, magazines, books, films, and television and radio programs". Robert McChesney, one of the best analyst of mainstream contemporary media, explains the emergence of global media: "Before the media explosion of the late 1980s, national media generally were characterized by locally or state-owned radio, television, and newspapers, especially in developing countries. When a flurry of mergers, takeovers, and cross-ownerships began, some sections believed that the advent of the Internet would eliminate the monopoly of these media giants as a new democratic medium was being established. Subsequent developments, however, have seen the same corporations also colonizing the Internet".

## The Global Media Onslaught

*"One of the intentions of corporate-controlled media is to instill in people a sense of disempowerment, of immobilization and paralysis. Its outcome is to turn you into good consumers. It is to keep people isolated, to feel that there is no possibility for social change."*

David Barsamian

Today a corporate regime dominates the world. These corporations exercise major influence over our day-to-day lives; they shape our attitudes, desires, priorities, relationships, values, sense of identity, modes of reflection, the ways in which we build community, and our perceptions of time and change. And one of their most powerful vehicle of intervention is media. David Edwards in his book, *Burning All Illusions*, notes, the battle for freedom from the control of earlier church-based and autocratic regimes has been, at best, only partially successful; that many of the devices used to maintain our conformity and passivity in the past have not been overcome at all but remain (often unconsciously) as servants of the powerful in new

guises. Today, the same Emperor can be seen striding unashamedly across our TV screens, resplendent in the various guises of 'democracy', 'the free world', 'the free press', 'Third World aid', 'human rights concerns', 'normality', just the way world is', appearing to be noble and moral as a matter of 'self-evident' common sense'. We have merely come full circle to a new version of the old illusions that clothe the same naked ambition and greed.

More than escalating consumerization, cultural homogenization/degradation, violence, etc, media is used to manipulate the real interests of local people.

<sup>1</sup>Throughout this discussion the term 'media' should be understood to encompass printed materials, radio, television, and new communication and information technologies.



Noam Chomsky discusses this implication:

*“A properly functioning system of indoctrination has a variety of tasks, some rather delicate. One of its targets is the ‘stupid’ and ‘ignorant’ masses. They must be kept that way, diverted with emotionally potent simplifications, marginalized and isolated. Ideally, each person should be alone in front of the TV screen watching sports, soap operas, or comedies, deprived of organizational structures that permit individuals lacking resources to discover what they think and believe in interaction with others, to formulate their own concerns and programs, and to act to realize them. They can be permitted, even encouraged, to ratify the decisions of their betters in periodic elections. The ‘rascal multitude’ are the proper targets of the mass media and a public education system geared to obedience and training in needed skills, including the skill of repeating patriotic slogans on timely occasions.”*

The global media system, in short, is oppressive, against the true essence of democracy (freedom of expression) and is vehemently biased. Due to the existence of such media frameworks, where consumerism and commercial interest reign supreme, the opportunities and spaces for critical thought and action are being pushed somewhere in the backdrop of general indifference, lack of support mechanisms and little hope for a sustained social change.

## Control Mechanisms & Media Manipulation

In their book, *The Global Media: The New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism*, Edward Herman and Robert McChesney note that the 1990s has witnessed a dramatic restructuring of national media industries and corporate mergers. The result of which is the emergence of the global commercial media network, which is dominated by ten mostly U.S.-based transnational media conglomerates (TMCs) such as Time Warner, Disney, Bertelsmann, Viacom, Sony, Dutch Philips, and News Corporation (owner of Star). This global media system is an indispensable agent of the globalizing, exploitative market economy as a whole. They further elaborate that the centralization of power is leading to the disappearance of a central requirement of democratic societies – diversity of ownership and ideas in the public sphere. The global media system runs on advertising revenue (from other large companies) and is responsible primarily to their shareholders. There is no accountability to the general public.

The built-in biases of the corporate mainstream media faithfully reflect the dominant ideology, seldom straying into territory that might cause discomfort to those who hold political and economic power, including those who own the media or advertise in it. What follows is an

incomplete sketch of the methods by which those biases are packaged and presented.

Manipulation often lurks in the things left unmentioned. The most common form of media misrepresentation is omission. Sometimes the omission includes not just vital details of a story but the entire story itself, even ones of major import. Stories that might reflect poorly upon the powers that be are the least likely to see the light of day. Thus the Tylenol poisoning of several people by a deranged individual was treated as big news but many other stories has remained suppressed for decades, despite the best efforts of worker safety groups to bring the issue before the public. (Methods of Media Manipulation, Michael Parenti)

## Media & Societal Issues

One of the ‘wonders’ of the present age is the information overload people are bombarded with throughout the day. Television viewing has become more of a necessity than a one-time leisure activity and as a result TV has become the most powerful transmitter of all sorts of media messages, apt or inapt, for all those willing to view. Today, electronic media (television) has become synonymous with advertising glut, exaggerated violence, all driving audience towards consumerism, self-absorption, disregard for local culture and rising materialism. Richard J. Barnet and John Cavanagh argue that the MTV entertainment network, which specializes in pop videos and serves as continuous commercial for a wide array of commercial products “may be the most influential educator of young people in five continents today”.

Inapt media messages (those reinforcing negative stereotypes) undoubtedly, render a most damaging influence over children. Research has proven that children are spending more time indoors in front of the TV, and less time interacting with each other outside their immediate environments. Within the household, the spaces for thoughtful discussion and meaning-making within the family are also breaking down.

Second, the kind of decontextualized programs that our children are watching, such as film songs, sports, cartoons, quiz shows, and game shows, serve to entice children into what Langdon Winner has called a state of ‘technological somnambulism’ (sleepwalking). When we try to take this drug away from them, children often react with great hostility.

Lastly, the global media often devalues and undermines informal participatory folk media, which provide alternative perspectives on peoples’ realities. The standard response thus far by government and citizen groups to this crisis is censorship – which itself represents another form of thought control.

## What Can We Do?

Individually and collectively, people need to start dynamic systematic processes of critical analysis and reflection about mainstream media affecting themselves, their families, their societies and their environments. This is not going to happen easily nor can somebody suggest a predetermined timeline to achieve this level of critical consciousness whereby people begin to realize what they are faced with (the onslaught of global media) and what can they do about it. But yet, collective efforts and actions are needed to disentangle our minds from the contemporary media mechanisms of thought control and manipulation.

**People-Centered Applications:** One pathway is developing alternative media. Media can also be a very powerful tool for supporting dynamic and diverse forms of learning – every media experience can become an opportunity to learn or to enhance one's learning abilities and processes. Yet, very few opportunities for creating a truly 'liberating media' exist. There is an urgent need to develop concrete community-based efforts to understand and address the challenges that are emerging from a media-rich society. At the same time, there is also an urgent need to develop innovative uses of the media to facilitate the learning and empowerment of people.

Moreover, teachers, parents and educators need to get involved with the process of creating critical media awareness (the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and produce communications in a variety of forms) amongst children via creative alternatives of learning and reflection.

## Generating A Media Discourse

*"Think for yourselves, do not uncritically accept what you are told, and do what you can to make the world a better place, particularly for those who suffer and are oppressed."*

Noam Chomsky

In this issue of EDucate! we have initiated a debate on perhaps the most pressing issue of the present age: the global media and how they shape up our attitudes and lives. From media's role in a democratic society to the possible usage of Internet as a vehicle for social change, we have tried to cover issues that seek critical examination and understanding on part of those at the receiving end. We have also explored how education, positively intertwined with media, can and cannot facilitate social change. It should be stressed that those concerned with education break out of the box of factory-schooling and join teachers, cultural activists, and concerned parents around the world in trying to engage the global media and to construct a lifelong learning system for the 21st century that supports the development of the full human potential.

Hopefully this debate will provide a platform for an ongoing discourse that will allow people to explore and understand the issue of global media more profoundly and inspire them to take initiatives in their own capacities towards integrating media positively in the frameworks of education and learning, cultural awareness and community building.

## Media Literacy Starts at Home

There are a lot of simple things that you can do in your own home to promote media literacy with your children (adapted from the Just Think Foundation):

- Turn off the television during dinner: This will create an opportunity for family discussion during which you can take time to talk with your children about what's important to you and why you value certain ideals.
- Keep a viewing diary: Evaluate your family's television viewing time and see where you can balance and/or cut back on viewing. Aim to keep a balanced diet. What is the ratio of entertainment programs to educational programs?
- Don't channel surf: This leads to unnecessary viewing. If you are having trouble finding something to watch, instead of watching, engage in alternative activities with your children.
- Avoid putting a television and computer in your child's room: A child with his or her own television gets the message that it's okay to view excessively and indiscriminately.
- Encourage your children to think about their favorite shows: Why do they like them? Do they relate to the characters? Does the program represent real-life situations? Ask them to come up with alternate solutions to the conflicts presented in the program.
- Point out how media are constructed: Do your children pay attention to commercials? Do they often remember them more than the programs? What children usually do not realize is that media exist to attract audiences for advertisers and programming is designed to attract specific markets. The easiest way for children to begin understanding this is to have them pay attention to the types of commercials played during different programs. Why aren't there toy commercials during the evening news? Why are there so many ads for alcohol during sporting events?
- Recognize media stereotypes: Are they true? Are they false? Why? Have your children compare the people you see in the media with real-life people. Can they think of exceptions to the characterizations or portrayals they see?
- Remember that you, not the television, are the master: The standard retort broadcasters use for programming with questionable content is that "If you don't like what's on, then just don't watch it."

You can begin these exercises as soon as your child becomes a media consumer (as early as age 2). The strategies suggested are great for guidance, but it's important to recognize your children's independence in making media decisions, as they grow older. Remember, it's not about your controlling their choices, it's about teaching them to make more informed choices.



## ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

**Michael Albert**

Began his political activities in 1967 and has been involved in activism and organization ever since. He was a co-founder of South End Press where he worked for about ten years and later of Z Magazine, ZMI, and various online projects including ZNet. He currently works as part of the Z Magazine collective and maintains ZNet and the new ZNet Sustainer Program. He also writes a column for Z, speaks publicly often, and has written over a dozen books over the years, often with his frequent co-author Robin Hahnel. His main activist focus has long been the creation and nurturance of alternative media institutions, recently mostly on the Internet.

**Edward Herman**

Edward S. Herman is a Professor Emeritus of Finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania where he was teaching micro- and macro-economics and financial regulation for 30 years. He has written extensively on economics, political economy, foreign policy and media analysis. He has a regular "Fog Watch" column in the monthly Z Magazine and has published numerous articles in many professional and popular journals. He has published 22 books, some of them are: "The Political Economy of Human Rights (with Noam Chomsky)", "Corporate Control, Corporate Power", "Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media (with Noam Chomsky)", "The Myth of the Liberal Media: An Edward Herman Reader" etc.

**Javed Jabbar**

Has extensive association with the mass media for over 30 years as a writer, filmmaker, radio and TV broadcaster, advertising practitioner, parliamentarian (1985-91) and Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting and Science & Technology in the Government of Pakistan, 1988-90. He is Founding Chairman of the South Asian Media Association.

**Shilpa Jain**

Shilpa Jain is a learning activist for Shikshantar in Udaipur, India. Through her work at Shikshantar and previous experiences with international development organizations in



Washington, DC, such as Creative Associates and the Academy for Educational Development, she has conducted research on several areas of education and development: democratic living, conflict transformation, creativity, Gram Sabhas and Panchayati Raj Institutions, the role of NGOs in civic participation, systemic reform, community participation, and equity education. She has a B.A. magna cum laude in Political Science and Women's Studies from Harvard University.

**Chavi Nana**

Chavi Keeney Nana is one of 40 Americans who were awarded the Marshall Scholarship to study at a university in Britain (Oxford University).

A double major in International Relations and German, Chavi has worked with Bosnian refugees in Germany and with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Rome during the Kosovo crisis. She plans to continue her efforts to influence refugee policies and forced migration. Her aim is to become actively involved in human rights and refugee policy development.

**Wasif Rizvi**

Before co-founding Shikshantar, Wasif worked in Pakistan as a social-policy development consultant in the areas of planning, policy and organizational analysis, research, program design/development, and program evaluation with USAID, DFID, CIDA, NORAD, Asian Development Bank, the Asia Foundation, PEN TV, and Philips Academy. He has two postgraduate degrees: a Master's degree in Education from Harvard University and a M.A. in English Literature from Punjab University, Lahore.

**Janet Weil**

Janet Weil is a writer and activist living in Northern California, USA. She has taught English to immigrants and in 1998 participated in "Equipped for the Future," a national pilot project establishing standards for adult education. She welcomes feedback, especially from Pakistani readers, at weiljs@yahoo.com.



## OP-EDs

**David Barsamian**

Founder and director of Alternative Radio. Regarded as an "ace interviewer" and "an ingenious impresario of radical broadcasting". Awarded as "Top Ten Media Heroes of 1994"

**Noam Chomsky**

Leading intellectual, linguist and political dissident. Chomsky has been regarded as 'the most important intellectual alive'.

**Prof. Anita Ghulam Ali**

One of the most respected and renowned educationists of the country - Prof. Anita is currently the Minister for Education, Sindh, Pakistan. She is also the Managing Director of the Sindh Education Foundation and Patron/Chairperson of EDucate!

**David Korten**

Cofounder and Board Chair, Positive Futures Network, and President of The People-Centered Development Forum. Korten's analysis of the corporate power has been regarded as one of the best works available on the subject.

**Robert McChesney**

Leading media analyst and author of *The Global Media: The New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism* and many more compelling books and articles on institutional media analysis.

**Noorud- Din Merchant**

Noorud- Din has been associated with the field of computers for almost a decade. He has also worked with the SEF on parental participation in education. Currently he is working at the Aga Khan Education Services, Pakistan.

**Matthew Rothschild**

Editor of The Progressive Magazine. Matthew is highly critical of the role that media played in recent political upheavals across the globe.

**Bina Shah**

Writer and journalist from Karachi. Author of *Animal Medicine and Where They Dream in Blue*.

**Naushad Vadsariya**

Naushad also works for the Aga Khan Education Services, Pakistan. He has recently arrived in Pakistan from Canada. His aim is to travel and study various languages and cultures.

**Howard Zinn**

Professor, activist, and author of the widely acclaimed *A People's History of the United States*.

# 1 democratizing

# global media

generating a discourse...



## media & democracy

---

what is the role of (mainstream contemporary)  
media in a 'real' free & democratic society?

**Edward Herman**

It should entertain, amuse and enlighten – and as regards enlightenment, it should fill what is called the ‘public sphere’ in which the issues important in a democratic society are debated and discussed and information is provided relevant to those debates and issues. This makes for informed citizenship, essential to a genuine democracy.

**Michael Albert**

Supposing in a good society ... media would entertain, inspire, educate, inform, provide a vehicle for developing and sharing ideas and agendas – for everyone. In other words, it would do pretty much what people say media is supposed to do now.

Good future media would do these things compatibly with the operations of other central structures of a good future society. As a result, good media, like other good undertakings in a good society, would be structured in accord with solidarity among actors, equitable distribution of income and circumstances, diversity of options and undertakings, and participatory self management for both those producing and those consuming the media's information.

Good media would have, as additional media-specific values, honesty, relevance, quality, the presentation of diverse views and provision of diverse channels and modes of communication available to all, especially dissenters – all of which highlight the problem that we endure now, of course. Because now the key defining structures of societies are antithetical to entertaining, inspiring, educating, informing, and providing means for developing shared ideas and agendas for everyone – other than in the limited sense of doing these things consistently with reproducing elite class, political, gender, and racial advantages. With current media, the worthy aims that we advocate are swamped by unworthy aims that maintain our subordination. Thus, mainstream media nowadays deliver honesty, relevance, diversity, access, and aesthetic quality only within the constraint of first serving elite, corporate, political, and other interests. In the future it would provide honest information and uplifting

entertainment instead as a first priority, against and undermining any elite interests that might exist.

**Stephen Fein**

In a free society, the media should offer the broadest possible spectrum of information and opinion and allow individuals to choose what they wish to see, hear and read. In a democratic society the media should help its citizens become better informed. In a free and democratic society the media should do both.

**Chavi Nana**

The primary role of the media in a democratic society should be to provide a channel through which views, both of the majority and the minority, can be expressed. Especially given the fact that the majority of democracies are too large to facilitate direct democracy, the media should present a forum in which multiple opinions are courted, represented, and in which discussion is encouraged.

**Janet Weil**

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

Article 19, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

As I sit down to write my responses to the questions on “Democratizing Global Media” at my computer in California, I am uncomfortably aware of the severe lack of equality and reciprocity in the media (and political) relations between the U.S. and Pakistan. My country is not flooded with Pakistani media messages that seek to change, abruptly and permanently, cultural practices such as care of the elderly, relations between adult children and their parents, and courteous behavior of youth – messages that I might well agree with! My nightly national newscast does not start with statements by Pakistani leaders or careful analysis of decisions taken by the government of Pakistan; but the reverse may well be true of news of the United States in Pakistan. What is the picture of Pakistan to the average television viewer in the United States – and to me?

So ... here we are, brainwashed or at least confused and distracted by the global media “thwarting any meaningful reflection on blatant injustices ... and selling seductive fantasies ...” Media grow out of, reflect and perpetuate the already existing, highly inequitable structures. What to do, where to begin in the face of systems of mostly corporate-controlled, highly undemocratic, world-altering media?

I have grave doubts that global media can ever be ‘democratized’ – that is, produced in some form of economic democracy and expressing the views of, and meeting genuine needs of, all its ‘consumers’. That ideal can be approximated in locally or regionally controlled media, perhaps. However, I do not feel at all hopeless; to engage in this discourse is already to begin to, in Chomsky’s words, “discover what [I and others] think and believe in, to engage in interaction ...”

### **Javed Jabbar**

The very nature of media is to be selective, to be suppressive and to be subjective and that focuses attention on the five paradoxes of media, on which I have written extensively. Firstly, the function of media being to delineate reality has unfortunately moved from delineation to distortion because distortion is in-built into the very nature of media. Therefore, media, in any ongoing situation in a society, should strive to minimize that inherent tendency to distort by being unable to represent the totality of a given situation. We assume that media portray reality, say independent, balanced, fair media doing a fair job of representing reality, which actually they don’t because it is not possible for media to be comprehensively accurate. But obviously we cannot do without media; we need media so that somebody sitting in Timbuktu gets to know what’s happening in the Sindh Education Foundation. So, what should media do? I think, first and foremost, reduce this natural tendency towards distortion and suppression or selection.

### **Wasif Rizvi**

All these terms are misinterpreted and misrepresented very frequently. Free democratic society is a very loaded term; it has been described within a particular framework, which in itself is highly questionable. Very simply a free democratic society should mean that people are allowed to participate in decision-making. They are a part of decision-making, in small socio economic decisions about their lives at a grassroots community level.

Unfortunately none of these frameworks in so-called formal situations exists. Numerous anthropological studies have shown that these frameworks did exist, do exist but in small isolated and what is normally labeled as backward or primitive societies. The studies have shown us that in pre-modern time and even during contemporary times there have been fairly significant and sizeable societies in which such frameworks existed where common people were allowed very significant roles in decision making which influence the entire community.

In the modern frameworks, however, such possibilities do not exist. Therefore, the so-called free democratic societies basically consist of small high interest setups in which the power - almost the entire power of decision-making is concentrated. In so-called free enterprise societies where we see a lot of private control which can also be called as money control or interest.

So if the question does not have a connotation of what we normally imply by the free democratic society only then we can move into the ideal role of media. I think it's important to understand that the moment we attach terms like free government or democracy, they come with a very heavy burden of predetermined frameworks, which have nothing to do with freedom or democracy. As a matter of fact, some writers have coined the term corporate oligopoly in which private business controls the vast sectors of decision making, those sectors include, what we call, the media agencies and then obviously their role is then limited to promoting, cementing, advancing the powers of their owners and majority share holders.

Ideally though, if you have a framework of people participating in their own decision-making then media has an important role of examining, reflecting and raising awareness regarding those decisions. Media should then have frameworks in which people are allowed to come and participate freely and have their points of views, with their real interest highlighted.

The other important role that it has is giving exposure and expression to a lot of cultural and social phenomenon i.e. engaging arts and cultural expressions and literature for all these societies in which it is functioning democratically.

Good media therefore has a multi-pronged function but

*I have grave doubts that global media can ever be ‘democratized’ — that is, produced in some form of economic democracy and expressing the views of, and meeting genuine needs of, all its ‘consumers’.*



essentially staying within the framework of grassroots decision making and democracies and participating in it as a tool for information exchange of awareness, providing reflective platforms for people to come and express and engage in various forms of cultural expressions.

### Shilpa Jain

I am highly critical of any role a centralized, mass media would play in a democratic society. First, we would need to understand what a democratic society is and what it means to be 'free'? Unfortunately, the primary examples of a 'functioning, well-run democracy' leave much to be desired. Given corporations' and international agencies' near-total control over policymaking decisions, extremely skewed legislative representation (where one needs to be a millionaire or *lakhpati* to contest elections), and low voter turnout (barely 40%), we must seriously consider whether 'democracy' exists in these countries – or anywhere in the world.

We can try and envision a free and democratic society: a network of small, interconnected and interdependent societies, where power and decision-making would be dynamic and mobile, never concentrated in a few hands, never in a central place. Where individuals and collectives would continuously work to determine how they want to live, their relationships with each other and with nature. In such a context, media – of any and all forms – would be there to nurture critical thinking and creativity, to ensure a diversity of ideas and values, to offer spaces for dialogue and dissent.

But media (television, film, newspapers, textbooks, etc.),

*The media – in its awesome technological grandeur – remains at a great distance from our everyday lives and experiences. The isolation, passivity, narrow thinking, etc. bred by media guarantees that people rarely reflect on why their families, communities, societies, are facing deep crises and what they can do about it.*

as it currently exists, cannot play this role. Built into its functioning is a near-total reliance on elite power interests – for management, financial backing, technological know-how, and therefore, for conceptual control. In other words, what we 'know' about the world is largely a function of what we are told: the sensationalistic and superficial analysis we get from this monopolized media. It succeeds in

diverting public attention away from key issues, root causes, systemic factors, our roles and responsibilities – indeed, everything that is critical for nurturing a democratic society. Instead, the world over, the middle class is kept busy with soap operas, music videos, superficial news, talk shows and sports. The media – in its awesome technological grandeur – remains at a great distance from our everyday lives and experiences. The isolation, passivity, narrow thinking, etc. bred by media guarantees that people rarely reflect on why their families, communities, societies, are facing deep crises and what they can do about it?

Thus, despite all the rhetoric of being the 'watchdog of society', the mainstream media mainly exists to reinforce the dominant will of the elite. How could it be otherwise, when the media is largely owned and operated by a handful of conglomerates, who have their own interests in profit-making via consumerism and control over resources? For these reasons (and more), today's media cannot play the role needed in 'free' and 'democratic' societies: for encouraging and facilitating creative expression, lively and dynamic dialogue, and personal and social responsibility.

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# 2 democratizing

## global media

generating a discourse...



# assessing mainstream media

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what is wrong with media today?

EVERYONE SEEMS TO HAVE SOME SENSE REGARDING THE FACT THAT THERE IS SOMETHING FUNDAMENTALLY WRONG WITH THE WAY MEDIA IS FUNCTIONING TODAY. IF YOU WERE TO INDICATE SOME OF THE MAJOR CONCERNS WITH CONTEMPORARY MAINSTREAM MEDIA, WHAT WOULD THOSE BE?

**Michael Albert**

To me this is very much like asking what is wrong with the pharmaceutical industry. That is, some people tend to think that media is quite exceptional, really very special in ways nothing else is special. I think, instead, that once we answer what is wrong with industries per se, then refining the answer to address the special aspects of media, or of pharmaceuticals, or of whatever else we might want to address – each having its own special features, of course – isn't really all that difficult. Perceiving and correcting the common flaws of all is the key issue, then moving on to special features.

So, the first thing is that mainstream media is capitalist – that is, it is corporate and operates in a competitive market. Mainstream media remunerates property. It replicates all society's defining inequalities and hierarchies in its own organization, and thus also in its products. Mainstream media employs wage slaves. It enriches owners. It subordinates the many, internally, to the will of the few, and it is the few, enjoying their elite advantages, whose ideas and values define the practices and products of media.

More, mainstream media's product is most often audience, which is sold to advertisers. Information and entertainment is in these cases only a means to the end of profit via the sale of people with disposable income to corporations who are also trying to profit. Truth, aesthetics, news, wisdom – these are all secondary matters, at most – and this is so even when information is the actual product that is sold, as well. That is, contemporary mainstream media exists in a system of advantage and domination and is as a result oriented by its owners and rulers to preserve that system from which those owners and rulers benefit and whose systemic logic and values are inscribed in their minds and manners.

Mainstream media are trying to profit and to maintain the conditions that ensure that productive surpluses will be conveyed to them as profits rather than going instead to workers in the form of higher wages or better conditions or better social services.

There is the matter of the class of people who I call coordinators, who don't own capital, but who instead

monopolize skills and knowledge and daily decision-making levers of power – lawyers, doctors, engineers, managers – people who largely control their own circumstances and, whether collectively or individually, also those of others, below. These coordinators too have class interests, sometimes in line with those of capital, sometimes more in pursuit of their own direct gain. But, all the time, with few exceptions, the coordinator class

is committed to making sure that those below, those who are isolated from skills, knowledge, and decision-making power, stay below. This too impacts the nature of mainstream media and its priorities, curbing it from providing a democratic outlet and from empowering the weak.

**Stephen Fein**

The major media are powerful institutions that see themselves as sharing power with the ruling elite. Those who own and run the major media, think it is their role to be responsible participants within that elite. They are upper-middle-class or wealthy individuals

who come to believe that what is in the best interest of the people in power, is in their best interest as well. The institutions, they run, ultimately become biased towards those in power and towards their ideas.

The biggest problems in the media today are: 1) the concentration of global media in very few hands, all Western-based corporations, 2) the paucity of non-profit and public-interest media/programs, and the commercialization of the public media that still does exist, 3) the interference of policymakers with the development of community-based alternative media (eg. microradio broadcasting), 4) the ability of major media corporations to influence (dictate) government media policy.

**Chavi Nana**

Given that one of my visions for the proper role of media is that it should provide a forum for a multiplicity of diverse views, one of the major problems with the media is that it is controlled by large conglomerates, obviously in their own interests. Microsoft, various search engines, CNN, etc., although they rarely admit it, all have their own agendas (both explicit and implicit) that color the information they regard as relevant and

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permissive – thus, our ‘freedom of access’ to all information is ordered by the preferences of these large companies. The fact that these large companies are now aggregating under the umbrella of large conglomerates is even more detrimental, as it further limits 1) the scope of the information we receive, 2) our ability to contest this at levels lower than the conglomerate. Finally, the fact that most of these businesses are located in the West means that for the Western readership/web surfer, their information is limited to particular views present in their societies – for those in other parts of the world, however, it means that their access to the world and what is exported as advantageous is colored through the dominant Western liberal paradigm.

In addition, while some major cultures, views, etc. are ignored, in another sense there is too much information presented and too few tools to sort out the good from the bad or detrimental. On the one hand, I am against companies filtering information (as they already do) for the consumer; on the other hand, consumers must be more critically educated in their use of the resources like the web and newspapers – taught that even the ‘world wide web’ only presents certain views, that certain newspapers have a conservative or liberal bias, and helped to develop the tools to sort through information and seek other sources, within their own culture and experience, or outside of it.

### **Janet Weil**

This question begs another question: what is wrong with human beings? Answer: quite a lot. Media too often operates out of the following dynamic: some few people produce, distribute and profit from media products (TV shows, to take one example) that ‘hook’ perhaps millions of other people into an uncritical dependency. A case can be made for television, including broadcast, cable and videos, having the most negative effects of all global media, as it is:

- 1) one-way communication, inducing a state of passive, somewhat addictive visual arousal (see Scientific American, February 2002, “Television Addiction,” by Robert Kubey and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi for recent research results on this effect);
- 2) watched individually or in small groups rather than communally like movies;
- 3) expensive to produce, compared to print or even websites, so that rich countries and corporations have huge advantages in being the producers;
- 4) disruptive of family cultural values and behaviors, such as home prayers, reading to children, bedtimes, eating dinner together, etc.
- 5) often considered trivial in a way other media are not, so that critical attention is not placed on it, even by people who analyze films, books, and other media;

Television watching displaces communal activities such as social or political meetings, team sports for adults, group singing, conversation and many others. The way television operates as a cultural/political force throughout the world is not in the public interest, though individual shows may be, or try to be. In short, global media, in my example television, are phenomena with unprecedented, enormous social effects, produced by some people for money or power or influence, consumed by other people for information, diversion or even addiction.

### **Javed Jabbar**

It is also important to make the distinction that media are not homogenous when we say there’s something inherently wrong with mainstream media. In many segments, I have found media being assumed to be electronic media. Even in very educated circles of Pakistan, South Asia, it is assumed that the word press means newspapers and when you say media, you are talking about radio and TV. But I want to make a distinction between newspapers, radio and television and then further distinctions will have to be made about whether we are talking about media originating from the West or now originating from Asia, pretending to be Asian and, yet being actually controlled by the West.

One good example is the Star TV Network owned by an Australian, now an American citizen, who has gone to India bringing out Star Television and is willing to sink 600 million dollars over 10 years into it. They lose 60 million dollars per year and are willing to lose more because in the next twenty years, they hope to recover investment, they are already beginning to recover it. That’s another kind of media and it cannot be compared to, let us say, a courageous individual newspaper, which is making its own contribution to international discourse but is owned by a family or a person with many more limited means but because of its editorial boldness or its ethical integrity, it has a voice and a respect. So while it’s a part of mainstream media, it is not prone to the corrupted distortions that others are very easily prone to.

There is no such thing as mainstream media, which are homogenous and can be described with one stroke. Within them there are qualifications and sub qualifications. For example, let’s take BBC World TV. I believe that in their news treatment, even though it’s increasingly superficial, the average duration of the news headline has been shrinking over the past 20 years. If the average headline used to take a minute and a half, today in thirty seconds they want to cover it and move on to the next one, which is one example of the superficiality and the lack of depth even in the BBC World TV, which is probably the world’s best television network, if you had to choose.

Now, the news tries to balance it by always representing two points of view: the Palestinian and the Israeli point of view. Within one channel you have two facets; you have balance on one hand in news content, for whatever it is worth, they do give Yasser Arafat's spokesmen a chance to have their say and they give the same to Israelis.

When it comes to programming, take the case of South Asia it is grossly imbalanced. In South Asia they do not, for example, at the moment originate a single program from Pakistan. They have Question Time India, they have India Business Today, they have Face to Face India, everything is Indian because they are market driven.

I just want to make that distinction that within a single medium, there are facets that are positive and there are facets that are highly negative. Mainstream media today are clearly protagonists with a very direct vested interest in what is happening in the corporate commercial sense or the state and governmental sense.

The state and government controlled media, too, have a very direct vested interest. I am saying this just to make the point that media are assumed to be the custodians of public interest, that they have adversarial relationship with the government and, they help people monitor what the state and government are doing wrong and they are the true representatives of the public interest. But actually, often, the media are not the custodians of the public interest and ironically what has now happened is that there is a space being created for a new type of institution, which is independent of the media, independent of the state and government, which acts purely in the public interest without a commercial motive and, without a motive of power which states and governments want.

I'm first of all referring to a need for an independent monitoring mechanism, which then uses media to disseminate its findings about media. At the moment there is barely any institution of this nature, there are some watchdog groups in the United States for example, but in South Asia and in Pakistan there was virtually none. We set up something called the Citizens Media Commission in December 1997, in order to observe, first of all, electronic media freedom. The purpose was to serve as a public interest body, independent of government and independent of the media so as to keep track of both. Now there is a need to develop and

nurture such institutions because the power of the media, to set the tone and terms of public debate, is so great that you become enslaved by the media-driven terms of debate. So the media themselves become the kind of indoctrinating, controlling process, which they are not supposed to be. They are supposed to be the custodians of public interest but they, ironically, end up doing considerable disservice to the public interest.

### **Wasif Rizvi**

I think ever since the technology itself exposed various forms of media to a lot public opinion one positive thing that has come out by accident is that people have a first-hand opportunity to look at the media frameworks of very powerful systems and societies and examine it somewhat freely. This sense has existed for a very long time but what is wrong with media is that it is a very important tool for a very small and very concentrated wealth and interest groups to consolidate and protect their powers. We are talking about few hundred thousand people controlling the access to almost all the resources of the world. And, in order for it to become possible it is essential that people whose lives are being controlled are given some sort of a justification, and more critically their reflection and analysis is blocked somehow. A framework of analyzing scenarios in their lives and lives and actions of people who govern them is limited, isolated and restricted and it should not go beyond a specified set of reference

***We are talking about few hundred thousand people controlling the access to almost all the resources of the world. And, in order, for it to become possible it is essential that people, whose lives are being controlled, are given some sort of justification and more critically their reflection and analysis is blocked somehow.***

points; all of these sophisticated functions are performed by media, one example of which you may have seen the other day on that show India Times on BBC world.

Few weeks ago a panel of supposed Indian experts was discussing the possibilities of war with Pakistan. They were given a specified framework that whether Pakistan is attacked now or should any form of discussion be allowed with Pakistan so it could give up its alleged hostility. Now none of the six actually questioned that India infact is a hostile state, which is beyond any doubt. India has almost half a million troops present in Kashmir. Between 50,000 to 100,000 Kashmiris have been brutally murdered by the Indian army. Now, these are hard indisputable facts, which are usually rendered unnecessary by the media intellectuals. Ironically though, they were discussing Kashmir, the Kashmir dispute and its repercussions on the relationship with Pakistan but they were not allowed to deviate from the framework, which was given by the power managers in India. Again the



framework was that you discuss that either we talk with Pakistan or should we beat them up. We are not discussing our role in Kashmir that is not allowed in that framework.

This pathology, the moral pathology exists at the core of media intellectuals. They automatically absorb the line that they have to take to please the power managers. So ranging from a callous, meaningless, senseless, way that the media in a very non-sophisticated manner following the state line or in a somewhat glitzy and a little flashy manner in which you have your BBCs and CNNs; the purpose of it stays absolutely within the framework that has been allowed by the power managers which usually include the actual owners of media as well.

Under such circumstances, it is simply not possible for anyone to anchor a serious problem on any big media outfit if they have not already absorbed and subscribed to limiting themselves; limiting their discourses within the outlines that have been given. No one is going to ask the obvious questions, no one is going to reflect on the pervasive reality. It is all about confusing terms; it is all about deflecting and refraining from discussing any serious issue.

*...the moral pathology exists at the core of media intellectuals. They automatically absorb the line that they have to take to please the power managers.*

Another much touted form of media these days is the Internet. Usually many people open up the Internet everyday, they go on yahoo and yahoo usually has a headline on the tragic situation in the Middle East. Now you go in and lots being said particularly about Palestinian militant killed, Israel kills Palestinian militant and if there is an Israeli dead, Israeli died because of the terror attack. Palestinian terrorists attack and Israeli killed. When you read it, it is actually a suicide mission at a military post and Israeli occupation army within the Palestinian territory and within the framework of international law any occupation army should be attacked and resisted. But such resistance is "terror" and they are the terrorists and they are attacking Israel and when Israelis invade Palestinian villages with tanks and F-16 bombers, they are actually killing Palestinian terrorists and that's on supposedly a democratized form of media the Internet where anyone can make a web page. So these are some disturbing examples of what is tragically wrong with the media.

### **Shilpa Jain**

a. The mass media is highly skewed towards reinforcing and expanding the status quo: The media largely projects and elevates (in brilliant color) the culture of competition, profit, material success above all else,

which is dominating in the world today. It tries to convince us that this is the ONLY possibility for the present and the future; this path is inevitable and unavoidable; and so we should all play the game to win it. Winning, according to its terms, of course, means greater consumption of market services and products, often to the detriment of our fellow human beings and the natural world. This attitude is largely a function of advertising – by far, the dominant feature and function of media. In this way, the mass media assists in the project of Modernity: to produce self-serving, de-humanized units, disconnected from one another and dependent on modern institutions for their thoughts, values and actions.

b. The mass media heightens a culture of expertism and elitism: By constantly and deliberately blurring the line between 'fact' and 'interpretation', it tries to pass off its subjective (biased) analyses as the objective 'Truth'. It props up celebrities and experts to show that we, the viewers, are incapable of understanding

the world, our localities, even our families, without their professional guidance. Our own lived experiences are nothing, when compared to the images we are shown and the commentaries we are given about 'reality'. (In this way, the mass media complements

the indoctrination we received in schooling, to defer to 'authority' and 'experts' in all situations.) The mass media's near-total reliance on advance technologies exacerbates this culture of expertism and elitism, as it is impossible for the majority of the world's people to access either the technology itself and/or the technical knowledge needed to operate the technology. This alienation and dependency on technology aggravates the other feelings of inadequacy that media produces: our losses of self-esteem, confidence, creativity, responsibility, diversity, etc.

c. The mass media enhances a culture of silent obedience: By locking us in the passive role of viewer, the media almost guarantees our quiet acceptance of its (read: elite) power. We are muted zombies, ever watching, never acting. We rarely feel prompted to raise serious questions about the roots of the crises being faced today (extreme inequalities, ecological extermination, widespread violence), and instead find ourselves intensely occupied with superficial and trivial matters – of sports, soap operas, game shows. Such silent obedience is further magnified by the media's projection of our individual and collective impotence – our powerlessness to do anything in the face of such a massive machine.



## DAVID BARSAMIAN



**T**he current crisis and war provide textbook examples of media propaganda and manipulation and the induced, what Orwell called groupthink. The official story is a virtual, non-stop monochromatic, one-note samba: They, the 'evildoers', hate us. They hate our values and who we are. From CNN and Fox to Time and NPR, there is little discussion of politics and the underlying causes of terrorism. The uniformity of opinion is striking. It should give anyone pause. Rather than being obedient and passive absorbers of news and information we should be proactive.

Be skeptical. Ask questions, probe. Think outside the box. Look for alternative, independent sources like, [commondreams.org](http://commondreams.org), [znet.org](http://znet.org), [indymedia.org](http://indymedia.org), [alternativeradio.org](http://alternativeradio.org), [fair.org](http://fair.org). Read the international press like The Guardian, Le Monde, The Independent and magazines like Z, The Progressive, International Socialist Review, Third World Resurgence and Extra! Study books by Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, Howard Zinn, Arundhati Roy, Angela Davis. Support progressive publishers like South End Press, Seven Stories Press and Common Courage. Take off your

ideological blinders. Examine your assumptions. Once you strip away the veneer of the constructed version of events, it becomes rather easy.

It's not neuro-surgery and requires no special training or talent. Young people, in particular, need to de-link themselves from the propaganda grid. Thinking outside the box is fun, challenging and exciting. Build networks and alliances with kindred spirits. Create your own media. Jello Biafra advises, Stop whining. "Become the media." In fighting back and building positive alternatives, we fulfill ourselves as citizens and human beings. Rumi, the Sufi poet, was born in Afghanistan. He is the greatest poet in Persian and one of the greatest in any language. His fame and reputation are such that three countries claim him; his birthplace Afghanistan, Iran, for he wrote in Farsi; and Turkey, where he is buried. But he belongs to all of us. And his words inspire many today. Almost a thousand years ago he wrote:

*"The meaning of a mystery does not arrive through the mind, but to do some service and it becomes clear."*

## ROBERT McCHESNEY



**W**hat EDucate! proposes as a subject for sustained debate, discussion and deliberation for scholars and activists across the planet, is one of the central issues of our times: how to best deploy media and communication systems to serve democratic values in this, so-called Information Age. On one hand, this is a fairly straightforward discussion about media ownership, commercialism, government censorship and the like. On the other hand, it is a maddeningly complex discussion of how various factors influence media, and how difficult it is to devise superior media systems. The bottom line, as the current commissars of global media like to put it, is that if we treasure the thought of living in a peaceful and just world, we have no choice but to pursue dramatic, even radical, media reform. It is a mandatory aspect of a broader, democratic reformation of the global political economy.

### **Developing An Alternative**

Propaganda and/or commercial indoctrination can be very effective, but it is never omnipotent. It always must butt up against the reality of people's lives. Hence, to the extent there is social conflict and tension in peoples' lives, it will tend to have the potential to undermine the propagandistic nature of messages from the media system.

We must develop our critique of mainstream media, our understanding of the policies that put the system into place, and then organize for structural media reform. We must try to develop alternative and independent media at the same time. The call for people to abandon existing media without a viable alternative is a waste of time; merely establishing independent media is insufficient. We need policies to assure that noncommercial and nonprofit media can prosper.

3

**democratizing**

**global  
media**  
generating a discourse...



**information  
or  
manipulation?**

---

has media historically functioned as an  
indoctrinating & social control tool or did it happen  
after the advent of television and internet?

THIS QUESTION AIMS TO HIGHLIGHT THE EVOLUTION OF MEDIA AND ENLIGHTEN READERS ABOUT ITS CONTROL  
MECHANISMS.

**Michael Albert**

I don't see that the purposes have changed in any dramatic way with technology. What affects the extent to which media in a society is being used to maintain the society's hierarchies of power and wealth, or is being used to subvert those, and to instead elevate the power and stature of oppressed constituencies is primarily the balance of power that exists in various on-going struggles in society, not technologies. How technologies are manifested reflects these struggles far more than vice versa.

So, the emergence of new tools for communication – say the Internet – can facilitate control, or can facilitate resistance and liberation. It may be that certain technological attributes tend more towards one or the other, for example allowing wider involvement, or cheaper access, or the reverse. But what ultimately occurs in society, though influenced by the technical features and possibilities, of course, nonetheless ultimately has much more to do with power relations, efforts at struggle, etc.

For example, there is no such thing as 'technological unemployment'. Technologies don't unemploy people. Social decisions do that. Whether a labor saving technology puts some out of work while keeping others working 50 hours a week, with output growing but accruing to those still working, and owners – or whether the same technology instead reduces the length of the work week to thirty hours, say, with full

employment, and with the benefits accruing overwhelmingly to all workers – is not determined by the blueprints of the tools. It is determined, instead, by power relations, by struggle, in turn dependent on information and organization and commitment.

Similarly, the Internet can be a tool of enhanced control and surveillance and commodification, we can see that possibility all around us. Or it can be a tool of democratized communication that subverts central corporate control, the potential we can also easily see in narrower but exceptionally important efforts now underway. Which occurs in what volume has much less to do with the nature of silicon chips or technical bandwidth possibilities, and much more to do with decisions made in light of balances of power and thus social relations and struggle, as to what will be done with the chips, and what bandwidths will be put in place, at whose expense, to carry what content.

And this general fact of the relevance of struggle to what happens with technical insights has been so historically, and it is so now.

**Stephen Fein**

The media have always had an influential role in society. When print media predominated, the impact was limited to those who could read and could afford newspapers. Radio allowed the media to reach many more people. But, it was television that gave the media the ability to influence people all

over the world, and to control their ideas. One has only to visit immiserated communities on every continent – antennas sprout from galvanized-metal roofs in rural villages, TVs sit on floors in mostly unfurnished rooms of urban slums – to recognize the enormous impact television is having on people everywhere.

The question is not how great is the impact of television; it is enormous. The real question is how will those who control this force (as well as radio and print media) use it? With the degree of global concentration that has occurred within the past 20 years, unimaginable authority resides in the hands of a handful of media CEOs and their underlings. Neither democracy nor justice is likely to result from this concentrated and unaccountable power.

Benito Mussolini, the dictator of fascist Italy once said, "Fascism should more appropriately be called Corporatism because it is a merger of State and corporate power." With the advent of global media concentration, and with the incestuous collaboration that occurs between media owners and ruling political elites, the private media and the state have essentially merged; their interests and ideologies have become one. The result could be considered the 'fascist-ization' of global media.

**Chavi Nana**

Yes – this did not begin with the introduction of the Internet. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* is

*The question is not how great is the impact of television; it is enormous. The real question is how will those who control this force (as well as radio and print media) use it? With the degree of global concentration that has occurred within the past 20 years, unimaginable authority resides in the hands of a handful of media CEOs and their underlings. Neither democracy nor justice is likely to result from this concentrated and unaccountable power.*

*Today, television and the Internet have co-opted both peoples' power of creation and their power of interpretation. Centralized control — with accessibility determined only by large sums of money, technical knowledge, or privilege — succeeds in obstructing diverse and creative conceptual potential.*

based on the central premise that one contributing factor to the rise of nationalism was the invention of the printing press, which enabled widespread proliferation of information — because this information is composed by individuals with their own agendas, it was always skewed, and thus has always been used as a mode of social control and/or a tool to build consensus and social cohesion. In many ways, the use of information as social control started before this — in the oral tradition, stories are passed down, as a mode of transmitting culture and of preserving cultural norms. Obviously the mass media and the Internet have had different effects because they operate on a wider basis and often contribute to the overshadowing of other cultures, but information has always been a tool of social control.

### **Wasif Rizvi**

I don't know, I'm not an expert in the history of media. But one thing I do know is that forums for public expressions and forums where people were hoping to generate some form of discourse have traditionally posed a threat to the power managers and it is important to either silence them or to take control over them.

It is true if we fast-forward through history and I think it is true throughout. The most popular media form during Renaissance in Europe was theatre, which was marveling over the empire and the kings, and the great heroes like various princes and queens and emperors of Europe none of it actually acted as some form of social conscience, it was basically aimed at marveling at the conquests of the European nations. And then we have the massive wars of Europe in which there was always

a desired goal to have a very powerful propaganda in history. Hitler has been heard lamenting over the fact that they lost the propaganda war during the First World War and he wanted to make sure that they shouldn't lose that war again when there is going to be another massive conflict in Europe and he planned it and he had a very powerful guy as in charge of propaganda ministry.

With that there was a huge industry coming up which was taking shape across Atlantic and North America. Their initial tools were radio and print media because those were the technologies available at that time and they were hugely inundated with the state line and with the promotions of contemporary power structures. And, then eventually in the 50s and the 60s, the TV came along.

One of the more interesting things is all these media when they were during the times of their infancy were perceived as tools for public interest. Only one country in the world from made it from the very onset a part of the private interest, which was the United States. That model became so powerful that almost all over the world media is not serving any public interest and it is almost completely a tool of private control.

Noam Chomsky once mentioned in one of his interviews that there was a newspaper in the 40s and the 50s in England that had twice the circulation as the three largest newspapers right now in England but it could not survive because it wouldn't get any money to be printed or published. It was a people's interest based newspaper. So regarding how media has been a tool

of social control, any framework that has the possibility of public expression and reflection is a source of threat and needs to be controlled if the power managers are smart and devious enough to use that they can manipulate it to their advantage.

### **Shilpa Jain**

I think this answer will depend on what media you are describing. Dance, music, painting, sculpture, poetry, stories, are also media, which differ from television and the Internet in several ways, mainly in terms of who gets to create/conceptualize them, who gets to use or view them, (i.e., their level of technology and therefore, elitism), and who gets to interpret them. In the past, media constituted a much broader category — let's say of message-making, idea-sharing, feeling-communicating. In this sense, it would be in the hands of probably all the members of a society.

And equally important, the task of interpreting the messages/the media would also belong to everyone. Today, television and the Internet have co-opted both peoples' power of creation and their power of interpretation. Centralized control — with accessibility determined only by large sums of money, technical knowledge, or privilege — succeeds in obstructing diverse and creative conceptual potential. While, simultaneously, strong doses of schooling ensure that people lose faith in their own abilities to: a) interpret, question and challenge the mainstream media and b) evolve context-sensitive understandings of what media can mean and do. This is, in part, why and how media has become a tool of social control and indoctrination.



Dear Readers of *EDucate!*,

*Afraid I am so hopelessly busy – particularly because of what is happening in Israel-Palestine right now – that I simply cannot try to answer all queries. That aside, I do not have anything profound to say about the media question, even surprising. To the most important questions in life there are only simple answers. That's quite generally true, I think.*

*A few indications of why I think so.*

Noam

**If the global media is a social control device and education an indoctrination tool, how are people and masses, who receive a heavy dosage of both everyday are expected to break free and liberate themselves?**

Exactly the way they have done all through history: slave revolts, women's rights, freedom struggles...There have never been any secrets or magic keys. The answers are those we all know: hard, dedicated, honest struggle. It is a waste of time to seek any other way. There isn't any.

**What are the possible ways of generating public action towards challenging the existing injustices sustained with the help of media and education?**

There are thousands of ways. For example, in Brazil a few years ago, I had the opportunity to watch public TV in a huge slum right outside of Rio. An NGO provided basic equipment. The programs were written, directed, and acted by local people. The

audience was in a big public square, during prime time hours, and participated directly as the actors, from the community, circulated through the crowd asking for reactions and comments that were shown live on the screen. I couldn't follow all of it, because it was in Portuguese. But enough to see that it was very serious. That's one example. People are easily able to create many more. If they expect advice about this from outside, they'll be disappointed. If they devote themselves to such projects, they can succeed.

**Shall we stop watching television and listening to the radio and stop reading the intoxicating newspapers? Shall we stop going to the schools? What shall we do? Most of us, at best, can think of a rally or some sort of a protest procession, or a dialogue. Can it go beyond that? How?**

I think that would be a huge mistake. There is a great deal to be learned in existing institutions: schools, universities, journals, books... And they can be greatly improved. Furthermore, popular independent alternatives can be developed. There is no reason for any counsel of despair, or for renunciation. Rather, the same answer as always: dedicated work.

I can only repeat what I said in Pakistan. People are making a terrible mistake if they wait for advice from outsiders, instead of doing what they know best, because of their intimate knowledge of their own society and circumstances. Outsiders can learn. They can rarely teach. At least not in areas like these.

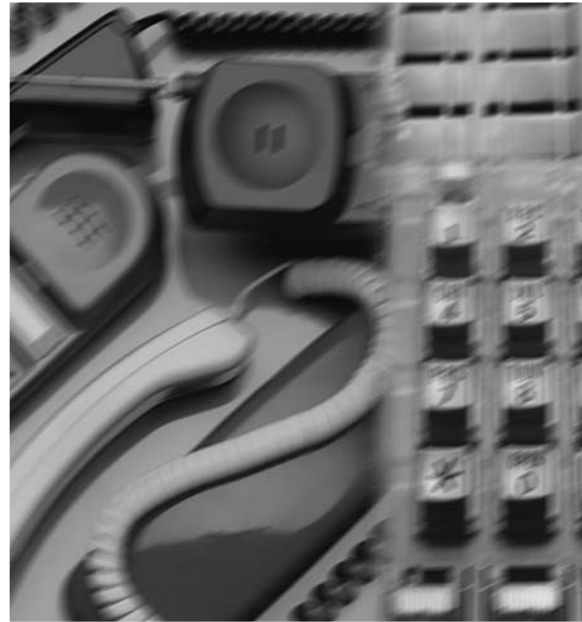
**M**edia should act as an agent that transfers knowledge, but the reality is in fact contrary to this. We are, but empty basins that can be filled to the brim by means of caressing our emotions with pseudo-attractiveness. Content lacks the element of 'holism' and rather seems to transfer itself in fragments, thereby presenting a world of stark dualism and fragmentation. Yet on the other hand, we quite freely and openly speak of diversity, pluralism and cooperation. It is simply another form of expression and a magnificent propaganda agent. The advent and rapid escalation of information technology reaches out to larger groups of people, thus making it easier for one to infuse their opinions, perspectives, biases and ideas. Turning the television off. Is this actually practical and "real" when the market, the pseudo-culture, when our lives are overwhelmed by CK images and Coca-Cola displays.

Educators play an enormous and significant role in discussing such pertinent issues. As rightly noted, recent events have created spaces for dialogue regarding issues that were/are often ignored. But how often have past events, history, demonstrated to us that "all too soon all will be forgotten." Thus, now appears an opportune moment to bring such issues to the forum for that important exchange, a critical dialogue. Raise level of awareness, critically reflect, and discriminate with confidence. There is no other agent better than oneself. One must develop the capacity to discriminate of what they wish to accept and/or reject. Potentials must be tapped into and exercised, for actualization leads to realization. Realization that we have been assigned an ignorant status and served with an opiate. Thus, it is pertinent that individuals develop the capacity to dissect, reflect, analyze, criticize, accept, negate, etc. simply to discriminate between the real and unreal.



# 4 democratizing

global  
media  
generating a discourse...



## who owns media?

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is the corporate (private sector/enterprise) control  
over media, the only issue?

is it as bad as the state owning it or is there a  
significant difference between the two?

WHO SHOULD OWN AND CONTROL THE MEDIA? WHO SHOULD THE MEDIA BE ACCOUNTABLE TO? THE STATE-  
(ESPECIALLY IN POOR COUNTRIES IS LIKELY TO BE HELD HOSTAGE BY THE RICH AND RELENTLESS CORPORATIONS)  
OWNED INSTITUTIONS LIKE EDUCATION, HEALTH AND MEDIA, NO MATTER HOW PRO-PUBLIC THEY ARE, LACK THE  
BASIC RESOURCES. WHERE DO WE GET THE RESOURCES FROM?

**Edward Herman**

It is not just a question of giantism, but also of institutional purpose. From this viewpoint, commercialism is as bad as giantism, as commercialization shifts the ends from providing specified services (including the filling of the public sphere) to making money, which entails servicing advertisers. U.S. experience shows that commercialization damages public sphere performance more severely than taking money from the government as a public service institution.

**Michael Albert**

If huge centers of power control information, they will orient it to their advantage. Of course, capitalist firms controlling information will bend it to preserve and expand capitalist profits and power. Of course, bureaucratic and authoritarian states controlling information will bend it to preserve and expand political advantages and domination.

In contrast, if information, and this is true for everything else in society as well, is truly democratically controlled, which is to say decided upon by those affected in proportion as they are affected – according to the norms and methods of participatory self management ... then we will have the opposite situation. Populations will use their influence to benefit themselves by their choices, as best as they are able to, that is to benefit everyone.

Small is not necessarily beautiful, and giant is not necessarily ugly. It is a mistake to think that a huge corporation is worse – in some cases even worse at all – than a small one. And the same holds for a huge state and a small one. It is true that

a bigger institution will have more assets to undertake larger endeavors, so if the institutions are horrible, their endeavors can then be horribly brutal. But the comparison regarding size in such a case is not to compare one huge operation to one small one, but one huge operation to many small ones, the latter summing to comparable scale. Which is worse or better? It is a case-by-case question.

The real issue that provides an overarching logic and evaluative framework is not size, but the structure of the institutions, their logic and values, and thus what they intrinsically pursue. In these respects, a corporation is pretty much a corporation, regardless of size. Not that there are no differences, there are, of course. But there is no golden age of media predating the large monopolies, or the Internet, or TV – other than various moments when movements have had larger shares of power with which to influence media and more of their own media, in particular.

**Chavi Nana**

No, it is not. The control of the media by an increasingly small number of large corporations is obviously worrying because of the control of these few groups over our access to information and the information to which we have access. However, the same can apply to the state-owned media organs – in some cases, even more so, because they are often under less pressure to pretend to present a fair representation of views and can be used directly to spread state propaganda. On the other hand, one of the major problems with the private ownership of media is that it gives the impression of being free

and fair, accessible to all – and something to which all can contribute and have their views expressed – while some state funded media is at least explicit in its bias (not always). So the public must be encouraged to question their supposedly free and fair access to information and to question the extent to which privately owned media resources are unbiased.

However, in general, I believe that in the best case, media should come from both public and private sources – public funded by the state and supportive of smaller enterprises that may not have access to private media time because it is too expensive. The private sector should also take seriously its corporate responsibility and open low cost spaces for public services announcements and the like.

**Wasif Rizvi**

Owned by the state should in theory mean owned by the people because state itself is supposedly accountable to people. So in theory this is supposedly public interest. In reality it is barely that. For instance, media in England or in France it is supposedly public interest; it is responsible to tax payers. In a state controlled media there is a media minister who is elected by people and they are the ones who regulate what's on it and what kind of possibility is it providing to people.

Unfortunately though most states are hostage to the money interest. There is usually enormous pressure on them to sell all possible means of interest in profit making through the private companies or not let any of the state-run institutions become a threat to the established centers of powers. So even if it is supposedly public

interest and accountable to people it has no way of fulfilling that role because the control of state and the control of the state machinery is essentially in the hands of people who own the country, who own the society, who are usually very rich and invariably very power hungry people. So to me it is the flipside of the same coin but in theory there are some theoretical possibilities of some accountability towards people when it is state owned.

### **Shilpa Jain**

There really is no significant difference between state or private ownership of the media. The problem is that, in a mass and centralized form, the mainstream media can only be a tool of manipulation and indoctrination. The logic goes something like this: Media has to be 'Big' to be meaningful or important. If it is to be big, then it will necessarily be expensive and centralized. Large amounts of money and an equally impressive management will be needed to run

it. Whoever has this money, or is selected for this management, will own and operate the media. Therefore, ordinary people should just make the decision: Should this money and management come from the state or from the corporations? Whatever we decide, we should just make them accountable to us. (By the way, this line is not so distinct as it is made out to be — given the historical and contemporary partnership between corporations and governments, from the East India Company to today's most powerful MNCs.)

The problem with this is not just that accountability is improbable or even impossible. (If it is not clear why, just think of how little accountability exists for us vis-à-vis the state today.) It is, that we are trapping ourselves in a lose-lose situation. Why don't we think beyond these two 'options', by taking them out of the equation all together? If we stop making media scarce — by insisting it be Big, and therefore, expensive and centralized

— then we open the door to many more, localized, small-scale media possibilities. We will not need to choose between the state or corporations; we will be creating, uncovering, rediscovering, media in its multitude of forms and processes.

Incidentally, we need to do the same thing for learning. When will we stop accepting the perverse logic that learning is scarce and can only happen in schools, which therefore, will be owned and managed by either the state or by corporations? If we see that learning (like media) is in each of our hands, we cannot only challenge current levels of indoctrination and manipulation, but we can also free our creative and expressive potentials. Our conversations will change from the droning despair of 'where can we get money?' to the bubbling energy of 'how can we engage with the diversity of learning spaces (media) generated, to live closer to our convictions of hope, justice, balance and meaning?'

### **BINA SHAH**

**T**he media should be used to educate people, but it is equally important for people to be educated about the media. What is most alarming about the media today is the blind acceptance with which people welcome it into their homes. They also allow the media to act as a substitute for their opinions instead of using it as one of many tools that helps them shape their own opinions. We must teach students how to be more analytical of the media, how to be more intelligent consumers of media, because after all, in today's world, media is a product, paid for by advertising, interest groups, lobbies, and so on.

In any media studies course, you have to pinpoint what kind of media you're looking at. Are you talking about news media? Entertainment or sports media? Cultural media? What are the messages that each type of media tries to send to its audience? What are its motivations? Who are the people behind the media? Once you start examining these questions, you go a lot deeper than the fifteen second soundbite that most media outlets present to us today. It's important to study the media in context to the traditional disciplines such as history, politics, philosophy, etc., in order to keep what you are hearing rapidly on radio or reading in the newspapers in perspective.

Next, you have to make the distinction in the media between fact and opinion. It's completely factual to say that "twelve Palestinian were killed today in Jerusalem". But it becomes opinion when you start saying things like "twelve Palestinian civilians were martyred by Israeli soldiers" or "twelve Palestinian militants were killed by Israeli soldiers in a strike against terrorism". Language is such a key issue when it comes to the media. I think any program on media studies must take into account the use of language and its effect on its audience.

Finally, any study of media must include a close look at the elements of group psychology, because the media is one of the key tools used to control groups throughout history. Cases of the media being used to sway public opinion in times of war, studies of propaganda, even the effect of patriotic music on people's emotions, must all be studied. The media can be a tool of information or disinformation, enlightenment or manipulation. But in the end, it's up to the consumers of media, not the media industry, to make those distinctions and make the demands of the media to be as fair and objective as possible.

### Role of Media:

First and foremost – it should reflect the aspirations and concerns of the people. At least this is how it should be in a 'free society'.



range of diverse opinions, therefore, it does give Internet users many options. Nevertheless, judgment is to be made taking into account what is being put out on the Internet and by whom; who is the godfather and who are the allies.

### What is Wrong with Media?

What has really broken down is the professionalism in members of the media. Just like in education, particularly in teaching, many have just walked into the profession without carrying with them the desired moral and ethical prerequisites.

### Media and Indoctrination:

Surely the media is a very powerful instrument in indoctrinating and controlling the thought processes just like education – education too is a very powerful tool for indoctrination. The debatable point is – do you think indoctrination is moral? I do not think it is. I think, instead of indoctrinating, the role of media should be to present facts to the people and to allow them to make their own decisions. But, of course, these are probably only ideals, in reality the state media obviously follows the official line. Although again, in an ideal situation, that should not be, but that is how it is. Multinational and 'other' organizations and agencies that feed local papers (and newspaper agencies) influence the media and their views find their way into the presentation of local problems. Ideas and non-issues, not relevant to the present situation are found to envelope the media. Sometimes it is insidious – sometimes it is blatant. A lot of times, I believe, our local media would not even know that they are being brainwashed into holding various opinions. I still find that there are people in the local media as also in the global media, who have the intelligence and analytical skills to discover the mainstream traps of indoctrination. Such individuals represent the best in journalism, because when they speak up, they stick their neck out.

### The Internet:

The Internet also reflects the alliances of the people who are on the Internet. Certainly, there is a whole

### Power of Information:

Information is a very powerful force. Whether you are literate or illiterate, whether you are educated or just literate, the point is that if you hear or see anything, it automatically starts a thought process, and I think that is very important. The thought process results in some action, sometime, somewhere. The action could be a reaction to collective thought processes. If factual information is provided to people there exists a greater possibility of the action being productive, meaningful and manageable.

### Education, Media & Social Change:

I think education is the most powerful vehicle for social change. With education, one can learn to channel information, one can identify the deceptions and frauds and learn to respond to such acts. In short, with education, one can learn to unlearn attempted indoctrination and resist that is attempted by the media. I am very hopeful because there are people in the media as well as in education, who take the pain of analyzing and collecting all the scattered information, and expose all the attempts to indoctrinate. These people have educated themselves to sift the truth out of the glut of lies and they are the people who will take the truth forward. You cannot expect every person, no matter how educated they are, to challenge the evils that are inherent in an entrenched system.

### Role of Educators:

The educators should make ceaseless attempts to make the student think and act critically. They should make the utmost effort to properly convey to students that it is most important that one has critical thinking abilities. It means just everything in life and in the process of living.

## MATTHEW ROTHSCHILD

Yes, just a handful of multinational corporations dominate the media. Yes, their primary, overriding concern is profit, not journalism. Yes, this has led them to sensationalize the news, crenelate the culture and marginalize dissent. Within the mainstream media, there are no new opportunities for empowerment. But there are small windows that are occasionally open, and we in the democratic movement should try to crawl through them. The 'op-ed' or commentary pages of newspapers, the letters to the editor page, and

even some of the talking-head shows need content, and we should not shy away from offering it to them in the style they are used to but with subversive substance. Plus, public television and radio offer more space for dissenting views.

It's a big mistake to conclude that the media are so corporate and so biased that it's not even worthy playing the game. It is worth it! If we withdraw from the field, the corporatist will have a field day. That said, we do need to impose

democratic control over the media wherever possible. We should insist that antitrust laws are enforced. We should insist that the oligopolies be broken up. We should insist on truly independent public and community broadcasting.

And we should make our own media: in print, on radio, on the Internet, on TV. In short, media work is a crucial part of democratic activism, and we need to engage in it wherever possible, without illusions, but with creative energy.

# 5 democratizing

## global media

generating a discourse...



## take it or leave it

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the argument of corporates and advertisers is two-pronged: 1) we are providing multiple choices to people – in the end they are responsible for their decisions, 2) if they do not approve of what we are showing/selling, they can always choose not to see/buy.

THEY CIGARETTE MANUFACTURERS AND SELLERS CLAIM THEY ARE NOT FORCING PEOPLE TO SMOKE; PEOPLE ALWAYS HAVE A CHOICE AND IF THEY CHOOSE TO SMOKE, IT IS NOT THE COMPANY'S/ADVERTISER'S FAULT. ALSO, WHY WOULD SOMEBODY WILLINGLY SURRENDER ACCESS TO TV, VCR AND OTHER ENTERTAINING MEDIA, ESPECIALLY IF ONE COMES BACK HOME AFTER A LONG, GRUELING DAY? PEOPLE, STRIVING TO MAKE ENDS MEET, DON'T WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN INTELLECTUAL PROCESSES – THEY SIMPLY WANT TO UNWIND. WHY WOULD THEY GIVE UP THEIR ONLY SOURCE OF RELAXATION? WHAT WOULD MAKE THEM THINK CRITICALLY?



**Edward Herman**

The choices offered are constrained by the importance of drawing advertisers, so that the readers/listeners don't necessarily get what they would want if they made the decisions as to what to produce. They won't get choices beyond those that pass through the advertiser/owner filter, so studies of environmental issues that might criticize advertisers may never be on offer. And if they shut off one station and move to the next, or buy a newspaper, they still can't escape the advertiser-owner filter. This requires a democratic media, not a corporate owned and servicing media.

**Michael Albert**

Notice that even your presentation of their claim puts the lie to it. That is, it isn't that we can choose anything. It is that we can choose among the things they offer, or we can choose nothing. This is very different. We are not offered the option of choosing to be a wage slave, or to have a job that is fulfilling and self-managing, but are only offered the option to be a wage slave or to suffer the pangs of starvation. We make the obvious choice, but this doesn't indicate that we think wage slavery is ideal. If that is too obscure, think of the real slave in the old southern plantation. They too could make a choice. They could stop working and be lynched or otherwise hounded to death, or they could slave away. They overwhelmingly choose to slave away – until such time as the option to abolish slavery became real. Does this tell us that slaving away was their ideal preference?

Suppose you went into a prison and visited the prisoners' commissary and took a look around. Probably everything there would seem horribly vapid and uninteresting. You wouldn't want any of it. Suppose now you were arrested and incarcerated in the same prison. Six months later you visit the same commissary, your only access to items for consumption. Now things are different. You see a range of offerings and you prefer some to others and carefully pick and choose. What has happened? You have altered your tastes, intelligently, in fact, so that you can benefit from the available options and not be whining about the lack of those that you would, were things different, prefer.

This is very much our situation. We are all in a kind of prison – capitalism. It offers us commissaries (information, but also food, medicine, jobs, everything on markets) that are highly constrained. Some of us urge that we break down the walls. That requires hope that it is possible to succeed. Others don't share that hope. So they try to make the best of the situation. They mold their preferences to try to enjoy the differentiations among what is offered, without wailing about what is missing. In fact, of course, we all do some of both ... but the point is, markets don't deliver what we want so much as we come to make ourselves want items among those that markets deliver. Markets, guided by the precepts of profit and power, largely produce us, we don't rule markets. This is true for all of them, information and entertainment included.

Thus, choosing among what is offered in newspapers or on TV tells us that among the options we are offered Sally likes the one she chooses, and Sam likes the one he chooses. But it doesn't tell us that Sally or Sam prefers what they are getting to things they aren't even offered. And what determines what is offered? Not Sally or Sam, but the owners, the managers, etc. With the constraints mentioned earlier.

This is a question that, like the others you have posed, one could pursue at book length, which would obviously be inappropriate here. But consider for example, that the mainstream media can offer us the OJ Simpson story, or the Clinton escapades, and so on, building these into mega stories, and can generate a context in which the average person either pays attention, being able to function socially as a result, or ignores the silliness, thereby becoming an outsider unable to converse, as a result. Okay, given these options most choose to pay attention.

But notice that even within our system, even seeking to garner great ratings, the media could instead run long exposes of the cigarette industry, for example, detailing how they sell addictive drugs to make profits in a manner that dwarfs the crimes of the Colombia drug

*Markets, guided by the precepts of profit and power, largely produce us, we don't rule markets. This is true for all of them, information and entertainment included.*

*If the media moguls are allowing all of this information to be spread on the airwaves and on the Internet, then they should also take responsibility for encouraging alternate views and promoting them at the same level.*

cartels. They could delve into the lives of the executives – no doubt there is plenty there to expose. This too could be elevated into a story that would sell a lot of papers, garner a lot of ratings. But it isn't done. Or, before asking why, consider also that if all the TV networks and newspapers and so on, in the period after September 11, had trumpeted that reality that the U.S. was considering, and then embarked on a terrorist attack on a defenseless population with the probability of killing hundreds of thousands and even millions of innocent people ... and had fully explored that reality, in depth, in human detail, and so on, that too would have perked up the ratings.

Then, instead of it being the case that one could pay attention to the propagandistic trash that was published, and thereby be a patriot and able to converse, and so on, or could ignore it and drift outside the social discourse to become a loner, at best – it would have been the case that one could pursue the actual true reality, or not. Newspapers telling the truth would have sold. TV stations telling the truth would have been busy. In fact, I think the cigarette story and the U.S. terrorism story and countless others that one could imagine would, if pursued with the kind of vigor mainstream media can muster for the Super Bowl, say, or the OJ case, attract more readers, more viewers, than anything else ever offered.

But the key to why this doesn't happen is that the criteria for what goes on TV and in the newspapers, or what is offered on any other market, isn't simply maximizing audience, or maximizing ad revenues, or maximizing other revenues while keeping costs down. It is doing those things consistently, however, with also reproducing the conditions of dominance and subordination throughout society. And that is what limits what options are offered.

### **Chavi Nana**

This is a difficult question to answer because, while I cannot support the idea that they are not at all responsible, I am also against censorship. Not only would I rather even distasteful views aired and available for discussion than swept underground and out of the realm of public discourse, but I would be uncomfortable recommending who should judge what is permissible and what is not. However, the 'its not our fault' claim must be contested – if the media moguls are allowing all of

this information to be spread on the airwaves and on the Internet, then they should also take responsibility for encouraging alternate views and promoting them at the same level. In addition, they (and we) should be encouraging viewers and listeners to search for and consider alternative views.

### **Javed Jabbar**

Choice has been twisted into virtual anarchy, it's become a kind of moral anarchy because choice too has to have limitations. There is no such thing as unlimited choice; choice has to be rooted in the values, the beliefs, the customs, the practices that any society cherishes and those must take precedence to work for this principle of choice.

I mean if you take choice to its extreme you are going to disrupt. I do not agree that choice is the ultimate definition of human liberty because it can go to a certain extreme and you can say everything is right as long as I have a choice. Its as simple as having to wear clothes, it's a custom and it's a physiological, cultural need that we have come to respect and, therefore, with some new motivations of the corporate sector for profit or viability you cannot discard it in the name of freedom and free market. What we are currently witnessing is intellectual confusion at the state and policymaking level and even in civil society.

With great respect, sometimes democracy also has inherent limitations that is why sometimes, the supreme court in the United States and the supreme court in India has said that even an elected legislature cannot change the fundamentals of the constitutions because just a majority does not mean you discard, say, the parliamentary system of the government or discard the very nature of the state. Equivalently in the media and information domain, however great this temptation to increase choice, there must be limitations based on this whole principle.

### **Wasif Rizvi**

Same response. You have a choice between discussing to beat up Pakistan or to negotiate for a week or so. So the premise of that choice is so predetermined there is hardly an alternate choice. If there is choice people turn to that immediately. There was one choice available that became so popular during this latest American invasion

of a poor country, which was this Al-Jazeera channel. People who did not even know Arabic were tuning into it because the only thing that it had offered was a slight deviation from the prescribed lines of discourse.

If you go on the street you'll hear it all the time that media don't trust media, they don't believe in it, they think it lies. If there was a semblance of a choice, which is truthful, which appears to be rational, which has some form of balance and objectivity, there is a massive demand for that.

### Shilpa Jain

The argument of advertisers should be rejected as a self-serving evasion of responsibility. First, because advertisers know very well that they deliberately employ a number of psychological techniques and manipulative ploys to get people to buy their products. They are not 'innocently' telling consumers about their product, leaving them a 'free choice' to purchase it or not. Rather, they are actively seeking to make people feel that their work, their families, their lives, their futures, would not be happy/successful/complete without that product. This is part of advertisers' credo: how could they stay in business if they were not successful in doing this? Second, in arguing that it is simply 'our choice', advertisers successfully evade responsibility for the consumeristic tendencies they promote: the exploitation of human

beings and of public/natural resources, the greed and inequalities, the violence and crime, that all ensue as consumerism grows in a society.

They are, however, right to say that we could shut off the TV. (Not that it is their only source of advertising to us; they also skillfully employ magazines, newspapers, billboards, flyers, etc., to constantly keep their messages in our face.) So, it is equally important to try and understand why we don't. Part of it is again due to advertisers' manipulation: the tricks they pull to make TV interesting, to call it 'entertainment'. The other part of it – the one we can do more individually and collectively to alter – is the breakdown of family and communities, the extermination of other kinds of learning spaces, the disconnection and alienation of an industrial economy, etc. Why do people want to 'unwind' at the end of their days? Why is a desire to be a 'vegetable', to not think, to be entertained, to be droned at, a common symptom of the modern industrial society? How does our schooling prepare us for this? How is this reinforced by certain frameworks about progress and success? How has the loss of other thinking-feeling-playing spaces ensured that TV has become our one and only source of entertainment/information? Shutting off the TV and engaging in these questions (and more) might help us to break out of the advertisers' illusions.

### HOWARD ZINN



**C**urrently, we have two vivid illustrations of the different kinds of roles that can be played by the media. First, the events of September 11th, and second, the current violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. In both instances, the major media (more and more under the control of mega-corporations, as Robert McChesney, Ben Bagdikian and others have pointed out) have kept the public ignorant, misinformed, with a distorted view of the reality.

For Afghanistan, the media have buried or minimized the news of civilian casualties in Afghanistan and have failed to give any kind of historical background or critical analysis to 'war on terrorism'.

For Israel Palestine, the media have concentrated on the terrorism of the Palestinian suicide bombers as opposed to the terrorism of the Israeli government. Also they have gone along with the Israeli and U.S. government's concentration on Arafat as the source of the problem and not on the occupation as the fundamental problem that needs to be ended.

In both situations, our only honest sources of information have been the alternative media, the radio stations like Pacific and others, the work of David Barsamian and his Alternative Radio broadcasts, and, more and more the Internet. Today, for instance, after reading a column

in the New York Times in which the war-lover William Safire gives Sharon a million-reader platform to defend the Israeli position, I could only get counter information from a half dozen different e-mails I received, all of which were in opposition to Israeli policy. One of these e-mails was from an Israeli professor, another from one of the Israeli reservists refusing to serve in the occupied territories, another from a journalist in Ramallah who witnessed the execution of Palestinians by Israeli soldiers. We are in a crucial battle of information.

Though, the resources of peace and justice are smaller, we do have truth on our side, and eventually that comes through.

6

**democratizing**

**global  
media**  
generating a discourse...



**internet -  
real help or  
real hype?**

---

is the internet capable of making the media more  
democratic?

**Edward Herman**

The Internet is a valuable addition to the media, somewhat democratizing it. Its problem is that it is an elite instrument that doesn't reach 80 percent of the population, and it isn't a mass medium in any case – it is a tool of communication between individuals and among small groups, except for institutions that have the means of alerting large numbers to the existence of their sites. That takes money and prior outreach, so that in reaching masses it replicates the existing structure of access and power. Furthermore, the Internet is gradually being taken over by commercial interests, which will further constrain its democratic potential. But that potential is still real and should be encouraged and protected.

**Michael Albert**

The key advantage of the Internet is lower costs of production and distribution, and easier decentralization of each. That's basically it. That's what has facilitated people of good will, making easier good use of the Internet as compared to other media. Social struggle can reduce operating costs and means of local control even further, which would be excellent. But elite policy can raise them, which would be bad, of course. With low costs, how well we organize and structure our efforts will impact their value, of course. And so on. The point is, the Internet won't itself, by its own inner dynamics, do anything for justice or equity or self-management or even diversity. It can be made as draconian, unequal, authoritarian, and homogenizing as any other medium, or, via our choices and activism, it can be made much better. These are overwhelmingly social matters, matters of struggle and commitment, not matters of technology.

If social and development activists use the Internet effectively to disperse valuable information, to develop shared agendas, to empower diverse constituencies, then the Internet will be more democratic and honest, and the example and intelligence created thereby will also pressure mainstream media. If not, then it won't be the case. There are millions of web sites – but a mere handful, I think actually less than ten, attract the overwhelming bulk of Internet traffic, way over half, I think. That is quite similar to the centralization of other mainstream media.

Still, it is also the case that a small operation can create a site that communicates across a country, even around the world, providing information, analysis, and vision, that not only edifies the immediate audience, but then percolates into all kinds of additional local media. This happens now, and can happen more. It is something relatively new, and it is very promising. Likewise, it is possible for local people with few resources to create their own news, and to then communicate it, including widely, via the Internet. This too is relatively new, and is again very promising.

**Stephen Fein**

The media concentration that has occurred worldwide and the amount of power that has been aggregated into the hands of very few individuals, will prevent the global mass media, as we know it, from being a force for democracy, or from advocating for peace and justice. The hope is that independent alternative media will grow-up around rapidly developing new technologies. The Internet and email are the main examples. Because of rapid commercialization, government will be hesitant to crack-down on this new electronic media. Business interests are already bitterly reacting to rumors about restricting, taxing or otherwise stifling this medium and its potential as a commercial cornucopia. Governments will monitor or try to influence Internet and email use, but they may never have the technological expertise to totally control it. And businesses will fight to keep it as open and accessible as possible.

**Chavi Nana**

Yes, in the sense that web-users can often gain access to views that are frowned upon by society, or even banned by their governments through the Internet. In that manner, the Internet can expose people to new views and encourage new public discourse. On the other hand, it is still subject to some of the same biases and restrictions as other media sources – it is still largely controlled by large conglomerates, who filter information according to their preferences. But because there are generally avenues through which alternative views can be presented on the Internet, the key to making it more representative of global views is to encourage individuals and groups to contribute to the Internet and air their views.

*If social and development activists use the Internet effectively to disperse valuable information, to develop shared agendas, to empower diverse constituencies, then the Internet will be more democratic and honest, and the example and intelligence created thereby will also pressure mainstream media.*



*It is increasingly becoming apparent that the Internet has been hijacked by corporations and by governments/agencies, who use it for spreading their messages, keeping an 'eye' on their populations, and selling their products.*

### **Javed Jabbar**

It seems the Internet has vast potential even though the elite may want to control it and there will always inevitably be a profit motive. I think the positive merits of the Internet and the potential it offers far outweighs the dangers that elitism can pose to this network. It's so new and so pervasive and it is so full of potential that we are still on the threshold of discovering what we can do with it. Already, ofcourse, the dangers are equally apparent; the aspects of pornography and diversions and pettiness and so on. But you can guard against that.

To intellectually channel the information available on the Internet is the great challenge of the 21st century. I mean if the 20th century can be described as the century of media and communication at a level unprecedented in human history, the 21st century is going to be about coping with the consequences of communication. What has happened is while our institutional capacity has remained stagnant, our capacity to generate information and create new media, has rocketed to the roof. For example the capacity of KMC or KDA or Water Board to meet the needs of Clifton, remains at the same level, while the capacity of Clifton to run the Internet and to produce whiz kids has gone up to where the fan is.

To develop the individual and institutional capacity to handle this information and make appropriate use of it, the development of a media literate class that is able to analyze the media issues from a public interest perspective is very vital. For example, today we do not have a single independent media based research center in the entire country. You have them in departments of mass communication or journalism and they are just producing graduates with degrees. What we need critically is to create a center with the objective of conducting research or focusing public attention on issues, pertinent to the public interest monitoring media.

### **Wasif Rizvi**

The power managers very tightly control the Internet. The Internet in theory does provide some possibilities but it is so inundated there is more than a billion web pages less than one hundred thousand of them are of any significance or stimulating use. Most of it is in a language, which many repressed people don't understand,

less than 4-5% of people actually have access to it that is much less than radio, television or print media.

I think it is rather ironic that one of the most elitist technologies is labeled as a democratizing technology. The only possibility that it may have that it may influence some powerful people who otherwise are very deprived of any form of alternative means. There is a technical possibility of posting the alternative opinion on Internet and there is the entire question of who can access it in the midst of all this clutter that one has to find a way in, then it is the language and then it is the discourse that exists among people. You may read one or two eye opening articles but it so depends on the individual to react to it or not react to it or to dismiss it or to feel helpless. It's very sketchy, it's very hard to predict if it brings any significant or meaningful framework that it can generate for societal reflection and action.

Apart from that, I don't think that people are suffering because of lack of knowledge or awareness. People are repressed because there are enormously tyrannical powers around. I think the possibility of using the Internet is not greater than the possibility of using the TV, radio or anything else. May be if we have widespread objectives, reflections and publications in different languages available on the Internet, then we have to figure out the people who can read those; first how can you get to the people and even if one creates significant number of websites with this kind of discourse. So all these questions of how to handle the loads of information and that too again are very limiting. At this point it's a form of print media only difference is that anyone can print it. You don't need to own a printing press to have your word out.

But the problem is right now, although there are a billion websites, it tragically lacks the context and relevance for a great number of people whom are referred to as the repressed people, the deprived people, the oppressed people or the controlled people. The reference points that are available on the Internet are not relevant to them at all. Instead of becoming starry eyed and too optimistic about possibilities, one needs to do a very careful and realistic analysis of the dimensions and possibilities that are present or can be attached to the Internet.

**Shilpa Jain**

The Internet really can't make media more democratic, because it is extremely elite. Maybe 10% of the world's population will be able to access the Internet; probably less than 10% of them will ever contribute to creating the content on the Internet. If we put a lot of energy (and resources) into increasing the numbers of computer users, then we are basically augmenting the sales of computer manufacturers and service providers. Moreover, it is increasingly becoming apparent that the Internet has been hijacked by corporations and by governments/agencies, who use it for spreading their messages, keeping an 'eye' on their populations, and selling their products. The 'bridging the digital divide' argument is simply providing a 'moral' justification for further centralizing control over peoples' resources and ideas. This is not to say that we cannot use the Internet for some purpose. For example, many activists have found

it useful as a quick messaging or networking system. But we should understand that, at the end of the day, one cannot have real, meaningful dialogue over the Internet. The medium just doesn't facilitate it. Mainly because of its total reliance on text (the written word). Moreover, we have to be prepared that it will be used for far greater negative activity (pornography, propaganda, looting, etc.) than for positive contributions. Therefore, I would suggest that we not put too much time and energy into expanding a technology that is daily becoming more and more a tool of surveillance and profit-making and has limited scope for real dialogue. We might instead begin to consider other existing ways of communicating globally (or create new ways). While working to improve those (hopefully less elite/centralized) processes, we might also begin to pay more attention to local communication and expression: strengthening our local communities as opposed to building more virtual ones.

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# 7 democratizing

## global media

generating a discourse...



## creating alternate media

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what would your media model look like? does the solution lie in creating alternative media or making the existing model more democratic?

THERE HAVE BEEN FEASIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS TO SHORE UP NON-PROFIT, NON-COMMERCIAL MEDIA, STRENGTHEN PUBLIC BROADCASTING ETC. ARE THESE REALISTIC OPTIONS?

**Edward Herman**

A democratic media would be noncommercial, locally controlled and operated, and with ready access and encouragement to many people to participate in its operations. It would be broadly based within its area and would encourage an address to local and national issues. This is hard to do in a mass society that is capitalistic, but that is the direction one should pursue. There are many intermediate structures that would improve on the present one in the United States and most other countries: less great size, less commercialization, more public broadcasting with maximum independence to the management and encouragement of local nonprofit media.

**Michael Albert**

This is not an either or choice. To try to argue rationally with its rulers that mainstream media should tell the truth, serve the people, and so on, is simply a waste of time. To tell the mainstream media's owners and decision-makers they are lying or manipulating is not to levy a criticism at them, in their eyes, but to convey the message that they are doing their job and doing it well. You don't convince the owners of General Motors to clean up their shops or to reduce their pollution by calmly conversing with them about the human travail these impose. They are trying to profit and to maintain the conditions of profitability, not to serve people or even facilitate conveyance. You want

less pollution, better conditions, you have to fight for it. The same holds for mainstream media. You don't have a conversation with the publisher of the New York Times about what is and what isn't fit to print. They know, and they do it well – given their vile aims and values.

So, when someone says that we should spend much of our time trying to improve mainstream media and they mean that we should put on a suit and go have lunch with folks in the media and discuss with them how they could do better, I think such people are rolling rocks up hills that will roll right back down, sometimes crushing them or others in the process.

On the other hand, when someone says that we should force mainstream media by our activities to do a better job, I very much agree. I think we should treat media like we target IMF meetings, WTO meetings, and so on. Indeed it will be much easier, since media institutions are sitting there day in and day out, all over the world. We should organize and demonstrate and pressure media, at their sites, forcefully, aggressively.

There is another approach, as well, besides dissent and demonstrations and raising social costs by our activism, for getting better mainstream media. That is, we can develop better alternative media. The more communication we can do, the more information we can get out,

the more analysis and vision we convey, the less able mainstream media is to ignore truths. Their narrowness becomes steadily less sustainable, the more the population knows by its own experience or by other channels of communication what is going on and is thus offended and outraged by the narrowness of the mainstream. In other words, one of the reasons to build alternative media is precisely for the impact that doing so can have on mainstream media's options and choices.

But this is not the only reason to build alternative media. It is valuable in its own right, as well. It serves our constituencies, it motivates and organizes, it provides a model of our kind of organization and process. To be honest, I have to say that I think these issues really are very obvious. Anyone on the left who thinks it is good to chat with mainstream media moguls trying to convince them to behave differently, anyone who doesn't think pressuring them would be advisable, and anyone who doubts the value of alternative media, is, well, so out of touch with the realities of communication and activism that it is hard to know what issue to address first in trying to clear their confusions. I suspect these confusions don't hold for your readers, I hope they don't, at any rate.

**Stephen Fein**

For those who desire a more peaceful, just world, not the

*We should organize and demonstrate and pressure media, at their sites, forcefully, aggressively. There is another approach, as well. The more communication we can do, the more information we can get out, the more analysis and vision we convey, the less able mainstream media is to ignore truths.*

*Media that are owned, operated and accountable to the people of a community or a nation.  
Media that help us realize our higher selves, instead of indulging in and profiting from  
our lower selves.*

wasteland of mind-numbing television nor the self-censored commercial print media, the modern communications technology of Internet and email, morphed into receivers as small and cheap as transistor radios, may be the future.

Radio may play a role as well. But, it will probably not be 'enlightened' programs from major radio broadcast outlets that we should look to, but microradio broadcasts from one-room apartments, that may help inform and educate poorer communities everywhere.

### **Chavi Nana**

I think that the ideal media model would incorporate both public and private sources of, and access to media channels. Therefore, I would encore support for public broadcasting, funded by governments, individuals and by the private sector as a part of a corporate responsibility program. However, I would also encourage education programs in schools and community centers to strengthen the level of participation of the public in the media – so that students and individuals have the tools to contribute, and also to challenge the way in which the media project is currently conducted.

### **Janet Weil**

"How can you remain oblivious to the pain and suffering of your fellow humans?" – Mashhood Rizvi, "The Hope of Possibility," EDucate!, p. 58, Issue 3, Vol. 1

"...some activities will be seen and other activities will not be seen." – Donald Rumsfeld, transcript, Department of Defense press conference, March 4, 2002

... later in the same press conference...

"Q: But what do you say to the argument that the American public has been denied an objective or unfiltered account of the war on terrorism because of Pentagon policies that tend to restrict reporter access to U.S. soldiers and their battles, as they're ongoing?

"Rumsfeld: Well, I don't hear that from the American people, I hear it from very small numbers of people in the press."

In a way, the answer to this question is simple: the exact opposite of the media model we have now. Media that speak to the concern about obliviousness to the suffering of our brothers and sisters, by presenting that suffering as serious matters that we, especially those more privileged, can and should do something about, not as mere 'news' or 'grisly entertainment' – or, more often, as analyzed by Edward Said, in his brilliant *Covering Islam*, as "...[c]lichés, caricatures, ignorance, unqualified ethnocentrism, and inaccuracy" (p. 130, Revised Edition, Random House: NY).

Media that are owned, operated and accountable to the people of a community or a nation. Media that operate out of universalistic values such as those in the 19th article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with some (inevitably contested) local, regional and national variations. Media in which both workers and consumers are treated fairly and with respect.

Media that support human rights

and would include neither the rape of children and youth being presented as 'sex entertainment' nor the vain, callous pronouncements of a man like US Secretary of Defense as 'news'. Global media that give all people free, universally available access to communication, information and entertainment in many languages. Media that operate within limits that members of communities determine democratically for themselves, which might include such restrictions as no VCRs in classrooms, or no Internet for children under 11, or no television one day a week, or...? Media that help us realize our higher selves, instead of indulging in and profiting from our lower selves.

To move towards this (or any other) ideal, the struggle is about creating and sustaining alternative media AND strengthening public/state-sponsored media in its public service functions AND seeking to reform commercial media, including public education campaigns (such as non smoking advertisements), boycotts, demonstrations, limits on their availability, and many other projects.

Reform/criticism/study/production of media must be considered an inherent, ongoing part of any social and political struggle, not as something tacked on, such as "send out press releases about our demonstration."

### **Javed Jabbar**

My media model envisages the existence of three distinct types of media whether they be newspapers or TV or radio or cinema. Three categories: one state owned and government controlled primarily



devoted to the public interest and you have to swallow the unfortunate political partisanship if it comes ... If that takes over that is where you can correct it by having roles of independent citizens as the board of directors. The state owns it, not a passing ruling party. And citizens sit on the board and shape policy.

The second is the corporate, commercial, profit driven media. The third element is the independent citizen led, community based media which is financially, the most difficult to manage because it doesn't have a state subsidy and does not depend upon the commercial welfare. It will be commercially and operationally the most difficult but it is the most important. And there we have a great vacuum.

However, we are on the threshold of that change. With the approval of electronic media independence law, combined with all the other initiatives linked to education, media education and media literacy, it signals the advent of this new type of media because you can apply it if you want to run a community radio station.

To be fair to this government, it has gone much further ahead in advancing the frontiers of media freedom especially in electronic media than any previous government.

Broadcasting live telecasts with political leaders of virtually every party without censorship is just one example. You must remember that even the independent press conducts censorship and they call it editing. But on TV and radio there have been live telecasts and broadcasts without any censorship. I think we have made progress and we must build on that.

### **Wasif Rizvi**

How do you dismantle the existing system that could mean that one attacks them or bans them or restricts them somehow. What certain media analysts are pressing for is perhaps that. Media, which is filled with advertisements, needs to be controlled.

If one is proposing the promotion of a particular model almost automatically it is demoting the other one. To me the more critical question is what is the level of public participation and what is the level of expanding the premise of discourse, even if it is non-profit, public radio etc. Does it have the possibility of people to participate in the creation, does it allow the creation of new reference points and frameworks to analyze scenarios. That's an important question if anyone, any public broadcasting system is going to come up with such kind of discourse. The range of

discourse, the way public mind is indoctrinated, the way the discourse is limited, just by changing the model from money to non-profit is an important step but it is not really the critical step.

### **Shilpa Jain**

Ideally, media needs to be considered in its expanded sense, as message-making, idea-sharing, feeling-communicating (described earlier), small scale, diverse, and creative. Each locality would be preparing many, many different forms of such media, which would then be shared with other localities.

Once we understand the purpose, logic and impacts of the mass media, then I do not feel it makes much sense to set up a system of alternative big media, or to try to make the existing model of big media more 'free'. Especially if the alternative media comes to occupy the same space, take on the same role, apply the same logic, and use the same technologies/infrastructure as existing mass media. I do not think we want to waste a lot of time and energy trying to reform a system set up to indoctrinate, manipulate, exploit and control. We would be much better off renouncing it and co-creating a diversity of media to better meet our individual and shared interests, needs, and dreams.

**Peter McLaren**



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# 8 democratizing

## global media

generating a discourse...



## media, education & social change

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is there a significant connection between media,  
education and social change?

IS EDUCATION A GREATER FORCE THAN MEDIA – MORE POWERFUL TO SPARK THE PROCESSES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE CHANGE? IF GLOBAL MEDIA IS A SOCIAL CONTROL DEVICE AND EDUCATION, AN INDOCTRINATION TOOL, HOW ARE PEOPLE, WHO RECEIVE A HEAVY DOSAGE OF BOTH EVERYDAY, AND EXPECTED TO BREAK FREE AND LIBERATE THEMSELVES? WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE WAYS OF GENERATING PUBLIC ACTION TOWARDS CHALLENGING THE EXISTING INJUSTICES SUSTAINED WITH THE HELP OF MEDIA AND EDUCATION? MOST OF US, AT BEST, CAN THINK OF A RALLY OR SOME SORT OF A PROTEST, CAN IT GO BEYOND THAT? HOW?

**Michael Albert**

In the U.S. towns with alternative radio, towns with good alternative news sources are more educated and more informed.

But education is a different matter. The more education a person has, on average, the more ignorant of social matters they are and the less radical. Of course there are exceptions, but this is the general rule revealed by polls and general experience, all the time. And for obvious reasons. Knowledge empowers, and societies of course want to ensure that those who are empowered will use their advantages in thrall to elites, not serving the broad public. So, education comes with socialization. You learn more facts, more methods of thought, sure, as you advance up the educational summits, but mostly you learn more about how to behave, about who you are supposed to like and to dislike, about what you are supposed to pursue and what you are supposed to avoid.

Regarding media, to become a major TV newscaster, for example, requires that you have great confidence, verbal skills, social manners, and so on. You have to be eloquent, etc. And this is in part a result of schooling, to be sure. But you also have to have had a kind of mental lobotomy regarding matters of society and history.

Chomsky and Herman detail these matters very effectively, showing how in the U.S. media system it is essential that a key TV news commentator – not even be able to think thoughts that are contrary to elite interests. This is socialization at work. The more education one has, on average the less one knows and understands about key aspects of society, unless, of course, the person is actually employed maintaining and commanding those aspects. In that case, they understand, they just have no human sentiments to cloud their behavior. (It isn't just that education induces social ignorance, therefore, it is also that in our type of society and economy to rise up the ladder of power and influence one must become immune to even perceiving much less caring about the wake of pain and suffering one leaves behind. In short, garbage rises ... But we should remember that the fact that the mainstream media and the education forced on us by society (whether to acclimate us to taking orders and to enduring boredom – or to prepare us to give orders and be oblivious to injustice) deny and denigrate our aspirations, doesn't mean media must do that, or that education must do that. And that is why, we have to take responsibility for our own edification with our own

alternative media, and why we have to use pressure to force mainstream to do better.

**Stephen Fein**

It will be very difficult for most people to transcend major media control and indoctrination. Only those who make a concerted effort to get beyond both the banality and the commercial hype will have a chance of getting the information they need to be adequately informed.

However, as demonstrations, protests and civil disobedience actions all over the world make clear, even people with little access to alternative information, are able to recognize the truth, and act. When the words of political leaders are not compatible with government policies, when living conditions deteriorate as those in power proclaim economic success, when the futures that are being mandated for families are not the futures they want, people will resist. Human beings desire freedom, seek justice, and dream of lives of dignity. Media fabrication and obfuscation cannot change this. The resistance of the ruling elites to popular demands, aided by a self-serving media, will not prevent change, but it may prevent peaceful change. Political leaders will force the people to take things into their own hands, to fight, to suffer, and to die for every social and economic gain they are finally able to attain. It has always been this way.

**Chavi Nana**

Yes, definitely. I think that actions like protests and rallies are useful ways to bring together the public in support of a particular cause, but I question the extent to which they foster long term education about the media – they can have this effect on some, but for others they are short-term ventures. Because all types of media are used in myriad and sometimes highly biased ways, the key is not to reject it, but to transform it into a tool that is accessible, relevant and useful to different populations.

In my vision, this would include the introduction of various media sources in classrooms and community centers, meetings etc – the type of media employed would depend on the resources available. But the key in this process is to use media in such a way that it is demystified; that is, not used simply to depict scenes from faraway lands or of big cities in the West. It is essential that the role of the media as it connects to everyday life is emphasized; this could potentially result in a higher number of people using various media sources, and also,

if it is (and it should be) encouraged, a greater degree of critical thinking about the media.

### **Javed Jabbar**

Absolutely. It is a symbiotic relationship between social change and how media could be used and there have been examples in recent history. The Soviet Union is an excellent example of how they used cinema both for propaganda purposes but also for some very positive changes that they brought about in Soviet society in the areas of literacy, education and health awareness.

### **Wasif Rizvi**

I think the idea of media education is how people can challenge media, how people can reject it or accept it. In Pakistan, a lot of people are very highly educated about media. One of the refreshing things about Pakistan is that people really don't trust the garbage, which is presented to them by the media. But yet there are very few signs of any social change.

If we are drawing possibilities of reflection, of social interaction, of people generating different forms of expression, finding ways of collective actions. Then both media and education present a huge possibility. If such forums are allowed to exist or are allowed to be generated and there are possibilities of doing that. There are possibilities of recreating indigenous forums in which people have interaction in certain manner. So that's one.

We must understand that education is a massive tool, for assembling people in a particular way so they don't pose a serious threat to the established ways of conformation or conforming to the frameworks, which exist to protect and preserve the existing power interest. The term education itself is about learning, reflection, interaction, its about generating reference points and possibilities for collective empowerment or promotion of justice, camaraderie of compassion and brotherhood within society. So if we are looking at the terms in their ideal forms and their socially constructive forms then ofcourse but if we are looking at them realistically, the way they have existed, the way they started out in a constructive way and immediately were corrupted by the power interest then such possibilities don't exist at all.

### **Shilpa Jain**

One can think of education as a kind of media, just as it is often claimed that the media is a kind of education. There are many reasons for saying this – not the least of which is the similarity in format (passive viewers consuming the sound bytes of information fed to them by an external source, as they sit isolated from communities, families, nature, and are functionally restricted in terms of action and interaction).

Media/Education – given its assumptions, goals, content, roles, impacts – cannot facilitate social justice or critical change. In form and function, it will be a tool of control, manipulation and indoctrination.

To challenge injustices and generate reflections, dialogues and actions for critical change, we need to think more about opportunities for unlearning, co-learning, and self-learning. People are questioning the indoctrination they are receiving, sometimes overtly, sometimes subtly – how do we have more of it? This begins by each of us first asking ourselves how we can live and interact in ways that challenge exploitation and indoctrination and nurture justice, meaning and balance? In terms of our work, we need to begin to break the monopoly that education/media has in our lives. What can we do to promote local, diverse self-expressions? How can we encourage people to reclaim learning as inherent to themselves, not as something given to them by experts, to be digested and regurgitated without question? Rallies or protests, new laws or letter-writing campaigns: they mostly tend to be single-issue demands for something (accountability, resources, etc.) from someone (the government, corporations, courts). As said before, if we understand deeply what media/education is for and what it is doing, then we will see why these (now-stale) approaches will not open many spaces for unlearning, self-learning and co-learning, much less for achieving social justice. Instead, we need to come up with more creative possibilities.

For example, here at Shikshantar, we are working on a number of Critical Media Awareness and Creative Expressions processes with children, youth, and parents. These include: analyzing images, dissecting advertisements, interpreting cartoons, recording our individual and family media habits, as well as making puppets and musical instruments out of waste materials, rediscovering dance as storytelling, writing our stories and poems in Mewari (the local language), painting provocative wall murals. These processes not only prompt critical dialogues about the existing media in our lives, but they nurture our abilities to creatively express ourselves and understand the world around us. Moreover, they free us from the illusions of needing a lot of money, technology, or technical knowledge to create media in our lives and work. We reconnect with and revalue not only our own experiences and feelings, but also the magical power and infinite potential of our own hands (and backs and feet). While just the tip of the iceberg, I think that these are examples of the kinds of self-organizing, locally-generated, dialectical processes that we will use to 'liberate' ourselves from the daily onslaught of indoctrination.

9

democratizing

global  
media  
generating a discourse...



role of  
educators

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what should be the role of academia in general  
and teachers in particular?

WHAT DO YOU PROPOSE SHOULD BE DONE AT AN OPERATIONAL LEVEL, IN SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES?  
HOW CAN WE HELP TEACHERS EVOLVE AS TRANSFORMATORY INTELLECTUALS? CAN THE CURRICULUM BE DESIGNED  
TO PROMOTE CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY? CAN EDUCATION HELP UNLOCK THE THOUGHT-CONTROLLING MECHANISMS  
OF THE MEDIA? HOW?



**Stephen Fein**

Academics are part of the praetorian guard of the ruling elites. They owe their positions to those at the top and must serve them in order to maintain their status. If they grow out of favor with those to whom they owe allegiance, they will be un-chosen, will be deprived of the accolades of the corporate press, and will lose their lofty positions in society. Only academics with principles that are greater than their ambitions, will disregard the wishes of those in power, and speak the truth.

The commercialization of education proceeds in the United States. Corporations pay for team uniforms so they can display logos, they install classroom monitors so they can air commercials to a captive student audience, and they fund research so their products can be given university imprimatur. As this commercialization proceeds, institutions of higher learning may lose some of their aura. Students and their parents may begin to see them more as places of indoctrination than of learning, and may question their legitimacy.

**Janet Weil**

I read this question as: what can we (teachers) do about media? I think we can do a lot, and not wait for 'academia' to lead the way, develop the theories, and so on, though much can be done at that level as well. Through our lessons on how to listen to and watch media critically and for specific purposes, development of definitions of 'critical media literacy', honest and open class discussions, conversations with other teachers, close observations of how our students use media, and many other strategies, we educators can:

- become aware of its effects, including of course on ourselves
- use it for specific purposes
- protest it/critique it
- create our own
- teach our students to make their own media

When discussing phenomena as complex, far-reaching and dynamic as global media, looking at different aspects can give us starting points for examination. Global media can be thought of as products, such as press releases, still photographs, magazines, television programs, websites, books. Or, global media can be conceptualized as the

representation of industries with global impact; for example, tourism exists as real-life activities and transactions (US college students hiking in the Himalayas) and as the related media – films, videos, television programs, slideshow presentations, print media and the Internet. A third form of media analysis considers the mode: is it interactive (email, most websites to varying degrees, computer games) or is it one-way (television, radio)? A fourth method of analysis is to identify media producers, for example the Pakistani government or US – or UK-held corporations, and to analyze their objectives, methods, cross-cultural effects, business practices, etc. Many lesson plans and specific learning activities can be created from these (and doubtless other) perspectives.

So, yes, there is "hope that we will ever get ourselves liberated from the existing situation."

**Shilpa Jain**

Teachers would first need to understand how they themselves are indoctrinated (on multiple levels) and how they serve as agents of indoctrination. Teachers, students, parents, would all need to engage together with diverse kinds of unlearning, self-learning, and co-learning processes (as mentioned before). I do not think this can be taught, or brought about with a change in the curriculum. To understand why, we would have to see that the very essence of curriculum, both in form and content, is also part of indoctrination. As my good friend Munir Fasheh, of the Arab Education Forum, says, "All curriculum is anti-learning."

Moreover, most who consider themselves 'critical pedagogues' or 'radical educators' still fall into the same traps of mainstream teachers. They too lack faith in the infinite potential of human beings and the human spirit, and see themselves as indispensable for 'liberating' others from oppression, exploitation, etc. (An excellent critique of Paulo Freire, in this light, was recently prepared by Gustavo Esteva, Madhu Suri Prakash, and Dana Stuchul, and will appear in the next volume of *Vimukt Shiksha, Unfolding Learning Societies*, April 2002).

To avoid this demise, again, we would have to nurture various dialogues (via creations, discussions, games, etc.) among academics and teachers, to understand how education is also media and what we can do to get out of its indoctrinating traps.

# 10 democratizing

## global media

generating a discourse...



## breaking free

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is there any hope that we will ever get ourselves  
liberated from the existing situation? do you think  
those with little or no access to media are much  
better off and can become a source of alternative  
lifestyles or thought processes?

DO YOU THINK THIS MEDIA GAME IS HYPED AND WILL DEFEAT ITSELF? CREATION OF CRITICAL SPACES FOR  
DIALOGUES ON ISSUES NEVER DISCUSSED BEFORE IN PUBLIC IS ONE OF THE AFTERMATHS OF SEPTEMBER 11.

**Stephen Fein**

The media in the United States may be the most sophisticated and entertaining in the world, but their product is homogeneous and undemanding, and its citizens may be the least informed. There is no need to switch TV channels to see what is on another station, because the information and the images are the same on all. There is no need to subscribe to more than one newspaper or 'news' magazine, because the stories, the point-of-view, and even the photographs are the same, or too similar to make a difference.

Americans accept that their press is not censored, and as a result they tend to believe their government's propaganda. Those who live in less democratic countries, know that governments lie and therefore tend to disbelieve their own country's press.

The irony might be that people in less democratic countries may ultimately have a better opportunity of becoming informed, than citizens in western democracies, who, because of media self-censorship, are denied the facts they need to make educated decisions. They may lose their freedom as a result, because they will have forgotten that real democracy requires an informed citizenry.

We, in the West, have been convinced that we are much better off than most, and in terms of comfort and convenience, we may be. But, we have been so programmed not to question the authority of those in power that we tend to accept even their most insane policies. In less-developed countries, although people may have little power to change the policies of their governments, they are more likely to question those policies and the motives of those in power. The advanced world may not be so advanced when it comes to critical thinking and independence of thought.

The media propaganda machine will never rest, but it does not have total control. Events have a way of

intruding. September 11th opened space for dialogue, so did the Enron debacle, so has the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the 'war on terrorism'. Citizens will question their leaders, and those institutions, especially the media, that endlessly repeat the government line. If they become dissatisfied with what is being offered, they may look elsewhere for answers. The progressive media needs to be there, to provide a different point of view, and to offer hope for a different future.

**Janet Weil**

In the formulation of the question, you already express hope, because the truly hopeless or rigidly cynical do not ask this: they have given up on hope. On a deeper level, I understand your first question as "Give me reasons to hope" or "The situation looks so bad, what are we doing about it?"

Of course I can give you reasons to hope, based on my own experiences, but I would like you to consider your question in a new way. What \*IF\* the current systems of media indoctrination and education "geared to obedience" (Chomsky) is, indeed, without hope? What \*IF\* everything really is tragically bad and doomed to get worse and worse, until the entire globe is under the domination of a single mega-corporation that controls everything from food to medical care to religion? Or whatever your worst fantasy is. What is your deepest fear? And then what would you \*do\*?

My guess (projection) is that you would cry out in your heart, and then to others in your life that you trust. And from that experience of anguish and rebellion, you would find a source of great energy. I have found, in my own life and in historical struggles, that things get interesting when there is 'no hope', when people face our fears, when we stop expecting some rescue or amelioration, when we sit with 'what is'. And then move on to change it.

*The irony might be that people in less democratic countries may ultimately have a better opportunity of becoming informed, than citizens in western democracies, who, because of media self-censorship, are denied the facts they need to make educated decisions.*

In human history as I understand it, there has always been domination, and there has always been the struggle, sometimes subtle and covert, sometimes loud and public, against domination. You are addressing some of the more subtle, internalized enslavements of our consciousness – questions of great interest to me since I was a youth 30 years ago. Why do we think what/how we do, and who's making us think that way?

Maybe it's difficult, even depressing, to think that there is an eternal struggle between domination and freedom. And maybe the struggle's not 'eternal', just very long. Almost my entire life has been framed by a question I rarely articulate, even to myself: "So when \*is\* the revolution [of human consciousness] going to happen, already?" Many, many things have changed in the almost 47 years I've been alive, and yet our planet seems no closer – indeed, in some ways much farther – to "the democratic, meaningful, and pluralistic lifestyle". Except

in our world to have the access to so much media, and the leisure to reflect on it with others.

### **Wasif Rizvi**

Media and education; why they are controlled and used for indoctrination because at certain level they do pose a threat towards enormous power interest, and do possess a possibility of empowering and liberating society. When you are saying that media is controlled and education is misled that means that these institutions if not controlled or misled present these possibilities. Now one needs to discover that level then one needs to recreate and generate such possibilities. So that's what you do.

### **Shilpa Jain**

Of course, we can liberate ourselves – we don't need anyone to do it for us. And I do have faith that it is happening and can happen more, if we support spaces where people are, consciously and unconsciously, already

*Of course, we can liberate ourselves — we don't need anyone to do it for us. While the media game may defeat itself in the long-run, as more and more people begin to renounce it, I certainly do not believe our concern about it is over-hyped.*

that instead of 'lifestyle' I would say "institutions throughout the world that promote the well-being of all."

As for the second part of this question, I would advise: be aware of a tendency to idealize those "with little or no access to media" – human beings have always had some kind of 'media', that is, reports through song, gossip, drawings, etc. of people and things they have not directly experienced themselves. Probably people in Pakistan who have little or no access to \*electronic\* media have something to teach us; perhaps they can offer some alternatives. I certainly mean no disrespect; on the contrary. I will be interested to read more on this subject.

Electronic media offer an alluring, addictive, but extremely limited and passive world of fakeness. I hate that world, and crave it, and am accustomed to it, and seek to balance it with other parts of my life. Human beings are evolved to engage, in a varied, sometimes dangerous and often beautiful biosphere, in an extraordinary range of experiences, not sit in front of 'the idiot box' as my father called it, or even keep typing into a screen. I do recognize that I am one of the very privileged persons

engaged in such processes. Can we value these existing spaces and grow more of them in our own lives and work? In many ways, people who have not had much exposure to the mainstream media have been able to retain and grow their common sense, creativity and wisdom (*akal* in Mewari), which are the bases for social justice. An appreciation and regeneration of this would certainly bring us a lot closer to freeing ourselves from thought-control.

While the media game may defeat itself in the long-run, as more and more people begin to renounce it, I certainly do not believe our concern about it is over-hyped. Without a doubt, it has had, and continues to have, serious effects on our psychologies, our ecologies, and our cosmologies. It has destroyed our human connectivity as well as many life-supporting activities (intergenerational dialogue, individual and collective creativity, hands-on labor, intimate interaction with nature, etc.) I think the reactions after September 11th, above all else, demonstrated the mass media's tremendous capacities for inhibiting understanding and inciting violence. Whatever few deep reflections and critical dialogues emerged were promptly overshadowed, ignored, or outrightly condemned and quashed by the mass media.

### What's wrong with the media?

In my opinion, the biggest problem with media (especially television) today is manipulation of information. Local and international news programs are the best example. Also, the mainstream media is highly commercialized. The commercials seem to provide quick solutions to all our problems: within 14 days you can become beautiful and charming by using highly-advertised beautifying products. These advertisements have become a source of fantasy and false idealism luring people into the web of consumerism. The younger generation is totally overtaken by media messages revolving around being beautiful, thin and buying what the corporations have to offer: expensive lifestyles. Media deliberately forgoes the real essence and meaning of beauty and simplicity.

Most of the programs, advertisements and music shows promote and transmit information alien to our traditions and culture because they present the Western mode of life. They make people believe that their only way to happiness and success in life is pursuing a Western lifestyle. They make people ashamed of their own cultures and traditions. The media serves the vested interests of the powerful people of the world – the power managers. They are conveniently portrayed as heroes, saviors, human rights preservers etc and the 'real' side of their actions is never exposed.

### Can the Internet be used as a tool for making media more democratic?

Yes, Internet could become an excellent tool for creating awareness and sharing reflection and action. I remember Chomsky saying in one of his interviews that when the Internet was invented, we heard the word 'Information superhighway' everywhere. Just after 10 years, we are hearing another term: 'E-commerce'. Generating more business and money is the only emphasis now. This new corporate mind-shift is affecting the youth of today the most.

The growing number of cyber cafes in our city and country could give the youth a chance to engage in meaningful dialogue over the Internet but sadly these venues are used for trivialities like chatting, accessing pornographic materials, entertainment etc.

Selecting and accessing the right information on the Internet is a major concern although we have an information surplus online. One appropriate way to make the Internet technology more democratic is to engage everyone in a meaningful dialogue regarding the potentials of the technology and exposing the processes, mechanisms and problems attached to it to audience's views. Through this participative process, the audience may learn and understand to make intelligent choices on the Internet.

### Is there a significant connection between media, education and social change?

Yes, there exists a strong connection. The existing media has played a vital role in shaping our lives, attitudes, behaviors, thinking etc. It has a huge impact on our children's personalities. It is more powerful than the learning systems in our schools. A rally or protest may be a good idea, but again, for making it sustainable we need to educate our teachers about these issues. The teachers, educators, school management, communities and children must be made to understand the potential of media and the purpose of education to create a more viable and just environment. The next step would be to develop tools for creating such awareness and engaging more people. There already exist some platforms for meaningful discourses like congregations in mosques and temples, inviting parents to schools, publishing and disseminating pamphlets, using local cable operators to develop programs and their dissemination etc.

### What could be the role of academia in general and teachers in particular?

Unfortunately, majority of our teachers are trapped into this false reality of completing the syllabus, preparing students to get better marks, promoting competitions, disseminating worthless information etc. This process continues throughout the academic life. There is an effort to address some of the societal issues but it is never pursued in a sustainable, effective manner.

The major challenge is to make the teachers aware about their existing roles and redefining them. The teachers should see themselves as agents of change. The teachers have to be trained to think and reflect on their practices and try to identify the strengths and weaknesses and evaluate these keeping in view their vision of education. They could then be engaged in the process of developing tools, redefining and redesigning the curriculum and strategies to generate meaningful dialogues. The school could be an excellent place to engage parents and communities in these dialogues. If teachers could record these dialogues, then local cable operators could disseminate them. This would not only prove to be cost effective but also within control of the communities rather than commercial institutions.

This process should be carried out slowly and gradually and within small groups and communities. Once these processes are in place, it is upto the community to decide whether they want to follow the existing systems of indoctrination or follow their own self-made systems. The teacher should then engage the community in designing new systems coherent with the traditions and cultures, reflect upon them and design strategies for action.



# UR On...



## **Aslam Azhar** **An Interview for EDucate!**

BY  
MASHHOOD RIZVI

“The world is mass producing literature just as it is mass producing other consumer goods”, says Aslam Azhar, the pioneering veteran of nascent Pakistan Television. From being the first Managing Director of PTV to a dynamic media critic, Azhar talks to EDucate! about the transition of electronic media in Pakistan, the rise of consumerism, the plight of our education system and the vitality of hope ...

**How did you get involved with Pakistan Television?**

Well very briefly, by chance, purely by chance. I was the first Pakistani to be employed in television when it started in 1964. It was started as a pilot project by a Japanese company who were given a contract by the Government of Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan said, look we know nothing about television, you start a pilot project, run it successfully for three months and then we take it over if it succeeds. This Japanese company was introduced to me, I was then a freelance theater person, writer, journalist and so I became the very first programmed Pakistani in Pakistan Television.

I started the Lahore station and that was very successful, I started the then Rawalpindi station, which later became Islamabad station and then the Karachi station. So I started all three of these. I went on to become the Managing Director of Pakistan

Television Corporation and in Zia-ul-Haq's time I was sacked. I came back when Benazir Bhutto came back in her first tenure, in December 1988, as Chairman of Pakistan Television and Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation, Radio

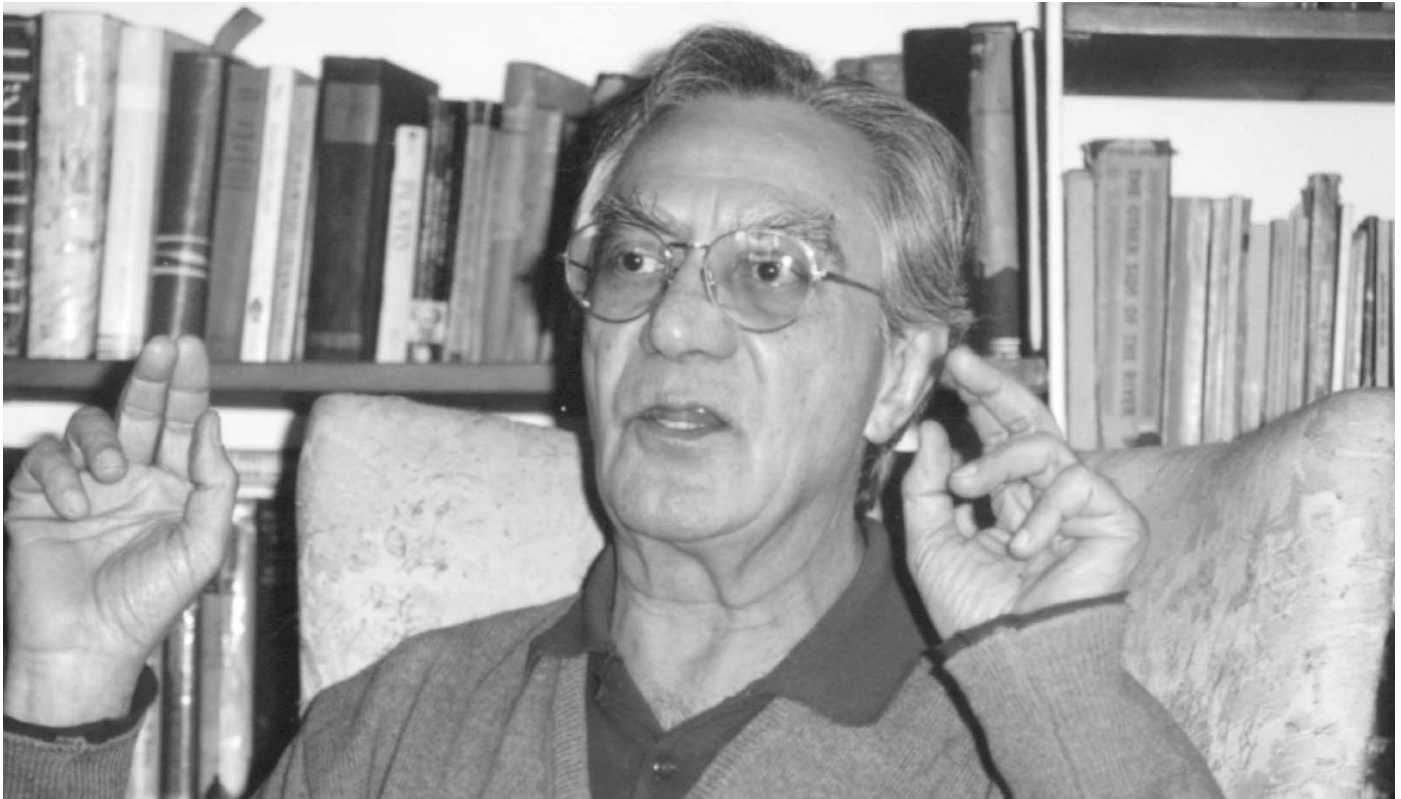
*and intellectually framing the role of television media or for that matter media in the Pakistani society. What were your initial goals with respect to the societal elements and how were you doing it?*

*All along, throughout my career, in the arts and in the performing arts and in the field broadly of culture, I have been concerned with somehow turning these two sub societies of Pakistan into one mainstream society. The two sub societies of Pakistan are the urban society and the rural society and there is a big gap between these two.*

Pakistan. After a year-and-a-half I decided that the policies the government was pursuing were not the policies that I had come to promote because I am a democrat and I resigned. Since then I have been a freelance.

*So you were not only technically but also conceptually*

Ofcourse I had a team, a very good team. All along, throughout my career, in the arts and in the performing arts and in the field broadly of culture, I have been concerned with somehow turning these two sub societies of Pakistan into one mainstream society. The two sub societies of Pakistan are the urban society and the rural society



and there is a big gap between these two, it is not a class gap in the Marxist sense; it is almost literally a cast gap. There is the English medium class and there's the non-English medium class and these are two casts in society and by and large the English medium cast inhabits the urban centers of Pakistan, whether they are poor or rich. Even the poor Pakistani today aspires to send his boys to an English medium school because he realizes there's no future for them in the absence of an English medium.

The rural child or parent has absolutely no access to that, not only no access but his aspirations are different, his culture is different, so in the early days of television we laid a lot of stress on bringing rural culture into the cities via television. And this was a conscious effort.

Now in those early days, 1964 till maybe 1970, television was very limited in its reach, there weren't all that many television sets in the country but then gradually it began to grow. In those days the big difference was that the programs were determined and decided and produced by us producers. Today, the situation is different, today the programs are determined, decided and produced at the will of he who pays, that is to say the advertiser, the great global corporations, which have swamped Pakistan. So this is why today television is no longer, in my opinion, serving society's needs. It is infact serving the needs of the global producers.

***Noam Chomsky was recently in Pakistan, you also met him. There are a lot of intellectuals in the West who have openly criticized the strangulating control of global media and have also analyzed the role of US media within their own society. Do you think anybody in Pakistan has been able to do that or if not, why?***

In Chomsky's lecture he was asked a similar question and he said nowhere in the world today and nowhere in history have the mainstream intellectuals ever supported rebellion and dissonance. The mainstream intellectuals have always supported the power structures in power, the establishment. We are a small group of people in Pakistan, who are now precisely raising our voices on this issue but we get very little support at the moment because there's a long process of creating lobbies in various sectors of society; in the middle-class, in the lower middle class, in the rural class. Lobbies which are conscientized and which understand what is being done to them and how they are being manipulated by the global media of which the Pakistani media, especially the electronic media, are a part and parcel.

Now, the electronic media in Pakistan are pursuing, without really thinking about these issues, the same course as the global media are, what we call in Urdu, *bher chaal*, they are

following like sheep. Nobody understands that what the global media and today's contemporary media essentially do is to destroy the critical ability of the individual. He is deprived of his critical ability to distinguish between good and evil, between necessary and redundant, between need and greed and this is what they consciously want because they want this individual to stop being a human being and become, in inverted commas, 'a consumer'. A consumer who consumes beyond his necessary needs because that's the only way in which the global corporations can continue to hold and exercise power internationally.

***There's so much comparison which is done between the way Indian media, especially the electronic media, has developed over the past decade after the invasion of the satellite dish and the way Pakistan has repositioned itself. Do you think this is an invalid comparison since their thought-control processes are more sophisticated than ours or is this comparison done on some other ground?***

You are right. Your question is well phrased. The Indians infact have turned out to be very good students of the Western global media and today Indian television, satellite television is even more efficient than the Western global media would have hoped for in converting human beings into consumers.

***Now the electronic media in Pakistan are pursuing, without really thinking about these issues, the same course as the global media are, what we call in Urdu, bher chaal, they are following like sheep. Nobody understands that what the global media and today's contemporary media essentially do is to destroy the critical ability of the individual. He is deprived of his critical ability to distinguish between good and evil, between necessary and redundant, between need and greed and this is what they consciously want because they want this individual to stop being a human being and become, in inverted commas, 'a consumer'.***



***the comprador producers of Pakistan are in alliance with the global producers and have the same interests in developing the media in a direction where it becomes as effective in manipulating society***

Now the comparison with Pakistan is simply because the Pakistani television was only state-owned, there was no private sector television and therefore Pakistani television in these early decades tended to be a little more service-oriented but now in the last five years, we see that Pakistan Television which is still state-owned is actually behaving like a private sector television organization, which is to say it's doing exactly what the Indian television commercial stations are doing; it is in the service of the producers of goods and services.

***In your opinion, whose interests should the media serve, the state or the society?***

Let me first say that I put this into three categories not two, not state and society. Number one is the state, number two the government of the day and number three the civil society. Now the state is all of Pakistan, the state has its permanent long-term interests and every member of civil society must serve the interests of the state without which he is nobody. The government of the day must protect the interests of civil society so that the state's interests continue to be served. The electronic media and ofcourse the print media are not to be in the service of the government of the day but in the service of civil society and the state. This is the important thing. In Pakistan we have stopped differentiating between the interests of the state and the interests of the government of the day. So the government of the day says I must stay in power, don't criticize me and the electronic media says 'yes sir' and therefore the

interests of civil society are ignored. Now people say, for example, that the BBC is a very democratic broadcaster but the BBC does criticize the government of the day, be it the Labor Party government or the Conservative Party government on particular issues, the BBC however never endangers the interests of the state of Britain. But because it is critical of the government here and there it is considered to have great credibility. It is not that the BBC is very sophisticated in its propaganda; it is that it has differentiated between the government of the day and the interests of the state. Now the interests of the state, for example, whether it be Iraq or Chechnya or the Falkland War against Argentina, the BBC was on the side of the state of Great Britain. But here and there it is critical of the government of the day's policies. In Pakistan and in India they are not making this distinction.

***Lets talk about the way the media have functioned under the present government. A lot of people think that General Pervez Musharraf has given more space to people in so many ways ...***

I agree with that view because I have been at the heart of the electronic media in this country for all these decades and never before have either the electronic media or the print media had the space to operate, which they have now ...

***Do you think that's a good step towards creating some***

***critical consciousness amongst people?***

Yes. In his lecture Professor Chomsky was asked whether military dictatorship can be expected to create the ground or prepare the ground for a real transition to genuine democratic society. His answer was that the work of politics in governing a country is not like the laws of physics. The laws of physics are unchangeable, if something has to happen, it will happen, if something can't happen it cannot happen. But with human beings and politics, governments have interests, have wisdom, have vision, have insight. Anybody can show that vision and insight, whether he is in uniform or whether he is not in uniform. And he said that if your government has the vision and the statesmanship, well, then I don't see why we cannot have the ground prepared for democratic dispensations.

***How would you assess the strength of Pakistani media? In US, where there's greater literacy and dependency on media, the people are literally subject to the worst form of indoctrination. As some critics say, they are the most disempowered society; they know nothing about what is happening outside the US. In India, there are so many consumers that the global corporations have put more efforts in furthering the sophisticated manipulation of ideas and manufacturing of***

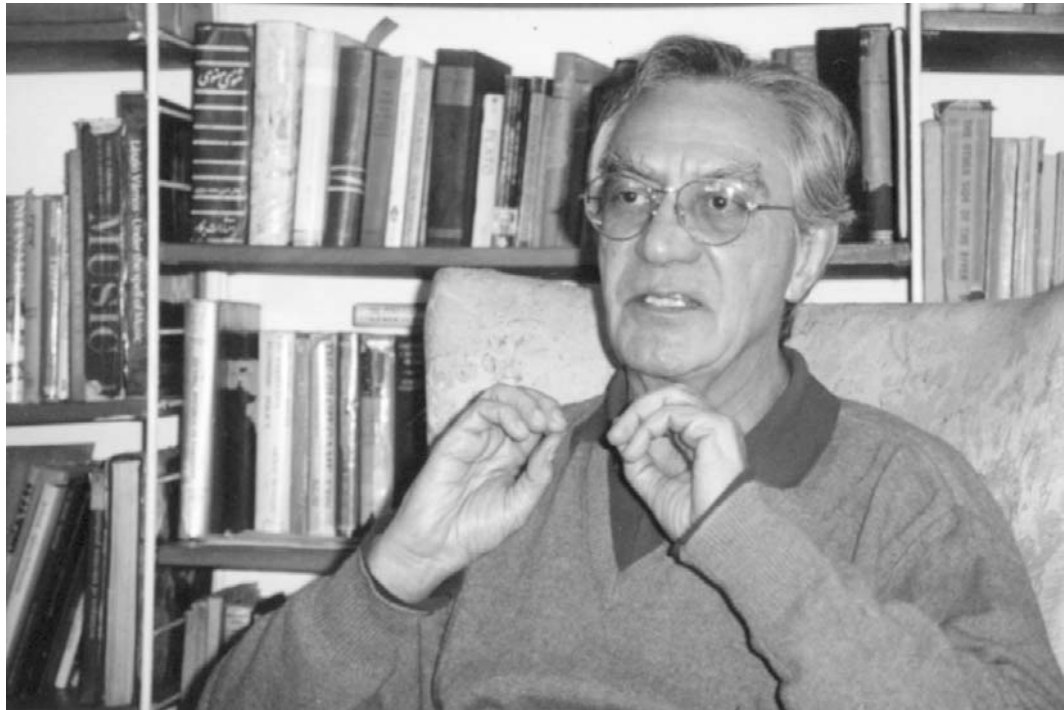
*consent. Do you think the same level of control is exerted by media in Pakistan too?*

Not yet. I like the way you have phrased your question, which is really not a question, you've almost answered yourself, I like your statement and I agree with it. Not yet, in Pakistan but it is going in the same direction because the comprador producers of Pakistan are in alliance with the global producers and have the same interests in developing the media in a direction where it becomes as effective in manipulating society in the directions in which they want, but the time is coming and I think that the speed with which we are going in the direction of the consumerist culture is accelerating.

*Do you think that the religious values act as a deterrent or as something which would always resist in constructive as well as destructive forms the corporatization of our culture.*

No, I do not think that religion stands in the way of anything. I do not think that Islam stands in the way of the corporatization of our culture or in the way of the democratization of our culture. Also it is necessary to understand that there's no one monolithic thing called Islam. Islam is the culture of its people; the Malaysian Muslims are one kind of culture, the Saudi Arabian are another kind of Muslim culture, the Lebanese are a third kind, the Egyptian are a fourth kind and the Pakistani are the fifth kind.

In the same way as in Christianity, Roman Catholic France or Roman Catholic Italy is very distinct from Roman Catholic Latin America. Very different, you had that liberation theology in Latin America, which has never come into the Catholicism or European Catholic Church. In the same way there's no monolithic Islam. Now, what happens is that the forces of society, the productive



forces of society can sometimes manipulate religion, be it Hinduism, Islam or Christianity, the manipulation is always done by the power structures. Now if the power structures choose to manipulate Islam then we have to first ask what is the aim of the power structures in Pakistan or what is the aim of the power structures in Saudi Arabia and accordingly Islam will be used and manipulated but intrinsically there's nothing in it to stop anything from happening.

Pakistani Islam is very sufically influenced. People of Pakistan, the common people of Pakistan, be they urban common people or village people, are very strongly responsive to sufi Islam. Now sufi Islam teaches that you don't forget the needs of the spirit, that you don't fall in love with the world so much that you forget the needs of the spirit. In the West, in consequences of Renaissance and a long historical development, there has been a distance created between the life of the spirit and the love of the world to the extent that the life of the spirit has almost completely disappeared in mainstream Western civilization. Now the way this is put sometimes is that materialism has displaced God from the throne. Here this has not yet happened.

*Do you think it's on its way?*

It is on its way and the only thing, which can stand in the way and stop this process or atleast slow it down is a revivification of the spirit through sufi Islam, if we were to work on those lines because sufi Islam, by no means, is monastic. Sufi Islam does not say that you go and sit in a cave in the mountain to contemplate and forget the world.

There is a very beautiful statement attributed to the Prophet (PBUH) when he was asked by Hazrat Ali once to give him a piece of advice and the Prophet of Islam said "Live in this world as though it is to be your home forever and prepare for the next world as though you are to die tomorrow morning." In other words "Live in this world as though it is to be your home forever" which means keep it beautiful and clean, look after your parents, attend to your worldly responsibilities because you are here forever and be a good citizen of the world, a clean citizen of a clean world but at the same time prepare for tomorrow; "prepare for the next world as though you are to die tomorrow morning" Now the two things have to go side by side; neither displaces the other, you must live in this world and you must prepare for the next.



***...the world is mass producing consumer goods, soaps, perfumes, toothpaste and McDonalds burgers and the rest, in the same way the whole world is mass producing literature, mass producing words and looking around I do not find a best seller that can be the creation of a Tolstoy today — there are no Tolstoy today, there are no Nerudas today, there are no Faiz Ahmed Faizes or Allama Iqbals today. Can there be?***

*I was just hoping if you could shed some light on Iran ... I have had the opportunity of seeing some movies and they were very touching and sensitive. They addressed the cultural, social and the economic problems and were trying to strengthen the belief systems. Do you think that's also indoctrination or that's how media should function?*

I don't know anything at all about how the media in Iran, the creative media, are developing. By hearsay, I hear that Iranian independent film producers are doing some very good artistic work. Artistic work is never propaganda. In artistic work, the artist is expressing himself and his insights, as he sees the world, his perceptions, he's not in the service of any global corporation or any power structure. The artist is never in the service, this is the difference to understand, whether he be Iranian, American or British or Pakistani, an artist, a true artist, is not in service of any power structure. What is he in service of? He is in service of human beings, he is in service of humanism; Pavlo Neruda was in service of humanism, Faiz Ahmed Faiz was in service of humanism. They were not propagandists.

*Lets go back a little bit and try to learn from your experience. You said that your major goal was to bridge the gulf between rural and urban masses and you even tried doing that. What were those things; policies and programs without the element of urban bias?*

Not very much, but basically our audiences at that time were

predominantly, preponderantly urban audiences because the television sets had not reached into the countryside. So therefore, what we were trying to do was to educate the urban audiences about the culture and the life of the rural masses. For example, I placed a great emphasis on folk music. The folk music in Pakistani society is basically sufi music, be it Sindhi folk, Punjabi folk, Frontier folk or Balochi folk. And the folk music of Pakistan somehow expresses spontaneously the rural culture of Pakistan and the folk culture. Now city audiences were unfamiliar with these sounds and these sights. So we used to bring a lot of that into it. Also I encouraged our playwrights to write on rural themes and many of them did very well in this area.

***Since you are not involved with the electronic media anymore, you must find it very disturbing the way Pakistani media is functioning these days. Most of the programs are being shot abroad depicting extravagance and urban bias to which majority of the population cannot relate to. One example from India is a recent film (Dil Chata Hai) which is under heavy criticism because what it displays is poles apart from the true realities of India and completely deviated from social responsibility.***

Ofcourse, ofcourse. I am distressed and I can't bear watching either Pakistani television or Indian television or even American television for that matter for the reasons that you have just enunciated in your question. The media in service of Mammon. Now

why, for example, have the other forms of art not gone in service of Mammon, the way commercial cinema or television all over the world, be it the Western world or the Eastern world. For example, theater in countries where theater flourishes on the stage continues to be the work of artists and not in service of Mammon. Ofcourse there is also commercial theater but good theater does exist, why doesn't good television exist, why is the cinema no longer producing the Ingmar Bergmans and the Satyajeyteras and the Kurosawas of 20, 30, 40 years ago in the same degree. Ofcourse here and there, there are exceptions but the cinema has gone after Mammon. Why hasn't the theater gone after Mammon, why hasn't the painter gone after Mammon, why hasn't the poet gone after Mammon, the answer is metaphor. Metaphorical expression is what the human spirit really needs; theater is metaphorical; you can't bring horses and wars on the stage, as Shakespeare said in his prologue to Henry, the fifth, "Think when we speak of horses that you see them, printing their proud hooves in the receiving earth", because he meant we can't bring horses onto the stage but we are going to talk about war and horses and kings and soldiers so when we speak of them, you think of them. In other words use your imagination.

Now television does not require you and me to use our imagination infront of the TV set. Television predigests everything and gives it to you.

Therefore, television is an opiate whereas good theater is not an

opiate, the painter is not an opiate, poetry is not opium. When you read good poetry or see a good painting your mind and your spirit comes awake. When you sit in front of the television set, your eyes are open but your mind and spirit are asleep because you are being given predigested entertainment.

***So what you are saying is that television could never become a good educational or liberatory tool anyway?***

I am saying precisely that. It is severely limited due to its dependency on money and the commercial interest. Now if there was somewhere in the world a state and a government that said no commercial television, we will find the money to fund good television, it is possible, then to turn television into a metaphorical medium of expression, in the service of civil society. It is possible but then it needs the money; a writer just needs a pen, a painter just needs brushes, oil paints and a canvas but a television producer needs a lot of money, a lot of equipment and a broadcasting system, where is that to come from? No state is willing to fund all of that so who funds? The corporate sector, and then as they say, "He who pays the piper, calls the tune".

***In your opinion, when did the severe decline of media and public sector in Pakistan begin?***

Basically, what you call the decline of the media is the commercialization of the media. Ever since Pakistani society also began to be a consumer society, our media have been commercialized and, therefore, the purpose of the media is no longer serving society but serving the people who pay the media to flourish.

***Do you think there's hope that someday a framework can be brought in where things can be***

***turned around or is it too heavily controlled by the corporates that it is too late?***

What comes to my mind is that just as the world is mass producing consumer goods, soaps, perfumes, toothpaste and McDonalds burgers and the rest, in the same way the whole world is mass producing literature, mass producing words and looking around I do not find a best seller that can be the creation of a Tolstoy today – there are no Tolstoys today, there are no Nerudas today, there are no Faiz Ahmed Faizes or Allama Iqbals today. Can there be? Now the world is consuming literature the way it is consuming all the other consumer products and so the bookshelves of the bookshops and of houses are full of trash because mass production of words can only lead to trash – these people who write novels are producing a novel a year and they are selling and selling and selling. Millions of copies is just nothing, here and there a good book also sells a lot but that's because then it is somehow serving a felt-need in the reader.

***And that is where that ray of hope is?***

Exactly, there is that ray of hope ... here and there, there might arise thinkers who serve felt-needs in society be it via television or print or music.

***The education system of Pakistan has nothing in its curriculum to create critical consciousness amongst students to critically examine what is on the news, on TV or in the newspapers. Do you think that if the education sector begins to take its responsibility, it can be a greater force than media and it can help break the cycle of manipulation?***

Ofcourse, education is at the center of hope, but education by whom and who educates the educator? Now, in Pakistan the state education

sector, the public education sector, is moribund. They haven't got the money, they haven't got trained teachers, they haven't got text book boards, which are properly educated and, therefore, they are just going on doing what they have done for the last 50, 70 years. The private sector is there in the education field to make money – I don't have any hopes whatsoever from private sector education in Pakistan or anywhere else in the world. The public sector unfortunately, the government of Pakistan, is not in a position but even if it were, there are governments in the world that have the money, but yet they have abdicated from their responsibility in the field of education of the young. But there are some societies, which have not abdicated from their responsibilities. For example in Germany there is a very strong and good public sector education, in America there is virtually none. Now, in Pakistan our public sector education is what I would hope for and one day I am hoping that there will be a government, which says these are now our new priorities of investment and the top priority will not be media, the top priority will be education and health.

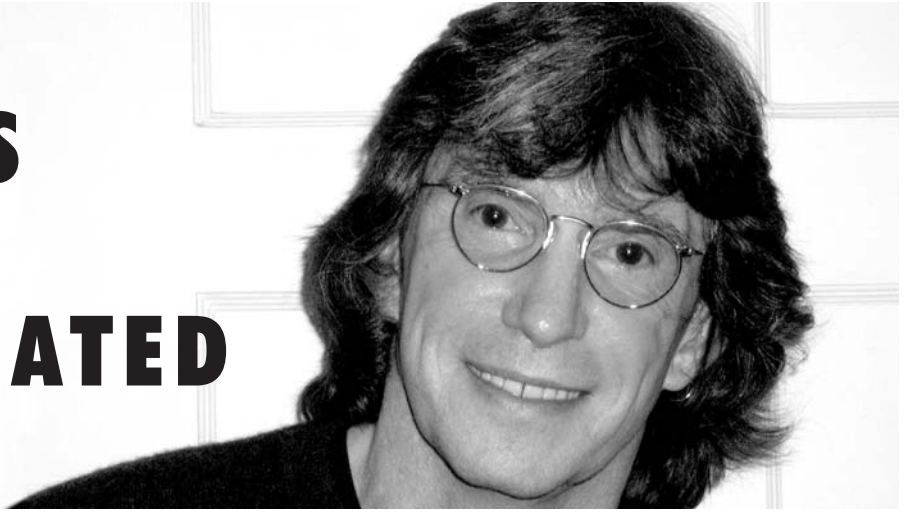
***Thank you so much, is there any message you want to give out through our magazine to people?***

Yes, since you ask because it might seem that some people might think I'm a pessimist. I don't like the word pessimism it does not belong in my lexicon. I don't like the word optimism either, that does not belong in my lexicon. I believe in looking at the world after removing scales from my eyes and looking at my society seeing it without propaganda, without prior brainwashing and then seeking answers. That's neither optimism nor pessimism.

***It's a drive towards the truth.***

Correct!

# ROLE OF EDUCATORS IN AN INDOCTRINATED WORLD



BY HENRY GIROUX

**W**hile it is true that the media is largely in the hands of a relatively few corporations and represent one of the most powerful forms of public pedagogy, it does not mean that everything they produce lies entirely on the side of domination or that it is not possible to challenge their pedagogical functions and messages. There are also alternative sources of information that are being produced in counter public spheres by many groups in the forms of magazines, newspapers, journals, videos and on the Internet. For instance, in the United States the Media Education Foundation provides, online and through its distribution process, an amazing array of sources of entertainment.

We need to remember that power and domination are not the same thing. This suggests that conditions have to be created in as many sites as possible to provide people with the intellectual skills, knowledge and motivation to both be able to understand how power works as a form of domination but also how it can be used as a mode of critique and transformation.

- At one level, we need a language of critique and possibility to make dominant power visible.
- Second, we need to develop modes of pedagogy that address the new sites in which learning is taking place outside of the limited confines of the school, such as in popular culture, mass media, and the new electronic media.
- Thirdly, we need to educate young people and others in a wide array of literacies that link knowledge to social change, and education to the project of expanding their sense of political agency while also connecting such agency to the broader

struggle for economic, political, and social justice and global democracy.

- Fourthly, we need to organize, on an international level, to not only fight the corporate forces of neo-liberalism, but also to create alternative public spheres that would offer new spaces for creating those vital discourses and technologies that would enable people to come together to defend vital public goods and the ongoing process of democratization on a global level.

In every instance, it is crucial to create world wide organizations that come together to defend the notion of the public good, democracy, and social justice and do so in a way that repudiates the powerful neo-liberal assumption that democracy and the market are the same. It is crucial to reclaim the language and project of radical democracy as a weapon to both critique and overcome the collapse of social orders into market relations.

This means redefining the importance of the democratic social, citizenship, political agency, transformative politics, and critical education. We need an inventive democratic imaginary as a basis for linking education and pedagogy to the broader processes of democratization itself. Hope must lie not only in the ongoing damage that neo-liberal capitalism is doing to the planet but also to the hard pedagogical task of making contradictions visible, affirming and reclaiming the ethical imperatives of realizable democracies, and resurrecting educated hope as a basis for creating the conditions for self and social determination.

Combining the discourse of criticism and hope is crucial to affirm that critical activity offers the possibility for social transformation. One option that progressive educators could consider is to develop an oppositional cultural politics that engages basic considerations of global social citizenship aimed at expanding democratic rights while developing collective movements that can challenge the subordination of social needs to the dictates of capital, commodification, and commercialism.

Central to such a politics would be a public pedagogy that attempts to make visible, in a wide variety of sites throughout the globe, alternative models of radical democratic culture that raise fundamental questions about the relationship between political agency and social responsibility, technology and globalization, and the re-inscription of the state as a force for domestic militarization. At the very least, such a pedagogy involves understanding and critically engaging dominant public transcripts and values within a broader set of historical and institutional contexts.

Making the political more pedagogical in this instance suggests producing modes of knowledge and social practices that not only affirm oppositional cultural work but offer opportunities to mobilize instances of collective outrage, if not collective action, against glaring material inequities and the growing cynical belief that today's culture of investment and finance makes it impossible to address many of the major social problems facing both the United States and the larger world.

Most importantly, such work points to the link between civic education and modes of oppositional political agency that are pivotal to elucidating a politics that promotes autonomy and social change. Unfortunately, many progressives have failed to take seriously Antonio Gramsci's insight that "[e]very relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily an educational relationship" – with its implication that education as a cultural pedagogical practice takes place across multiple sites as it signals how, within diverse contexts, education makes us both subjects of and subject to relations of power.

Hopefully, the challenge facing educators as public intellectuals in an age of global plunder by an unchecked market authoritarianism will manifest itself in a plurality of forms of political and pedagogical interventions, including challenging the historical inevitability of global

capitalism, defending the historical advances associated with nation states by pushing for "more education, more health, more guaranteed lifetime income," mobilizing marginalized groups on all fronts, and making anti-racist and class struggles paramount to any struggle for democratization. Economic restructuring on a global level

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makes class a more central category than ever before as a result of the increasing divisions between the rich and the poor, accelerated by the massive transformation of power from nations to transnational corporations, on the one hand, and the equally massive transfer of wealth from the poor and middle class to the upper classes on the other hand. But any attempt to abolish forms of class, racial, gender, and other types of oppression requires a different kind of politics than what has been traditionally associated with the politics of class struggles.

A new politics must be steeped in an attempt to publicly confront oppressive relations, explain them, situate them historically, engage how they are worked in the intersection between the local and the global context, and refuse to accept their inevitability. A pedagogy of persuasion and transformation in this instance becomes crucial to any viable politics of democratization. Any feasible movement that challenges neo-liberalism and corporate globalization will need to develop pedagogical strategies that debunk the cherished myths of capitalism, offer knowledge, skills, and tools that "will be immediately useful in people's lives" and, at the same time, "point to longer-run, more fundamental changes."

Simultaneously, it is crucial for educators and others to fight against the effects of neo-liberalism and finance capital by becoming border crossers and working collectively with other groups spread out across the planet to develop global institutions "of effective and political action as could match the size and power of the already global economic forces and bring them under political scrutiny and ethical supervision." Such projects and interventions while not offering a politics with guarantees can unleash the pedagogical and political energies



necessary to combine a strong hostility to the existence of human suffering and exploitation with “a vision of a global society, informed by civil liberties and human rights, that carries with it the shared obligations and responsibilities of common, collaborative citizenship.”

Instances of such movements can be glimpsed in the peaceful globalization protests that have taken place against the WTO, IMF, G8, and WEF in Seattle, Washington, Genoa, Italy, and more recently, New York City. The move from protest to building astute analyses and international alliance can also be seen in meetings such as the World Social Forum that took place recently in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Both of these movements echo David Held and Mary Kaldor’s call for a left that is willing to address as part of a broader notion of global justice the ethical issues “posed by the global polarization of wealth, income and power, and with them the huge asymmetries of life chances,” none of which can be left to market solutions.

This suggests a non-hierarchical, popular movement on a global scale which makes pedagogy, economic justice, and cultural recognition central to the goal of creating a world in which democratic principles provide the fertile ground for spreading the values of human rights, the rule of law, and social justice as a way of connecting people of all cultures and places not merely through the abstractions of theory but through the everyday, place-based experiences that shape their lives.

I think that the issue of pedagogy must be central for any movement for democratic change. What this suggests for educators both inside and outside of the university is that they need to take seriously their role as oppositional public intellectuals who believe that what they say and do can make a difference in creating strategies of understanding, engagement, and transformation. Such a position would suggest that educators attempt to understand and engage how capital works pedagogically to secure its political interests, how

it uses cultural politics precisely as an educational force in shaping a new generation of accommodating intellectuals.

It would also show how capital legitimates the dismantling of the gains of the welfare state and eliminates those public spaces that provide the conditions for social movements to organize and spread their messages. Additionally, such pedagogical politics requires greater attentiveness to linking studies about the ownership of the media to how the media functions pedagogically as a form of cultural politics; how the decline of the military-industrial complex has given rise to a prison-industrial complex buttressed by a politics of race and identity politics that permeate the cultural institutions of everyday life; and how cultural work in the academy might articulate with and play a role in expanding the possibilities of radical democratic struggles. This focus requires, in part, that critical educators help to strengthen and build social movements and organizations capable of addressing and mobilizing against the numerous forms of violence and oppression that increasingly are being waged against large segments of the global population.

Publicizing the myriad forms of educational and political work that are attempting to reclaim public spaces such as the schools and expanding democratic relations should be made available not only among politically similar allies but in the larger public sphere. Such work provides a concrete opportunity to challenge the culture of political cynicism and indifference. There is little doubt in my mind that such work goes a long way in challenging the culture of political avoidance while demonstrating that, as Bourdieu succinctly puts it, democracies cannot exist “without genuine opposing powers.” It is particularly crucial that academic intellectuals assume some responsibility and engage what Bourdieu calls “the function of education and culture in economies where information has become one of the most decisive productive forces.” Because it is precisely through such

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cultural and institutional formations that cultural studies practitioners – in conjunction with broader social movements – can produce analyses, questions, ideas, and pedagogical practices that the media both ignore and offer the conditions through which people might be mobilized.

Educators must revitalize a radical pedagogy and politics that links political economy and the economy of representations, desires, and bodies to scholarly work, public conversations, and everyday life. Moreover, such work can be addressed as part of a broader attempt to reclaim the culture of politics, to rethink and expand the possibilities for social agency as part of an ongoing effort to reverse the evisceration of public goods, and to prevent the increasing commodification and privatization of public spaces, especially the public schools and higher education. Similarly, cultural studies must directly engage the question of how to imagine and build political alliances and social movements.

This suggests producing, whenever possible, the theoretical tools, political strategies, and pedagogical practices necessary to wage multiple struggles in a variety of sites against those institutions and cultural formations that provide social guarantees only to the privileged, and that provide suffering, uncertainty, and insecurity to everybody else.

Educators should continue their efforts to raise questions about and rethink not only diverse articulations of culture and power, but also how such relations work both to close down and open up democratic relations, spaces, and transformations both within and outside of the classroom, and what the latter mean theoretically and strategically for how we think the meaning and purpose of education and politics. As admittedly difficult as such a task might appear, it offers the opportunity for cultural studies advocates to rethink their role as oppositional public intellectuals within a global context, and provides incentives for mastering new technologies of communication, exchange, and distribution.

If the future is to have any meaning, educators from around the globe must demonstrate that issues linking learning to political agency and democracy are central to both understanding struggles over resources and power

as well as organizing a politics that enables people to have a voice and an investment in shaping and transforming the conditions through which they live their everyday lives. Such a collective voice and investment requires that people experience themselves as critical social agents along multiple axis of identification, investment, and struggle. Only then can we provide the basis for opening up the space of resistance, for imagining different futures, for drawing boundaries and making connections, and for offering a language of critique and possibility that makes visible the urgency of politics and the promise of a vibrant and radical democracy.

If one of the characteristics of the present time is a retreat from the political accompanied by a growing disdain, if not cynicism, towards public life, it is a crucial task of critical educators to keep alive what it means to recognize that changing consciousness and transforming institutions is as much a pedagogical issue as a strictly political one. Any worthwhile notion of politics must acknowledge that while it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism, any viable notion of struggle must foreground the crucial relationship between critical education and political agency and recognize that the longing for a more just society does not collapse into a retreat from the world, but emerges out of critical and practical engagements with present behaviors, institutional formations, and everyday practices.

### **About Henry Giroux**

Henry A. Giroux received his doctorate from Carnegie-Mellon University in 1977. He has taught at Boston University and Miami University and accepted the Waterbury Chair Professorship at Pennsylvania State University. Professor Giroux has published extensively in a wide ranging number of scholarly journals and books. His recent books include: *Fugitive Cultures: Race, Violence, and Youth*, *Channel Surfing: Racism, the Media and the Destruction of Today's Youth*, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope*, *The Mouse That Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence*. He is currently the Director of the Waterbury Forum in Education and Cultural Studies at Penn State University. He is also on the editorial and advisory boards of numerous national and international scholarly journals. He also serves as the editor or co-editor of three scholarly book series. Professor Giroux lectures widely on a variety of cultural, social and educational issues in the United States and abroad.

# WHAT MAKES MAINSTREAM MEDIA MAINSTREAM

BY NOAM CHOMSKY

**P**ART of the reason why I write about the media is because I am interested in the whole intellectual culture, and the part of it that is easiest to study is the media. It comes out every day. You can do a systematic investigation. You can compare yesterday's version to today's version. There is a lot of evidence about what's played up and what isn't and the way things are structured.

My impression is the media aren't very different from scholarship or from, say, journals of intellectual opinion — there are some extra constraints — but it's not radically different. They interact, which is why people go up and back quite easily among them.

You look at the media, or at any institution you want to understand. You ask questions about its internal institutional structure. You want to know something about their setting in the broader society. How do they relate to other systems of power and authority? If you're lucky, there is an internal record from leading people in the information system, which tells you what they are up to (it is sort of a doctrinal system). That doesn't mean the public relations handouts but what they say to each other about what they are up to. There is quite a lot of interesting documentation.

Those are three major sources of information about the nature of the media. You want to study them the way, say, a scientist would study some complex molecule or something. You take a look at the structure and then make some hypothesis based on the structure as to what the media product is likely to look like. Then you investigate the media product and see how well

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it conforms to the hypotheses. Virtually all work in media analysis is this last part — trying to study carefully just what the media product is and whether it conforms to obvious assumptions about the nature and structure of the media.

Well, what do you find? First of all, you find that there are different media which do different things, like the entertainment/Hollywood, soap operas, and so on, or even most of

the newspapers in the country (the overwhelming majority of them). They are directing the mass audience.

There is another sector of the media, the elite media, sometimes called the agenda-setting media because they are the ones with the big resources; they set the framework in which everyone else operates. The New York Times and CBS, that kind of thing. Their audience is mostly privileged people. The people who read the New York Times — people who are wealthy or part of what is sometimes called the political class — they are actually involved in the political system in an ongoing fashion. They are basically managers of one sort or another. They can be political managers, business managers (like corporate executives or that sort of thing), doctoral managers (like university professors), or other journalists who are involved in organizing the way people think and look at things.

The elite media set a framework within which others operate. So there are a lot of ways in which power plays can drive you right back into line if you move out. If you try to break the mold, you're not going to last long. That framework works pretty well, and it is understandable that it is just a reflection of obvious power structures.

The real mass media are basically trying to divert people. Let them do something else, but don't bother us (us being the people who run the show). Let them get interested in professional sports, for example. Let everybody be crazed about professional sports or sex scandals or the personalities and their problems or something like that. Anything, as long as it isn't serious. Of course, the serious stuff is for the big guys. 'We' take care of that.

What are the elite media, the agenda-setting ones? The New York

Africa, or something like that. You're supposed to go over to the big university and find an expert who will tell you what to write, or else go to one of the foundations. These outside institutions are very similar to the media.

The universities, for example, are not independent institutions. There may be independent people scattered around in them but that is true of the media as well. And it's generally true of corporations. But the institution itself is parasitic. It's dependent on outside sources of

a filtering device which ends up with people who really honestly (they aren't lying) internalize the framework of belief and attitudes of the surrounding power system in the society. The elite institutions like, say, Harvard and Princeton and the small upscale colleges, for example, are very much geared to socialization. If you go through a place like Harvard, most of what goes on there is teaching manners; how to behave like a member of the upper classes, how to think the right thoughts, and so on.

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Times and CBS, for example. Well, first of all, they are major, very profitable, corporations. Furthermore, most of them are either linked to, or outright owned by, much bigger corporations, like General Electric, Westinghouse, and so on. They are way up at the top of the power structure of the private economy, which is a very tyrannical structure. Corporations are basically tyrannies, hierarchic, controlled from above. If you don't like what they are doing you get out. The major media are just part of that system.

What about their institutional setting? Well, that's more or less the same. What they interact with and relate to is other major power centers – the government, other corporations, or the universities. Because the media are a doctrinal system they interact closely with the universities. Say you are a reporter writing a story on Southeast Asia or

support and those sources of support, such as private wealth, big corporations with grants, and the government (which is so closely interlinked with corporate power you can barely distinguish them), they are essentially what the universities are in the middle of. People within them, who don't adjust to that structure, who don't accept it and internalize it (you can't really work with it unless you internalize it, and believe it); people who don't do that are likely to be weeded out along the way, starting from kindergarten, all the way up.

There are all sorts of filtering devices to get rid of people who are a pain in the neck and think independently. Those of you who have been through college know that the educational system is very highly geared to rewarding conformity and obedience; if you don't do that, you are a troublemaker. So, it is kind of

When you critique the media, they get very angry. They say, quite correctly, "nobody ever tells me what to write. I write anything I like. All this business about pressures and constraints is nonsense because I'm never under any pressure." Which is completely true, but the point is that they wouldn't be there unless they had already demonstrated that nobody has to tell them what to write because they are going to say the right thing. If they had started off at the Metro desk, or something, and had pursued the wrong kind of stories, they never would have made it to the positions where they can now say anything they like. The same is mostly true of university faculty in the more ideological disciplines. They have been through the socialization system.

Okay, you look at the structure of that whole system. What do you expect the news to be like? Well,

it's pretty obvious. Take the New York Times. It's a corporation and sells a product. The product is audiences. They don't make money when you buy the newspaper. They are happy to put it on the world wide web for free. They actually lose money when you buy the newspaper. But the audience is the product. The product is privileged people, just like the people who are writing the newspapers, you know, top-level decision-making people in society. You have to sell a product to a market, and the market is, of course, advertisers (that is, other businesses). Whether it is television or newspapers, or whatever, they are selling audiences. Corporations sell audiences to other corporations. In the case of the elite media, it's big businesses.

Well, what do you expect to happen? What would you predict about the nature of the media product, given that set of circumstances? What would be the null hypothesis, the kind of conjecture that you'd make assuming nothing further. The obvious assumption is that the product of the media, what appears, what doesn't appear, the way it is slanted, will reflect the interest of the buyers and sellers, the institutions, and the power systems that are around them. If that wouldn't happen, it would be kind of a miracle.

Okay, then comes the hard work. You ask, does it work the way you predict? Well, you can judge for yourselves. There's lots of material on this obvious hypothesis, which has been subjected to the hardest tests anybody can think of, and still stands up remarkably well. You virtually never find anything in the social sciences that so strongly supports any conclusion, which is not a big surprise, because it would be miraculous if it didn't hold up given the way the forces are operating.

The next thing you discover is that this whole topic is completely taboo. If you go to the Kennedy School of Government or Stanford, or somewhere, and you study journalism and communications or academic political science, and so on, these questions are not likely to appear. That is, the hypothesis that anyone would come across without even knowing anything that is not allowed to be expressed, and the evidence bearing on it cannot be discussed. Well, you predict that too. If you look at the institutional structure, you would say, yeah, sure, that's got to happen because why should these guys want to be exposed? Why should they allow critical analysis of what they are up to take place? The answer is, there is no reason why they should allow that and, in fact, they don't. Again, it is not purposeful censorship. It is just that you don't make it to those positions. That includes the left (what is called the left), as well as the right. Unless you have been adequately socialized and trained so that there are some thoughts you just don't have, because if you did have them, you wouldn't be there. So, you have a

*The obvious assumption is that the product of the media, what appears, what doesn't appear, the way it is slanted, will reflect the interest of the buyers and sellers, the institutions, and the power systems that are around them. If that wouldn't happen, it would be kind of a miracle.*

second order of prediction which is that the first order of prediction is not allowed into the discussion.

The last thing to look at is the doctrinal framework in which this proceeds. Do people at high levels in the information system, including the media and advertising and academic political science and so on, do these people have a picture of what ought to happen when they are writing for each other (not when they are making graduation speeches)? When you make a commencement speech, it is pretty words and stuff. But when they are writing for one another, what do people say about it?

There are basically three currents to look at. One is the public relations industry, you know, the main business propaganda industry. So what are the leaders of the PR industry saying? Second place to look at is what are called public intellectuals, big thinkers. What do they say? The people who write impressive books about the nature of democracy and that sort of business. The third thing you look at is the academic stream, particularly that part of political science which is concerned with communications and information and that stuff which has been a branch of political science for the last 70 or 80 years.

So, look at those three things and see what they say, and look at the leading figures who have written about this. They all say (I'm partly quoting), the general population is 'ignorant and meddlesome outsiders'. We have to keep them out of the public arena because they are too stupid and if they get involved they will just make trouble. Their job is to be 'spectators', not 'participants'.

They are allowed to vote every once in a while, pick out one of us smart guys. But then they are supposed to go home and do something else like



*There is another sector of the media, the elite media, sometimes called the agenda-setting media because they are the ones with the big resources; they set the framework in which everyone else operates.*

watch football or whatever it may be. But the 'ignorant and meddling outsiders' have to be observers not participants. The participants are what are called the 'responsible men' and, of course, the writer is always one of them. You never ask the question, why am I a 'responsible man' and somebody else is in jail? The answer is pretty obvious. It's because you are obedient and subordinate to power and that other person may be independent, and so on. But you don't ask, of course.

So there are the smart guys who are supposed to run the show and the rest of them are supposed to be out, and we should not succumb to (I'm quoting from an academic article) "democratic dogmatism about men being the best judges of their own interest." They are not. They are terrible judges of their own interests so we have done it for them for their own benefit.

That's the doctrinal side and it coincides with the institutional structure. It strengthens the predictions about the way the thing should work. And the predictions are well confirmed. But these conclusions, also, are not allowed to be discussed. This is all now part of mainstream literature but it is only for people on the inside. When you go to college, you don't read the classics about how to control people's minds.

Just like you don't read what James Madison said during the constitutional convention about how the main goal of the new system has to be "to protect the minority of the opulent against the majority," and has to be designed so that it achieves that end. This is the founding of the constitutional system, so nobody studies it. You can't even find it in the academic scholarship unless you really look hard.

That is roughly the picture, as I see it, of the way the system is institutionally, the doctrines that lie behind it, the way it comes out. There is another part directed to the 'ignorant meddling' outsiders. That is mainly using diversion of one kind or another. From that, I think, you can predict what you would expect to find.

#### **About Noam Chomsky**

Noam Chomsky is one of the leading intellectuals of our time. He is also regarded as one of America's most prominent political dissidents. A renowned professor of linguists at MIT, he has authored over 30 political books dissecting such issues as U.S. interventionism in the developing world, the political economy of human rights and the propaganda role of corporate media. Chomsky has most kindly allowed EDucate! to reproduce from the plethora of his internationally acclaimed works.

## حکسی و عمل

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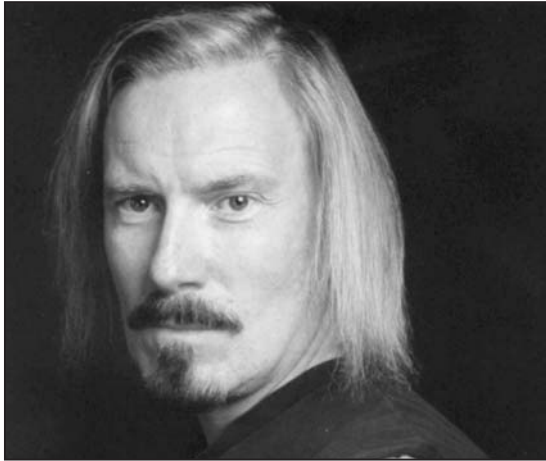
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# An Educator's Views on Media

**An Interview with Peter McLaren**

BY MASHHOOD RIZVI

*Can you share some of your general perspectives on the media vis-a-vis social change and democracy?*

I think it is important to understand that we cannot treat the media as some kind of autonomous entity. Media sectors interpenetrate in various ways, but overall the media are overwhelmingly structured by the state and function, by and large, to service the interests of capital. I would begin by arguing that the current commercialization of broadcasting actually substantially undercuts public systems of communication. Public systems of communication are really at the mercy of the market.

Today, it appears as if the hypertrophy of financial capital has become the functional grid in which media economies are secured. We need to understand that media serve the interests of national capital and its hydra-headed entanglements with transnational economic relations. So that the media need to win the support of the transnational money markets. I would argue

that it is impossible for the media to foster democratic social relations when they do not challenge the principle of private ownership and profit. If the media and the capitalist state work hand-in-glove, how is it possible for the media to really be an instrument for helping the poor and powerless in the world? We live in precarious and ominous times.

The destinies of the media – and the ideological interests that they serve – are interlocked with the vagaries of the ‘free’ market. When you begin to comprehend the enormous power and global reach of the U.S. media, the challenge becomes overwhelming. The media cartel of AOL Time Warner, Disney, General Electric, News Corporation, Viacom, Vivendi, Sony, Bertelsmann, AT&T, and Liberty Media do their best to ensure that the news media continue in their role as the servants of the dominant ideological instruments. That, and the fact that the majority of public broadcasting outlets in the U.S. rely on large corporate-backed think-tanks to offer ‘expert’ opinions to their audiences, are just a few of the reasons why the United States population has been so willing to give up its long-cherished democratic freedoms.

On a global scale, the media serve to mystify the process of human value production. Social relations linked to capitalist production are glossed over and never explained in terms of the consequences that they have for the powerless and the poor. According to Mark Crispin Miller, the cartel's favorite audience is that stratum of the population most desirable to advertisers. Thus, we are faced with the media's complete abandonment of working people and the poor. Traditionally, the role of the press has been to protect us against those who would abuse the powers of government. However, the current media cartel is unwilling to take on the powers that be. Why should they? Their value systems are too similar and the powers that be share their own interest in the accumulation of surplus value. As

Miller notes, media journalists now appear to work against the public interest – and for their parent companies, their advertisers and the political administration that holds sway in Washington. Miller argues, and I agree, that we have to take bold steps in order to liberate the media from oligopoly, so as to make the government our own.

***Don't regulations exist to help prevent the formation of cartels?***

Yes, but historically they have been ignored. And now they are being overturned altogether. A few weeks ago, the District of Columbia Court of Appeals overturned one of the country's last-remaining regulatory protections against media monopoly. According to a report from FAIR, the court overturned the rule that had prevented one company from owning both television stations and cable franchises in a single market. The court also ordered that the FCC either justify or rewrite the rule that bars a company from owning television stations which reach more than 35 percent of U.S. households, stating that as is, the rule is arbitrary and illegal. If you look at the broadcast TV markets in the United States, one-seventh are monopolies, one-quarter are duopolies, one-half are tight oligopolies, and the rest are moderately concentrated. In addition, while the number of TV stations has increased from 952 to 1,678 between 1975 and 2000, the number of station owners in the same period of time has actually declined from 543 to 360. Let me give you an example of what a media monopoly can do. One of the primary ideological vehicles of the new media mafia is Fox News. Fox News Channel and 26 television states are owned outright by Rupert Murdoch's News

Corporation. Fox News is rapidly gaining a wide and committed audience on the basis of its appeal to right-wing male viewers. Its political catechism is spiked with testosterone and rage and gives ballast to the logic of transnational capitalism and U.S. militarism.

The corporate media have driven out any hope for even left-liberal news coverage or commentary in the United States. The truth is that the so-called 'leftists' are, at their most extreme, 'centrists' and more often than not tilt politically to the right. With virtually no leftist representation in the media, the U.S. public are being ideologically massaged by opinions and positions that serve the interests of the ruling class. The myth of the liberal media talked about so much by right-wing pundits is simply a lie (Extra! July/August, 1998).

But the worst offenders in the media are organizations like National Public Radio. On January 10, FAIR [Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting] put out an Action Alert asking people to write to National Public Radio about the politics of its Middle East reporting. NPR had been referring to the situation in Israel and Palestine around the New Year as a period of 'relative calm' or 'comparative quiet'. NPR went on to clarify this description by noting that 'only one Israeli has been killed in those three weeks'. What NPR failed to acknowledge was that during this 'quiet' period, an average of one Palestinian per day was being killed by Israeli. (See <http://www.fair.org/activism/npr-israel-quiet.html>.) Despite protests organized by FAIR, this distortion continues to be repeated. But think about it, the left in the United States does not have a lot of money behind it. Do you know how much

***I think it is important to understand that we cannot treat the media as some kind of autonomous entity. Media sectors interpenetrate in various ways, but overall the media are overwhelmingly structured by the state and function, by and large, to service the interests of capital. The destinies of the media – and the ideological interests that they serve – are interlocked with the vagaries of the 'free' market.***

*The media serve to mystify the process of human value production. Social relations linked to capitalist production are glossed over and never explained in terms of the consequences that they have for the powerless and the poor. According to Mark Crispin Miller, the cartel's favorite audience is that stratum of the population most desirable to advertisers. Thus, we are faced with the media's complete abandonment of working people and the poor.*

it costs to enter the national media market, let alone the international market?

***How is the struggle for media reform linked to the larger struggle for democracy?***

There is no question in my mind that the struggle for media reform is an essential part of the struggle for democracy. McChesney and Nichols (2002, pp. 16-17) have argued that media reform proposals need to apply existing anti-monopoly laws to the media; restrict ownership of radio stations to one or two per owner; fight the monopolization of TV – station ownership, break the lock of newspaper chains on entire regions, create reasonable media ownership regulations, establish a full range of low-power, noncommercial radio and television stations across the globe; invest in public broadcasting so as to eliminate commercial pressures and to serve low-income communities; allow tax credits to any non-profit medium; lower mailing costs for non-profit and significantly non-commercial publications; eliminate political candidate advertising as a condition of a broadcast license; require that stations who run paid political broadcasts by politicians run free ads of similar length from all the other candidates on the ballots immediately afterward; reduce or eliminate TV advertising directed at children under 12; and decommercialize local TV news with regulations that require stations to grant journalists an hour daily of commercial-free news times; and set budget guidelines for those newscasts based on a percentage of the station's revenues.

In his magisterial work, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*, Robert McChesney writes that media reform cannot be successful if

isolated from other struggles for democracy. He writes that media reform will not, and cannot, be won in isolation from broader democratic reform. He argues that the only way to gain some control over media and communication from the giant firms that overrun the field will be to mobilize some kind of a popular movement. He also notes that while media reform is a cornerstone for any type of democratic movement, it is not enough. This must be accompanied by electoral reform, workers' rights, civil rights, environmental protection, health care, tax reform, and education. In other words, McChesney links media reform to the larger struggle for democracy. In this sense his advice is similar to that of Chomsky and Edward Herman, both of whom I greatly admire, along with McChesney.

***What about information technologies?***

Well, I believe that information technologies – when they are embedded heart and soul in the capitalist marketplace – can actually increase alienation in the sense of commodifying information. A marketplace – even one that has been digitalized – is still a marketplace. The digitalized information systems so necessary to capital helps to speed up its circulation and production. The speeding up of circulation and production does little, however, to demystify the world and in fact creates mystification at a higher register. On the other hand, alternative media that challenge marketplace values are very important in the struggle for democracy. Magazines like yours (EDucate!), Z Magazine, Covert Action Quarterly, High Times – as well as many Internet magazines – all of these publications are crucial in providing information and analysis crucial to challenging dominant ideological and

political interests. Can the new media technologies create, through forms of cyberactivism, a new global 'cognitariat' capable of challenging capital's law of value and the digital networks of the international financial system? Let's just say that I am hopeful but not optimistic.

### **What can radical educators do?**

Wherever and whenever possible, radical educators have been implementing critical media literacy classes in high school and university classrooms. Examining the politics surrounding media policy and practices from a historical materialist perspective (i.e., looking at the media in the context of the creation of a transnational capitalist class), critical media literacy educators also employ a critical semiotics to analyze the media as a form of popular culture – a popular culture that carries a lot of unexamined ideological freight; it investigates the form and content of commercial broadcasting; and it examines representations of race, class, gender, and sexual relations as a form of ideological production.

I have students at UCLA who work in working-class communities, helping young people create their own media representations of themselves and their communities through alternative media. Of course, examining the media critically and creating alternative views – especially with respect to the Bush administration's war on terrorism – at this particular historical juncture, in the United States, risks charges of anti-patriotism. Yet, from a critical perspective one could argue that patriotism that is not at the same time conjugated with introspection, sustained critical self-reflexivity, and the possibility of transcending the reified knowledge and social relations of the corporate capitalist state, is a patriotism that does an injustice to the meaning of the word.

One of the best features of a democracy lies in its provisions for the ability to be self-critical, to challenge, or affirm, as the case may be, what has been presented by the dominant capitalist media as commonsense. That feature has been effectively eroded by increasing corporate control of the media. Democracy cannot exist in a society whose media are owned and run by the transnational capitalist elite. From where I stand, a socialist alternative is the only possibility for democracy to be secured.

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### **About Peter McLaren**

Professor McLaren began his teaching career in his hometown of Toronto, Canada, teaching in an inner-city school in one of the most highly populated housing projects in the country. McLaren completed his Ph.D at The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, in 1983. In 1984 he held the position of Special Lecturer in Education at Brock University's College of Education where he taught in the undergraduate and graduate programs. In 1985 McLaren worked with Henry Giroux to create the Center for Education and Cultural Studies, at Miami University of Ohio, where he served as both Associate Director and Director. While at Miami he was awarded the title of Renowned Scholar in Residence, School of Education and Allied Professions. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and Commerce, and Associate of Massey College, Professor McLaren is the author and editor of over 35 books. He began teaching at the University of California in 1993, where he serves as Professor, Division of Urban Schooling, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. Professor McLaren lectures worldwide and his work has been translated into 15 languages. His most recent books include *Schooling as a Ritual Performance*, 3rd edition, Rowman and Littlefield, 2000, *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture*, Routledge, 1995, *Revolutionary Multiculturalism*, Westview, 1997, and *Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the Pedagogy of Revolution*, 2000.

# VOICE *of the* VOICELESS

BY MUHAMMAD KHAN (DRIVER)

Muhammad Khan is an integral member of our team. Although not 'literate' in the conventional sense of the word or 'educated' by the standards of the privileged few, he has the brilliance and motivation to handle perhaps the most radical section of our magazine: 'Opinions of the Oppressed'.

For this issue we gathered opinions of people regarding television and its impact on children:

## ***What is the impact of television on children?***

### ***Results . . .***

"The dish is not creating a good impact on the innocent minds of children. They should show more cultural and informational programs so that children can learn something from them. Religious programs should be prepared keeping in mind the demands of the modern age to help children understand religion better."

*Tosia Sardar Ali - school teacher*

"I think the impact depends on the type of programs shown on TV. If good programs were shown, they would create a good impact and vice versa. I think TV programs should allow children to know about their religion, worldly education and moral training."

*Saeed Rehman - tandoor owner*

"As children cannot go out much, I think TV provides them a lot of awareness and, therefore, creates a good impact. I think such programmes should be shown through which

people not only get information and education at home but are also able to distinguish between good and bad."

*Ayoob Khan - student*

"I think TV creates both good and bad impacts on children. We should have programs that manifest the fact that we are a progressive Muslim nation. They should also be congruent to the 21st century so that they help us progress like other progressive nations."

*Mir Mohammed - fruit seller*

"Due to the influence of TV, children do not go for prayers and argue that they cannot miss a drama at that time. Dish is not creating a good impact because inappropriate movies and programs are shown on the channels."

*Liaquat Ali Khan - driver*

"TV is good as well as bad for children. It is good because informative programs help them



to add on to their existing information. It is bad because through dish children are becoming careless; instead of paying attention to education, they tend to pursue things like infatuation/love affairs at a young age.”

**Sher Khan - gatekeeper**

“I think TV is good as well as bad for children. PTV telecasts good programs for children while cable spoils them. They do not pay attention to eating, drinking or education.”

**Ghalib Gul - driver**

“I used to have a TV at my house but I had to remove it because I felt it spoilt not only my children but also the environment at home. It becomes a disease for children because it not only wins their attention but also deviates them from education and their family. It nurtures vulgarity and kids tend to imitate whatever is being shown on TV. When they are asked to study or pray they argue to watch the programs first before performing other duties. I was so exasperated that I threw out the TV from my house. I also told my relatives to do the same.”

**Sadiq - driver**

“I don’t have a TV at home because I feel it is bad for my family. Television programs usually show Western culture which has destructive influence on my children.”

**Rehmat - gatekeeper**

“If you see it from my perspective, TV will make a good impact on children if more educational programs are shown. Cartoons are usually shown at a time when children return from school and have to go for tuitions so these programs create a big distraction and children refuse to go for studies. They lose interest in education and only want to watch television. If more educational programmes are shown then its OK, otherwise watching TV is not good for children.”

**Nasir Khan - police gunman**

“TV is good if more informative programs are shown. There should be more

educational programs rather than dramas and serials that are of no benefit to children. Television programs should aim to make children more conscious about respecting their parents and adults.”

**Moharam Ali - gatekeeper**

“I think TV is not essential for children. But if somebody thinks it is, then they should show programs, which are suitable for children, and not those that are more adult-oriented. TV programs should be more focused on education and learning rather than love stories and songs.”

**Asad Ali - salaried employee**

“TV programs should be such that the whole family could watch them together. Children have a habit of imitating whatever is being shown on TV, so if more educational programs are shown, they would naturally create a good impact on children.”

**Rukhsana Sheik - school teacher**

“Watching too much TV is not appropriate for children because it not only affects their studies but also their vision. They have innocent minds and watching unsuitable programs may create a negative impact on them. TV is a powerful medium of expression and it can be used to create awareness about our local culture rather than that of the West. Programs about sports and physical exercise and popular historical dramas like *Akhri Chatan* and *Muhammed Bin Qasim* (telecasted in the past) should be shown.”

**Rafiq Ahmed - school teacher**

“Different programs create different impacts on children. Children often repeat the dialogues of popular dramas and serials. They not only call each other by the names of the drama characters but also try to imitate the way of talking of those characters. They know all the popular songs by heart. The best way to create a positive impact on children through television programs is by combining entertainment with information.”

**Ahmera Khawaja - school teacher**

# Inspirations

## & Reflections...

✧ This makes frightening sense in a globalized economy where consumerism is more desired than active citizenship, where power is increasingly concentrated and the public is increasingly unwelcome in a public discourse defined by the powerful. If your goal is to numb people and drive them away from active participation, then TV as 'weapon of mass distraction' and wall-to-wall entertainment makes sense. Shut up and shop is now the message, one that makes sense to advertiser-dominated media outlets.

**Danny Schechter**

✧ The professed concern for freedom of the press in the West is not very persuasive in the light of ... the actual performance of the media in serving the powerful and privileged as an agency of manipulation, indoctrination, and control. A 'democratic communications policy', in contrast, would seek to develop means of expression and interaction that reflect the interests and concerns of the general population, and to encourage their self-education and their individual and collective action.

**Noam Chomsky**

✧ The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.

**Steve Biko**

✧ Private capitalists inevitably control, directly or indirectly, the main sources of information. It is thus extremely difficult, and indeed in most cases quite impossible, for the individual citizen to come to objective conclusions and to make intelligent use of his political rights.

**Albert Einstein**

✧ Most of the news the world receives comes from and is directed at a minority of humanity – understandably so from the point of view of the commercial operations that sell news and collect the lion's share of their revenues in Europe and the United States. It's a monologue by the North ... Other regions and countries get little or no attention except in the case of war or catastrophe, and then the journalists covering the story often don't speak the language or have the least idea of local history or culture. The [global] South is condemned to look at itself through the eyes of those who scorn it.

**Eduardo Galeano**

✧ Whoever controls the media – the images – controls the culture.

**Allen Ginsberg**

✧ Electric technology is directly related to our central nervous system, so it is ridiculous to talk of 'what the public wants' played over its nerves. Once we have surrendered our senses and nervous systems to the private manipulation of those who would try to benefit from taking a lease on our eyes and ears and nerves, we don't really have any rights left.

**Marshall McLuhan**

✧ We are drowning in information, but starved for knowledge.

**John Naisbitt**

✧ It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have these three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence to practice neither.

**Mark Twain**

✧ Beware of the newspapers. They will have you hating the oppressed and loving the people doing the oppressing.

**Malcolm X**



☠ The networks and magazines sell your head to the corporations that make the products that you will in turn buy. A magazine in fact promises the advertiser a certain amount of heads. “My circulation is 25,000 copies, 3 readers per copy ... that's 75,000 heads. In other words, 75,000 people that could buy your product ... the bigger the size of the ad, the bigger the cheese on the mousetrap.

☠ The global media market has come to be dominated by seven multinational corporations: Disney, AOL Time Warner, Sony, News Corporation, Viacom, Vivendi, and Bertelsmann. These seven companies own the major U.S. film studios, all but one of the U.S. television networks, the few companies that control 80-85 percent of the global music market, the preponderance of satellite broadcasting worldwide.

☠ Whopping three-quarters of global spending on advertising ends up in the pockets of a mere 20 media companies. Ad spending has grown by leaps and bounds in the past decade, as TV has been opened to commercial exploitation, and is growing at more than twice the rate of gross domestic product growth.

☠ As a reader, have you ever filled out those polls in magazines? They don't do those for popularity contests. They do them to know what you are buying, where you live, how old you are. etc. The magazines then use this information to sell your head. And hopefully you will buy a product advertised in the next issue.

☠ There has been a dramatic shift in sales among the books that were published. The book business has begun shifting even more heavily towards celebrity-driven best-sellers. The number of best-sellers (books that sold 100,000 or more copies) grew substantially in the 1990s. When that fact is juxtaposed against an overall decline in book sales, it is clear that mid-list books are falling off the edge. Good fiction, investigative reporting and other quality books are simply being squeezed out of the market.

☠ Ad spending hit a record \$244 billion last year, with companies investing more money and brainpower than ever to make you buy. That figure will drop this year for the first time since 1991, though it is projected to hit a new record in 2002.

☠ Kids influence \$200 billion in spending each year; the ad industry employs market researchers and developmental psychologists to hone its pitch.

☠ Recent research shows that the average American 3-year old recognizes 100 brand logos.

☠ A study by the University of Wisconsin found that the space occupied by corporate logos at schools, such as billboards and scoreboards, went up 539 percent in the last decade, while the amount of corporate-sponsored education materials had gone up 20-fold.

☠ Companies are hiring people to surf the Web, enter chat rooms and pose as regular folks while touting products – or just defending certain companies from criticism.



# Media, Education and Public Consciousness

BY DR. TARIQ RAHMAN

**In** a sense the media and the educational apparatus have similar roles. In the oldest societies about which there is evidence, this role was to socialize the young to accept the dominant worldview and, along with it, the power structure. Education was in the hands of the family but in societies, which had an agrarian base there was enough surplus wealth to support a paid priesthood, which imparted education. In our part of the world, after the family, the child was taught – if at all – by the village priest (the maulvi or Mian Ji). The equivalent of the media was the nai, the village barber, whose official functions included announcing marriages, exchanging information through gossips etc. Along with it a mirasi or bhand served similar functions. There were other similar functionaries too who spread news by beating drums.

Even at this unsophisticated level both the educational and the media establishment were differentiated in various ways. The educational establishment generally concerned itself with the past, with the 'Word', and its

meaning. The contemporary situation was reckoned with but in the light of canonical texts or oral discourses. The media concerned itself with the here and now: marriages, deaths, elopement, theft, jokes, gossip etc. Both had pro-and anti-establishment practitioners. In the educational establishment the anti-establishment ulema and sufia stayed away from the patronage of the court and the nobles. The pro-establishment ones got the huge tracts of land for the madrassas and khanqahs, which they established. Mostly, however, the madrassa was established by an endowment (waqf) given by a rich patron who did not, or could not, interfere with the teaching, which remained firmly in the control of the ulema. If the ulema were not too radical, especially if they left the king himself in peace, they could carry out their teaching without fear. So, the educational establishment could generally carry on its work unhindered by the state.

Not all of the educational establishment was in the hands of priests or mystics. Some of it was in the hands of practicing poets too. They corrected the poetic compositions of their pupils without fees. Sometimes, however, they were compensated by rich pupils. Ghalib, for instance, was given a monthly stipend by both Bahadur Shah, the king of Delhi, and the Nawab of Rampur for correcting their verses.

While the ecclesiastical teachers emphasized their ideology (maslak), which was predominantly theological, the poets too did the same though their ideology was aesthetic. In both cases a discourse of what was right or appropriate or beautiful was generated. If one was to succeed one had to adhere to it. Dissent was possible but it too followed established patterns – mystical, heretical, psychological etc. As a mystic one could be different from the orthodox ulema but, in general, one had to follow a school of mysticism. One could, of course, be a heretic but this was dangerous though the state did not reach everywhere nor was the religious establishment very efficient so one could



*The modern media creates myths and confers visibility. If the media does not show the pain of an individual or group of people it is not known. This, incidentally, is true in the world of fairy tales where we feel the sorrow of the princess, however trivial its cause, but not the sorrow of the soldiers' families when the soldiers die in battle for the princess. The CNN and Fox News, during the U.S bombing on Afghanistan at the end of 2001 showed us the pain of the Americans who died in New York. They showed us the families of the Americans who had died. But they blanked out, for the most part, the families of the Afghans.*

powerful in a personal way. One could, of course, pose to be insane or prone to falling into a trance. This gave one a certain license and the restrictions of a highly traditional society were relaxed for such people. In South Asia, those possessed by supernatural beings were not hurt on the stake (as they were in Europe) though they could be beaten with shoes.

As for the media, it too was either pro-or anti-establishment. The pro-establishment nai, mirasi, bhat or dom (domni) merely sang the praises of the paymaster. The anti-establishment one made fun of the great. The jokes and songs were irreverent but the solemnity and majesty of the powerful could hardly afford to punish them because that would be considered in bad taste. This is exactly what the 'fools' or court jesters did in Europe. They often pointed out to their powerful patrons that they were wrong and were, after all, mere human beings with no special claims to be the representatives of divine power.

Thus the fool's cap sometimes hid some of the wisest heads in Europe. It gave the fool the license to speak the truth before a tyrant who would cut off the head of anyone else who said the same thing. This is clearly portrayed in Shakespeare's play 'King Lear':

Lear: Dost those call me fool, boy?

Fool: All thy other titles those hast given away;  
That those wast born with.

Kent: This is not altogether fool, my lord.

Fool: No, faith, lords and great men will not let me;  
If I had a monopoly out, they would have part  
On't, and loads too: they will not let me  
Have all fool to myself; they'll be  
Snatching.

The Fool is so highly critical of Lear, indeed so disrespectful, that if anyone else had been like that he

would have been in danger of life. But the Fool goes unpunished.

This kind of license is part of aristocratic patronage. It comes from the consciousness of the patron that he is so powerful that the words from a 'fool' cannot harm him. Moreover, the source is itself inauthentic – after all, he is a 'fool'! Thus the words do not have force unless one wants to invest them with it.

Both literature and comedy inherit this ambiguous power. If you want to decode the symbols and unpack the irony the discourse is critical. If you do not, you can dismiss it as an artifact. However, in the movement against the power of the establishment, especially the state as such, both critical academia and the media established a straightforward critical edge and the prerogative of freedom. These are established only in self-assured Western societies but not in parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America where the state is less self-assured.

The modern media creates myths and confers visibility. If the media does not show the pain of an individual or group of people it is not known. This, incidentally, is true in the world of fairy tales where we feel the sorrow of the princess, however trivial its cause, but not the sorrow of the soldiers' families when the soldiers die in battle for the princess. The CNN and Fox News, during the U.S bombing on Afghanistan at the end of 2001 showed us the pain of the Americans who died in New York. They showed us the families of the Americans who had died. But they blanked out, for the most part, the families of the Afghans. It was not a complete blank-out though as some reporters like Robert Fisk showed us the other side of the picture i.e. Afghan sufferings. However, on the whole, the world saw Americans as suffering humans rather than Afghans. This, then, is what the media does. It makes us fully human by making us part of the consciousness of other human beings. If we are not part of any consciousness we do not exist. The media, then, gives us life.

The media also gives us a profile. It tells people how to perceive us. It gives information, which is itself filtered

and, obviously, less than complete. And then it lays down rules of interpretation and, even more subtly, cues to emotional registration. I can portray people from Pakistan's villages as hospitable and gregarious; warm and caring (for the family) or, alternatively, vicious and aggressive; servile and bullying – all profiles supported empirically. In short, we are not only created by the media; we are also moulded by it. We are not created as a blank slate because we are all socially slotted in society but the media writes our stories on the slate. It can distort the stories and hide the slate if it likes.

After this comes the educational establishment, which can perpetuate us as, it wishes for posterity. The educational establishment, like the media, does its own sorting out and it may change the profile. It may even kill the memory that we ever existed. But, for very complex and widely differing reasons, if we are preserved then our images may be quite different from both the reality and even the reality conjured up by the media. Education, like the media, also moulds consciousness.

Because of this power of controlling visibility, emotional bias and consciousness all wielders of power have tried

***The more enterprising can play video games and the really perverse can watch pornography and video nasties. These packed and ready products have an underlying message: 'the world is a finished product to take at its face value. It is there to entertain you — for a price, of course. It is not to be changed'. Since it is not to be changed one needs to buy as much entertainment as possible.***

to control education and the media. Plato is not the only one to have tried to banish poets – the media – but almost everyone tries it one way or the other. The most interesting experiment is the one now in progress in Western democracies. This is, essentially, the 'Circus Method' – at par with the gladiatorial shows organized by the Roman emperors when the people were near starvation. Everybody is given a TV screen to watch inane soap operas or sports. The more enterprising can play video games and the really perverse can watch pornography and video nasties. These packed and ready products have an underlying message: 'the world is a finished product to take at its face value. It is there to entertain you – for a price, of course. It is not to be changed'. Since it is not to be changed one needs to buy as much entertainment as possible. This, of course, means leaving the screen for forays to the place of work. But, essentially, life means lying back and being deluded with pleasure-inducing sensations. This is the perfect worldview for a consumer-oriented, post-industrialist proletariat which, ironically, does not see itself as a proletariat at all.

In this worldview economics takes a front seat and politics is left out. The reductive, often unspoken, assumption is that if you work hard you will 'make it'. One is not encouraged to question whether this is possible everywhere in the world? For all classes? All genders? All ages? No! These are uncomfortable questions which puncture the myths of equality, liberty and the fairness of the market forces. Because criticism is blunted, one condones layoffs, malnutrition in parts of the world, the increase in poverty in countries where IMF policies are followed, the terrible increase in crime where the market forces have recently come to operate – all these things are impatiently shrugged away by the ordinary person whom the media mesmerizes to believe that history has actually ended, à la Fukuyama, and that the blessed state of the world is one of free market.

The question for us in Pakistan, however, is as to how the media and the education system affect us. Our governments are not free from colonial compulsions yet so we are not given the circus treatment. We follow the platonic model of banishing the poets though, of course, we pretend to follow the Western model of making them peripheral and, as it were, fangless. Thus the electronic

media is completely controlled and the print media is controlled through self-censorship (for the most part). Our educational system supports the project of nationalism in history, social studies and language textbooks. This 'nationalism' means hating India, denying multi-culturalism and sacralizing both the state and the military by using the emotional power of Islam. Thus our media does not question the military and its policies while our educational system glorifies its wars and shows it as a saviour.

While the state is still the major power controlling our educational system and the media, private entrepreneurs have emerged too. Like their Western counterparts, they are in the business of making money. But, unlike them, our businesses target the elite ignoring the masses. Thus, while ordinary people eat fast food and wear jeans in the West, in Pakistan only the elite does so. So, unlike the West, the idea is not to increase the purchasing power of the masses to make them all consumers. The idea is to impoverish the middle classes while ignoring the masses.

The political consequences of such private interventions may be disastrous. The government media and education create a nationalistic, Urdu-using, religious-idiom-using Pakistani. This Pakistani is under-privileged and poor. He is also angry because he is aware that there is another world cheek by jowl with his own world of misery. This other world, created by the new media entrepreneurs, foreign media and English-medium education is alienated from our society, English-using, secular-idiom-using and full of contempt for ordinary Pakistanis. These two worlds are on a collision course because traditional brakes are becoming loose. Whereas people earlier believed in fate and did not ever see beautiful houses and voluptuous maidens in tight-fitting jeans having a party, young people from the have-nots do see them every day on the TV screen. Thus the brakes are becoming loose and one day they might fail.

I can recommend what can be done but who will do it? I know that the media and the education will always create myths and always with some distortion. And, equally, whenever they create they also leave out much which remains unborn, uncreated because the myth-makers have not noticed it. The process is, and will remain, intrinsically violent. What is, however, possible is that the colonial and medieval forms of control are given up. The platonic way is far too violent to be countenanced. The circus method will hold sway but it can be modified firstly by making both education and the media subject to the control of those who work in them. I mean this quite literally – that teachers and journalists should actually have shares in educational institutions and media offices. This will reduce the power of the state and the plutocratic owners. This, coupled with critical pedagogy and insights into dissent, may go some way towards making the media and the educational processes more supportive of the rights and concerns of the common people.

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#### **About Dr. Tariq Rahman**

Tariq Rehman, Ph.D., is an acclaimed Pakistani scholar specializing in linguistics. He is currently Professor of Linguistics and South Asian Studies at Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, and was full professor at the University of Sana'a, Yemen and Fulbright research scholar at the University of Texas, USA. As head of the Department of English, he has the distinction of introducing a Masters program in Linguistics and English Language Training at the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He writes with simplicity and clarity and increasingly draws on the two disciplines of history and politics. Among his many published books, *A history of Pakistani Literature in English* remains a landmark.

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# Societal Learning

Books for a  
**BETTER**  
world

The organization and regulation of culture by large corporations such as Disney profoundly influence children's culture and their everyday lives. The Hollywood film industry, television, satellite broadcasting technologies, the internet, posters, magazines, billboards, newspapers, videos, and other media forms and technologies have transformed culture into a pivotal force, "shaping human meaning and behavior and regulat[ing] our social practices at every turn."

Mass-produced images fill our daily lives and condition our most intimate perceptions and desires. An issue for parents, educators, and others is how culture, especially media culture, has become a substantial, if not primary, educational force in regulating the meanings, values, and tastes that set the norms that offer up and legitimate particular subject positions what it means to claim an identity as a male, female, white, black, citizen, non-citizen. The media culture defines childhood, the national past, beauty, truth, and social agency.

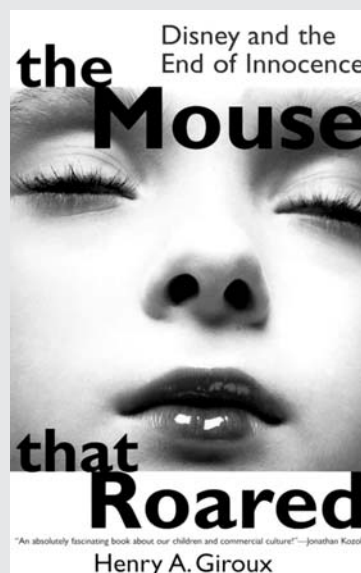
Consider the enormous control that a handful of transnational corporations have over the diverse properties that shape popular and media culture: "51 of the largest 100 economies in the world are corporations." Moreover, the U.S. media is dominated by fewer than ten conglomerates, whose annual sales range from \$10 billion to \$27 billion. These include major corporations such as Time Warner, General Electric, Disney, Viacom, TCI, and Westinghouse. Not only are these firms major producers of much of the entertainment and news, culture, and information that permeates our daily lives, they also produce "media software and have distribution networks like television network, cable channels and retail stores."

For adults, Disney's theme parks offer an invitation to adventure, a respite from the drudgery of work, and an opportunity to escape from the alienation of daily life. For children, Disney is a wish-landscape that combines fantasy, fun, and the opportunity to enter into a more colorful and imaginary world. Its animated films usher children into terrains that are exotic and filled with the fantasies of escape, romantic adventures, and powerful emotional themes about survival, separation, death, and loss – and provide points of identification and the capacity to mediate and experience in fantasy form realities that children have not yet encountered. Disney offers children the opportunity to dream, vindicating the necessity of fantasies that contain utopian traces and that offer an antidote to the brutality and emptiness of everyday life. But like all dreams, the dreams that Disney provides for children are not innocent and must be interrogated for the futures they envision, the values they promote, and the forms of identifications they offer.

This book takes as its main tenet that what Disney teaches cannot be abstracted from a number of larger questions: What does it mean to make corporations accountable to the public? How do we link public pedagogy to a critical democratic view of citizenship? How do we develop forms of critical education that enable young people and adults to become aware of and interrogate the media as a major political, pedagogical, and social force? At the very least, such a project suggests developing

## THE MOUSE THAT ROARED DISNEY and the End of Innocence

Today, cultural institutions shape of our lives. Henry this issue by world's most corporation. He diverse ways in Corporation has force in shaping memory, producing consuming legitimating positions that conservative and the roles imparted adults alike. Giroux attempts to hide innocence and while exercising its



a major force on both global economics and cultural learning. Disney is among several corporations that not only preside over international media but also outstrip the traditional practices of schooling in shaping the desires, needs, and futures of today's children. Written by one of the leading cultural critics, this book is important reading for anyone interested in education, society and political culture.

politics and nearly every aspect Giroux takes up looking at the influential explores the which the Disney become a political images of public children as subjects, and ideological constitute a deeply disturbing view of to children and shows how Disney behind a cloak of entertainment, influence as a

educational programs, both within and outside of schools, that offer students the opportunity to learn how to use and critically read the new media technologies and their cultural productions. Organizing to democratize the media and make it accountable to a participating citizenry also demands engaging in the hard political and pedagogical task of opening up corporations such as Disney to public interrogation and critical dialogue.

Disney's overwhelming presence in the United States and abroad reminds us that the battle over culture is central to the struggle over meaning and institutional power and that, for learning to become meaningful, critical, and emancipatory, it must not be surrendered to the dictates of consumer choice or to a prohibition on critical engagements with how ideologies work within cultural discourses. On the contrary, critical learning must be linked to the empowering demands of social responsibility, public accountability, and critical citizenship.

Far from being a model of moral leadership and social responsibility, Disney monopolizes media power, limits the free flow of information, and undermines



substantive public debate. Disney poses a serious threat to democracy by corporatizing public space and by limiting the avenues of public expression and choice. Disney does not, of course, have the power to launch armies, dismantle the welfare state, or eliminate basic social programs for children; Disney's influence is more subtle and pervasive. It shapes public consciousness through its enormous economic holdings and cultural power. Michael Ovitiz, a former Disney executive, says that Disney is not a company but a nation-state, exercising vast influence over global constituencies. Influencing large facets of cultural life, Disney ranks fifty-first in the Fortune 500 and controls ABC, numerous TV and cable stations, five motion picture studios, 466 Disney Stores, multimedia companies, and two major publishing houses. In 1997, Disney pulled in a record \$22.7 billion in revenues from all of its divisions.

Disney's view of children as consumers has little to do with innocence and a great deal to do with corporate greed and the realization that behind the vocabulary of family fun and wholesome entertainment is the opportunity for teaching children that critical thinking and civic action in society are far less important to them than the role of passive consumers. Eager to reach children under twelve, "who shell out \$17 billion a year in gift and allowance income and influence \$172 billion more spent by their parents," Disney relies on consultants such as the marketing researcher James McNeal to tap into such a market. McNeal can barely contain his enthusiasm about targeting children as a fertile market and argues that the "world is poised on the threshold of a new era in marketing and that...fairly standardized multinational marketing strategies to children around the globe are viable." For McNeal and his client, the Walt Disney Company, kids are reduced to customers, and serving the public good is an afterthought.

As market culture permeates the social order, it threatens to cancel out the tension between market values and those values representative of civil society that cannot be measured in commercial terms but that are critical to democracy, values such as justice, freedom, equality, health, respect, and the rights of citizens as

equal and free human beings. Without such values, students are relegated to the role of economic machines, and the growing disregard for public life is left unchecked.

What strategies are open to educators, parents, and others who want to challenge the corporate Disney barons who are shaping children's culture in the United States? First, it must become clear that Disney is not merely about peddling entertainment; it is also about politics, economics, and education. Corporations such as Disney do not give a high priority to social values, except to manipulate and exploit them. With every product that Disney produces, whether for adults or children, there is the accompanying commercial blitzkrieg aimed at excessive consumerism, selfishness, and individualism. This commercial onslaught undermines and displaces the values necessary to define ourselves as active and critical citizens rather than as consumers.

Educators, parents, community groups, and others must call into question existing structures of corporate power in order to make the democratization of media culture central to any reform movement. In part, this suggests taking ownership away from the media giants and spreading these resources among many sites in order to make media culture diffuse and accountable. Such monopolies are a political and cultural toxin, and their hold can be broken through broad-based movements using a variety of strategies, including public announcements, sit-ins, teach-ins, and boycotts, to raise public consciousness, promote regulation, and encourage antitrust legislation aimed at breaking up media monopolies and promoting the noncommercial, nonprofit public sphere.

Defending media democracy is not tantamount to demanding that schools teach media literacy, nor is it simply about providing students with more choices in what they watch, hear, buy, or consume. These issues are important but become meaningless if abstracted from issues of institutional and economic power and how it is used, organized, controlled, and distributed. For example, as important as it is to teach students to learn how to read ads critically in order to understand the values and worldviews the ads are selling, it is not

enough. Such literacy should not be limited to matters of textual interpretation or to the recognition that media culture is about business rather than entertainment. Parents, educators, and others need to actively question the manufactured myths, lifestyles, and values created by media giants like Disney to sell identities and increase profits.

The time has come to challenge Disney's self-proclaimed role as a purveyor of 'pure entertainment' and take seriously Disney's educational role in producing ideologically loaded fantasies aimed at teaching children selective roles, values, and cultural ideals. Progressive educators and other cultural workers need to pay attention to how the pedagogical practices produced and circulated by Disney and other mass-media conglomerates organize and control a circuit of power that extends from producing cultural texts to shaping the contexts in which they will be taken up by children and others.

Finally, we need to organize those who inhabit cultural spheres that produce, circulate, and distribute knowledge but who seem removed from matters of education, pedagogy, and cultural politics. Artists, lawyers, social workers, and others need to acknowledge their role as public intellectuals engaged in a pedagogy that offers them an opportunity to join with other cultural workers to expand the non-commodified public space.

Challenging the ideological underpinnings of Disney's construction of common sense is the first step in understanding the ways in which corporate culture has refashioned the relationship between education and entertainment, on the one hand, and institutional power and cultural politics, on the other. It is also a way of rewriting and transforming such a relationship by putting democracy before profits and entertainment and by defining such a project within the parameters of a broad political and pedagogical struggle. The aims of this struggle are:

- (1) creating public spheres that educate for critical consciousness,
- (2) closing the gap in wealth and property between the rich and poor, and,
- (3) providing the resources for creating a democratic media linked to multiple public spheres.

# Societal Learning

Websites for a  
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**SURFING ZMAG**  
**www.zmag.org**

ZNet is a "Community of people committed to social change". Z is an independent political magazine of critical thinking on political, cultural, social, and economic life. It sees the racial, political, and class dimensions of personal life as fundamental to understanding and improving contemporary circumstances and it aims to assist activist efforts to attain a better future. To these ends, Z attempts to operate in a democratic fashion, both internally and also with respect to its contributing writers and artists and the broader national progressive community.

Michael Albert, longtime activist, speaker, and writer, is editor of ZNet, and co-editor and co-founder of Z Magazine. He also co-founded South End Press and has written numerous books and articles. He developed, along with Robin Hahnel, the economic vision called Participatory Economics (*for more on participatory economics, checkout zmag's parecon section*).

This site is an enormous repository of articles, interviews, links, features, quotes, commentaries and resources pertaining to today's pressing concerns like mainstream media, alternative media, global economy, Middle East crisis, labor, repression etc. For a new user finding the information they want can be a daunting task. To facilitate, we have compiled a list of some key components (especially those relating to media) of ZNet with their brief overviews:

## **ZMagazine Subsite**

Z Magazine articles go online three to five months after publication, and about a thousand articles are now available. You can view articles by author or topic, etc and also find out about Z and related projects.

## **War/Terror Pages**

In times of crisis, ZNet creates special sites to track busy topics. These range from 'scandals' like Enron, to major left events like the Seattle Demos. The War/Terror pages provide analysis of the 'War on Terrorism' and give an example of a timely component focusing on a world crisis.

## **Globalization Section**

ZNet prioritizes activism and movement involvement. A good example is the subsite devoted to the anti-corporate globalization movement.

## **Watches**

Watch sites are devoted to pressing issues that require frequent attention. Content is updated regularly. The Watch Areas comprise of topics like activism, alternative media, economy, Asia, foreign policy, gender, globalization etc.

## **Translations**

Volunteers from around the world have translated ZNet articles into many languages. Articles can be read in Spanish, Italian, Slovak, Turkish/Kurdish and many more.

## **Instructionals**

ZNet includes a number of self-contained 'instructionals'. They include a main sequence of information, often based on a book or series of Z articles.

## **Contributor Biography Pages**

A list of authors who contribute to ZNet. Clicking each name yields a short biography plus links to some of their articles. Regular contributors include Noam Chomsky, David Barsamian, Tariq Ali, Aziz Choudry, Robert Fisk, Eduardo Galeano, Edward Herman etc.

## **ZNet Interactive**

ZNet's interactive facilities can be used to post or to view reports, analyses, reviews, photos, lyrics, links, quotes, and cartoons. Beyond uploaded material, there is also a remarkably diverse pen pals facility, among other features.

## **Sustainer Program**

People who donate to Z use the ZNet sustainer facilities. Premiums, users receive for their donations include daily sustainer commentaries, access to an online zine of commentaries, plus access to a forum system where people ask various ZNet contributors, like Noam Chomsky and Michael Albert, questions.

## **Contact Z**

If you need to get in touch with Z, this page lists the addresses for contacting Z Magazine, ZNet, Z Video, Z Media Institute and divisions of each.

## **ALTERNATIVE MEDIA WATCH**

This component of ZMag provides hundreds of links to non-corporate media. It is a great way to connect to community-based media. It also contains some analysis of the mainstream media.

ZNet's alternative media resources include links to diverse media institutions (FAIR, Association For Progressive Communication, Alliance For Community Media etc), general media articles and commentaries by media critics (Chomsky, Michael Albert, Edward Herman etc), print periodicals (The Progressive, CounterPunch etc), progressive media bookstores, alternative radio, TV and film sites and translations in many languages (Spanish, Italian, Turkish etc).

## **Z MEDIA INSTITUTE**

The Z Media Institute is held each year in Massachusetts. The sessions provide training in general political, education, organization building, activism, and particularly radical media work. Focuses include political studies, media studies, organizational skills and studies, computer skills and techniques. The program involves four course sessions each day plus project groups and lectures from noted guest lecturers and teachers.

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