HIGHLANDER MEDIA JUSTICE GATHERING

FINAL REPORT

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This is the Final Report from a select gathering of media advocates and activists that was held at the Highlander Education and Research Center in New Market, Tennessee, in August 2002.

With the support of Becky Lentz from the Media Policy and Technology Program Area of the Ford Foundation and the historical significance of meeting at the Highlander Center, I brought together 21 activists and advocates involved in many aspects of media policy. We were asked to look at the current issues in media policy and the needs for strategic organizing.

It was an exciting meeting, but one that was not especially 'smooth.' The participants brought with them a very wide range of professional perspectives and experiences, from many years in the field to being newly engaged. They also brought with them backgrounds that ranged from community television station management, to training African-American youth in media analysis; and from building grassroots education campaigns, to filing legal briefs with the FCC. Finally, they reflected a wide diversity of ethnic identities and backgrounds, which enriched the gathering greatly, but also required building trust among the participants, a rare occurrence in such media-oriented gatherings which are generally more homogeneous.

Working together, the gathering focused on *Constituent Building*, and *Articulating Goals*. The great need for media organizers and advocates to **expand our base** was painfully evident, so we took the effort to outline steps that could deepen and strengthen our local support. At the same time, we all agreed that this was an especially **important political moment**, and that we were in a position to harness general public discontent with many aspects of media and corporate behavior by helping bring the issues to progressives and civil society groups.

I suspected that the experience we shared at Highlander would take a while to percolate down, and that is in fact what is happening now. After digesting the work, some of the participants are now looking over the strategic directions we outlined and are beginning to dig in with concrete plans based on the directions we articulated. With momentum, this promises to expand rapidly and have growing impact across many sectors of civil society and social justice organizing.

I would like to thank all the participants who gave their time and honest efforts to make the gathering productive and meaningful. I would also like to acknowledge the outstanding facilitation and assistance provided by Highlander Center staff members, Suzanne Pharr and Scot Nakagawa. Finally, I want to express special appreciation to Becky Lentz at the Ford Foundation for providing the leadership and commitment to bring this group together, for her strong support for this entire project, and for her belief in the importance of advancing this work.

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Community Media Services
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In August 2002, Ford Foundation supported a 3-day retreat for a select group of media advocates, activists and organizers. The gathering brought 21 progressives at the Highlander Research and Education Center, in New Market TN from August 5-8, 2002. The focus was on --
- an intensive look at the current issues facing media activists;
- analysis of the policy and technology landscape;
- an examination of obstacles that are keeping the movement from developing;
- identifying strategic approaches to organizing that lend themselves to shared actions.

Highlander has a long and distinguished history as an important center for training organizers in civil rights and social justice, and they were well positioned to both facilitate the group discussions, and provide a concrete political context to the discussion.

Why the Gathering?
The plan for the summer camp was to build relationships and political strategies within a field that is small and undernourished, yet engaged with the important political and cultural challenges of the media age. The planning grant would begin the process of refocusing strategies for protecting media and technology access, promoting progressive policy reform, and ensuring a place for public voice and participation in the globalized media environment.

The field of media reform and policy advocacy is an amalgamation of different groups working on disparate issues: access to and control of broadcasting and cable outlets, broadband deployment, internet and telecommunications policy, and radio frequency spectrum reform, as well as media consolidation, privacy, and expanding public engagement. The range and complexity of issues is forcing media activists and advocates to stretch their frame of reference to confront new and shifting areas of technology and policy which they can barely keep up with.

Policy work is largely centered in a handful of Washington-based public interest groups with a long history but uneven ties to national membership or grassroots organizations. Yet public interest sectors, content providers and nonprofit operators cut across media genres - television and radio broadcasting, broadband and interactive, wireless, and satellite. Advocacy efforts reflect an array of needs: ethnic media production and distribution, cultural preservation, and technology access, for example.

The complexity of issues results in a broad range of organizations, but each is focused on a relatively narrow set of activities and generally lacks the resources for extensive planning, networking or collaborating outside their immediate issues. The gathering at the Highlander Center was an opportunity to give these leaders the chance to discuss not just how they do their work, but why they do it and what they need to accomplish right now in the challenging period ahead.

The planning would be successful if it can --
1) generate new ideas and strategic thinking about media reform/advocacy in the U.S.;
2) outline the content and direction for a larger annual event, the summer camp;
3) promote new working relationships among participants and organizations; and
4) attract interest and support from other funders.

The long-term goal is to initiate cross-fertilization and support political strategies over time to focus on the larger issue of direction for both national and international media advocacy.

Organizing the Meeting
Because the initial group will be relatively small, participants were selected with an eye towards gender balance, age, geographic and ethnic diversity, as well as representing a wide range of experience in different sectors of progressive media and technology activism.

Methodology for organizing the meeting and selecting participants was straightforward.

1.   I circulated a summary of the summer camp proposal to an initial list of media advocates and activists drawn from my own direct contacts, referrals from the Ford Foundation, and a review of key organizations on the internet.   Each individual was asked to outline ideas about such a gathering; identify key issues in the field; and send me referrals for other activists and organizers.   This quickly generated a list of nearly 100 people for the 'working group'.

2.   Starting with this list, I tried to reach each individual on the telephone to establish a more personal contact and learn more about the issues they were engaged in. While not able to speak with everyone, I did reach 65% of the people referred to me by telephone (or in person.)

3.   More importantly, I was able to contact nearly 100% via email. Even those who I could not reach by phone contributed their ideas and opinions, which also generated a great deal of enthusiasm for the gathering. Many people also sent essays, position papers, articles, handouts, and links to websites with analysis, commentaries, visuals, etc.

4.   I was able to have one-on-one meetings with about a half-dozen individuals in New York. Meetings were arranged over breakfast or lunch, which allowed leisurely, in-depth discussions about the issues at hand.

5.   I went to Washington DC for a one-day trip, where I was able to meet with 5 different activist media organizations. Each told me about their activities and plans, and offered feedback on the gathering. These face to face meetings were both valuable and instructive.

Based on these efforts, I was able to make direct contact with a large number of people engaged in many aspects of media activism, organizing, research and policy analysis, and to gather a small sample of the volumes of materials being generated around media issues. These contacts also served to guide me in selecting the participants invited to the gathering.

Selecting Participants
My selections was based on a number of factors, with the primary focus on individuals who were engaged in *media or telecommunications infrastructure, access or policy work* – planners, project directors, coordinators, campaign organizers, and policy drafters who understand the power of getting content and technology into people's hands, and are willing to take on the unglamorous work of making it so. [There were no people there who were primarily content providers.]

In addition, there had to be representatives from the four major food groups:
1. *Analog media*, such as community radio and television broadcasting and cable access centers.

2. *Digital media*, community technology centers, and people using the internet like the indymedia organizers.

3. *Media policy advocates* and lawyers based in Washington DC.

4. *Groups doing research and analysis* on media issues, media reform initiatives, and academics.

Overall, the gathering had to be balanced for gender, age, race, geographic spread, and experience. With such a limited number of participants, I decided that only one person from any given organization could attend, and preferably, participants would have experience in more than one sector of the field. Finally, as much as possible, I invited not the heads of the organizations, but the second level of staff members. This was to recognize the need for leadership development in the field and to ensure that the gathering would NOT be only the 'usual suspects' (heavily weighted towards white men over 50) associated with progressive media, but would include some of the younger, energetic thinkers.

All of this assured that the gathering would be comprised of a multi-racial group of assertive and outspoken advocates. Based on these criteria, both subjective and objective, the final group that attended was comprised of 21 people – 8 men and 13 women, ranging in age from 25 to 60. Just half were people of color. [The complete list of attendees, including brief bios and contact information is attached.] All but 2 stayed for the entire meeting.

Setting the Agenda, Facilitating the Discussions
To plan appropriately for the gathering, and to take advantage of the facilities and leadership at Highlander, I made a site visit in June. This allowed me to meet the staff, see the meeting and dorm facilities, and plan the agenda.

While there, I met extensively with Highlander Executive Director Suzanne Pharr, and Program Director Scot Nakagawa, who were going to be facilitators for our group. Both are long time organizers, but neither was familiar with media advocacy issues, so while there, I gave them a background overview of the issues we wanted to address. To follow up, I also sent them a preliminary packet with a selection of more detailed issue and position papers.

We outlined the agenda together, and decided that one of the most important aspects of the gathering would be for the participants to get to know the work each was doing -- but NOT in a standard conference mode. Several timeslots were allocated for introductions, show and tell, and similar sharing. However, in keeping with the spirit of popular education, none of the presentations was to be 'talking heads' – instead, participants were asked to role-play, use props, and play video and audio programs (but no power points!) to illustrate the work that they do. The rest of the agenda was focused on examining our political context, the obstacles we face, the connections we have, and the strategies we can develop.

Given the history and commitment of Highlander in confronting issues of race and class, these questions were also included in our agenda as central to the analysis and strategies we had to develop to build grassroots support for media advocacy. Raising these issues during the course of the gathering was difficult and, at some points, contentious. But because almost half the people present were people of color, they constituted a critical mass that ensured these issues were discussed openly and in context.

During the course of the 3 days, we followed much of the agenda as it was outlined. However, as in any dynamic meeting, we collectively made adjustments and revisions, based on the actual dynamics of the group and the concerns that emerged. Also, in keeping with the spirit

and experience of Highlander, once the meeting itself began, several participants were also asked to take leadership in some of the meeting facilitation and decision-making.

Meeting Dynamics and Issues
Initially, the concept of the gathering was to focus on organizing strategies for media and technology policy issues. The assumption was that the group would have a basic level of understanding that these were shared issues, and that together we would be ready to hone in on strategic questions related to having local and national impact.

To assist this process, I prepared a paper outlining issues and concerns in media advocacy that the organizers themselves identified as being important and strategic. The paper was based on the many conversations I had to prepare for the gathering, and was distributed widely before the meeting. The paper summarized the key political obstacles -- such as how to engage citizens around media issues; how to connect the movement for democratic communications with broader movement for social justice and equality; and how to best take advantage of this as the political moment.

It also raised questions about internal issues -- over turf battles and competition between organizations; the lack of leadership development; the lack of connections between activists working in the analog media environment and using the internet; and the serious need for models for economic sustainability.   [The complete paper *"Key Issues and Questions"* is attached.]

While this paper was helpful in introducing many of the common concerns of the group, at the actual gathering it became clear that there were two underlying issues:
> *Constituency* **– who are the constituencies for media organizing?**
> *Goals* **– what do we need to accomplish?**
Most of the existing progressive media advocacy groups are small – some are one-man shops – and often our issues are complex, abstract, technical and hard to explain. This keeps participation in our efforts limited and often relegates our organizations to the status of 'intermediary groups' because we don't deal with 'bread and butter' issues.

At that same time, while we all share a general commitment to media transformation, there were no stated goals or outcomes that we hold in common – our efforts, priorities and analysis range across many directions and are aimed at different results.

Working in this somewhat undefined environment, it is easy for us as organizers to become isolated from groups organizing around grassroots issues that have immediate impact on people.   More often than not, we wonder why groups engaged in other issues aren't embracing media transformation as central to winning their own issue (which lays the blame on these other groups for 'not getting it' about media issues.)

Yet this appears to be a political moment when there is a rising consciousness of the impact of media on political discourse, the lack of civic participation, and growing interest among social justice advocates in developing tools to take on media organizations. So if we are successful, our strategic efforts might take root quickly.

For perspective, we examined our current moment in light of the historical organizing, both successful and unsuccessful, of the civil rights movement, and some of the milestones of progressive media advocacy. This look back brought out some important points –

- The political right advances their agenda for economic, fundamentalist and racist values through different organizing strategies, many of which they learned from social justice organizers during the civil rights movement.
- Less than 10% of progressive money goes into the media, while the right provides concentrated funding to writers and media to get their message out. Progressives spend more money than the right, but the right concentrates many of its resources to support a media strategy, which is central to supporting their social agenda.
- The single most important media victory in the last half of the 20th Century *was United Church of Christ vs. FCC*, a case which gave modern media reform movement its birth through the civil rights movement by forcing media outlets to hire African Americans.
- Another important development internationally was the introduction of the *New World Information Order* – an early effort at the UN to put media access and local, non-corporate control of information on the global agenda.
- The media environment we are in today was shaped by these and related developments, and much of what we are facing are the reactionary responses to these progressive policy decisions that have evolved over time.

Many media reform efforts shrank in the 80's when money was diverted to other areas, deregulation started to accelerate, and digital technology began to require radical shifts in access and infrastructure. This has given us today's major trends:
- Corporate consolidation of media, fewer choices in content, more control of ideas;
- Privatization of mass media, internet and other communications technologies;
- Increased commercialization within the media – more commercials per hour, more product placement, more 'branding' efforts;
- Great devaluation of public commons, public participation and public service in the media environment, including reversals of many previous policies;
- Largely unsympathetic legislators who are indebted to media special interests and contributors;
- Decreasing dollars and not enough noise from the community side;
- Abandonment of minority communities by mass media, at the very same time the demographics of those communities is growing;
- Sheer volume of technology makes it hard to keep up;
- Large liberal civic organizations representing millions of people are not part of this discussion – yet right wing and politically conservative groups see media as a priority and make it a point to be very much in the discussion;
- The public is fed up with exposure of corporate corruption – including telecom companies -- and seems willing to act;
- Sympathetic awareness of the negative impact of globalization among the young and general public;
- Media literacy efforts are gaining ground.

As progressive organizers and activists, we also face considerable challenges:
- There is not enough money or resources to support the organizing we need to accomplish;
- Media activism is seen as too narrow, divorced from people's reality, requires 'special' knowledge and is too 'techy';
- Absence of simple and articulated political goals leaves a gap between community groups and media activists;
- Idea that information is power is not an organizing idea – information isn't power but part of it;
- Our language is boring, alienating, full of jargon and not passionate enough;
- Digital divide – even if the divide were fixed, we would still just have a world that sees the public solely as consumers not producers;
- We need to identify who is in the base we are building and mobilizing;

- Mainstream media speaks to working people effectively telling them what to wear, eat, etc. but we are not effective in speaking to that same constituency;
- We are being out "think tanked" by the right;
- There is a serious lack of presence of people of color in this debate. This is also true in public broadcasting, which at least is supposed to be accountable;
- We have very little sense of our own history, expertise and experiences;
- Coalition building time is now, we re at a special time now, policy groups and activists can come together at this time;
- We have a huge hole to fill – no progressive infrastructure exists that can unify our issues or serve as an umbrella group.

Positioning Ourselves to Advance Media Advocacy
This led to the central question: how can we position this work within a larger movement for social justice? At the same time, how do we connect the issues of more responsive media control and editorial voice to the needs within civil society of reflecting the broadest range of political opinion, perspective and experience, including unpopular positions and dissent?

Every one of us at the gathering have a passion for engaging in media as central to political organizing. But many of us have been involved for more than 25 years, and the political, social and technological environment have shifted radically during this period of time. We all felt it was important that our efforts reflect this passion – but it must be translated into understandable, accessible concepts and connections. There are so few of us working in the field of media organizing and advocacy, that building solidarity and shared context among us is critical to having any success.

The issues of race and class, always underground, were also brought to the surface as major elements that had to be considered, difficult as they might be. The noticeable lack of people of color within media advocacy organizations points to some serious shortcomings in our political perspectives, and in our ability to build popular support within communities of color. Our discussions of these points created a level of tension in the group that was prickly and at times, uncomfortable. There was also a level of conflict that came from differences in age among participants, in particular, conflict between some of the young activists who did not seem to appreciate the actual struggles and experiences of those from the prior generation.

Most of these differences were treated with respect, but even with the broad level of shared values that we brought to the meeting, they touched participants on a very personal level. These challenges to individual understanding meant that the group as a whole had to work at building solidarity and trust with each other, and people would have to make a deliberate choice about working together after the meeting was over because it was assumed that we were all going to be moving in the same direction.

Coming from disparate experiences and approaches to media activism, we did agree on two very basic political principles as underlying our strategic plans:
1) *Technology and Media should serve all people* – Each of us has an individual commitment based on the core values of social justice and equality, and the institutions that control and shape our media must be transformed in order to realize this goal.

2) *Local communities, especially those that are marginalized, should have some ability to decide how media resources are created, used and allocated* -- As the major target of mass media and technology, the public has a strong interest in both the structure and content of its media. There must be accessible mechanisms to promote public voices, participation and involvement in how media is used and governed.

From these two principles, we identified three broad areas to examine which could help us relate the issues of media justice to progressive organizing, especially using the perspective of race and class to anchor the issues to grassroots experience.

Building a Broad Base of Support -- There is a great potential to mobilized large numbers of people around media concerns, because the impact is so pervasive in our culture. But first, it is important to approach people who see themselves as direct stake holders. We need to see this group as the base constituency we have to build.

The primary means to build a solid base is to respond to the genuine needs that people express. People already know what their problems are -- the role of activist and organizer is to tease out these issues and reflect them back to the community, not to offer solutions but to help make connections for people to figure out solutions themselves.

If we seriously address race and class as central to successful organizing around media, we must link it to engaging in dialog that can create a shared identity. Designing a process of ascertainment and listening projects, to hear people articulate their concerns about media issues and identify the issues *they* think are key, can be a strong start. This is especially important if we want to build ties to groups engaged in other social justice organizing, so we can build trust and see how best to connect these issues to media.

A major challenge facing this strategy is *funding*. Many of our efforts don't have organizers hired to do this kind of listening, which takes a sustained effort, or even have a clear constituency. Groups often see media only as being in service to movements, not the other way around. Developing a 'Listening Project' is a concrete effort that can be implemented locally, that can go a long way in helping us strengthen our base and start to build social justice partnerships. We need to determine what resources we need to pilot this type of initiative.

Creating Strategic Alliances and Partnerships -- Any alliance has to begin with listening as a participatory process to develop agenda. To be successful, we must be committed to building a working relationship over time, and starting out by being clear at the beginning about what the goals are and why we need partners. We must create more opportunities for conversation, including raising difficult issues based in the truly contrasting perceptions that come from differing experiences of race, class and privilege. Then, after listening and ascertaining, we will be able to repackage ideas about media to bring out their relevance to other organizations.

Another point is that we need clear guidelines of how we will work with other groups, especially if they are a for-profit organization, so as not to be degraded or taken advantage of. Finally, we have to examine what we are willing to 'give up' in terms of control, so there is genuine sharing of power and decision-making within the partnership, based on the expectations and goals of the alliance. We have to be prepared to relinquish control of what we think of as 'our' agenda, based on what our partners have told us about their needs, issues and decision-making structures. This is the basis for creating reciprocal, mutually supportive organizational relationships and alliances.

Developing Campaigns -- After all this planning and preparation, what would a model campaign encompass? We prepared several scenarios that outlined what a local and a national campaign might look like, and what impact it could have. We used the growing opposition to Clear Channel Radio as an example – owning 1,200+ radio stations across the country, they are the most powerful radio operator today. But they are vulnerable in a number of areas, and in many cities, there is a growing resistance among the public to their programming and promotion policies.

Ordinary listeners are not getting what they need from broadcasters, so The Clear Channel campaign, for example, might operate in ways that made race and class central. Begin by identifying

those Clear Channel stations that target urban or Hispanic communities – and then challenge them to address the concerns of those local communities.   But not every Clear Channel station is programming for minority audiences, so we need to learn from the local listeners what particular concerns they have, based on the programming of their local stations.

Another more local avenue is mounting support for public access channels on cable and other local media and telecommunications centers, i.e. community technology centers. We could put together a campaign to provide tools for local people to speak to their city council members and other local politicians so that they can negotiate with cable providers to ensure that local community needs were addressed.

There might be specific opportunities to supporting building neighborhood media centers (such as an initiative to put a local cable access studio in Harlem.) Other efforts might be to help in implementing a community needs assessment, reaching out to churches, criminal justice organizations, and many other local groups, to design a media center that will have good equipment, full internet access, and similar media services. A large part of the campaign would be to educate people about the existing resources that are already in place.

Finally, in terms of building a movement, there was the idea to create a set of unified messages, or a single logo, that each media advocacy group could use, regardless of their different efforts. This would be something like a single 'brand,' identifying groups as part of the Media Justice Movement. It could create a strong national image for the movement, even with all the disparate organizations and initiatives underway.

The Highlander Constituency
The Highlander staff was asked about how the Highlander Center itself might become involved in media advocacy, and how its constituency could be engaged. The staff sees the Center as being able to act as an intermediary to groups in Appalachia, the south and all over the world, particularly popular educators. With a primary constituency of low income people in the South, the Highlander Center could be a strong partner in testing out how to make media advocacy relevant to folks who understand the impact of the media, but don't see how it relates to them.

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A key strategic decision was to work on shifting the terms of media organizing from *'Media Democracy*,' to *'Media Justice.'* Because the concept of 'democracy' has been degraded through its association with strong-arm economic tactics, the term is mistrusted in many parts of the world. We thought that transforming the concept to Media Justice will put our efforts on the same level as other social justice and human rights organizing, and give us a new vocabulary to work with in terms of defining our various goals.

Using this new framework, we were able to point to several specific directions that were strategic, both in terms of strengthening our organizing base, and that can have real impact on the issues before us. These directions include support for local initiatives, grassroots education and organizing, and improved networking, as well as continuing support for national policy activities. All of them recognize the importance of activating vocal and visible public engagement, but also that our issues are long-term, and many of them will not necessarily have policy solutions.

Even so, there is a lot we can do to improve the media environment and reinsert a place for public space in the media landscape. The gathering participants volunteered to take up these specific activities.

1. Design a Universal Logo
Create a 'universal logo' for Media Justice groups, similar to the ones that have been adopted for Day Without Art campaign. This could provide a unified image, give the movement a common identity and provide a method to involve more groups who might identify with the mission, despite its many fragments, priorities and differences.

2. Polish the language for two principles – to be 'wordsmithed'
We discussed crafting improved language for these two principles:
      1) Technology and media must be directed toward social justice;
      2) Technology and media participation must be structured in a democratic way.

(This follow-up will be done within the group.)

3. **Develop a Popular Education Toolkit on Media Justice**
After three days of trying to come up with working definitions of our issues and terms, the group came to the conclusion that media advocates have great need for a set of materials that are easily understandable and accessible to social justice organizers and consumer groups, etc. A priority for our follow-up efforts is to work with popular educators to develop a Tool Kit on Media Justice to assist us with our own efforts to work with other groups on including media as part of the general social change agenda. This is a crucial set of activities that will be shared by several groups and take 6-9 months to plan and implement.
      1. Prepare a new set of materials on **Media Justice** using popular education techniques. [Review any existing media organizing materials to see what might be useful]
      2. Focus on shifting the dialogue around media in relation to social justice organizing
      3. Follow-up meeting to test the materials for practical use and impact

4. Organize a national WSIS education campaign
We thought that the upcoming UNESCO World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) should be a timely tool to educate social justice groups about media issues. Using the kind of local organizing and education campaign that was done all around the country before the Durban conference as a model, we will try to build a national initiative around WSIS and the global efforts around Communications Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) that are underway in other parts of the world.

    1.   Using WSIS and CRIS as hooks to design national organizing around information/media issues globally, in a manner similar to the organizing that was done around the Durban conference on Racism.

    2.   To make Geneva 'The WTO for Media'

5. Develop a pilot project around local/regional media ascertainment and organizing
In the course of our discussions, we kept examining how best to mobilize local public around issues. By using the outline for how to build our base, we would like to pilot a local organizing project that would target 3-5 locations and design a media organizing project based on the needs articulated in local listening sessions and ascertainments. Ideally, this would include at least one site in the south, perhaps a rural area and an urban area, and one ethnic project. Each site would use a different strategy, based on the needs and media conditions articulated by the community itself during the ascertainment. This would be a major 2-year organizing project.

    1.   Put together planning team
    2.   Select target locations and local partners
    3.   Design and implement ascertainment of local media issues
    4.   Based on the 'listening sessions' design local organizing strategies and partners
    5.   Provide resources and support for local organizing project

6. Continue Strategic Planning about Policy and Technical Issues
Expanding context for policy initiatives to reflect media justice as central premise as much as possible. Work with the existing national policy organizations to strengthen them and support their efforts to build alliances with grassroots and constituency groups.

7. Develop Presentations to Funders and related groups who can move this agenda
At this point in time, it is vitally important that funders be educated about the central role of media justice in the larger picture of social justice organizing. Among us, we will work with various individual donors, foundation staff and members of funding groups to raise the profile of the issue and its importance.

    1. Media bites for funders
    2. Focus on shifting the dialogue around media in relation to social justice organizing
    3. Aggressively Organize briefings, presentations, etc.
    4. Initial groups will include
        a. National Organizers Alliance (NOA)
        b. National Network of Grantmakers (NNG)
        c. Council on Foundations
        d. Social Venture Network
        e. Other opportunities
    5. Writing articles etc.

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The Media and Technology Gathering was funded by the Ford Foundation, with **consultant Nan Rubin** in charge of recruitment and planning, and the **Highlander Center** responsible for logistics and facilitation. It was convened from August 5-8, 2002. Logistical work included arranging for airline travel, local ground transportation, food and housing, per diem payments to attendees, and support for the group while they were at Highlander.

The Highlander facilitation team was made up of two staffers, Scot Nakagawa, and Suzanne Pharr. The agenda was developed through a collaborative process between Suzanne, Scot, and Nan Rubin. This was done through one site visit, with ongoing planning and exchange through fax, telephone and email.

 The goals of the agenda were:
1) Identify key and unifying issues among the group;
2) Identify the opportunities and challenges these issues present, vis a vis building a broad, diverse and active grassroots base for media justice advocacy and alternative media, particularly in terms of how the issue address issues of race and class;
3) Build relationships among participants;
4) Address the possibilities for networking and ongoing collaboration among the participants.

Facilitating the Gathering
Facilitation was designed to provide flexibility and offer the greatest number of possibilities for participants to drive the discussions and steer the agenda. We were largely successful at involving participants in directing the agenda towards the issues and concerns of greatest interest to the group. We less successful at anticipating partipants' needs, providing opportunities for networking, and adapting agenda items to group dynamics as they evolved.

Some of the difficultly arose out of the fact that the group was very divided and, very guarded at first about the political differences between them.   Not being at first aware of the political terrain, this required us to reorganize the agenda in midstream. It would not have been possible to anticipate all the issues that came up because none of us had personal knowledge of every participant. But even so, we had frequent check-ins on the agenda, and tried to adjust it as much as possible to respond to the shifts in group focus and mood.

Political Issues
The divisions within the group were mainly between the *policy advocates* on one hand, and the *media makers* and *community organizers* on the other. What is pragmatic and necessary to policy advocates is working within the legislation and regulation process to make a broad, national impact. They see this as the very highest priority, and expect an understanding that this is the highest priority for support.   But it is often divorced from public involvement.

The issues to community organizers are more personal and have immediate impact. Community organizers work to build mass based organizations and social movements. For them, strength is

built through popular support coming from those who are most affected by the issues and therefore most motivated to participate at the grassroots level.

Real politick in a time when legislative bodies are dominated by corporations and right wing political activists means making compromises that are divisive or engender apathy at the grassroots level. Apathy and division are deadly to community organization.

This division arose when the issues of race and class were raised in the group. Those on the policy end of the media activist spectrum felt that issues like race and class, which engender strong reactions and divide people, were not issues that should be central to the media advocacy agenda. They felt that they were addressing these issues adequately by advocating for a just social policy. For the community organizers and some of the media makers, however, dealing with these issues means addressing them directly among the people most affected by racism and class oppression. By necessity, this meant responding to issues as they are felt 'on the ground.'.

This was not what some of the participants expected, and we dealt with the division directly. Many among the group had requested that Highlander Center bring more of itself and its own agenda to the meeting. We let the participants know that the focus on race and class that was integrated into the agenda was Highlander's contribution. Race and class issues are the foundation of all of Highlander's programs, and so were central to the preparing the agenda on media. But Highlander's primary role was to facilitate the discussion, not to turn the gathering towards our particular organizing priorities.

Keeping it Together
The discussion that followed raised a variety of questions about principles, values, and strategies. We led a brainstorm of potential ways to transform media work that would demonstrate an understanding of the importance of addressing race and class in building the mass base around media concerns that we need to win.

In general, the Highlander Center viewed this meeting as a bridge-building occasion between policy people and media activists, with minor incorporation of technology. As with many Highlander workshops, one of the most important results was shared political analysis and framing in preparation to develop *concrete strategies*.

We witnessed participants moving from "This is the single, most important way of doing things and the one thing we all must commit to doing," to "There are many complex, interconnected issues to be understood here and we need to develop a variety of approaches unified by a progressive politic." Certainly for those of us working in the South where the discussions of media and technology are rare, the ideas in the room were increasingly exciting as they focused on media justice work that is inclusive of everyone across race and class, rural and urban, young and old. The 'Next Steps' follow-up indicate a direction that has the potential for genuine impact, including our communities in the south. Highlander is interested in supporting these efforts and in the potential for testing some of these ideas in our own region.

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HIGHLANDER MEDIA JUSTICE GATHERING
(MEDIA AND SOCIETY SUMMER CAMP)

ADDITIONAL   MATERIALS

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

KEY ISSUES DISCUSSION PAPER

Berryhill, Peggy

[Director, *Native Media Resource Center*; organizer of *Intertribal Native Radio Summit* ; nationally-known public radio and multi-media producer]

Barraza, Ana Lilia

[Station Manager, *KUBO, Radio Bilingüe*, El Centro CA, one of the network of English/Spanish public radio stations that serve the US, Puerto Rico and parts of Mexico with broadcast and satellite service.]

Chester, Jeffrey

Jeff is Executive Director of the *Center for Digital Democracy*, which focuses on ensuring that the digital media serve the public interest; preserving the Internet's open architecture; and establishing an "online commons" for the free exchange of ideas and information. In 1992, with his wife Kathryn Montgomery, he co-founded the *Center for Media Education (CME)*, and created CME's project on open access and the future of the Internet. Jeff was also co-founder of the *Telecommunications Policy Roundtable*, and in 1995-1996, during the debate on the telecommunications Act, he played a key role in fighting proposed deregulatory ownership measures for the broadcasting, newspaper, and cable industries. In the 1980s, Jeff developed and managed the national media campaign that led to creation of the *Independent Television Service*, and he is also a founder of the *National Campaign for Freedom of Expression* and the *Teledemocracy Project*. Other campaigns include working to ensure that low-income families benefited from advances in telecommunications, including basic phone service; public interest requirements for new spectrum allocations in the Telecommunications Act of 1996; and working with the *ACLU, Consumers Union, Consumer Federation of America*, and *the Media Access Project* to impose conditions on the merger of AOL and Time Warner.

Cyril, Malkia

Malkia Amala Cyril is an Oakland based, Brooklyn born black lesbian working with youth organizations in the Bay Area to strengthen their media capacity, increase strategic media coordiantion between youth organizations, and centralize media advocacy and media activism as a tactic and tool of youth organizing and policy advocacy. Malkia has worked as an organizer and trainer with youth and youth organizers for the past 8 years.

Dichter, Aliza

A media democracy activist and media educator, Liza is co-founder and senior editor of MediaChannel.org. Launched in 1999, MediaChannel connects more than 900 affiliated groups with a global community concerned about journalism, communication rights, media literacy, cultural diversity and free expression. Liza has led workshops at independent media conferences around the country and is regularly asked to speak on issues relating to public-interest media policy and, most recently, on international conflict coverage, the Middle East crisis and the challenges and responses of the media in the wake of September 11. She is the director, with Seeta Peña Gangadharan, of the *Media and Communications Policy Center*, under development. Other current projects include the *Action Coalition for Media Education*, a media literacy intiative (www.acmecoalition.org) and the *Angels of the Public Interest*, an activist group challenging FCC deregulation. Liza is based in New York's Catskill mountain valley where she led a field study in violence and media culture for the crisis intervention agency Family of Woodstock.

Fox, Jean Ann

Jean Ann is Director of Consumer Protection for the *Consumer Federation of America*, an association of more than 300 pro-consumer state and national organizations that speaks on behalf of consumers. She specializes in financial services, electronic commerce, and consumer protection issues. Before going to work for CFA in 1997, Jean Ann served as CFA President. She is also Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of *Consumers Union,* publisher of *Consumer Reports* magazine. She is a member of the Steering Committee and e-commerce work group of the *Trans Atlantic Consumer Dialogue* and is Vice President of the *Virginia Citizens Consumer Council,* a volunteer statewide advocacy organization. Jean Ann formerly worked as Director of the *Allegheny County Bureau of Consumer Affairs* in Pittsburgh; as an Extension Home Economist for the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service; and as Regional Manager, Bureau of Consumer Services, Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission. She has served on the Consumer Advisory Council to the Federal Reserve, the Consumer Affairs Advisory Committee to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the Leadership Council to the Virginia Tech Family and Consumer Sciences program, and has received much community recognition for her work.

Gangadharam, Seeta Peña

Seeta is a freelance journalist, media activist and policy scholar based in San Francisco. She serves as director of the policy project at *MediaChannel.org,* a clearinghouse for news, information and opinion on media democracy issues worldwide. She also serves as a consultant to *Active Voice/Television Race Initiative,* a community engagement projectthat grew out of the television series *P.O. V.* that uses social documentary to stimulate public dialogue and problem-solving around issues of race, culture, identity, globalization, interfaith and more. Seeta has contributed to several publications and books, including *"We the Media: A Citizen's Guide to Media Democracy", "SPIN Works!"* and *"Communications, Revolution and Reform".* Prior to *MediaChannel* and *Active Voice/Television Race Initiative*, she worked as an assistant researcher at the Institute for Public Policy Research in London and as an associate with the SPIN Project in San Francisco. Seeta holds a master's in media and communication from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Halleck, Dee Dee

Dee Dee is a media activist, filmmaker and video pioneer, founder of *Paper Tiger Television,* co-founder of the *Deep Dish Satellite Network,* and Professor Emerita in the Department of Communication at the University of California at San Diego. She began making films in 1961 and her film on a community art project, *The Mural on Our Street,* was nominated for Academy Award in 1965. Dee Dee served as President of the *Association of Independent Video and Film Makers* (AIVF) for three years, and has served as a trustee of the *American Film Institute, Women Make Movies, the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers, the Instructional Telecommunications Foundation* and *Woodstock Community Television.* She has led hundreds of media workshops with, among others, elementary school children, reform school youth and migrant farmers, and she is the author of numerous articles in *Film Library Quarterly, Film Culture, The Independent, Afterimage* and other media journals. Her first hand account of alternative television, *Hand Held Visions,* (Fordham University Press) was just released by Fordham University Press. A retrospective of her work was screened at the Documentary Festival of Brazil in Rio and Sao Paulo in 1994. As a board member of *Videazimut*, the international video producers association. Dee Dee has also participated internationally in gatherings related to democratizing communications, including attending recent planning sessions on the campaign for Communications Rights in the Information Society, preparing for the upcoming International Summit.

Herdon, Sheri

Sheri is a media and social change activist with 12 years of experience creating media and educating people about the power of independent local community media to promote radical social change. She was the News director at KCMU Public Radio in Seattle for four years, where she developed a news program that became one of Seattle's most vibrant activist information sources. She was one of the founders of the Independent Media Center in 1999, was instrumental in putting together the national legal team for Indymedia Spring 2001 as well as organizing the Indymedia conference in San Francisco, and she continues to work with Indymedia and devise alternative models of organizational development and communications infrastructure. Her passion is the use and development of cutting edge appropriate technology as well as developing the most democratic strategies for building an international decentralized communications network. In her previous life, she was a paralegal in the corporate realmand a graduate student nearing the completion of a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature. Her mission is to develop and support innovative and collaborative projects that move society toward greater democracy, creativity and liberation, particularly through the use of the new and old media and the intersection between the two. She is on the board of several media oriented nonprofits, including *Earth On-the-Air Independent Media (EOAIM)* and *Seattle Independent Media Coalition (SIMC*) and is a co-founder of *Community Powered Radio.*

Honig, David

David is a civil rights and communications lawyer who has handled roughly 100 FCC rulemaking proceedings and 1,000 FCC and civil rights adjudications. In 1986, in response to the FCC's suspension of two of its minority ownership policies, he convened the organization now known as the *Minority Media and Telecommunications Council* ("MMTC"). David has served as MMTC's fulltime Executive Director since 1998. MMTC seeks minority employment and ownership in all FCC-regulated industries, as well as wide public access to telecommunications and the Internet. MMTC represents 48 national organizations before the FCC and the federal appeals courts, trains students in communications law, and operates the nation's only minority owned and nonprofit media brokerage.

Jackson, Janine

Janine is Program Director for FAIR *(Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting,)* and producer/host of FAIR's radio show, *CounterSpin*. Jackson's articles have appeared in publications including *In These Times, St. Louis Journalism Review* and the *UAW's Solidarity*, and in books including *Civil Rights Since 1787* (New York University Press) and *Censored 2000* (Seven Stories Press). She has appeared on ABC's "Nightline" and CNBC's "Inside Business" among other shows, and is host of CUNY-TV's cable program, "Labor at the Crossroads." Jackson is a graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, and has an M.A. in Sociology from the New School for Social Research.

Leanza, **Cheryl A.**

MAP's Deputy Director, Cheryl joined Media Access Project in 1998 after more than two years at the FCC. She graduated *cum laude* from the University of Michigan Law School and simultaneously earned a Masters of Public Policy from Michigan's Institute of Public Policy Studies. Ms. Leanza has taken leadership roles in the area of low power radio and cable broadband open Internet access and has been widely quoted in the trade and mainstream press on these issues. Ms. Leanza was recently elected as a trustee of the Federal Communications Bar Association Foundation, and is a member of the D.C. Affairs Section of the D.C. Bar.

Lloyd, Mark

Mark is the Executive Director of the *Civil Rights Forum on Communications Policy*, a non-profit, non-partisan project he co-founded to bring civil rights principles and advocacy to the communications policy debate. Previously, he worked as General Counsel to the *Benton Foundation*, and as a communications attorney at Dow, Lohnes & Albertson in Washington, D.C. representing both commercial and non-commercial companies. He also has nearly twenty years of experience as a print and broadcast journalist, including work as a reporter and producer at NBC and CNN. Mark has served as board member of dozens of national and local organizations, including the *Center for Democracy and Technology, OMB Watch, Iona Senior Services, the Independent Television Service*, and the *Leadership Conference Education Fund*. He has also served as a consultant to the Clinton White House, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Open Society Institute and the Smithsonian Institution. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan and his law degree from the Georgetown University Law Center.

Maeda, Sharon

Sharon started her decades-long year career in communications when, as a teacher, she found too many negative media images of women and people of color. For eleven years, she worked in public television and radio to provide access and programming by and about women and communities of color, including serving as Executive Director of the *Pacifica Radio* network, for six years. In 1993, she was appointed by President Clinton as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the U. S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development under Secretary Henry Cisneros. Most recently, she was Associate General Secretary for Mission Communication at the *General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church.* In addition to managing the in-house production of print, audio, video, web and multilingual resources, she coordinates communications projects worldwide, which include telecommunications advocacy and global radio and computer learning centers. Sharon has served and continues to serve on many community and media boards, including former Chair of the *National Asian American Telecommunications Association,* being a trustee of the *Public Radio Satellite Trust*, the advisory board of the *Asian American Policy Review* of the Harvard Kennedy School and *Working Films* - a non-profit group that packages and distributes documentary films for educational and grassroots organizing.

Perlstein, Jeff

Jeff is the Executive Director of *Media Alliance* in San Francisco, a twenty-six year old media training and advocacy center for journalists, activists, nonprofits, and community members. Best known for its role in the organizing to save KPFA and reclaim the Pacifica network, as well as its convening of the protests to confront the National Association of Broadcasters in September 2000, MA is also the fiscal sponsor of the *Prometheus Radio Project, the Democratic Media Legal Project*, and *the SFIndependent Media Center.* At Media Alliance, Jeff has initiated campaigns *for Press Freedom duringWartime*, greater community accountability at Clear Channel station KMEL-FM, and a cable franchise agreement for San Franciscans that's in the public's interest. He co-founded the *Independent Media Center (IMC)* in Seattle and the website *indymedia.org,* which now links over 85 IMC's in more than 20 countries. In the year following the project's launch, Jeff worked with community media groups in the U.S. and abroad to develop their local IMC's, and refine and expand upon this new communications model for civil society. Before joining Media Alliance, Jeff was the National Campaign Coordinator of the domestic *Economic and Social Human Rights* program at *Food First/ The Institute for Food and Development Policy.*

Ross, Randy

Before becoming a Community Liaison for the *Northwest Area Foundation* (www.nwaf.org) in St. Paul, Randy worked as the Tribal College Affairs Liaison for the *American Distance*

Education Consortium (www.adec.edu) based in Lincoln at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln east campus. Randy served as Executive Director of the *Lincoln Indian Center, Inc.,* for three years prior to working for the university. He is a non-trustee board member for the *National Museum of the American Indian, Information Technology Committee* for more than a decade, and he is the Treasurer of the Board for *Migizi Communications* (www.migizi.org) in Minneapolis MN, a Native news and information service. Past work experience includes arts consulting, community economic development with tribal communities through the Administration for Native Americans, and participating in the *American for Indian Opportunities Ambassadors Program* in 1993. Randy has a long time record of working in the tribal technology planning, policy and telecommunications arena, and he co-authored a report published by the Benton Foundation on *Native Networks*.

Rowland, Wick

Willard D. ("Wick") Rowland, Jr. is President and General Manager of *Colorado Public Television, KBDI-TV/12* in Denver, Colorado. He also is Professor and the former Dean of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Colorado. His teaching and research focus on media history and policy, the TV violence debates, public broadcasting, and the history of communication studies. At KBDI he is helping lead the national effort to model differentiated second and third alternative, community-oriented public television services across the country. B.A. Stanford (history), M.A. University of Pennsylvania (communication), Ph.D. University of Illinois (communication).

Rubin, Nan

Nan has been providing technical and organization assistance to public broadcasting stations, independent producers, media organizations and grassroots groups for more than twenty years. With a strong technical bent, she is also involved with projects in digital media, archiving and broadband. Nan built two community radio stations, *WAIF/Stepchild Radio* in Cincinnati, and *KUVO* in Denver, the first English/Spanish bilingual public radio station in a major market, and she is a founding member of the *World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters* (AMARC) based in Montreal, and the *National Federation of Community Broadcasters* (NFCB), where she also served on staff for six years. Nan has worked extensively with minority arts and media projects, particularly with Native Americans, and she recently joined the *Stable Revenue Project*, providing strategic planning for public radio stations licensed to historically Black colleges and universities. Her credits as Project Director include *"Living Voices"*, a set of 45 radio profiles of American Indians produced by the *Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian,* but to public radio listeners, Nan is best known for the popular series *Search for the Buried Past: The Hidden Jews of New Mexico.* She serves on the Board of *Native American Public Telecommunications,* Inc; *The Brecht Forum,* and she is a founding member of *Jews for Racial and Economic Justice* in New York City.

Shorters, Trabian

In 2000, Trabian launched *Technology Works for Good,* a Washington DC-based nonprofit provider of technology support and training to other nonprofits. This award-winning initiative was launched with the support of AOL Time Warner, Microsoft, Fannie Mae, The Meyer Foundation and half a dozen other local underwriters. In its first two years, TWFG has serviced, trained and supported more than 300 organizations in using technology to streamline operations and improve their service delivery. Prior to his ventures in technology, Trabian spent four years as Director of the *M. Carl Holman Leadership Development Institute of the National Urban Coalition*, where he initiated, coached and supported nearly three-dozen African-American leaders in collaborative efforts. He co-founded the *National African American Males Collaboration* and the *Common Sense Group.* Before joining the Coalition, Trabian helped to establish the *Michigan Community Service Commission* and he lead in the

formation of *Young People for National Service*, network of people under 30 who named President-elect Clinton's national service program *"AmeriCorps."* Trabian graduated with honors from the Michigan State University School of Journalism in 1991 where he built Michigan's largest Black Student Newspaper and srved as a copy editor for the Detroit News. He has since spent two years with the *Center On Philanthropy* studying America philanthropic traditions and the roles of African Americans.

Sisnett, Ana

Ana is Executive Director of *Austin Free-Net*, a non-profit corporation established in 1995 to provide training and access to the Internet in public places, especially for Austin residents who don't have computers of their own.   Her local, national and international volunteer and paid activism have included community media and cultural productions, anti-oppression workshops, AIDS/HIV awareness initiatives, and community technology training, access, policies and issues related to Austin and Texas e-government initiatives. Throughout the '90s, as a co-"Technomama," Ana provided multilingual Internet trainings for national and international non-governmental organizations working on the UN Human Rights and Women's conferences. Most recently, Ana was an invited panelist at *the Barbara Jordan National Forum on Public Policy*, *Goodwill International Industries* annual conference, a keynote speaker at *the St. Louis Brown Bag Technology Collaborative*, and mentor during the *2002 Community Technology Centers Network Leadership Institute.* Ana has been cited by Texas Monthly Biz as one "The Most Powerful Texans in High Tech," and among "Persons of the Year" by abc.com, and she is the recipient of the City of Austin's *2001 Susan G. Hadden Telecommunity Award*. Ana is also a published writer included in several anthologies, and author of *Grannie Jus' Come!* , a book inspired by her childhood memories of her loving grandmother. Ana is now the proud grandmother of fiery toddler, Ashley Mia.

Themba-Nixon, Makani

Makani is executive director of *The Praxis Project*, a nonprofit organization helping communities use media and policy advocacy to advance equity and social justice. A long time organizer and nationally renowned trainer, Makani has published numerous articles and case studies on race, media and policy advocacy. She is co-author of *Media Advocacy and Public Health: Power for Prevention*. Her latest book is *Making Policy, Making Change* available from Jossey-Bass.

Tri Dish, Pete

pe'tre dish (n): a squat, cylindrical, transparent article of laboratory glassware, useful in observing resistant strains of culture in aetherial media. Pete is one of the founders of pirate station *Radio Mutiny, 91.3* FM in Philadelphia, and its legal successor *RadioVolta.org.* He is also a founder of the *Prometheus Radio Project*, an organization that organizes for low power radio and provides free assistance to LPFM applicants. He actively participated in the FCC rulemaking and the grassroots organizing campaign that led up to the adoption of LPFM. He tours the country regularly to help start community radio stations and fight for democratization of media speaking at radio stations, colleges, coffee shops, living rooms, garages and even the CATO Institute. He holds a BA in Appropriate Technology from Antioch College.

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HIGHLANDER MEDIA JUSTICE GATHERING

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS
>   ANA SISNETT
>   SEETA PEÑA GANGADHARAN
>   ALIZA DICHTER
>   MAKANI THEMBA-NIXON
>   ANA LILIA BARRAZA
>   DAVID HONIG
>   MALKIA CYRIL
>   JEAN ANN FOX
>   PETRI DISH
>   MARK LLOYD
>   CHERYL LEANZA
>   JANINE JACKSON
>   JEFF PERLSTEIN
>   SHARON MAEDA
>   JEFFREY CHESTER
>   RANDY ROSS
>   DEE DEE HALLECK
>   SHERI HERNDON

REPORT: Highlander Media Justice Working Group Meeting (August 2002)
Prepared by: Ana Sisnett, Executive Director, Austin Free-Net

The gathering of over 20 print, video, radio, community technology, Internet and other producers, activists, consultants, and advocates was, if nothing else, quite simply, an eye-opener. The following "report" is quite subjective and informed by my writerly self, my "kid in a candy store" self and by my deep gratitude for the tremendous opportunity to bring my "whole self" through my personal and political contributions to the work of media, community technology and social and economic justice in collaboration with the Highlander Center.

First and foremost, for me, personally and professionally, the gathering was a much-needed opportunity to meet others working throughout the US and beyond to ensure freedom of information and dissent in various media through a variety of strategies in the aftermath of 9/11/01. The gathering was also a dream, perhaps taken for granted by some of my colleagues in major urban areas, to examine current political issues and community technology within the context of social and economic justice. Finally (for now), the event was a rare instance of participating in an event that did not place my work in the area of access to computing resources and training issues at the center of attention and purpose.

The opening exercise of telling the stories of our names was a particularly useful and moving experience. The evening of "show and tell" was also most welcome. I was able to "bond" with several participants and I certainly welcomed hearing clear-thinking, articulate people address issues in ways that I don't always hear or fully get to integrate during my day-to-day business of running a nonprofit.

As the week progressed, I recognized that bringing together a such a highly-driven, incredibly busy group of people does not always lend itself to restful, free-form reflection and sharing of strategies and experiences-- instead of having a stated goal, campaign, organization or other predetermined result firmly established.

If I could articulate disappointment, it would be that I had no idea that the field of community technology and public access to computing resources, the Internet and training did not yet seem considered "media" (ie, radio, video, television, print) by a group of well-informed individuals. Ultimately, I think my work fit somewhere on the spectrum between Technology Works for All and MediaChannel.Org, and I yearned to be as free-wheeling as Prometheus Radio, as rooted in civil rights as the Civil Rights Forum on Communications Policy, as experienced as Dee Dee Halleck, more aware of and vocal and visible in the CRIS campaign, as sharp-edged as FAIR, and a partner of the Consumer Federation of America. There is much work to be done in this area but I may have to defer to others for the time being. I also promised myself and AFN staff that I would resist the urge to make sweeping changes upon my return.

The Highlander staff was challenged by a "donor-driven" activity that differed in scope, focus, purpose, methodology, and constituencies to those workshops and other gatherings conducted on Highlander's initiative, and through its program staff and community-based partnerships in the South and Appalachia. Of course, Highlander staff rose to the challenge by calling out and addressing race, class, age and other dynamics unfolding in not-so-comfortable ways throughout the week.

To the credit of the participants, several were able to acknowledge and directly confront those areas of disagreement. Personally, as a veteran conference and workshop participant, I do believe that louder,

more disruptive voices sometimes prevailed for a number of reasons (and not necessarily for the better). This was a result of not having enough time to fully address these issues and is not a reflection on the facilitators' abilities. And, while I believe in honoring and welcoming youth activism and leadership, I do not believe that it should be at the expense of older or more traditional activism. I did not agree that the priorities of the group should be centered on race and class; it is my firm belief that we as activists must go to the "trouble" of addressing the "laundry list" of oppression in all forms whenever and wherever the opportunities arise. I must also learn to be one; as a Black immigrant lesbian parent and grandparent, it is therefore important for me to be an ally --mistakes and all--to Jews, to the disabled, to youth, to the poor, the people facing the barriers of literacy and formal mis-education, refugees, exiled and other involuntarily displaced peoples--all this and more, if I'm to know what to expect of my own allies.

For the trip, I bought Tinkertoys to create an interactive model of community technology for a taped portion of the gathering; my granddaughter has inherited my props. I read my soon-to-be out of print children's book, *Grannie Jus' Come*! during show and tell; I also donated two copies to the Highlander and traded one for Dee Dee Halleck's *Hand-Held Visions*.

I did return to my community with renewed commitment to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to articulation of communications as a civil and human rights issue. I also came away with the confirmation, validation and acceptance of the urging in me to more firmly ground my activism and the work of my organization within the context of social and economic justice and to further articulating media justice among my colleagues in community technology, nonprofit and community-based circles. I am also proud that Prometheus Radio's Pete Tri Dish was able to visit Austin soon after the Highlander gathering (I wasn't able to attend, unfortunately).

I would be remiss if I did not report here that the opportunity for working with the Highlander long-term was enhanced by my participation in the Working Group, followed closely by a Ford-funded Learning Exchange between Highlander and Austin Free-Net. I organized and hosted 4 Highlander staff who visited with Austin Free-Net's staff, customers, partners, and several other community organizations and efforts related to their work, and participated in a community gathering; Highlander's Director, Suzanne Pharr was also interviewed for Women's International News Gathering Service (WINGS), a 25 year-old syndicated news service, and *Women's News Hour*, an Austin community television program.

As part of the Exchange, Austin Free-Net and the Highlander have begun to share their expertise in the areas of community technology (including rural broadband, wireless connectivity, an online activism), and socio-economic justice, respectively. During the recent visit, Austin Free-Net staff, board of directors and public access customers shared their experiences of community technology, thereby setting the stage for our visit planned for Spring 2003.

I will report more fully on the Exchange elsewhere but I am compelled to say here that the Highlander visit was a catalyst for important Austin Free-Net community-building efforts. We held a community reception and gathering which opened with a greeting of another indy bookstore owner, Indigenous Elder/Brother, Raul Salinas of Resistencia Bookstore and with a brief poetry reading. The venue, Bookwoman, is the only remaining feminist bookstore in Texas /the US, and one of the few remaining independent bookstores in Austin; the event allowed us to call attention to the plight of independent bookstores threatened by the expansion of a major bookstore chain within blocks of 3 independent book and/or record stores. Poets included the Elder Salinas, and the South Asian inspired by Suzanne

Pharr's *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism* to be co-founder of Trikone-Tejas, a pan-Asian GLBT student organization and, finally, the co-editor and independent publisher of an anthology of Texas poets responding to 9/11/01. Others present included about 30 local and statewide peace, justice, youth, consumer, lesbigaytrans, HIV/AIDS, community technology, nonprofit, and other activists, and interested individuals shared where they find the greatest hope for change in the aftermath of 9/11/01 and the shift in political and funding priorities. Many participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to break fear, isolation, and pessimism by hearing others speak of hope.

On Jean Ann Fox's suggestion, I have touched bases with of the Consumer's Union in Austin. Liza Dichter has put me in touch with her mother who provides online resources for senior citizens, Dee Dee Halleck and I have mutual friends/colleagues in Austin, I think of Janine Jackson and Seeta Peña as mentors, Randy Ross is a colleague I expect to run into on a community technology project we're both involved with, Trabian Shorters and I may be in an upcoming book on Blacks online, and Pete Tri Dish Hopefully, Mark Lloyd will visit Austin and while here, we will work to connect him with the Texas Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund, faculty of area colleges and universities, and media and civil rights activists. And, I hope to soon meet a Highlander board member living in Austin.

All of the sentiments and experiences shared here were, nonetheless, profoundly humbling because the gathering was held at the historical Highlander Research and Education Center. Becky Lentz, the Ford Foundation, the Highlander Center, Nan Rubin and the emerging Highlander Media Justice Working Group are to be congratulated for an inspiring gathering of people deeply dedicated to increasing awareness of the human and civil rights to communication, and to strengthening media justice efforts everywhere.

Ana Sisnett
Austin Free-Net
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Notes on the Highlander Gathering
Seeta Peña Gangadharan

Personal reactions:
- The shift in the terms of the debate from "media democracy" to "media justice" is a tremendous leap that needs to be made. It makes the entry point into the issue much clearer. Through its usage, we don't only fall back on wonderful allusions to the Fourth Estate and free speech, etc., but engage this idea of the right to communicate AND to be heard (as a human right).
- Also, with race and class at the forefront of the discussion, the entry point into this issue is much more well-defined. Here issues of representation can link up with public policy--and probably not only in the service of media policy.
- Media justice should be in the service of other movements. Media justice can be a second message in the struggle for any movement.
- Talking about what we need to do (i.e., in some cases give up) in order to get other people in the room is a major awakening.
- The conversations that took place in the room over the gathering were difficult but necessary.

Questions:
- If media justice is in the service of other movements--can the media policy problems really be addressed?
- Aren't there some issues pertaining to more specialized communities that can also be pushed to the forefront?
- Are we divided with the policy advocates along basic lines of "content" versus "access" issues? Why is "content" not a policy issue?
- Can't we marry what media literacy projects are accomplishing (developing values, culture and identity, helping disempowered people find a voice and build skills, etc.) with what's happening on the policy front?

Needs:
- It's not entirely clear how ethnic media can fit into this picture of media justice. The policy issues do not seem explicitly related (although I think there's a way to do it--without using media justice activists as poster children).
- Organizers. Media activists do not have organizing skills, but there are some individuals who might do it well.
- Spokespersons. You cannot lead a media justice movement with an un-diverse, set of policy wonks.
- Positive, pro-active vision. Not just a reactive one.

Projects that seem really essential:
- The popular education piece is a necessary piece to moving forward. It should be developed, piloted, honed and well-documented. It could be a really opportunity independent media types to come out of the woodwork and be engaged in this process. It's also a possible chance to map what's available in a pilot community.
- Another meeting with more social justice activists in the room or this series of listening projects would be really effective. (This is similar to what Phoebe was talking about helping with.)

- Another meeting specifically on messaging and outreach of independent media folks would be useful. I guess this would tie in with a 101 training course on activist strategies and techniques for independent media practitioners.
- Clear Channel and cable licensing campaigns can follow a basic template, have same artillery, but be controlled and implemented locally according to needs and concerns. In the case of Clear Channel, the stations should not just be shut down but made receptive to local influence in programming content. (i.e., it shouldn't just be a 'Clear Channel sucks" thing.)

& & &

To: Becky Lentz and Nan Rubin
From: **Aliza Dichter**

October 10, 2002

What an incredible opportunity and honor to be at Highlander. We did push past some of the usual boundaries that keep us from learning or saying new things, we did have some difficult (this is good) conversations among people who may never have engaged in that way before. There were so many wise and insightful minds in the room and the chance to connect, to talk, walk and dine with them was great (the summer camp part).

I found the meeting was incredibly helpful in continuing to coalesce my ideas about the best ways to work to advance media/comm. as a political issue. I don't see this as a "movement" but as a layer and force for all "movements" -- in other words, I think we need to be figuring out how to work with other political advocacy and social justice leaders (who emerge from their own constituencies), listen to them, and support them by adding the analysis of the media issues that relate to their work. This is how our work becomes relevant, not because we try to convince them it is. They want media/PR support and we can also help with that along with helping them incorporate media reform/policy/activism into their work. We need to listen. Build relationships.

Follow-up is hard. This group that met is a busy, dedicated group of people, most of whom are urgently working, under-resourced, on too many projects at once. I am sorry the meeting didn't give us more time to talk about our current projects, directions and initiatives and figure out the best ways to collaborate and support each other *within and across* those. I think that is sorely lacking, and the "action steps" seemed mostly to focus on new (and, yes, desperately needed) initiatives and projects. Which means you come back from the meeting with more work and responsibilities to pile on, not necessarily connections that make your current work better or more effective.

As an organizer, or as someone working within media-issues groups to help us figure out how to organize around these issues, I found the meeting really valuable. We didn't actually talk about organizing per se, about how ideas of change and power and rights are spread and acted upon. And there may not have been enough organizers there to learn from (we did a history of the right in the US, might have been more useful in that short time to talk about the history of social change ideas & how they take hold). But both the people there and the context of Highlander had a big impact on my thinking about these things.

Reflections:

Many of us concerned about the politics & social implications of media and communication need to practice what we preach:

We are not practicing the values we push: localism, diversity, cultural-relevance, community connections, accessible public affairs content, the power of communication.

We say those things are crucial for media. We should be making them central in our work and how we advance our issues. I would say we -- people working on media policy/ reform/ "media democracy" -- are often failing on these issues. But there are people among us who are worth learning from.

Communication: Especially the policy/reform folks. We talk about the importance of communication and PR and independent media but we don't have communications strategy built into our work: we aren't producing popular materials, we aren't working with media makers and as media makers to communicate on these issues by making good media (radio psas and articles and brochures, etc), taking advantage of public occasions for outreach on these issues. We aren't thinking enough about messaging and tapping into public concerns and values.

And we have totally underdeveloped approach to communicating through mainstream media-- those in DC have their methods and have good relationship with press, but that doesn't spread to other and local groups on these issues: it's the same spokespeople saying the same things (even if what they are saying is smart). This is changing and more so since more activist folks are getting involved (reclaim the media, Indymedia.org) I am seeing independent media wanting to do coverage of these issues. What about ethnic and community media? We need focus and funding to do this.

Funding implications:

It occurs to me there are many powerful pieces doing work in this field but what's most missing is the connections. The infrastructures and opportunities for collaboration and synergy.

* DOCUMENTATION! This is huge-- there have been so many important gatherings and meetings in the past year (and of course, earlier). The organizers' meetings in NY and Philly, Ruckus camp, Highlander, LaborTech, Seattle, the ARCA meeting, the anti-poverty conference, so so many. There are maps of the field (our allies, constituents), tactics, new language, lists of challenges and solutions, histories …etc that have all been drawn up on big white papers never to be used again. There is some continuity only because of those of us who overlap and keep debriefing each other, but we really need to be capturing and storing and sharing this stuff in a regularized way. We need support to do this.

As I look through my notes from Highlander I realize how powerful it would be to track and share these ideas, to have a way for these meetings to build on each other. I think it would be great to fund someone who has been a participant but who is also a great listener and note-taker and organizer.

For example, I think it would be amazing if Seeta or Sheri were funded to take this on as a project and do and gather the documentation, also gather feedback and input from others and then find a way to make it available and accessible. Also perhaps working with researchers or others who have good insights into the best ways to use online tech for info sharing of this sort. Perhaps MC could be a home for it but we need someone, right away, to have the job of gathering notes and reflections from folks before it's too late.

* ORGANIZERS: the advocacy groups need money, but they also need to learn how to listen and how to do outreach. They are doing crucial work-- the few groups in DC are the only ones really monitoring and interpreting regulations and filing responses. Funders could give them money specifically to hire organizers to work with them (not just young people to work as assistants), smart experienced people who have a different perspective and a justice orientation to enable the advocacy groups to connect to existing political communities and movements, use the web better for organizing,

etc. Also to help the policy advocates broaden their networks and base and frame the issues for people in more effective ways.

*   MEDIA WORK: As per PR above, perhaps an "outside" group could be funded for this work to help with the media-making and communications/PR strategies and connections to indie, ethnic media -- this could also help us bring in new voices, especially people of color. They'd get the issues content from DC and other groups and help frame & publicize it.

<div align="center">* * *</div>

….Of course the project ideas that came out of the meeting were really powerful and relate to these issues above. I understand that project proposals will be submitted shortly and I will be helping to draft the popular education piece that directly relates to many of my concerns stated above.

Thank you, Becky, for making this possible and thank you Becky and Nan for the honor and opportunity to be included in this gathering. I look forward to the next developments, and deeply value the relationships and collaborations I was able to grow and enhance there.

Liza Dichter

<div align="center">* * *</div>

Comments from the Highlander Gathering

The meeting was the best such gathering I went to. I have been to several attempts to bring together folk doing media work: Blue Mountain, Spirit in Action, both media and democracy congresses -- you name it. I keep going in hopes that I will find the meeting where people really want to figure out how to work *together* to make change.

This meeting was the closest I got to participating in such a gathering. The participants were engaged. The discussion honest. People were willing to take risks. They really cared about the meeting and the outcome. They took ownership of the process and the post work. It was really wonderful to see.

It was great to host it at Highlander. The movement "vibe" and the facilitation was flexible and open. It helped facilitate the sense of collective responsibility for the outcomes.

I think another important fact was the amount of preparation Nan Rubin undertook to speak with the participants; really listen to folk's concerns and help shape it into an agenda. People didn't feel as if they were invited to a set deal, they do their spiel and tune out while someone else performs. Nan helped set a framework where everyone recognized their input and stayed tuned in *for the process* as well as any presentations. In fact, it was great that the meeting was presentation light and discussion heavy.

I wasn't sure I felt so positive when I first left it. It was intense and some parts of it was painful. As a mid level veteran of this work (there were folk who had more years on me for sure), I had my share of tough encounters in the areas where race, class, gender intersect with what people call media democracy. I felt buoyed by the use of the term media justice to describe the work. And I realized, the more I reflected on the meeting that the painful parts were where the most progress took place. I'm really affirmed in this after attending yet another media gathering a week ago that didn't scratch any surface.

The Highlander Meeting went deep and as a result, will have lasting impact on how the work is done.

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Praxis prak' sis 1. exercise or practice of an art, science or skill. 2. The practical application of theory; action informed by theory. 3. The synergy between theory and action; the highest form of practice. The Praxis Project 1. An innovative not for profit institution dedicated to capacity building, technical assistance, research, and training for community-based policy change.

From: Ana Lilia Barraza
Radio Bilingue (KUBO – El Centro)

To: Ford Foundation

Re: Highlander Media Justice Gathering

To begin with, I was very impressed that this meeting came together. I had never had the opportunity to sit and have an in-depth discussion with people from such diverse media backgrounds. I think that we had a good representation from TV, radio, new media, and media policy advocates.

The Highlander Center was an excellent setting for such a meeting, due to the fact that it allowed us to have a frank discussion about the barriers that keep us from working together. These obstacles, we found out, sometimes have to do with racial and generational issues that we are loath to bring up out of politeness. Yet, these issues cannot be resolved without this type of discussion.

In addition, we had the opportunity to share our work and achievements. Many of those in attendance had just a vague idea of how Radio Bilingue works and it was a great opportunity to describe to this group the goals and mission of Radio Bilingue. But more importantly, I was able to learn more about the projects that exists in the struggle for social justice. And, because some of the participants have been in the struggle for more than 20 years, the younger participants received a bit of a history lesson.

The goals that came out of this meeting are lofty: basically, they are to organize as media advocates around issues of media justice and to create popular education campaigns to inform others about the importance of media justice in their communities. I think that having a follow up meeting is essential to make sure that these goals are reached.

In summary, the highlander meeting was a valuable experience in two very important ways. First, it reminded me, as a radio producer and administrator, that the work we do at Radio Bilingue is part of a larger bed of work that deals with social justice and media. Secondly, it highlighted the importance of working with other groups, in one way or another, on issues of media policy. This is especially true of Radio Bilingue because it is one of the few Latino controlled public media entities in the United States and Latinos must not be left out of the debate regarding media control and social justice.

# # #

1. I appreciate the hard work Nan put in pulling so many eclectic personalities from around the country together.

2. Highlander was OK for a first gathering, but it's really not conducive to serious long term business, unless you just want to limit the effort to committed lefties who regard Highlander has sacred ground. It's too small, there's no 24/7 Internet access, and there isn't the depth of in-house staff with specialized media advocacy expertise. Future meetings should be at (e.g.) the Aspen Institute or the National Urban League.

3. We were missing the national churches (National Council of Churches, United Church of Christ, Hebrew Congregations, Catholic Bishops) unions (AFTRA, CWA) national civil rights groups (NAACP, Urban League, LULAC, La Raza, NOW, AWRT), the Leadership Conference, Lawyers Committee and People for the American Way. No one can build a lasting coalition without these heavy hitters.

4. We also need to reach out to honest conservatives who don't like one-note or silent and trivial media either. We can't win without them, so we need to build cross-ideological coalitions. (MMTC does this pretty well -- we have ultraliberals and honest conservatives, but all of us are progressives on civil rights.)

5. It would have been useful for a representative from Ford to have been there, both to listen and to talk to us about proposal-writing.

6. This isn't that major a point, but I still feel that more time should have been devoted to cross-fertilization and strategy-sharing among those who didn't know one another, with less time spent on political philosophy and "movement-building." A movement is built from relationships, and it is nurtured over time, not germinated instantly in a short meeting. We didn't have enough time to really explore what each other was doing and thereby develop the relationships which are a predicate to having a movement. *[Note: David left a day early, so did not participate in the final discussion on strategic directions.}*

7. The final report we were sent stated that the "Washington-based public interest groups" have "a long history but uneven ties to national membership or grassroots organizations." We represent 50 such organizations, so I was puzzled by this assertion. The final report also states that a division among the participants "arose when the issues of race and class were raised in the group" and that "[t]hose on the policy end of the media activist spectrum felt that issues like race and class, which engender strong reactions and divide people, were not issues that should be central to the media advocacy agenda" while the community organizers felt these issues should be part of the agenda. The policy people there were Cheryl Leanza, Mark Lloyd, Jean Ann Fox, Jeff Chester and me. Obviously, none of us thinks that race or class is divisive or secondary. Speaking only for MMTC, we've spent 15 years doing nothing else; most of our clients are defined on the basis of race or class.

8. Let's recognize and deal with the fact that the agenda right now is not set by us. Until we're in a position to set the agenda, we have to play according to the timetable and rules of those who do set the agenda. Right now, Agenda Item #1 is the FCC media ownership proceeding. Comments are due in less than four weeks (we've asked for more time; so has MAP, and so have the unions, Jeff's organization and others). If we spend a lot of time and effort focusing on short-term issues, we'll wake up one morning and discover that while we were asleep, the potential for democratic media is gone.

Like it or not, the greatest need <u>right now</u> is to help the understaffed, underfunded, way overworked "Washington based public interest groups" -- and especially MAP, which is way in the lead on this -- advocate to save the electronic media from being monopolized and homogenized, and to preserve a measure of diversity and equal opportunity. Much as I love to do small media and join demonstrations, this fight isn't going to won through those tactics. It's going to be won through high-quality research and intensive litigation, and through securing access to big media to tell our story.

David Honig
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10/31/02

* * *

Malkia Cyril

As Director of the Bay Area's first Youth Media Council, the Highlander meeting on media policy was a huge success.

For what seemed like the first time in a while, local organizers, regional intermediaries, and national policy folks were able to convene and raise important political questions about the scope and history of media policy, identify missing components and relationships, examine the goals of media policy work and the role of grassroots community organizations and disenfranchised communities versus the role of policy wonks and lawyers in this very needed sector of the social justice movement.

The challenges that arose during the meeting between those that had done media policy work for a long time from a "beltway" perspective and those that approached access to information from a more community based methodology opened up strategic space for not only expanded discussion, but new relationships, increased strategic coordination, and tangible collaboration.

Since that time, the Youth Media Council and Media Alliance have partnered in a corporate media accountability campaign targeting 106.1 KMEL, a flagship Clear Channel radio station in the Bay Area whose audience is primarily young urban people of color. The goals of this campaign are:
1. To amplify the voices of marginalized youth,

2. Increase media access for youth organizers and local artists,

3. Improve the accountability of 106.1 KMEL to it's audience.

We are excited about this new relationship, and believe that this new campaign will indeed create new opportunities for marginalized youth in the Bay Area to speak for ourselves.

We credit this relationship and this new campaign to the Highlander meeting and look forward to the continued growth of this network.

# # #

November 1, 2002

Nan, I enjoyed meeting you and the interesting cross section of advocates, educators, and practitioners that you brought together at the Highlander Center in August. It was also nice to be back in East Tennessee where I went to school. Here are some reflections on the event and your report. Your final report stated: *"Policy work is largely centered in a handful of Washington-based public interest groups with a long history but uneven ties to national membership or grassroots organizations."* Consumer Federation of America is an association of about three hundred state, local, and national pro-consumer organizations. These groups represent over 50 million consumers. Our policy positions are adopted by our membership and we are made up of grassroots organizations. So we feel that we speak for (and help our members speak for) a diverse population on communications issues from a consumer perspective.

At Highlander I was happy to be in touch with groups that can extend our grass roots capacity and help us reach an even larger group of grassroots advocates. Although we are constantly striving to work with diverse groups, this will help us in our out-reach to minority groups and to groups that work on media content issues.

CFA, one of the national policy groups that attended, has for decades believed that advocacy in the consumer interest on telecommunications, digital democracy, and media issues is essential to protect all segments of the community. Issue advocacy is not the whole ballgame, but consistent, in-depth participation at the policy level in Washington, at the state capital, and before local governing bodies is essential for protecting the consumer and public interest in a democratic communications market.

CFA staff includes Nancy Register, who works to develop opportunities and capacity among our state and local members who are interested in digital democracy issues; and Mark Cooper, a national expert on communications, media, and digital issues, who is a prolific researcher, report-writer, and player at the Federal Communications Commission and other venues where decisions are being made. Nancy and Mark have worked for several years to involve our local grassroots members in media, communications, and open-access issues and advocacy opportunities. They are building a network of grassroots organizations who can participate in policy debates and provide public support for reform.

As I introduced myself at the Highlander retreat, I came to CFA following a career as a grassroots consumer advocate, leading state-wide volunteer organizations in Pennsylvania and Virginia, and as a local government consumer protection agency director and staff member of a state utilities regulatory agency.

The Highlander meeting was a good opportunity to introduce the more traditional consumer advocacy groups to leaders who work with media and communications issues from slightly different perspectives. While introductions and work-sharing took up a large portion of the Highlander meeting, future gatherings should concentrate more on in-depth work on the issues, strategies, and funding necessary to make real changes that benefit all consumers.

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Thoughts about Highlander from Petri Dish

This summer, I was invited as a representative of the Prometheus Radio Project to attend the Highlander Media Justice Gathering. The first major activity in the gathering was a role-play in which we were supposed to do a five-minute presentation about our organization's work. We were supposed to do this as if we were presenting to a small grassroots civil rights group in Alabama. This was a very funny coincidence for me, since the Highlander gathering was just days before the beginning of Prometheus's summer tour of 22 Southern cities where we would be making many presentations to groups just like that.

We also spent some time identifying obstacles that hinder our success in the media reform movement. This was helpful for establishing common ground and setting the stage for later discussions at the gathering.

One of the prime goals of the session was to build powerful collaborations between groups that focus on media issues and the larger social justice movement. Prometheus already has extremely strong collaborations with many social justice organizations. The main way that we collaborate is working with organizations that are trying to start radio stations, including the *Coalition of Immokallee Workers, the Southern Development Foundation, American Friends Service Committee, League of United Latin American Citizens, Friends of the Earth,* to name a few among the dozens of close partners and hundreds of groups that we provide support for. And of course, we also already collaborate almost constantly with *Indymedia, Media Access Project, Media Alliance*, members of *Media Channel* and other groups present. The challenge for Prometheus is not in starting collaborations, because we already collaborate with all sorts of organizations nearly constantly-- but in thinking strategically about how to deepen the relationships.

The individuals assembled at Highlander were intelligent, talented, and committed activists, but one form of diversity that we lacked was that most groups there were largely urban focused (with the exception of the representatives of the Highlander school itself, who were in a facilitation rather than participation role). Because of the limitations imposed upon Low Power FM (LPFM) by Congress, the prime constituency of Prometheus is in small towns. This meant that our most immediate form of collaboration that we generally do with social justice groups was really not possible at this time with most of the organizations assembled at the Gathering. Low Power FM will only be allowed in big cities after a great deal more struggle and several more years of pitched battles in Congress.

Another exception to the urban slant at the gathering was Radio Bilingue (who we've been working with-- particularly on our recent construction of what we believe to be the first Asian-American owned radio station in the United States- a LPFM station for the Hmong Community in Fresno, California, where Radio Bilingue played an advisory role).

New and deeper collaborations that emerged from Highlander are very promising. One of Prometheus' main goals has been to help develop the successful low power stations and their supporters into a fighting constituency for media policy reform in many arenas. During the Gathering several plans emerged with certain groups to strategically partner to use our networks to reach our constituency with certain key media reform initiatives.

Prometheus has invested a great deal of time and resources into collecting contact data from our tours, our radio station building events, our lectures, workshops and from those who submitted comments on the LPFM proceedings at the FCC. We are about to use these databases to mobilize individuals to comment to the FCC and Congress, using materials collaborated on by ourselves, FAIR, Media Alliance, Center for Digital Democracy, Civil Rights Forum, Media Channel and others.

Another exciting new collaboration is with Youth Media Council and Media Alliance. These two organizations are engaged in a campaign against a local Clear Channel radio station that fired a popular local DJ for hosting Barbara Lee, the sole Congresswoman who voted against the war in Afghanistan. Media Alliance and Prometheus have initiated a national campaign to focus the widespread public disgust with the largest radio-chain owner Clear Channel into opposition to further deregulation of ownership of mass media. Youth from the Youth Media Council will undertake a study of the local Clear Channel affiliate, and Prometheus will use our expertise in FCC procedure to bring the Youth Media Council findings into a format that the FCC will accept as evidence against media concentration of ownership. This creates the radio analogue of the TV strategy that Mark Lloyd outlined at the later *Reclaim the Media* gathering in Seattle which many of the Gathering attendees were involved in. Lloyd's strategy involves collecting evidence for presentation to the FCC and Congress about consumer dissatisfaction with the current state of media.

For Prometheus, the Gathering at Highlander expanded our circle of trusted allies in this work. Our organization is relatively new, and it was very valuable to get insights from representatives of organizations at all the stages of the life cycle. The great strengths of Prometheus are our devoted constituency, our activist approach, our deep connections to the movement for social justice, our national expert volunteer base, our track record of winning policy reform and providing technical, legal and political support for our constituents- helping to make their dreams of building institutions of community based media into a reality. Our weaknesses are our lack of organizational and management sophistication, our personnel policies that demand inordinate sacrifice from staff at wages too low to attract or keep optimal candidates, and our relative lack of long term planning. The late night stories of organizational challenges were some of the most rewarding parts of the gathering for me. I personally learned a lot from talking to others who have similar positions of responsibility in small organizations that may have a different focus of mission, but face the similar problems of small start-up non-profits that have the task of planning for successful advocacy in the long-term.

Longstanding friendships were strengthened, groups who we had tangential contact with became closer allies, and some completely new bonds were formed with groups that we had not known before. I appreciate the opportunity to study at Highlander and prepare for Prometheus's future in strengthening the media reform element of the movement for social justice.

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Comments from Mark Lloyd

You were very clear from our first meeting that the "summer camp" for media activists would not attempt to facilitate an agenda for action . . . and that, of course, is what I was most interested in. So I was prepared to contain any frustration I would feel at lost opportunities . . . but the underlying frustration did not go away, it actually grew because of the apparent talent in the room.

As I indicated in the conference I was very impressed by the diversity of people represented, this diversity hinted at great possibilities to reach far into audiences and power largely untapped in previous efforts toward media justice. **To sum this thought up: Nan put together a great party list with the potential to make real change if they were supported and directed.**

Highlander was a good place to hold the meeting, and a place of great inspiration to me. I must admit I was very disappointed with Scot's attempt at a people's history. And there was in evidence very little thinking at Highlander about media reform . . . and they still seemed confused about the difference between that and good public relations when we left. Perhaps they should have done a better job of trying to understand communications policy issues before the meeting, to better facilitate a dialogue among communications activists, lawyers, and practitioners.

I must also admit little patience for the discussion of race, particularly among groups and individuals with little power to control even their own destinies. I've seen this dispute among people without power too much. Those of us who have attempted to diversify the media/public interest community can *not* count on support -- foundations no longer encourage diversity among the leadership of those they fund, and there is little diversity at the foundations and little honest communication among racial minorities and those in power in foundations to create social justice.

The solution to this problem does not start with browbeating Jeff Chester's small group or Media Access Project or MediaChannel to get more people of color, or getting people of color who are in positions of power to actually respond to the issues faced by people of color. Foundations must begin to bring people inside who can speak freely, and whose challenges will be honored and protected (even if disputed). That will ripple outward.

I was fortunate enough to know many of the people there and was happy for the opportunity to strengthen those ties, and I made new friends. The test of this start is whether it will sustain the many distractions which will arise over the next months to continue the work begun.

Thanks again for the opportunity to participate.

& & &

Cheryl Leanza's reactions to the
Highlander Media Justice Gathering
October 25, 2002

I found the gathering to be very informative, useful to meet others, but the process was extremely frustrating. We could have used much more information about the goals of the time before we arrived or at least at the start of the session. Despite that frustration, I sat down and wrote down a list of "take-aways" for myself that was three pages long after I came back to DC. As my response, I include some of those there. These were useful insights, and will inform my work. It remains to be seen if any of these will become real working projects.

Here are some of the ideas and thoughts that I felt were most meaningful:

· The people most affected should be making the decisions, but I am not sure who is the "most affected" in media policy.

· We would be more successful if we had an idea that most people can get excited about. Many groups that might care have a hostile relationship to the media. Problem – if the four TV station owners don't serve you now, little difference if there are 4 or 2 owners. These groups may not feel they have "won" even if the change we are advocating occurs.

· Those who work inside the beltway have a worldview that is very different from others. For example, because we know just how difficult it is to succeed on even the smallest battle, we tend to have more limited, pragmatic expectations, and also tend to see small victories as major achievements. They are major achievements in federal policy-making, but they may seem subtle to those not in our world.

· In order to make the movement diverse, **we must give some things up**. **We must cede some of our agenda. This is a real sacrifice.** To do this would require working on our core issues less – is that the right approach?

· The FCC is not an easy forum in which to encourage mass participation, but it plays a central role. Local groups resent being called on only when it is time to write letters to Congress. They need to feel part of the process.

· Younger people want to learn the history of this movement (particularly more broadly than their own little part.) We need to learn the history of other movements, how they knit together.

· The problem of an intergenerational split between the activists who got started in the 1970s and those who got started in the 1990s is significant. The more experienced individuals will have to sacrifice their own time and power to mentor new-comers, and to turn over leadership to the next generation. This is not a simple issue.

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Comments from Janine Jackson, program director, FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting)
FAIR has been doing media criticism, activism and policy advocacy for some 16 years now, and the terrain has changed tremendously in that time. A number of groups have done work that shared a basic philosophy but was not coordinated—work that created the foundation for the nascent media democracy movement. For example,

> -- media literacy has grown as a K-12 educational effort, partly in response to corporate encroachment on curricular development

> -- social justice advocates have incorporated an increasingly critical media awareness into their programmatic work (beyond simply trying to get coverage of their issues)

> -- alternative media have been encouraged by the decrease in production costs and developments from public access to low power FM

> -- consciousness of the anti-democratic tendencies of large corporations has developed with the anti-NAFTA and, later, the global justice movement

And, frankly, corporate media have gotten much worse—more consolidated, less diverse, more commercial, more sensationalistic--generating resistance among journalists themselves, including journalists' unions and professional associations.

But it's only in recent years that people have begun to speak of a "movement" for media reform. I think a key impetus for this has been (on top of the generally heightened awareness brought about by years of public education by existing groups) the mutual outreach and bridge-building between communications policy groups and activist-oriented, issue-based organizations.

Groups that have long been doing mutually-reinforcing work seem to now see themselves as part of a broader (if not exactly concerted) effort. In particular, policy groups increasingly recognize the value of an outside-the-Beltway constituency that can link media policy to coverage (and public understanding) of the issues they care about. And issue organizations, like anti-racism, labor and environmental groups, are increasingly aware of the importance of media reform as an organizing issue in itself, and not a mere adjunct to other sorts of work. This mutual acknowledgment is long overdue.

All of which is simply by way of indicating that meetings like August's at the Highlander Center are precisely what is needed right now, essential, in my view, to building the efficacy of this growing network of advocates, activists and educators.

In addition to concrete connections formed between individuals and institutions, I think we came away with:

> -- an increased knowledge—and, significantly I think, increased respect—for each other's work, accomplishments and challenges (a key ingredient for future collaboration)

> -- a useful overview of the landscape of existing organizations and projects, with an eye toward opportunities to work in coalition

-- an explicit awareness (too often grudging but not with this group) of the need for policy advocates to connect policy/regulation/government action with the issues most vital to social justice organizations -- and specifically to fully incorporate a race and class consciousness into both the explanation of problems with current media and any programs for structural reform. I can hardly overstate the importance of this development.

The media reform movement is happening; groups and individuals are doing this work and will continue to. There is still some question, however, about how much impact these projects can have, and how quickly, given the juggernaut toward increasingly commercial and decreasingly democratic media. Even marshaling a response to the current deregulatory whirlwind at the FCC will require tremendous effort and resources. But everyone at Highlander, and the varying constituencies they represented, has ideas about how to go forward in a more coordinated way. It was an exciting and encouraging conversation that I expect to prove fruitful.

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Highlander Report & Feedback: Jeff Perlstein - Executive Director, Media Alliance

From August 5-8 2002, I had the great pleasure of joining 21 allies for a 3 day intensive work session at the Highlander Center in Tennessee to help advance a justice-based agenda for media policy and technology issues.

The gathering was fruitful on a number of levels and, as to be expected, also contentious and challenging at times. Nan Rubin has done a thorough job of summarizing the gathering's purpose, methodology, content, interpersonal and inter-organizational dynamics, and conclusions. I am going to write briefly about my take on the gathering, which I hope will contribute to moving this work forward in principled and powerful ways. I absolutely encourage and look forward to a lengthier discussion and follow-up on this summary and the gathering in general.

I feel the greatest success of the gathering was the opportunity to meaningfully address the variety of obstacles to principled and powerful collaboration between participants, their organizations, and constituencies. There was strong work done towards developing a shared commitment to move beyond these challenges together: from the challenge of funding the many necessary aspects of this work and distribution of resources to overcoming the systemic and interpersonal manifestations of unequal power relations in our society (race, class, gender, age). Participants were able to honestly deal with these dynamics in a safe space.

This is absolutely necessary if we are going to work together and get beyond the previous baggage of the "media democracy movement" as well as much of the "progressive" organizing in the U.S. We were only able to have these discussions and move through them due to the commitment of time and energy placed upon them, and the siting of the gathering at Highlander with facilitators grounded in anti-oppression and civil rights work.

Having said this, I know I was frustrated by the lack of specific campaign initiatives and organizing plans fleshed out during our time together – time that is so precious due to our limited resources for ongoing face-to-face gatherings. Current and ongoing campaigns felt to me as if they were given a back seat to a more process-oriented mode and, as my friend says, there's no time to waste because "the roof is on fire".

But I guess I can't have my cake and eat it too – at least not in three days. I recognize the limitations of time and, more importantly, that the establishment of trust and shared goals and commitments is a necessary undergirding to future campaign work together and building for the long haul. I did feel that this goal could have been met and a balance could have been struck a bit more towards specific campaign planning, perhaps if the facilitators were a bit more familiar with this "field". I don't know if it would have been possible.

Forced to make a difficult choice one way or the other, I strongly agree with the decision to err in the direction chosen. We need to address these critical pieces immediately so that we can build a different model than has predominated in the "media democracy movement" and most "progressive" organizing to date. Our future success depends on it.

Based on the gathering I am hopeful we are on our way, but I am convinced significant resources will be needed to sustain the process initiated at Highlander so that the impact lives beyond "just another media policy talking session." This group should be re-convened and given resources to facilitate

ongoing communication, collaborative decision-making and campaigning, and other crucial participants must be identified and included.

Below I summarize in bullet points my take on key successes, areas for improvement, concerns, and suggestions for follow-up. I hope this is helpful…

I feel the key successes of the gathering were:
→ The development of trust between participants through acknowledgement and meaningful discussion of the obstacles to trust and collaboration and the establishment of clarity, respect, and understanding for moving us forward together
→ The identification of the key underlying issues we need to all address to engage a broader citizenry if we are to move media policy (constituency building, shared goals, shared language, resources)
→ The naming of shared premises and goals for our work
→ The generation of a number of specific ideas for initiatives to advance a justice-based agenda for media policy change driven by grassroots citizen engagement and action

Suggestions for improvement / concerns:
→ Facilitators more familiar with the "field" of media policy and technology issues
→ More time on how to plug into initiatives already underway
→ More time spent on outcomes and collaborative initiatives
→ More focus on which groups and networks are key allies that can be mobilized quickly
→ More discussion on who was missing from gathering that must be involved and how to work with them even if, and perhaps especially, they cannot be mobilized quickly (!)

Concerns:

→ That we clarify what is meant by "Media Justice" and recognize that it's initial conception was as a critique of the "media democracy movement" as it has been formulated until recently. Many organizations who attended the gathering are implicated in this critique, including Media Alliance and Indymedia of which I am involved, and must be held accountable if Media Justice is to have any meaning as different from the previous efforts – it can't be just a name change and really address the concerns raised.
→ That resources be found to sustain this ongoing work and help Highlander participants build together and with others upon the gathering's discussions, relationships, and campaign suggestions.
→ That the "Highlander group" not become institutionalized and self-perpetuating in a detrimental way that closed the process off from self-examination and critique.
→ That the "Highlander group" seriously reflect on its composition and who else should be included in future gatherings and discussions.

Suggestions for follow-up include:

→ Resources to pay for a coordinator to facilitate the communication needed for follow-up and forward motion
→ Clarification of expectations and commitments from Ford related to collaborative proposals and the ongoing work of the Highlander group

→ Popular education materials for broad public engagement, including language for emphasizing the shared goals identified at the gathering
→ Funding of a pilot project for media policy organizing that emphasizes local and regional efforts that build towards national work
→ Resources for the beltway policy groups to do their work and to build stronger links with local and regional constituencies
→ Funder briefings on this "field", its resource needs, and the opportunities it presents
→ Capacity Building for Media Policy work amongst constituencies under-represented in the media and in media policy work, including a Leadership Development program and Media Policy Training Institute (with a better name :)
→ A people-of-color led Media Justice convening that parallels the kickoff gathering for the Environmental Justice movement 10 years ago

I do hope this is helpful and truly apologize for the delay in getting it together. I look forward to following-up and continuing to build on the work that's gone before to create a new, collaborative, principled, and powerful model for advancing media policy work in the interests of social justice and human rights.

Very sincerely,

Jeff

<p align="center">& & & &</p>

November 17, 2002

TO: NAN RUBIN

FROM: SHARON MAEDA

RE: MEDIA WORKING GROUP AT HIGHLANDER CENTER

This is being written months after the gathering at Highlander. I did not go back and review my notes or your report, until after this memo was drafted. I wanted to capture the most lasting reflections.

And, as you remember, I had to leave a day early in order to get to Dallas for the National Asian American Journalist Association convention where I was coordinating a panel, and organizing efforts to elect more activist journalists to national office. We won the elections, but I missed the ideas for future coalition building and action portion at Highlander. Nevertheless, the meeting was definitely a highlight of 2002.

First, being at Highlander was incredible. Feeling the presence of legendary leaders for peace and justice was very special and I do think it affected our work in a very positive way. I have been at conferences and meetings with a number of the same folks, and there was always more posturing, or at least certain people wanting the last word. That behavior was almost total absent in the first two days at Highlander.

Second, the mix of participants was very rich and diverse. I think that no one knew everyone, yet all of us knew at least one or more participant. For me, it was particularly important to hear from people under 30 years old. It was a joy to hear their strength and commitment, but in a manner not shaped by the "movements" of the 60's and 70's when they were not yet born! And, it was also excellent to have the pioneers there as well. The instant willingness of people to share what they and their associates are doing was very impressive. I must admit that the only apprehension I had about attending was having to hear certain extremely strong and opinionated people dominate the discussion. That, incredibly, was minimal with the gentle guidance of the facilitators.

Third, the participants were all very clear about the threats to media access and what we had come to know as freedom of speech:
- Enormous concentration of electronic media ownership in a few hands.
- Increased limitation of public access to airwaves, with the one exception of low power FM radio stations, of which few are on the air and which provide access in a very limited geographic area.
- Increased Big Brother-type intrusions on rights to privacy.
- Elimination of any semblance of "minority" access at the FCC.

Those issues coupled with the post 9/11 frenzy to find terrorists in our midst, have put a real chill on the First Amendment and public access to information. Most political and community leaders, as well as funders, don't really understand the importance of communication to ALL of their issues; they typically will not support media access. I think that the Ford Foundation could play a pivotal role in educating their peers.

Since I wasn't there to volunteer to do any of the follow-up I was not disappointed in the lack of outcomes after being at Highlander. Sometimes, it is important to share issues and

ideas…to dialogue, debate and even argue…to learn and to trust….and to just BE. I took the gathering as a retreat and it truly fulfilled more than my expectations.

For me, no grand plan could possibly be designed without the retreat coming first. And, if we really intend to implement strategies, each one of use would have had to go convene similar retreats with the folks back home.

Given the results of recent elections and loss of civil liberties, we must continue to move forward. Rather than trying to get support for one grand plan, however, I think the "movement" can be built by working on different levels with different constituencies. Now, although disconnected by miles and months of time, I am ready to work with anyone and everyone to move at least part of the agenda forward. I think a big mistake would be to attempt to pull together a huge, unworkable - no matter how lofty - agenda, then fail to implement the project and meet our goals.

The exciting part is that each Highlander participant has a whole set of networks and access to individuals. A realistic next step would be to create a "newsletter" on-line in which we can all share what we are doing, what we know to be happening, etc….with sufficient annotation that others can join in on whatever actions, activities suit their priorities and needs. There would be great value if there were someone (it could start with a student intern and move toward a funded person) who could be the facilitator of all this information, to organize it in meaningful categories, to distribute it at least weekly, and keep us informed, and help us plug into more efforts, if we knew about them as far in advance as possible. I am constantly frustrated that I get emails from media justice activists that are announcing something that takes place tomorrow, rather than next month.

And, my other suggestion is to **develop a media strategy about media justice issues/advocacy.** Remember how we created that buzz about a new women's group called Spectra Communications? Well, I think with some funding and very little work, we could get virtual national coalition going. For example, a series of carefully timed community radio and cable access programming coupled with strategic full page ads with a huge list of organizations would give the appearance of major organization, even with a small initial organizing effort. It could build from there. What would it take for each of us at Highlander to get 10 organizations to sign on and to pass it onto 10 other organizations, etc…?

For example, a message on this order:
Dear Members of Congress: we do not appreciate the fact that you have taken away:
      1) media access issue (give compelling example)
      2) FCC access issue (another compelling example)
      3) First Amendment issue (more compelling examples)
Next election, we may only hear/see your paid advertisements, but we won't forget that you forgot us.

     Signed…….thousands of organizations.

Then, a separate box to solicit more participation by going to www.mediajustice.com
Well, sorry this is so late, and that I can't contribute further because I missed the last day. Thanks again for bringing together such diverse folks. It gives me energy to, in the words of longtime Highlander, Pete Seeger, "KEEP ON KEEPIN' ON………."

# # #

November 20, 2002

Dear Nan:

I appreciate participating at the Highlander conference last summer.

It was important to bring together on a regular basis people and organizations involved in the media and communications fields. I particularly thought that the concerns about the need to address "racial justice" issues was very important.

A more in-depth dialogue is needed as a follow-up in order to exchange information about the critical issues. There also needs to be a discussion about the history of efforts to achieve the goals of social and economic justice by the public interest media community.

Sincerely,

Jeff Chester
Center for Digital Democracy

<p style="text-align:center;"># # #</p>

From: Randy Ross

To: Nan Rubin
*   B. Lentz*

I'm sure what I have to express here has been probably covered by others but perhaps there are some pieces that might not be mentioned by anyone else.

Overall, the Highlander convening was excellent. I really enjoyed the environment; it was my first time to be at Highlander and thoroughly enjoyed the location and the facilities, and was in awe with the history of the place. It definitely felt like sacred ground to me the entire time.

The food was terrific! I would not mind going back again and hope to do that some day.

I was impressed by the energy gathered and the experience level; it definitely was a stellar group in my view. The facilitators were very good and humble; kind, and thoughtful. As with most Native people, cultural behaviors, I really tend to listen a lot initially, so if I was too quiet; it is not because I was disinterested or disconnected. I know Nan that you are familiar with cultural behaviors and values from people who are from the heart of Indian country; it's a pretty reserved place and sometimes non-verbal communications are more evident than verbal, etc.

You have gathered, otherwise, a very communicative group; no one there, in my view, was shy at all; not that this was a surprise or anything; but this might make a difference as you add more Natives to the dialogue and broaden the circle; we need to be mindful of mix and comfort levels based on these differences of thought, philosophy, and communication when other than mainstream experience or other than English language speakers are involved.

I offer this as a note for the future of course. I was fine; you know I can hang with chatty when I get in the mood; hell, I will stand on the street corner on Wall street and yell at a Yellow Cab like a Manhattan homelander....how's that for acclimation.

Serious, overall, it would have been great to have a bit more time to process alot of this; and to allow more time for small group and structured one on one to add to the group development mix and building trust and strengthening relationships between and among the participants. All was fine however, just something to think about is what I'm saying.

I know it was a difficult job to identify and select participants and there are always practical limitations and desired limitations. The level of diversity was well noted and you did a great job.

for my view; and as a request; it would be great to ensure we have more than one Native American person at the table. I realize Peggy Berry Hill was supposed to attend, but even if she did, I would still feel an imbalance of sorts. This is understanding that there is a tremendous void in Indian country for trained and/or experienced media policy folks. I tend to included because of my exposure and self-taught efforts; and willingness to explore beyond the traditional boundaries of Tribal/Federal policy work or advocacy.

 Indian professionals tend to get a narrow view sometimes; for many years, and still is the case, I don't see tribal government investment or tribal college investment of staff and resources in these tangential areas involving information rights. ie. CPSR, EFF, computers, Freedoms and Privacy, Privacy council, etc., etc., and you don't see vice versa; these folks at NCAI, NIEA, regional tribal organizational meetings conferences, or at NARF or even NMAI proceedings; exception perhaps the work of Elizabeth Weatherford.

The opportunity to build knowledge bridges and find cultural translators is important in my view. Media policy strategies are probably important in Indian country, but few, either the elected tribal council leadership, chairs, or even professionals like Indian lawyers; really know what and how to relate on these matters discussed at Highlander or at NYU Faye Ginsberg/Barb Abrash et al.

There is room and need for a strand or cell of Native Americans willing to cross the media policy divide and help make sense of it to tribal Nationhood and community.

Kade Twist, Marcia Warren, Roanne Robinson, James Casey, Jim May, George Baldwin, Suzan Shown Harjo, Vine Deloria, Dave Warren, Peggy Berry Hill, Susan Braine, Wade Chambers, John Tahsuda, Pat Spears, K. Bambi Krause, Lance Morgan, and a few others I can name, in my view, have a proven track record in creating a body of work that is highly relevent; and all are Native Americans.

We should make an effort to cast a broader net to gather the knowledge and wisdom of other Native American contemporaries.

Another thought, post-gathering dialogue; working with H.323 and multi-cast; caucus chat room software; audio conferencing and other web tools to continue the conversation; web portal for information management; and implement distance learning tools.

The location for future meetings should be wired, high speed access, 802.11 wireless, use technology to advance communication and content. Highlander needs a high speed circuit, dial-up is not effective.

I would like to see some help given to a Native media policy project, and then feed that into this mainstream dialogue to increase the dynamics, benefits, and understanding, thus peeling open more opportunities.

I mentioned it felt like I was on sacred ground, maybe a future gathering can be held in Indian country; no matter our culture or race, we always have to remember what is sacred, and what it takes to feed our spirit and soul. Highlander does this for me, inside, because I see the Smoky Mountains as Indian country, land of the Cherokees; Rosa Parks is a given, but I think it
helpful to always contextualize the continued human struggle, and the Cherokee people sacrificed greatly (and I know Highlander people realize this). South Dakota or New Mexico would be great for folks who don't understand connection to land, mother earth; and natural forces. This is probably beyond the scope but just a thought.

Finally, I see the need for training programs; policy development, and assessment; need, impact, opportunity.

I hope this is of substantive value to the dialogue.

best regards,

Randy

# # #

Final Report on the Media and Democracy Workshop at Highlander
DeeDee Halleck

Let me say at the outset that Nan Rubin's report is quite good. In this report, I am only adding some observations from my own perspective and some suggestions, which are in no way meant to criticize the terrific work which Nan did to put this together.

Participants
Nan was able to convene a good group which spanned many ages, class, ethnic groups and levels of experience. It was unfortunate that Mark Cooper from Consumer Federation and Andy Schwartzman were not there, as they are key players in the media policy reform movement. It might have been useful to have someone who had worked directly for the Telecommunications Sub Committee such as Wilhemena Cook or David Moulton, or with the FCC such as Michael Couzens, or a lawyer who has dealt with media policy issues in litigation such as Jim Harwood or Peter Franck.

Location
It was a good idea to have the meeting at Highlander, though there was no one who was able to give a first hand account of the history of the organization. Suzanne Pharr is a relative newcomer to the institution and did not have direct involvement with the civil rights struggles of the past. If we were to benefit from Highlander's history , it would have made more sense to have some testimonials and/or music (Guy Carawan lives on the property) to give a more direct feeling of the history.

Form and Procedures
The facilitation was not as good as it could have been. I felt that Suzanne (Scot was not that active as a facilitator) did not really understand the field of media policy enough to effectively lead the discussions. All too often activists and organizers tend to regard media as things to use: how to get good press, how to make a press release, etc. They do not really relate to media policy as something that needs to be thought of as a category which itself needs to be addressed. I think that Suzanne is probably a skillful organizer, but I did not get the feeling that she ever moved beyond this notion of media as something for activists to "use". My sense is that Suzanne was not really "in tune" with the participants, nor with the general organizing principles and goals staked out for the meeting. This made facilitation rather tangential to real problems and the real issues of media policy. Much time was wasted on "games" and facilitation strategies which diverted the rather impressive brain power there into what was unfortunately sometimes trivial or completely unrelated subjects.

I did not feel that there was enough time left over from what were basically preliminaries to really strategize about challenges and tactics to create a media policy reform movement.

Issues:
To me the big issues around media policy are (from a key list by Jeff Chester):
1.   Erosion of rights of local (and national) governments to regulate and receive compensation for use of public rights of way, due to industry convergence and consolidation.

2.   Apathy and Public, Educational and Government (PEG) access's poor image from the public's perspective. PEG does not do a good job of marketing their strengths to the general public.

3.   Local governments' eliminating public from franchise agreements.

4.   Elimination of ownership rules which promotes media consolidation destroying localism, inability of the "market" to provide from the public's information (and cultural) needs.

5.   Bandwidth grabbing by PBS and local governments without any real public payback.

6   Growth of DBS and lack of localism in those markets.

7.   Threats to the open structure of the internet: control of access through high speed providers.

8.   The almost total loss of the public interest, convenience and necessity in telecommunications regulation.

9.   The increasing repression of the Patriot Act and other counter terror measures.

10.   The need to attend to media issues on a global scale: to participate in the discussions around the World Summit on the Information Society and work with CRIS – Communication Rights in the Information Society.

Tactics:
1.   Get active on the national level around media regulation. This means organizing our constituencies, lobbying locally, statewide and nationally and even showing up at demonstrations, especially at the FCC
2.   Collaborate with other community media entities such as community radio, micro radio, media arts organizations, local independent newspapers, ethnic press, indymedia, etc, to advocate for democratic media.
3.   Bring together the sometimes fractured media reform movement by finding a common path between cable regulation advocates (NATOA, ACM) and the universal access advocates (Jeff Chester (Center for Digital Democracy) and the Media Access Project (Andy Schwartzman, etc). We need to draft a common demand for democratic communication that includes all of our needs.
4.   Educate and collaborate with local, regional and national civil rights, human rights and justice movements to incorporate media policy issues into their struggles.
5.   Sue the federal government about the loss of public interest.
6.   Work with international organizations addressing media policy issues on a global level.

Implementation
1. Fund staff positions in the on-going media advocacy organizations (MAP, Center for Digital Democracy, AIVF) for people of color to:
        a. initiate local organizing around media issues in communities of color
        b. educate the black congressional caucus and Latino and women members of Congress
        c. initiate a caucus of persons of color who work collaborative on media policy issues.
2.   Fund a small group (and some hot shot graphic designers) to make sexy popular education materials (several versions for several different communities): comics, radio carts, posters, PSA's etc. This work should be done in consultation with community groups who have experience in this sort of grass roots education.

3.   Fund a task force of ten people to meet with each other and to keep up with the CRIS and WSIS campaigns-- to bring it all home in local meetings, articles, manifestos (and to add to and inform

of a global level all the other four activities). They should be funded to attend these important meetings. Much can come from having a real presence there. Other countries have organizations that are funding participation: i.e. the Canadian development bureau, the British Community Media org (gets funding from national film and tv $$. Even third world countries feel it is important to have representatives. The US is sadly deficient...in this regard..)

4.   Fund five cities for organizing forums, access and radio discussions, with specific campaigns with specific targets-- i.e.
        a. constructing lowpower radio
        b. getting good cable/broadband franchises
        c. intervening for diversity on public tv
        d. organizing around radio diversity
        e. showing how access can work for good with celebrations of what is best in the field—

5.   Fund hearings with FCC Commissioner and/or Telecommunications Sub Committee Members, various progressive Caucus members, to present testimony about the internet, diversity, access, etc.

6.   Fund a legal team to defend the public interest.

7.   Fund a Rolling Thunder type revue/spectacle to SAVE THE INTERNET!!!
organized by the Highlander Media Justice Group, that goes to ten major cities (targeting large black churches and Latino cultural centers)with presentations
        a. about creeping closure of internet
        b. about representation of people of color on all the media
        c. about the threats to artists

Conclusion
In order for democracy to function, there must be free and open access to both sending and receiving of information. At the present time, the means for this communication is based on use of the airwaves, the civic infrastructures and the geostationary satellite paths. These are public resources which can be regulated so that the public interest is primary. The current tendency is to eliminate any requirement for public service. However there are models for public service communication that we can look to for examples to expand.

1.   PEG access has successfully build an alternative infrastructure to allow wide use of networks and equipment. Although ridiculed by corporate press, it actually has worked in many communities and deserved to be preserved and replicated.
2.   The internet in its most open and accessible form.
3.   The public service provisions on DBS satellite service.

On an international level, the ITU regulation of satellite paths, can be expanded to include public service provisions similar to PEG access regulation: channels and a taxing of commercial use of this global public resource. A majority of the satellites are military. These should be required to incorporate peace channels. Especially needed at this time in history.

DeeDee Halleck

& & &

Highlander Report

To: Becky Lentz and Nan Rubin
From: Sheri Herndon
Date: November 23, 2002
Re: Debrief after Highlander Gathering – August 2002

The Highlander Gathering was truly one of the highlights of this year for me. I only wish that we could hold more substantive strategy meetings like that with various groupings of people and organizational representatives. Bringing together small groups of dedicated people from around the country who are doing different yet connected work is one of the most important things we can be doing at this time. It doesn't happen enough. Also, the setting of the Highlander meeting was beautiful – not just for the nature surrounding us and the peaceful atmosphere and view, but because we were participating in the lineage of a powerful civil and human rights tradition. I was awed in browsing through their library. What a lesson in history and to understand our role as media activists and advocates and policy wonks in this tradition.

I came away with a strong desire to find the connections between all our work; to see how they overlap and where we could find solidarity so as to help each other in our respective work. This feels like an untapped mine or we're only at the tip of the iceberg. We must be sharing ideas and resources and collaborating more now than ever before. Where it's possible and not a burden we should be doing it, but we need to identify what those overlaps are to make it happen. What are our collective best practices and how do we continue to share them together. It's one thing to have these meetings, it's another thing altogether to continue the momentum so that the energy is carried forward. I hope we can have some follow-up meetings to address some of the dangling projects and threads to this meeting. The Highlander Gathering was also an incredible opportunity to network and share with some of my new and old heroes in the movement for creating democratic and participatory media, here in the States and globally. Apart from conferences where everyone is busy and either speaking, listening or preoccupied, I've never been in the same room with so many people working toward such common goals in terms of media and communication activism and policy. I am really grateful to Becky and the Ford Foundation for funding this meeting and for Nan who put it all together and made it happen. Thank you both!

In this report, I try to be honest and thorough while also being succinct (not one of my fortes thus I'm using bullet points – I wish I had more time to make this report more 'eloquent' but time is precious and I seem to have not enough of it). My critiques are in no way a critique of the efforts of Nan who did an incredible job and who should be commended for doing the work to bring us together. It just about how we can improve things for the next time and because these kinds of face to face meetings are invaluable, I feel it's necessary to evaluate where we were successful and where we weren't so that the next time will be an ever greater success. In these times on our planet, we can't afford the luxury of taking a long time to figure things out. We have to evolve rather quickly now. I am only speaking for myself here. I do wish we could have spent more time "debriefing" collectively because I would have gained a lot from hearing everyone else share, formally, in notes and reports, or more informally.

The criticisms and observations I make are not judgments but rather should be seen as opportunities for how to improve things and continue to build on the **foundational work** that the Highlander Gathering represented.

What Worked

- Bringing together such a diverse and powerful group of people is a catalyst in its own right; this is something we need to do more; it was a unique opportunity to talk and share work across many different sectors. We were all learning from each other.
- There was someone who was in charge of "documenting" the gathering. There were audio tapes of each session as well as someone typing up the notes as we went along. This is often a critical element that is left undone and usually handed over to an already overworked person who has no time to adequately prepare notes from the event.
- Creating a summary document that put together all of the critical work done at the gathering (the one Nan compiled).
- We pushed the boundaries concerning issues of race, gender, age and class in the meeting, that was both a personal and collective reflection. Most of the time this never happens. At the Arca Gathering several months later, this did not happen and I think then you have these unspoken vibrations that ultimately keep us from having greater solidarity and greater impact if we were all working together more as a coalition or network of media activists and advocates.
- The wonderful brainstorming and collective intelligence of the group. Wow. Very inspiring to talk about the challenges, trends and opportunities in the movement and the historical timeline. Seeing these put on paper was a powerful exercise.

What Didn't Work As Well

The Gathering itself:

- Our facilitators were not as attuned to the issues of media democracy and because of this, I felt we were not as focused as we could have been. This is not a judgment against Suzanne or Scott (who are wonderful people in their own right) but rather to acknowledge that having a facilitator well versed in our issues would have enabled us to push through things more quickly.
- The daily revisiting our agenda seemed to slow us down at moments.
- There was not enough time in general for the entire gathering. At least one or two more days would have helped us solidify our next steps and do some critical prioritizing that would have helped us all.
- Not enough attention was given to the collaboration possibilities or the connections between our work.
- Not enough time to talk about our various projects. This connects with the point just above. If we could have spent 1/2 day on this, we would have seen some quicker movement toward where we'd like to do more resource sharing or supporting each other where possible.
- Spending more time identifying the priorities from our lists of challenges, trends and opportunities. By identifying them, we could find some places for cross-pollination.
- We should have figured out ahead of time how to stay connected after the gathering and through what means and get everyone to agree to it (what's feasible given people's schedules).
- We didn't leave enough time at the end for next steps and the working group proposals – it felt kind of rushed. We came up with several awesome projects and people did sign up, but if we had had a bit more time over them face to face, I think our on-line virtual communication would be more productive. It feels like we're lacking some momentum on a few of them. Probably because we're all extremely busy.

Post Gathering:

- In general, not enough communication as a group since Highlander, whether that was on email; we never really did any kind of debrief about what worked and what didn't work – a simple evaluation. I realize it's not easy for a group of such busy people to do this, but this is all connected to the work that we love and feel passionate about so we should have made it more of a priority.
- We could have made better use of Trabian's on-line communication support (although he tried and I want to give him credit for that).
- We should have made better use of email and/or other on-line collaboration tools (like IRC or Wiki) to continue our discussion. A conference call with everyone to debrief after a few weeks might have helped. Since the conference I have not seen or read anyone's thoughts on the topic other than reading Liza's report. If we had all done that sooner and been talking on email, I think we would have done a more thorough job of evaluating the experience collectively and arrived at some more realistic next steps that people all felt we could accomplish.
- Not enough discussion about the Funding Exchange and how funds from the Ford Foundation will be funneled through the FE and how we as a group will interact with that funding opportunity(ies).

Suggestions

- Have a subgroup of people work on preparing the conference or gathering so that the responsibility doesn't fall just on one person. Nan did a great job trying to get us all to respond to possible agendas before hand, but we needed to have a bit more time getting to know each other I think to do that. Therefore, the agenda kind of fell into Nan's hands when it was more of a collective responsibility. By assigning that task to a group and initiating the process a bit earlier, we might get more "buy in" from the whole group.
- Next time set aside space to do a kind of resource and need assessment of the groups represented at the gathering.
- Put resources toward funding a part-time stipend for each of the working groups that we came up with to at least make some movement on those proposals; pay people to coordinate those pieces otherwise they might not get done given people's already excessively busy schedules.
- Use a facilitator from inside the movement.
- Make more time in general - add another two days to the meeting.
- Have a commitment to a follow-up meeting so people can have a strong sense of the continuity. Plan it!
- Have a stronger awareness of what possible funding from Ford or other donors could be made toward the various projects we identified. The funding issue is so critical in a movement that has been driven by scarcity of resources. What we don't want is infighting and dissension over how to spend money. That's why all that has to be out front and clear for everyone so we're all working on the same page.
- Everyone share their individual reports.

# # #

HIGHLANDER MEDIA JUSTICE GATHERING

KEY ISSUES DISCUSSION PAPER

Key Issues and Questions –

The following is an initial compilation of responses to the questions posed below, in a first round of conversations with a wide range of media activists, organizers and advocates. It is only a first cut of concerns that people have on their mind, in preparation for talking further about these and a host of other issues in person and electronically. It was circulated to the participants who were invited to Highlander, plus many others who help to shape these questions.

Nan Rubin, June 2002

1. As media activists and advocates, what are some key issues we must understand and explore?
2. What is the framework we are working in – both the media context, and broader political landscape?
3. What do we need to accomplish?

➢ What is the concept of having "public" media, as opposed to privately controlled media? Who defines it, how does the reality of the market place affect that philosophy; is it inclusive or exclusive of society's needs? Public media is essential to society, yet even within 'public broadcasting' sector, today there is total absence of concepts relating to 'public interest' or 'public service' coming from Washington leadership.

➢ What is the reality of the media industry today; what constitutes its "culture" and how does this relate to the society at large?

➢ Emerging reality of culture in/and development (social, political, economic): what is the role of media in this phenomenon and process?

PRIMARY POLITICAL ISSUES

> *"If the communities of the world are to improve their human development options they must first be empowered to define their future in terms of who they have been, what they are today and what they ultimately want to be. Every community has its roots, its physical and spiritual affiliations reaching back symbolically to the dawn of time, and it must be in a position to honour them."*
> *"Cultural policy must promote a new paradigm that supports human development in ways that are sensitive to "all the cultural issues and fully recognize them." "This is what cultural policy must ultimately come to mean..development must be cultural in the twenty-first century or it will not be at all."*

UNESCO

▪ **Engaging the Public in Confronting the Power of the Media --** People don't understand their relationship to the media/telecommunications infrastructure; even when they see it, they don't think they can change it.
  ▪ Our challenge is to reach and mobilize citizens into an effective political constituencies – through existing membership organizations, affinity groups, and issue-oriented groups.
  ▪ Develop clear, local targets but connected to big message which resonates with larger public; Not focus on national regulations, which might seem intractable, but on local [state, municipal] regulatory issues, where we can have had some successes
  ▪ What are we asking folks concretely to do at the end of the day –we must figure out what demands we can make that will both make a difference and lead to empowerment

▪ **This is an Opportune Moment --** Movement Policy Groups are more interested than ever before in getting grassroots support to back their policy work. At the same time, local groups are asking how to take on media policy issues – "Isn't there something we can do about media?"

- Reality is that there is a small opening right now to direct things towards congress a little bit; we should be jumping into that little window of opportunity
- A really good time to build the connections between us, get the grassroots support machine in place, consider creating a collaboration, cooperative effort
- It is the right time to approach groups involved with other key social issues with a media agenda
- How do we best take advantage of this timing?

- **Ownership** – Media consolidation and concentration of ownership is a major issue that the public is aware of. We are in a position to break it down and give public a way to relate to it.

- **Education via Media** – the media industry has a responsibility in education, training and supporting greater participation by community. Our media is way under-used for education.
    - This issue is also related to **Media Literacy** – how do we define ML? How do we teach it, and use it to build public engagement?
    - **Citizenship related services** – ways to make (public) broadcasting accountable; media use for informing electorate

- **Connect the movement for democratic communications with broader movement for social justice and equality**, not only globally but at home.
    - Strengthen the movement for democratic communications first
    - Identify landscape , important projects to support, establish network communications
    - Initiate a national campaign for media democracy awareness

EMERGING ISSUES

- **The growing inattention to and de-legitimization of popular knowledge** -- The potential role of independent media to promote "popular knowledge and power", as opposed to commercial media narrowing the recognition that there is legitimate power in unified political action.
    - The combination of excessive valorization of "knowledge workers," plus conservative politics generally, added to new technologies of electronic communication--all seem to be escalating the longstanding emphasis on the assumed deficiencies of oppressed groups, even in liberal discourse.

- **Peer to peer issues,** file sharing, etc – This is a critical moment for this technological issue, related to the concept of "personal autonomy and freedom" that is one of the central ideas of using the web, i.e. for individual satisfaction. **This is an issue that younger people understand** – younger folks who see the internet at theirs to do with as they please, including altering the technology – how to get them in?

- **The Role of 'Ethnic' Media** – is this time to segment niche audiences, or use ethnic media to bring people together, common concerns, evolving into mainstream model. How do we relate to ethnic media in relation to larger media outfits (Telemundo acquisition by NBC, etc.)

- **Community building** (superstructure v. infrastructure issues) that build capability: the case study--Native Americans, defining the place of media in a era of community and tribal self-determination

- **Cultural asset mapping** principles (how to facilitate community recognition of its unique resources, and how these relate to media issues)

    - **Borderless Media** -- For the indigenous community, a lot of the issues are borderless. Group needs to keep this in mind, as part of the consciousness of cultural internationality, not solely economic.

INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

Even in a society where anyone/everyone can be heard, we have the power to focus public attention and set of the public agenda on some issues, by virtue of our reaching large numbers of people who themselves are engaged. This is important for us to keep in mind – that our control of media outlets and content is not solely to protect the public sector, but to have the ability to help shape the discourse of the public agenda.

- **Old Media, New Media --** Divisions between the (older) analog media activists, and the newer communities of 'digital' media – different set of ideologies, different experiences, different mood in the country and different media landscapes. Bridging the gap between these two 'generations' is a critical first step, so that each are in the same arena when it comes to public service.

- **Make Connections** -- The meeting should be used primarily to make connections with each other, especially for everyone to ID themselves as being *on the same side* in this battle, set aside competition, and see that *we have to be in solidarity with each other* even if we have differences of ideology, etc. This is one of the successful tactics of the right.
  - We need to agree with each other that we want same goals, even if the means available to us are different because of economic, historical, technological, regulatory evolution.
  - Common ground on both analog and digital media – providing service to populations, even though they reach people based different types of access -- one reaching geographic areas better, the other reaching like-minded individuals better, etc.

- **Understanding our assets --** Combined, we have a lot of assets, but we have to see them collectively.
  - Each group as a role to play -- Who has constituencies? Who can get to the hill? Who can mobilize folks? What are our strengths?
  - Can we overcome our selfishness over control; competition over very spare resources

- **Strategic Information Sharing** – right now, we don't add up to the sum of our parts – information and coordination among us needs to be much better, sharing resources needs to be better, need to frame things in the global context but manifest in local initiatives – need a way to frame our issues in a more cohesive fashion, need much stronger ties between the groups that are on the ground

- **We are a "network of networks"** – we have to be thinking strategically as *networks,* not as individual organizations or projects – how do we use our resources in this framework? How do we create a functioning, more cohesive network?
  - Need to think of 'mainstream' liberals who are engaged in media reform and how to work with them as allies, not in conflict – mobilizing the middle classes
  - Building ties between the intersection of *public access* and *community broadcasting* with *access to the internet* -- what strategies are needed on the front lines on content distribution – i.e. control of the physical method for broadband distribution in the home (home = cable modems; work = DSL or other means)

- **Diversity of Vision** – media doesn't have to be "mass media," but there can be different concepts of what media can be used for -- Need to keep in mind **that 'media' is not solely electronic**, also other forms of art and communications; including people engaged in 'information liberation' etc.

- **Models for Economic Sustainability** – the non-profit sector BADLY needs models for sustainability, real, hard examination of how to support our work that is not dependent on grants and not corporate model
- **We Haven't figured out how to FUND ourselves** -- no $$ for content and production. The funding environment hasn't moved for more than a decade, still no $$ for program support or institution building.
  - o **Adequate funding** is the only way we will be able to get true diversity is to have adequate – Heritage Foundation puts tons of money into their media activities, yet we are starved… why have we been so unsuccessful in educating folks about the critical nature of this work?
  - o **Everything cannot be accomplished for free,** there are some things that just have to be paid for. Trying to do everything for free also cuts out many people who would love to participate but cannot afford it without adequate compensation.

- **Infrastructure** – create an infrastructure to support media organizing sector for long-term, ongoing and sustained focus

- **Foundation Advocacy** – educating progressive funders about media and need for sustained support for infrastructure and advocacy, not solely narrow vision of 'content' or 'programming'

- **Making our message accessible --**If we use the same kind of rhetoric, "in search of public interest, in new media environment," that has been our familiar advocacy vocabulary up to now, *we will lose.* We are witnessing a rapid disinvestment globally in public service media; we need a new vocabulary to express our goals.

- **Narrowing of Program Content –** Even with 'alternative' outlets, our content is in danger of becoming blunted and supporting the status quo –
  - o **Homogenization of programming** –blanketing blandness on the air, not just crushing out diverse voices, but diverse cultural values and unique or interesting experiences.
  - o **Diversity of content** – even alternative press is focused on niche programming, not offering wider points of view or contrasting experiences…
  - o **Commercialization** – creeping across the board because there are no other ways to support our work – underwriting is not the answer; public funding is not in the current climate, direct public support requires political understanding and fiscal infrastructure…

- **Vulnerability of those few who are providing a counter voice --** Routinely attacked by the right wing culture vultures, etc. there are only a few radical voices with high visibility. We are extremely vulnerable to attacks from the right over our politics, values, analysis. Only a tiny group is able to make a living being visible progressive media voices, only a couple of progressive media superstars (i.e. Laura Flanders, Noam Chomsky, Amy Goodman, Jim Hightower, etc. –love them or hate them, there needs to be many more -- they should not have the burden of being THE sole progressive voices reaching the public. This make folks very isolated. We need more high profile voices from our point of view.

- **Too much infighting, backbiting ---**scarcity of outlets and resources means we are fighting each other over the scraps, competing among ourselves, fighting over same pots of money, very debilitating, destructive and keeps us from moving forward. Too much mistrust between our projects, with the big prize being media visibility. But it shouldn't be this way – we should be able to rise above this and build stronger working relationships based on mutual support and common political goals, respect for the different roles we play and strengths we bring to the table.

- **Becoming Accountable to our Communities --** Organize a series of 'report backs' in our local communities, -- panels, discussion, etc. -- to bring the discussion to folks in person, off-line, etc. much broader than our meeting and email lists (There is a real disconnect between media activists and broader communities in many places)

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Do we want to consider working on one or more national campaigns together?
- "Finding the movement instead of making the movement"
- Models such as ***Day Without Art***, or the growing success of ***Buy Nothing Day***
- Being opportunist about the mood, creative about campaign building

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