

Modern Media Censorship in America

Project Censored Democracy Advocacy

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

Editor`s note

Four Global Research authors received a Project Censored award in 2008:

Constance Fogal (story number 2)

Stephen Lendman (story number 2)

Michel Chossudovsky (story number 5)

F. William Engdahl (story number 25)

For 32 years, Sonoma State University's (SSU) Project Censored has pioneered US media democracy, research, and First Amendment issues. Founded by Carl Jensen in 1976, it's now headed by Professor Peter Phillips, currently on sabbatical leave, with Professor Mickey Huff in charge as Interim Associate Director of the program until his return.

PC works cooperatively with numerous independent media groups, primarily to train SSU students "in media research, First Amendment issues and the advocacy for, and protection of, free press rights in the United States." Since its founding, it's trained over 1500 students in investigative research and the importance of our most fundamental right without which all others are at risk and now currently hang by a thread.

PC is a "partnership of faculty, students, and the community" to conduct research "on important national news stories that are underreported, ignored, misrepresented, or censored by the US corporate media." Each year, it ranks the top 25 and publishes them in its yearbook, "Censored: Media Democracy in Action." The latest "Censored 2009: The Top 25 Censored Stories of 2007 - 2008" may now be purchased at bookstores or online at <http://www.projectcensored.org/store/>.

The current edition is larger than ever. It includes the year's honorable mention choices and additional chapters covering these topics:

- Updates on previous PC stories;
- Junk Food News and News Abuse;
- The News is Good!: Stories of Hope and Change from 2007 and 2008;
- Oiling the Dangerous Engine of Arbitrary Government: Newspaper Coverage of the

Military Commissions Act (aka the torture authorization and habeas rights revocation act);

— Universal Healthcare, Media, and the 2008 Presidential Campaign;

— US Media Bias, Human Rights, and the Hamas Government in Gaza;

— The Gardasil Sell Job - on the controversial human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine thought to be unsafe for adolescent girls, yet Merck dishonestly markets it in collusion with the FDA;

— Fear & Favor 2007: How Power Still Shapes the News;

— Index on Censorship 2007 - 2008;

— Truth Emergency Meets Media Reform;

— Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan — Eyewitness Accounts of the Occupations;

— The Pentagon's Child Recruiting Strategy;

— Deconstructing Deceit: 9/11, the Media, and Myth Information; and

— Thirty-Three Years of US Military Domination and Economic Deception.

In all, over 400 power-packed pages of vital information in the current PC Censored 2009 edition. Must reading for everyone. Even those familiar with the issues for more information than they now know.

Project Censored's Definition of "Modern Censorship"

It's the dominant media's "subtle yet constant and sophisticated manipulation of reality" in their role as "guardians of power" and to serve their single-minded pursuit of profit. It includes ignoring vital news stories. Parts of them. The whys that explain them, and systematically withholding vital truths from the public. It's done through and because of political, economic and legal pressures in fundamental violation of a free and open press. Run by CEOs, not journalists. Serving their interests and advertisers, not ours.

PC believes in a "healthy and functioning democracy." Supports independent media and the right of free people to be informed. It also holds the dominant media accountable and serves as an antidote to their practices.

Why Project Censored and Why Now?

Democracy requires a free, open, vibrant and diverse media. Elements very much absent under our corporate-dominated system. As a result, the media system today is in crisis. Fiction substitutes for fact. News is carefully filtered. Dissent marginalized, and supporting the powerful substitutes for full and accurate reporting. Aggressive wars are thus called liberating ones. Civil liberties are suppressed for our own good. Anything government does, we're told, business does better, so let it, and patriotism means supporting lawless imperial regimes.

Media scholar and activist Robert McChesney asks whether "the media system....promote(s) or undermine(s) democratic institutions and practices. Are media a force for social justice or oligarchy?" Given their concentrated state, profits as a be all and end all, and partnership

with an imperial state, their current condition is corrupted, broken, and in violation of the public trust they disdain. “Rich media, poor democracy” for McChesney. A powerful antidemocratic force. More dominant than ever. Hyper-commercially driven. Unresponsive to public needs, and serving only the interests of wealth and power the way Alex Carey brilliantly explained in his classic work, “Taking the Risk Out of Democracy:”

He wrote: “The twentieth century has been characterized by three developments of great political importance: the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate power, and the growth of corporate propaganda as a means of protecting corporate power against democracy.” Journalist Walter Lippmann called it the “manufacture of consent” in a democratic society where it can’t be done by force, and Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman titled their landmark 1988 book “Manufacturing Consent” to describe the dominant media’s “propaganda model” to program the public mind.

It “filter(s) out the news to print, marginalize(s) dissent, (and assures) government and dominant private interests” control all information dissemination. It’s done through a set of “filters” to remove what’s unacceptable and “leav(es) only the cleansed residue fit to print” or broadcast.

It raises the dilemma James Madison posed that “A popular government, without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy; or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives.”

Today it’s from the media, and therein lies the problem. An opportunity as well from alternative sources and organizations like Project Censored promoting the best they have to offer. Publishing it in annual volumes. Spreading it by word of mouth through lectures, on-air discussions, and in classroom instruction on journalism as it was meant to be in a free and open society. Understanding Thomas Jefferson’s warning that emerging “banking institutions and moneyed incorporations” would destroy our democratic freedoms and replace them with a “single and splendid government of an aristocracy” if given a free hand.

What Lincoln also feared by “see(ing) in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country....corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed.” Made easier today given the dominant media’s power and ability to use it against the public interest the way Alex Carey explained:

Through a “propaganda-managed democracy....to identify the free-enterprise system in popular consciousness with every cherished value, and to identify interventionist governments and strong unions with tyranny, oppression and even subversion.” Carey called propaganda “communications where the form and content is selected with the single-minded purpose of bringing some target audience (the public or a company’s employees, etc.) to adopt attitudes and beliefs chosen in advance by the sponsors.” It’s as important in democratic societies as in authoritarian ones. In addition, “the success of business (or government) propaganda persuading us that we are free from (this type influence) is one of the most significant propaganda achievements of the twentieth century.”

Even truer today with round-the-clock news. Hundreds of cable channels, and a more

dominant media than in Carey's day. All the greater need for organizations like Project Censored to dispel official propaganda with real news and information that refutes it. All the more reason also to support its vital work. Countering the giants with what a free society needs to survive.

Stories the Dominant Media Censor

Hundreds of them have been covered since 1976 when PC's top story was "Jimmy Carter and the Trilateral Commission." Carter was a charter member of David Rockefeller's organization to counter the threat of democracy - too much of it. To assure that political power rests with the few. That public interests go unaddressed. That governments serve multinational banks and giant corporations. That people and resources are exploited for their benefit, and that popular democratic movements are suppressed. David Rockefeller chose Jimmy Carter to be president for that agenda. To be an interregnum executive after the turbulent Nixon years, then hand back the office to Republicans in 1980.

The same year, PC covered:

- the "Corporate Control of DNA;"
- selling banned pesticides and drugs to third world countries;
- unsafe workplaces causing "untold numbers of injuries, disease and deaths....;" and
- the sale of worthless and harmful non-prescription drugs to the public along with 20 other censored stories.

The top two 1977 stories covered the myth of black progress and "Cancer, Inc." About billions spent for cures, yet the US rate was 50% above the world average. It's still epidemic. Kills millions. Is a huge health care industry money-maker and too profitable for providers to want a cure.

In 1978, nuclear power plant dangers won top honors, and long before the proliferation of GMO foods and their hazards, the feasibility of organic farming ranked second.

Dumping illegal/dangerous production on third world countries was called "The Corporate Crime of the Century" and PC's top 1979 story. Number two was that "The (Iranian embassy) Seizure Should Not Have Been A Surprise" even though as late as summer 1978 the US media portrayed the Shah "as a modernizing, reform-oriented leader (with) a broad base of popular support."

In 1980, the distorted coverage of El Salvador's civil war won top honors followed by "Big Brother Is Listening to You" - the National Security Agency (NSA) that can do it today with much improved technology and legally with institutionalized spying legislation in place. Most recently The Protect America Act of 2007 and FISA Amendments Act of 2008. They assail civil liberties. Legalize warrantless wiretapping. Remove judicial oversight, and grant telecom companies retroactive immunity post-9/11 to violate our privacy.

"The Real Story Behind Our Economic Crisis" and the flagrant miscarriage of justice in Greensboro, NC ranked one and two in 1981.

Back then, a lack of “a competitive economy, monopoly, militarism, and multinationalization” (were) at the root of our economic crisis.” Those factors still apply but much more as well. The current situation far exceeds any crisis since the 1930s. Is in most respects unparalleled. No one fully understands it. How much harm it may cause. Its effect on world economies. How bad things may get or what alleviating measures may work best, if any.

Industrial capitalism is eroding. Replaced by a kleptocracy. Grand theft America. Rewarding criminals for their crimes. Backed by the full faith and credit of the government with taxpayer money. An unimaginable wealth transfer to the rich. When this ends, things won't ever be the same again in our lifetimes. The old system didn't work. The new one will be worse, and along the way the human fallout will be catastrophic. Talk about a big story. Short of armageddon or world war, it doesn't get any bigger than this. Factors responsible include:

- the ruinous effects of militarization; a permanent war economy for profit and dominance; unsustainable spending for it; the accumulation of mountains of unrepayable debt; the drain on a weakened economy; the implications are chilling - a future default, hyperinflation, potential bankruptcy, and demise of the republic;

- a speculative finance-created crisis; called financialization or Frankenstein finance;

- a totally deregulated, anything goes, environment permitting the most extreme, outrageous practices; free from government oversight that created the real under and unreported dilemma of: multiple imploding bubbles affecting housing, mortgage finance, and an alphabet soup menu of levered-up, high-risk securitized assets amounting to financial alchemy and largely outright fraud; the most dangerous being a “quadrillion dollar derivatives bubble” (a thousand trillion) crucial to contain to avoid the implosion of the entire global banking system and world economies with it; in a word, potential financial armageddon touching everyone; in 2003, Warren Buffett called derivatives a “time bomb” that pose a “mega-catastrophic risk;” said they're “financial weapons of mass destruction” capable of wrecking the whole economic system;

- at the root of today's crisis is a corrupted, broken system; Chicago School fundamentalism; unfettered capitalism; unbridled greed, and the human wreckage it causes; driving it is a government-business partnership for global dominance and the single-minded pursuit of profit;

- no freedom in our “free markets;” they're manipulated (up and down) for profit in either direction; in a crisis like today, small, expendable, and less favored enterprises are destroyed to benefit powerful ones like Bank of America, Goldman Sachs, and the Rockefeller family JP Morgan Chase Bank; the scheme is for greater consolidation among fewer giant players; the losers - the vast majority of people unaware that what's going on was planned; although this time the best and brightest were too smart by half; they may have set off a chain reaction global financial market meltdown; world governments are frantically scrambling to contain it with no idea if they can because the current crisis is unprecedented; no one's sure what can work, and the sums needed are unimaginable; in the trillions, with a fraction of it proposed for starters; a down payment; perhaps international help to raise more; and

- fraud on a massive scale involving many trillions of dollars; placing world economies at

risk; a Ponzi scheme writ large; a calculated crime; the greatest one ever with media complicity through silence as things progressively worsened and now approach the abyss; the story is still unfolding; it won't be easily or soon resolved; and its outcome is far from clear; one thing that is: this affects the entire world community of nations and everyone in them; there's no place to hide anywhere.

In 1982, fraudulent toxicity and cancer testing was PC's top story followed by "Americans 'Bugged' by Super-Secret (Foreign Intelligence Surveillance) Court." Institutionalized, illegal spying goes way back.

In 1983, "Israel: Merchant of Death in Central America" as the region's largest arms supplier and Ronald Reagan's massive peacetime military buildup ranked one and two.

In 1984, the myth of the "well-publicized Soviet military buildup" (to incite fear), and the Reagan administration's use of "international terrorism" as a pretext to assail civil liberties were the year's top two stories.

In 1985, intense saturation El Salvador bombing and unregulated military toxic waste were PC's picks for numbers one and two.

In 1986, spying on US Central American policy critics took top honors, followed by the Reagan administration's official policy of suppressing information from the public - with near-silence from the dominant media.

In 1987, PC's top story was on "The Information Monopoly" - what journalist/author Ben Bagdikian wrote about in his book, "The Media Monopoly," now titled "The New Media Monopoly" in its seventh edition. Ranked second was the "Contra-drug connection in America."

In 1988, George HW Bush's 25 years of "Dirty Big Secrets" was PC's top story followed by "How the EPA Pollutes the News and the Dioxin Cover-Up."

In 1989, media dominance again took top honors in an story titled "Global Media Lords Threaten Open Marketplace of Ideas." Second ranked was "Africa Turning into the World's Garbage Can."

In 1990, PC's top story was on the Cheerleader Press' Gulf War coverage. Second ranked was "The S & L Crisis: The Solution Is Worse Than the Crime" - about Reagan era criminal bankers and the \$500 billion taxpayer bailout it cost. Appropriate to look back on given today's financial crisis. The unease about how bad it may get, and the realization that this time things are far more potentially disastrous than anything experienced in the past. See above comments under 1981's top story.

In 1991, "CBS and NBC Spiking Iraq Bombing Carnage Footage" ranked first. Number two was "Operation Censored War" about the secretive GHW Bush administration and an obliging cheerleading media.

In 1993 (the next PC-listed year), "The Great Media Sell-Out to Reaganism" won top honors followed by corporate crime dwarfing what occurs on streets. The US prison gulag system (by far the world's largest and adding 1000 new inmates weekly, mostly poor blacks and Latinos) holds 2.3 million inmates. People not rich enough to buy justice. Seldom are corporate criminals prosecuted, and when they are, punishment is inconsequential by

comparison.

In 1994, the US killing its young (through violence, poverty and indifference to human needs) ranked first. Second was “Why Are We Really in Somalia?” Humanitarian intervention is never the reason. Strategic resources (especially oil and gas) always are primary along with advancing our imperial agenda and making the world safe for capital.

In 1995, PC’s top story was “The Deadly Secrets of the (US) Occupational Safety Agency” – keeping 170,000 toxically-exposed workers uninformed about the risks. Second-ranked was about a “Powerful Group of Ultra-Conservatives (including influential Christian fascists) Secret Plans for Your Future.” They haven’t changed and are now more dangerous than ever.

In 1996, “Telecommunications Deregulation: Closing Up America’s Marketplace of Ideas” ranked first after passage of the (grand theft media) Telecommunications Act of 1996 allowing greater than ever consolidation. Number two was a story on cutting social services by balancing the budget on the backs of the poor. Now affecting everyone to advance a global militarist agenda.

In 1997, PC’s top story was “Risking the World: Nuclear Proliferation in Space.” One part of an agenda for “full spectrum dominance” over all land, surface and sub-surface sea, air, space, electromagnetic spectrum and information systems with enough overwhelming power to fight and win global wars against any potential challengers using all weapons in our arsenal. “Shell’s Oil, Africa’s Blood” was number two for the year.

In 1998, the Clinton administration’s aggressive global arms sales ranked first followed by personal care and cosmetic products being potentially carcinogenic.

In 1999, PC’s top story was on the secret Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI). Designed to undermine national sovereignty by creating an open field for capital. Next was the story of chemical corporations profiting from breast cancer.

In 2000, multinational corporations profiting from international brutality ranked first followed by Big Pharma putting profits ahead of human need. By developing products like Viagra instead of cures for diseases killing millions in developing countries.

In 2001, World Bank and multinational corporate collusion to privatize water took top honors followed by OSHA failing to protect US workers.

In 2003 (the next listed year), PC’s top story was on FCC efforts to privatize the airwaves followed by a story on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) to privatize social services and make them available only to those who can pay.

In 2004, top ranked was “The Neoconservative Plan for Global Dominance” followed by how “Homeland Security Threatens Civil Liberty” with plenty of ammunition from pre-and-mostly-post-9/11 repressive laws.

In 2005, PC’s top story was on the unprecedented 21st century wealth inequality threatening the economy and democracy followed by a story about Attorney General John Ashcroft’s attempt to strike down Alien Torts Claim Act (ATCA) protections against corporate human rights abuses in foreign countries.

In 2006, the Bush administration's obsession with secrecy ranked first followed by the media's failure to cover the Fallujah and overall Iraqi civilian death toll.

In 2007, PC's top story was on the "Future of Internet Debate Ignored by Media" followed by "Halliburton Charged with Selling Nuclear Technologies to Iran."

In 2008, the Military Commissions Act (MCA) denial of habeas rights for everyone (including US citizens designated "unlawful enemy combatants") won top honors followed by the Bush administration moving toward martial law by inserting an obscure provision in the John Warner Defense Authorization Act of 2007 annulling the 1807 Insurrection Act and 1878 Posse Comitatus Act.

Project Censored's current top 25 2009 stories are just out and available for purchase as explained above. Top ranked was about "Over One Million Iraqi Deaths Caused by US Occupation" as documented by Johns Hopkins researchers earlier and British polling group, Opinion Research Business (ORB). Other selected stories included:

- the North American Union (NAU) Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) or militarized NAFTA;
- InfraGard on the FBI deputizing business;
- the US International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) training Latin American security forces in counterterrorism techniques; a possible scheme to restart the region's dirty wars;
- two George Bush executive orders (EOs) criminalizing the anti-war movement and allowing the Treasury Department to seize property from anyone opposing the administration's Middle East wars;
- The Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act (HR 1955) - called "the thought crime prevention bill;" passed by the House and introduced in the Senate in August 2007 (S. 1959) but not acted on;
- Guest Workers Inc.: Fraud and Human Trafficking - or near-slavery in America;
- executive orders (EOs) can be changed secretly even though the Constitution has no provision giving presidents the right to make new law through one-man decrees;
- Iraq and Afghanistan Vets Testify;
- the American Psychological Association's (APA) complicity in CIA torture;
- El Salvador's Water Privatization and the Global War on Terror;
- Bush profiteers collecting billions from the No Child Left Behind Act scheme to destroy public education in America by privatizing it;
- Tracking Billions of Dollars Lost in Iraq through fraud, waste and other war profiteering schemes;
- Mainstreaming Nuclear Waste;
- Worldwide Slavery at a time most people don't know it exists, let alone in America;

- the Annual Survey on Trade Union Rights;
- the UN’s Empty Declaration of Indigenous Rights;
- Cruelty and Death in Juvenile Detention Centers;
- Indigenous Herders and Small Farmers Fight Livestock Extinction;
- Marijuana Arrests Set New Record;
- NATO Considers “First Strike” Option while the US 2001 Nuclear Policy Review, 2002 and updated 2006 National Security Strategy, and other US documents assert the right to wage preventive or proactive wars with “first strike” nuclear or any other weapons of mass destruction;
- CARE Rejects US Food Aid - because it causes more hunger than it prevents;
- FDA Complicit in Pushing Pharmaceutical Drugs;
- Japan Questions 9/11 and the Global War on Terror; and
- Bush’s Real Problem with Eliot Spitzer - to stop his exposure of subprime predatory lending fraud responsible for much of the current world financial crisis.

Project Censored annually present awards for the corporate media’s most important suppressed stories. For its work, its Director, dedicated staff, and student interns deserve our award for being one of our national treasures. Holding the dominant media accountable.

Follow their work. Support their activities. Know what’s at stake. A free and open society. The type media vital in it. The risk of losing it, and need for assertive, decisive action to assure that won’t happen. Nor will it if Project Censored can help it.

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Also visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com and listen to The Global Research News Hour on RepublicBroadcasting.org Mondays from 11AM - 1PM US Central time for cutting-edge discussions on world and national topics with distinguished guests. All programs are archived for easy listening.

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