CHAPTER 4

Media Democracy in Action

Compiled by Mickey Huff, with contributions by Sarah van Gelder and Yes! Magazine; Chris Woods of the Bureau of Investigative Journalism; Jay Costa and Darby Beck of MapLight; Michael Levitin of the Occupied Wall Street Journal; Victoria Pacchiana-Rojas on Banned Books Week; Christopher Ponzi of Rebellious Truths; Nora Barrows-Friedman of Electronic Intifada; Andrew Phillips of Pacifica/KPFA Radio; J. R. Valrey of Block Report Radio; Steve Zeltzer of Work Week Radio

ON MEDIA FREEDOM:
The only security of all is in a free press. The force of public opinion cannot be resisted when permitted freely to be expressed. The agitation it produces must be submitted to. It is necessary, to keep the waters pure.
—Thomas Jefferson, 1823

ON THE RIGHT TO KNOW:
Freedom of the press, or, to be more precise, the benefit of freedom of the press, belongs to everyone—to the citizen as well as the publisher. . . . The crux is not the publisher’s “freedom to print”; it is, rather, the citizen’s “right to know.”
—Arthur Sulzberger, 1990, American newspaper publisher

ON JUSTICE:
When our days become dreary with low-hovering clouds of despair, and when our nights become darker than a
thousand midnights, let us remember that there is a creative force in this universe, working to pull down the gigantic mountains of evil, a power that is able to make a way out of no way and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. Let us realize the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.

—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., 1967, in an address to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, “Where Do We Go from Here?”

In the past, critics of Project Censored have complained that we point out problems in our society that go underreported but do not offer solutions. Over the past several years, we’ve been addressing this concern through our research of so-called good news, news of real change and community building, and through our efforts to reclaim the fair share of the common heritage.

Addressing censorship in news media is certainly a major issue, but in doing so, Project Censored also works to provide tangible information that empowers people to be active agents in their own information gathering and to be more willing to share knowledge in meaningful ways. This sharing comes through the many social circles we inhabit, not merely in the increasingly virtual world of social media, but in the real world, face-to-face, on the ground, in local communities that can be connected globally via vast communications technologies. It is important to note that merely having an active presence on the World Wide Web cannot be the only means by which we share knowledge and information, by which we organize and act to achieve social and political change.

In this spirit, Project Censored not only works to uncensor major news stories that the corporate media ignore or distort, it also works to maintain a vibrant free press system through education, media literacy, and civic activism. Over the years, we’ve partnered with individuals and groups that dedicate their lives to media freedom, transparency, access to information, and a solid democratic communications principle—the right to be heard, and the commitment to ensuring that others are heard too.
Project Censored hopes to continue building solidarity with those who, like us, believe that our world is on the verge of a paradigm shift in information availability and dissemination. This shift could revitalize our democratic institutions and restore hope to hundreds of millions, reinforcing the ideal that self-government can work, but only if we, the people, have access to highly accurate, trustworthy, relevant information. This is paramount if we are to develop intelligent, compassionate actions for social change. We encourage more networking and community building in maintenance of a free press.

Again this year we highlight a mix of exciting newcomers in the realm of media democracy and we celebrate veteran media freedom advocates. We must all work to keep the waters of information pure, as we have a right to know what those in power are doing and what many have done in the past that has led to our current state.

In 1786, Thomas Jefferson wrote to fellow founder John Jay—who believed that the people who owned the country ought to run it—and stated, “Our liberty cannot be guarded but by the freedom of the press, nor that be limited without danger of losing it.” We must be liberty’s protectors, we must be the media, and we must support others in the quest to report about what is really going on in our society. In short, we guard against today’s John Jays—the 1 percent. We are the vox populi.

There has been much excitement this past year, from the uprisings in the Middle East, to Occupy, and beyond. The following people and organizations represent media democracy in action. They all embody the right of citizens to truly know what is happening in the real world, past to present. They all work to ensure that the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice. We proudly highlight their work and stories. These are dispatches from the front lines of our media revolution.

**YES! MAGAZINE: THE TWELVE MOST HOPEFUL TRENDS TO BUILD ON IN 2011–12**

by Sarah van Gelder

An earlier version of this piece originally appeared in *Yes! Magazine* on December 31, 2011. *Yes! Magazine* is a national, nonprofit media organization that fuses powerful ideas with practical actions.
Who would have thought that some young people camped out in Lower Manhattan with cardboard signs, a few Sharpies, some donated pizza, and a bunch of smartphones could change so much?

The viral spread of the Occupy movement took everyone by surprise. With politicians and the media fixated on the debt ceiling, everyone seemed to forget that we were in the midst of an economic meltdown—everyone except the 99 percent who were experiencing it.

But by the end of 2011, people ranging from Ben Bernanke, chair of the Federal Reserve, to filmmaker Michael Moore were expressing sympathy for the Occupy movement and concern for those losing homes, retirement savings, access to health care, and hope of ever finding a job.

This uprising was the biggest reason for hope in the months that followed. The following are twelve ways the Occupy movement and other major trends have offered a foundation for a transformative future.

1. **Americans rediscover their political self-respect.**
   In 2011, members of the 99 percent began camping out in New York’s Zuccotti Park, launching a movement that quickly spread across the country. Students at the University of California–Davis sat nonviolently through a pepper spray assault, Oaklanders shut down the city with a general strike, and Clevelanders saved a family from eviction. Occupiers opened their encampments to all and fed all who showed up, including many homeless people. Thousands moved their accounts from corporate banks to community banks and credit unions, and people everywhere created their own media with smartphones and laptops.

   The Occupy movement built on the Arab Spring, occupations in Europe, and on the early 2011 uprising in Wisconsin, where people occupied the state capitol in an attempt to block major cuts in public workers’ rights and compensation. Police crackdowns couldn’t crush the surge of political self-respect experienced by millions of Americans.

2. **Economic myths get debunked.**
   Americans now understand that working hard and playing by the rules doesn’t mean you’ll get ahead. They know that Wall Street financiers are not working for their interests. Global capitalism is not lifting all boats. As this mythology crumbled, the reality became inescapable: the
United States is not broke. The 1 percent have rigged the system to capture a larger and larger share of the world’s wealth and power, while the middle class and poor face unemployment, soaring student debt burdens, homelessness, exclusion from the medical system, and the disappearance of retirement savings. Austerity budgets only sharpen the pain, as the safety net frays and public benefits, from schools to safe bridges, fail. The European debt crisis is front and center today, but other crises will likely follow. Just as the legitimacy of apartheid began to fall apart long before the system actually fell, today the legitimacy of corporate power and Wall Street dominance is disintegrating. The newfound clarity about the damage that results from a system dominated by Wall Street will further energize calls for regulation and the rule of law, and fuel the search for economic alternatives.

3. Divisions among people are coming down.

Middle-class college students camped out alongside homeless occupiers. People of color and white people created new ways to work together. Unions joined with occupiers. In some places, Tea Partiers and occupiers discovered common purposes. Nationwide, anti-immigrant rhetoric backfired. Tremendous energy is released when isolated people discover one another; look for more unexpected alliances.
4. Alternatives are blossoming.
As it becomes clear that neither corporate chief executive officers nor national political leaders have solutions to today’s deep crises, thousands of grassroots-led innovations are taking hold. Community land trusts,6 farmers’ markets, local currencies,7 time banking,8 micro-energy installations,9 shared cars and bicycles,10 and cooperatively owned businesses11 are among the innovations that give people the means to live well on less and build community. And the Occupy movement, which is often called “leaderless,” grew many emerging leaders who are building the skills and connections to shake things up for decades to come. This widespread leadership, coupled with the growing repertoire of grassroots innovations, has set the stage for a renaissance of creative rebuilding.

5. Popular pressure halted the Keystone XL Pipeline—for the moment.
Thousands of people stood up to efforts by some of the world’s most powerful energy companies and convinced the Obama administration to postpone approval of the Keystone XL Pipeline,12 which would have sped up the extraction and export of dirty tar sands oil. Environmental science scholar James Hansen says, “If the tar sands are thrown into the mix, it is essentially game over” for the planet. Just a year ago, few had heard of this project, much less considered risking arrest to stop it, as thousands did outside the White House in 2011.13 As a result, President Barack Obama initially rejected the permit for the pipeline in January 2012, much to the chagrin of Big Oil.

Unfortunately, Obama bowed to pressure in March 2012 and ordered an expedited review of a portion of the pipeline, after which the pipeline company TransCanada submitted a new permit application. If the protests that forced the initial permit rejection can be revived and appropriately harnessed, we can avoid an environmental disaster yet.14

6. Climate responses move forward despite federal inaction.
Throughout the United States, state and local governments are taking action where the federal government has failed. California’s new climate cap-and-trade law took effect in 2012. College students are pressing campus administrators to quit using coal-fired sources of electricity.15 Elsewhere, Europe is limiting climate pollution from
air travel, Australia has enacted a national carbon tax, and there is a
global initiative\(^6\) underway to recognize the rights of Mother Nature.
Talks at the November 2011 United Nations’ Climate Change Conference in Durban,\(^7\) South Africa, arrived at a conclusion that, while far
short of what is needed, at least keeps the process alive.

7. There’s a new focus on cleaning up elections.
The Supreme Court’s *Citizens United* decision,\(^8\) which lifted limits
on corporate campaign contributions, is opposed by a large majority
of Americans. The year 2011 saw a growing national movement
to get money out of politics;\(^9\) cities from Pittsburgh to Los Angeles
past resolutions calling for an end to corporate personhood.\(^10\) Constit-
tutional amendments have been introduced. And efforts are in
the works to push back against voter suppression policies that target
people of color, low-income people, and students, all of whom tend to
vote Democratic.

8. Local government is taking action.
City and state governments are moving forward, even as Washington
DC remains gridlocked, even as budgets are stretched thin. Towns in
Pennsylvania, New York, and elsewhere are seeking to prohibit hy-
draulic fracturing, or “fracking,”\(^21\) to extract natural gas, and while
they’re at it, declaring that corporations do not have the constitution-
al rights of people. Cities are banning plastic bags,\(^22\) linking up lo-
cal food systems,\(^23\) encouraging bicycling and walking, cleaning up
brown fields, and turning garbage\(^24\) and wasted energy into opportu-
nity. In part because of the housing market disaster, people are less
able to pick up and move.

9. Dams are coming down.
Two dams\(^25\) that block passage of salmon up the Elwha River into
the pristine Olympic National Park in Washington State are coming
down. After decades of campaigning by Native tribes and environ-
mentalisits, the removal of the dams began in 2011. The assumption
that progress is built on “taming” and controlling nature is giving
way to an understanding that human and ecological well-being are
linked.
10. The United States ended the combat mission in Iraq.
US troops are home from Iraq at last. What remains is a US embassy compound the size of the Vatican City, along with thousands of private contractors. Iraq and the region remain unstable.

The state of Vermont took action to respond to the continuing health care crises, adopting, but not yet funding, a single-payer health care system similar to Canada’s.

In June 2012, the Supreme Court upheld the Affordable Care Act by a vote of five to four. Although President Obama’s overhaul of health care law is far from a single-payer system, it will sharply reduce the number of Americans without coverage. Responding to the Supreme Court decision, Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont stated, “While the Affordable Care Act is an important step in the right direction and I am glad that the Supreme Court upheld it, we ultimately need to do better.”

Michael Moore characterized the decision as a “victory” and “momentum” toward “true universal health care in this country.”

12. Gay couples can get married.
In 2011, New York State and the Suquamish Tribe in Washington State (home of the author of this piece) adopted gay marriage laws. Navy Petty Officer Second Class Marissa Gaeta won a raffle allowing her to be the first to kiss her partner upon return from eighty days at sea, the first such public display of gay affection since Don’t Ask Don’t Tell was expunged. The video and photos went viral.

This momentum built in 2012. In February, Washington became the seventh state to legalize gay marriage and, in March, Maryland became the eighth to do so. In May 2012, President Obama affirmed his support of same-sex marriage, making him the first US president to take this position while holding office. In July 2012, Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) married his partner, Jim Ready, making Frank the first member of Congress to enter a same-sex marriage.

2011–12 may be remembered as the time when opposition to gay marriage lost its power as a rallying cry for social conservatives. The tide has turned, and gay people will likely continue to win the same rights as straight people to marry.
With so much in play, as the worldviews and institutions based on the dominance of the 1 percent are challenged, as the global economy frays, and as we run headlong into climate change and other ecological limits, one era is giving way to another. There are too many variables to predict what direction things will take. But our best hopes can be found in the rise of broad grassroots leadership, through the Occupy movement, the Wisconsin uprising, the climate justice movement, and others, along with individual but interlinked efforts to build local solutions everywhere. In many ways, 2011–12 have been years of transformation and rebuilding—this time, with the well-being of all life front and center.

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THE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM
by Chris Woods

The London-based Bureau of Investigative Journalism, while only in its third year, has had a powerful impact on national and international journalism. The not-for-profit news organization, funded by the David and Elaine Potter Foundation, focuses on producing complex high-end investigations, often in collaboration with major media partners such as the BBC, Al Jazeera, the Guardian and many others.

Its core team of reporters has exposed the cozy relationships between some of Britain’s top lobbying firms and the world’s worst dictators. Working with WikiLeaks, the Bureau’s award-winning Iraq War Logs series and website also helped to put a very human context to hundreds of thousands of secret US military documents. And the bureau continues to scrutinize a global surveillance industry that increasingly spies on the world’s citizens. Other major investigations have examined UK deaths in police custody; have exposed the abuse of international aid money in Ethiopia; and have explored the alleged secret riches of Russia’s ruler Vladimir Putin.

One ongoing investigation led by senior reporter Chris Woods—“The Covert War on Terror”—continues to engage the Obama admin-
istration, the Pentagon, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) over their “secret” wars in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia.39

In summer 2011, the bureau comprehensively refuted claims by the CIA that it had not killed any civilians in Pakistan with its drone strikes since May 2010.40 Yet, an extensive field investigation in Waziristan identified by name at least forty-five civilians killed by US drones in that time frame. The CIA’s false claims had gone unchallenged by the US media for almost six months prior to the investigation.

Shortly afterward, the bureau published a complete, dynamic database of all known US drone strikes inside Pakistan since 2004.41 For the first time, credible reports of civilian casualties were mapped, concluding that CIA attacks have led to more deaths than previously understood. Some 174 children were identified among at least 2,400 people reported killed. There were credible reports of at least 479 civilians among the dead.42

The intended targets—militants in the tribal areas—appear to make up the majority of those killed. To date, the bureau has identified 167 named militants among the dead since 2004, from groups such as al-Qaeda, the Pakistan Taliban, and the Haqqani Network. Hundreds more are unknown, low-ranking fighters. Yet the bureau has also identified 317 named civilians killed over the same period, raising legitimate concerns about the strategic success of the campaign, at a time of rising protest in Pakistan.43

A further major investigation in February 2012, with the London Sunday Times, provided shocking evidence that the CIA had repeatedly attacked Pakistani rescuers seeking to aid victims of previous drone strikes, or those attending funerals.44 More than seventy civilians were identified by the investigation team as being killed in such attacks, along with many Taliban. The US did not refute the findings.

This year the drones team has significantly expanded its coverage of the covert war, focusing on US secret operations in East Africa and the Gulf. Its report on Somalia showed for the first time the extent of clandestine US military engagement there since 2007—with up to twenty attacks killing as many as 169 people.45 In 2011, US armed drones also began stalking the troubled country’s skies. As part of that same investigation, the bureau also refuted false claims by an
Iranian broadcaster of more than sixty “US drone strikes” in Somalia, which supposedly had killed more than 1,300 people.46

The bureau’s ongoing and internationally respected work on Yemen shows the growing scale of Obama’s secret war there. Until December 2009, only one US covert military action had been recorded in the Gulf nation. Since then, as many as 140 individual US strikes, mostly with drones, appear to have taken place.47 While casualty figures remain difficult to obtain, the bureau estimates that between 300 and 800 people have so far been killed in this counterterrorism campaign, which some fear will backfire.

Unfortunately, the US intelligence community has gone to some lengths to attack the bureau’s work on the covert war on terror. An anonymous US official claimed for example that the Pakistan rescuers story was “helping al-Qaeda.” Pressure has been applied to the bureau’s media partners. The CIA has also claimed that the bureau was getting its information from a “Pakistani spy” (in fact a respected lawyer representing drone strike victims.)48

Nevertheless, the drones team continues diligently to map strikes by the CIA and Pentagon in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia and to identify, where possible, those killed.49

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MAPLIGHT: REVEALING MONEY’S INFLUENCE ON POLITICS
by Jay Costa and Darby Beck

Whether you’re interested in protecting the environment, changing immigration law, cutting the deficit, or influencing just about any policy issue in the United States, you’re bound to hit a common obstacle: the people who make our laws are more focused on fundraising than serving the public interest. As political scientist David Mayhew put
it, members of Congress are “single-minded seekers of re-election.” To run a competitive campaign for Congress, one must raise literally millions of dollars, and that money has to come from somewhere. In the United States, the vast majority of it comes from relatively few special interests that have a vested stake in having legislators owe them a favor. MapLight (MapLight.org), a Berkeley, California–based nonprofit, nonpartisan money tracker, provides tools that allow citizens to see just where this money comes from and how it influences the kind of policies that get passed.

Often when people think about money influencing politics, they imagine smoke-filled backrooms where promises are made, money is exchanged, and everyone leaves in separate cars. The reality is much more mundane, insidious, and perfectly legal. Rarely do candidates and contributors engage in a *quid pro quo* exchange of money for votes. But a feature deeply ingrained in our political system is that candidates who take stances favorable to wealthy interests receive more money to run their campaigns than those who do not, making them more competitive. Once legislators are in office, those who funded their campaigns naturally have more influence on and access to them than do others; the interests of funders are reflected in what issues get considered, what regulations are put into place, how resources are allocated, and so many other decisions that our elected officials make each day.

Wealthy interests wouldn’t spend millions of dollars unless they believed they’d get something in return. Although a single example of legislators voting with their funders is not proof of corruption, over time a pattern emerges that shows how moneyed interests often get their way. MapLight shows the effects of this influence by combining three data sets: campaign contributions, legislative votes, and the positions that special interests take on particular issues for Congress and the California and Wisconsin state legislatures. At a glance, visitors to the site can see which interest groups and companies support or oppose a particular bill, how campaign contributions correlate with legislators’ votes, the timing of contributions and votes, the biggest contributors to a legislator’s campaign, the biggest recipients of a particular interest’s contributions, and more.

Just as important, the site translates abstract issues of “influence”
into concrete and tangible examples of how campaign finance affects voters’ everyday lives. In 2005, the year MapLight was established, California legislators passed California Fresh Start, an eighteen-million-dollar pilot program intended to help schools pay for fresh fruit in students’ breakfasts. The only problem was that fresh fruit doesn’t generate income for the food-processing industry, which from 2001 to 2006 contributed $2.3 million to various California candidates according to data from FollowTheMoney.org. At the industry’s behest, a Central Valley lawmaker changed the word fresh in the bill to the word nutritious. The bill was signed into law. Schools used millions of dollars, originally intended for fresh fruit, to serve canned fruit served in sugar syrup.

Flash forward to 2012 and the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA). Proponents of the bill claimed it would help enhance copyright protection of online material. Opponents claimed it would jeopardize free speech protections and stifle innovation. MapLight revealed that legislators sponsoring SOPA received nearly four times as much money from the entertainment industry, which supported the bill, as from the software and Internet industries, which opposed it. In addition to being featured in over 150 news stories, MapLight’s data was used by the online advocacy tool Sopatrack to alert users to the pro-SOPA and anti-SOPA funding received by their lawmakers and to encourage them to take action. Amid this flurry of media attention and massive protest, consideration of SOPA has been postponed indefinitely.

As the examples above illustrate, campaign money has a tangible influence on our legislative process, and there are countless more examples not listed here. Fortunately, as the latter example shows, there are ways we can counter this undue influence. MapLight makes it possible to draw back the curtain on what’s really going on in our government, arming voters with facts as they head to the polls, and giving citizens the tools they need to hold elected officials accountable. To have a healthy democracy, the public must be informed about its operations. Is your elected official representing your interests or moneyed interests? Visit MapLight.org today and find out.

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OCCUPY: REPORTING THE REBELLION
by Michael Levitin

Producing a newspaper in a revolution is dirty work. It may also be the most gratifying work some of us, as journalists, ever get to do.

On the night before the first edition of the Occupied Wall Street Journal went to press in late September 2011, a handful of people in a tiny office in New York’s West Village neighborhood attempted to transcend activism and journalism, working through dawn to finish what we hoped would be a clean, clear, professional publication that fairly represented the two-week-old Occupy Wall Street movement.

There was nothing naïve about it. We were after legitimacy, and we didn’t exactly think as much as we reacted to circumstances around us. By the first of October, 50,000 copies of the four-page broadsheet were circulating through New York City’s streets and subways, at cafés, in bookstores and parks—especially The Park, Zuccotti, which had become the apparent center of the world. We had occupied the media with our dirty, beautiful print. Then it was on to issue two.

Now, a year later, it’s a good time to ask: where is the Occupied Media that sprang from the Occupy movement, and where is the Occupy movement itself? The response sounds almost like a Zen koan: Occupy is everywhere and it is nowhere. It is visible as it is invisible. In early June 2012, as this piece was written, the Occupy message of economic justice was once again far removed from most Americans’ radar. Encampment closures and police crackdowns from Oakland to Boise to Little Rock had soured moods and displaced people’s energy within Occupy. And the corporate mainstream media treated the movement already like a footnote, something that was a part of history, that had flared up, died, and was now roundly forgotten due to some “failure” to capitalize properly through the usual political channels.

The problem with that assessment, of course, is that the functional political channels died long ago, swallowed up by a corporate-owned state that sees no merit in a genuine democratic process, fairness under the law or the constitutional freedom of its citizens . . . while the spirit that ignited the Occupy movement has only just been born.

In response to the waiting and wondering, some of us decided to try something new: to help those who sympathized with Occupy find
their place in the nascent national movement by bringing the mes-
sage of economic justice out onto the open American roads, through
cities and countrysides, realizing the power of the 99 percent in plac-
es that had scarcely heard about the autumn uprising in Manhattan
and across the nation—and if they had, they knew little of what the
movement was about and what its goals were.

We called the trip the Occupy Caravan, and we mapped out a
course with multiple routes traveling across the country for three
weeks, starting on the West Coast and ending on the East in a stream
of vehicles and color and collective noise that would carry our voices
through the heartland to the seats of power, ending at the first-ever
Occupy National Gathering in Philadelphia, which took place from
June 30 to July 4, 2012.

The Occupy Caravan found its theme in the 100th anniversary of
the birth of Woody Guthrie, who rode west with the Oklahomans dur-
ing the Depression and sang about economic injustice and inequality
in his own time. In our journey three quarters of a century later, en-
titled “This Land is Our Land” after Guthrie’s seminal song, the same
core issues and values remained at stake: fairness, justice, equality,
accountability. Occupy never set out to be a political movement. It
ignited spontaneously as a social movement and ignored the trap of
traditional politics altogether. As we liked to say: It was never about a
park. It was about ideas—about power and the rights of free people to
decide their own fate, not someplace overseas where we generally see
our battles taking shape, but right here at home.

In the process of reaching out to Occupies across the country, we
discovered just how badly the communities had fractured and divid-
ed and withered into near nonexistence in the six months since the
camps had closed. Partly because of the state’s federally coordinated
assault, which succeeded as a tactic of brute intimidation, and partly
due to the movement’s own lack of leadership or an articulated, long-
term strategy, the caravan was an opportunity to revive that spirit of
Occupy and push our message out more favorably, not least during
an absurd election season in which the question nagged: how bad do
you want your democracy—enough to take it back?

One of the signs at a Blockupy Frankfurt march, which drew tens
of thousands into the streets of Germany’s financial capital in May
2012, read: “When unfairness becomes the rule, resistance becomes a duty.” In our case, nine months into the movement, resistance would come not in the form of encampments but of roving occupations. Pop-up occupations. Flash occupations that are here today and gone tomorrow, almost too quick to notice but not quick enough that the force of presence isn’t felt. We coordinated welcoming events and media coverage in dozens of cities, which included marches and take-the-streets protests; car parades and demonstrations outside of corporate offices; potlucks and discussions and theatrical entertainment. We hoped to create a sense of the folky America that many of us scarcely know is missing, though we can feel its loss somewhere deep in our culture; the America that celebrated vaudeville and Mark Twain and travelers who brought with them a message, often an important one, from the world that lay beyond the next hill.

On this journey, while Americans by the millions were living without jobs and homes and any hopes of a prosperous future, we knew our cause was just. But justice, as Guthrie sang many decades ago, can take a while for some people to get used to.

In thinking about where Occupy Wall Street once was and where it appears to be going, I can’t help but wonder if we made a mistake early on by calling ourselves—or rather, by allowing ourselves to be called—a movement. It happened instantly, in the second week of Occupy, which was perhaps far too soon for any “movement” to merit by proven actions, too soon for plans that had yet to be devised and lived up to.

By calling ourselves a movement—by revealing an eagerness to be affirmed, to be acknowledged and already celebrated as an historic body, simply for standing up—is it possible we that put ourselves into a box and created our own, almost inevitable endpoint? Movements die if they do not transform—if they do not stay one step out in front of the historic moment they presume to be leading. But is it possible, by thinking of ourselves as a movement, that we precluded becoming something much more, whether more lasting or with an impact that is greater and more real? To say yes to a social movement finally means to join it, and not all of us can say yes. We are not all ready—in fact, most of us are not ready—to commit ourselves to something about which we know too little. We want evidence and clarity; we
want definition, purpose, some secure knowledge about where we are going before we say yes, I will march with you because I know what I am marching for.

What if we looked at the past year not as a movement, although we chose to be one, but as something else? Something global, moving through us but not necessarily inside us, much as we’re witness to the tsunamis and torrential waves of energy now sweeping across our Earth—as fires and storms, as heat and melting and drying, as disappearance—waves of energy we are unable to stop, but which we must find a way to join if we are to survive. This energy—which we sense is moving through us and around and inside us, which we don’t understand though it must be in our psyche to follow as autonomous Beings able to decide Right from Wrong, Justice from Injustice, Fairness from Abuse, Humility from Hubris, Necessity from Greed—is this energy enough reason to believe that we must Occupy? Or do we have any other choice?

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BANNED BOOKS WEEK IN 2012: DOES LITERATURE NEED LIBERATING?
by Victoria Pacchiana-Rojas

In September 2011, the five-day event Banned by the Bay brought San Francisco its first festival devoted to celebrating Banned Books Week. People met in bookstores to discuss the state of the First Amendment with lawyers and activists, crammed into bars to sing and dance to performances inspired by banned books, filled library auditoriums to hear local authors read from and discuss their favorite banned books, and gathered in cafés to swap banned classics. The books and authors featured were the usual set—Judy Blume and J. K. Rowling, To Kill a Mockingbird and Tropic of Cancer, Ulysses and Fahrenheit 451—yet one title appeared that many were unfamiliar with: Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed.53
Freire’s theory on education and the power relations that teachers and students inhabit has seen renewed interest since the state of Arizona’s 2011 decision to remove the book, among many others—and along with the Mexican-American Studies program in which it was taught—from its curriculum. Though the entire text itself warrants attention, the crux of Freire’s theory is that education should break down the barrier between student and teacher, between an empty vessel to be filled and one with the power to fill it, through an equal exchange of ideas. Such a dialogue allows the components of education—textbooks, historical narratives, literary texts—to become not something produced by an Other with authority, inscribing the reader as its object, but as something produced by its readers who give it meaning. In this way, the reader is able to see him or herself as the subject of a collective text that constitutes our history, and through this recognition, one gains not only the ability to comprehend one’s position in history, but as Freire suggests, the ability to understand how one fits into that history and—intrinsic in the responsibility that comes with education—to transform its future. Thus, through education one can write one’s own future. But in order to write, one must read.

Which brings us to the theme of this year’s Banned Books Week: “Thirty Years of Liberating Literature.” Since its founding in 1982, Banned Books Week has sought to draw attention to instances of censorship that happen every day in small ways. Through heightened visibility, books deemed immoral, obscene, or blasphemous by censors of all shapes and sizes are cast into the spotlight and, for one week, put on display as a reminder of our professed belief in free expression and of the rich literary history which, through its very existence, serves to reinforce that belief. And yet that the books are put on display at all speaks to the charge put forth by critics of Banned Books Week, who point out that the idea of a banned book in a twenty-first-century United States is misleading.

Indeed, much of the data comprising the American Library Association’s list of challenged texts is taken from reports about school libraries and classrooms where books are routinely challenged and removed based on their usefulness in imparting a particular worldview to young minds. And while it’s true that anyone with the desire—and a library card or Internet access—could obtain any book on the ALA’s
list, for fifty-one weeks out of the year the majority of the books are a little less visible.

The reasons for this are many, and a comprehensive analysis is beyond the scope of this essay, though suffice it to say that a mix of a changing literacy rate, an industry saturated with franchise titles, and a marketplace driven to promote for profit over other measures of value drives the promotion of some titles and not others. And as our theme of “Liberating Literature” reminds us, visibility is important. We in the United States have the freedom to choose what we consume, but how we exercise that freedom is a result of the decisions we make based on the information available to us.

Which is why the phrase Liberating Literature is a misnomer, for the literary texts are, for the present, available to anyone who goes searching for them. What is at risk is not the texts themselves, but the reading of them, for it’s in the process of reading that we are able to see ourselves in the motivations and actions of the character, or Other, before us. What we do with that recognition is the great unknown that compels the censor to act. That historically banned or challenged literature often shows viewpoints that fall outside of the mainstream, or that challenge dominant institutions and ideologies, is a testament to this threat that reading poses. Such a threat is what Freire embraced and found essential to an education that encourages a reader to find in the text a likeness, and through that recognition be empowered to enact change. Thus, year after year, when we see books like The Catcher in the Rye and Slaughterhouse-Five on display in our bookstores or libraries, we’re reminded not of the texts’ inherent subversiveness, but of what gets excluded from our acculturating media and institutions—how not to act and who not to be. In 2012, the banned book is certainly available. It is the allowance and capability to think critically, and to develop a unique sense of self from the ideas one encounters through reading, that is under fire.

Victoria Pacchiana-Rojas is founder of Banned by the Bay, San Francisco’s celebration of Banned Books Week, and a graduate student in the literature program at San Francisco State University.
REBELLIOUS TRUTHS (AND THE RESPONSIBLE REVOLUTION)

by Christopher Ponzi

If you’re reading this book, you must be a rebel. Does that mean you throttle-twist torque-drenched pistons while hurling Molotov cocktails at crooked cops? Maybe, but probably not. Yet the “truth” has been branded an outlaw. Through corruption and greed, the status quo has fine-tuned itself into a well-oiled manipulation machine, making all those who value the pursuit of truth rebels by default. This is the origin behind the name of our organization, Rebellious Truths (rebellioustruths.org).

So what are we?

Rebellious Truths is an antipartisan nonprofit dedicated to exposing the fact-led truth and igniting a responsible revolution here in America. A “responsible” revolution would be nonviolent and focused on unification regardless of partisan labels, with revolutionaries well-educated on pertinent subjects. We aim to creatively expose and educate youth about corporate media’s propaganda and manipulation, those often buried economic truths, and the rampant political corruption on all sides. We wish to bridge ideological divides, foster mutual understanding and respect, inspire people to question polemical labels, and engage in nonviolent direct action against corrupt forces.

While we are undoubtedly a media-focused organization, it would be misleading to label Rebellious Truths as simply a distributor of media, for media revolutionaries today must go beyond simply being purveyors of accurate information. We are developing an ecosystem for intellectual exploration through robust online and local community networks, combining educational, fact-based material; cutting-edge visual and digital activism; concert rallies; and on-the-ground action. We are seeking a complete shift of mentality within the American sociopolitical framework of left/right, liberal/conservative, Democrat/Republican—all of which perpetuate false divisions, preventing Americans from uniting under common goals and reaching sustainable solutions. We are also attempting to eject Americans from a political savior mentality that rears its well-coiffed
head every election cycle. This is a people’s revolution. To replace all this, we are constructing a freethinking framework of exchange that more eloquently reflects the fundamental human values of truth, integrity, justice, community, and empathetic compassion. We believe that without this fundamental cultural value shift, no amount of well-intentioned legislation will suffice, and therefore we focus on being agents of that shift.

Through new media, we focus on illuminating the narratives of American youth particularly, because they—or, more to the point, we—have contributed least to the deep problems facing us today yet bear the brunt of the burden. Despite the fact that youth are systematically demonized, commodified, disenfranchised, and immobilized, we will and must help lead this revolution. Our creativity, entrepreneurship, innovation, tolerance, and understanding are what will move humanity toward a better world.

In a culture of deceit, the ideal of authenticity is crucial. The youth at Rebellious Truths are facing the same problems as our peers, thus can connect authentically. Our narratives are not traditional or dry, but artistic and passionate, mirroring the organic journey of intellectual evolution that is at times abstract and fictional, but is always a reflection of what is really going on. We must be upfront, humble, and painfully honest. While “questioning” is a major theme of organizations worth their salt, “question us too” is usually not, but it must be so.

Style and artistry have been traditionally confined to the realms of entertainment or advertising, and are often neglected by information entities and activist organizations. This can no longer be. Fearless creativity must become an integral aspect of the media revolution, and it will be up to us pioneers to make sure it is both gorgeous and ethical.

Rebellious Truths is about inviting youth into the dialogue. We need to be role models for the changes we seek, not control-freak guardians of information. We must establish solid frameworks for others to feel empowered to engage in a constructive conversation. We must also change the conversation regarding ethics in our society, and part of that change is not to lecture, but to inspire. The youth perspective is not to be dismissed as simply an unrefined product yet to
complete filtration through the maturity machine, but is a valid and necessary perspective on its own merits.

We are young, fresh to the scene, and incorrigibly idealistic. Will we survive? That's hard to say. Yet we believe wholeheartedly in our approach and mission that we are doing our part in the media revolution. We are honored to share our message with Project Censored readers. Thanks for listening.

CHRISTOPHER PONZI is cofounder of Rebellious Truths.

ELECTRONIC INTIFADA
by Nora Barrows-Friedman

The Jaber family land is rapidly diminishing. Over time it has been reduced from an expansive, fruitful mountainside to a scarred and struggling enclave, eaten up slowly by the neighboring Israeli settlement, a miniature model of Israel’s land grab in the shrinking territories of Palestine.

“There are peace negotiations, but all the time there are demolitions, they are building the settlements, they are arresting people,” said Atta Jaber. “All the world is looking but their eyes are blinded. We are alone, without power, without any kind of defense to continue to live in this land.”

. . . Atta and [his family] were born from this hillside, and their roots run deep in their land.

“Even with the occupation, we continue our lives here,” Atta said. “We still have Jerusalem and Palestine inside our hearts. We are not beggars, we have education. We can rebuild.”

A quick scan of the human rights section on the website Electronic Intifada reveals a reality censored by the Western establishment media and elected officials, the cheerleaders and apologists of Israeli policy. Without the international spotlight and effective condemnation of Israeli policies, Palestinians, many of whom are refugees in their
own land, are left alone to face further land confiscation and displacement. Rampant home demolitions. Extreme settler violence. Aerial bombing attacks. Resource theft. Apartheid policies. And further dehumanization by Israel’s propaganda ministry and the government’s global lobbies.

This year, like all years in Palestine, those stark injustices are ubiquitous—but the “mainstream” corporate media continue to cheerlead for the Israeli government and its policies, and feign ignorance at the ongoing Palestinian struggle. Despite this, grassroots resistance—and international solidarity—remains at the heart of the Palestinian struggle, a movement that continues to grow on the ground and expand across the globe.

In April 2012, for example, thousands of Palestinians shut away inside Israeli jails and detention centers began a mass hunger strike—reminiscent of unarmed, historical resistance tactics in Ireland, India, and Guantánamo Bay—to draw attention to Israel’s draconian and frequent practice of administrative detention (indefinite imprisonment without charge or trial) and to demand basic humanitarian conditions, health care, and other rights (such as family and lawyer visits) inside the prisons.

Looking at the global solidarity movement, the Palestinian-led campaign for boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against Israel is continuing to gain momentum. Since the BDS call was initiated in 2005, dozens of international artists, performers, musicians, academics, scholars, writers, and cultural icons have refused to cross what is now one of the world’s biggest picket lines.

Communities across the planet, from students on college campuses to activists in major cities, continue to organize campaigns within their local BDS groups in order to send a message to Israel and its corporate and political benefactors: until Israel complies with international law and affords Palestinians equal human rights and lasting justice, there will be no business as usual.

The international BDS campaign against companies that sell equipment to the Israeli military, financial institutions that hold Israeli bonds, and corporations that sign contracts with the Israeli government—is not only one of the most effective ways to hold Israel accountable, it’s also been instrumental in educating the general public.
about the situation in Palestine and expanding the global solidarity movement.

The Electronic Intifada was at the forefront of reporting on the hunger strikes, working alongside human rights advocates and prisoner support organizations to send pertinent information and analysis out to readers and activists across the world. As we say in our mission statement, the Electronic Intifada exists simply to provide a forum where commonly excluded perspectives and challenging viewpoints are presented, and our editorial choices are informed by a commitment to universal principles of human rights, international law, antiracism, and equal justice.

In 2012, we have continued our groundbreaking reporting as Israeli policies tighten around the necks of Palestinians inside the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, inside the state of Israel itself, and in the global diaspora. We’ve curated a world-class cadre of independent reporters and correspondents who regularly highlight news, analysis, and action items on our new blog and through the powerful social media avenues Twitter and Facebook, and since April 2012 have produced a weekly news podcast culled from the top stories of the week, featuring interviews with reporters, human rights advocates, and analysts who can further contextualize the headlines. These continuous efforts help to break the media censorship barriers that are already beginning to slowly crumble with the rise of independent, grassroots media.

Nora Barrows-Friedman is an associate editor and reporter for the Electronic Intifada and a board member of the Media Freedom Foundation/Project Censored.

RIDING THE WAVES AT PACIFICA RADIO
by Andrew Leslie Phillips

The Pacifica Foundation was founded in 1946 by poet and journalist Lewis Hill and a small group of pacifists, intellectuals, and experienced radio people. They did not have the same political or economic philosophy, but they shared a vision that supported a peaceful world, social justice, and creativity. At 3:00 p.m., April 15, 1949, Lew Hill
sat behind the microphone and announced: “This is KPFA, listener-sponsored radio in Berkeley, the first such radio station in the world.”

At the time, less than 9 percent of the Bay Area radio audience owned the new FM receivers, so Pacifica gave potential listeners special KPFA radios with 94.1 on the FM dial to get people tuned in. Frequency modulation (FM) broadcasting was a new technology, thus Pacifica was backing the future, along the way inventing an entirely new funding mechanism: the theory of listener-sponsored radio. It was daring, audacious, and brilliant. And it caught on. Today there are Pacifica radio stations in five of the top ten radio markets.

The concept of listener sponsorship appealed to the politically savvy and zealously left-leaning progressive community in the Bay Area. They were happy to support a radical alternative to commercial pabulum, incipient McCarthyism, and the atomic bomb/Cold War politics of the 1950s. The social, political, and cultural leadership eagerly sought the free access offered by KPFA, as they do to this day. Now the audience is more diverse, reflecting the current milieu.

Access to airtime has always been at the center of controversies at Pacifica and community radio everywhere. Most on-air people at Pacifica were unpaid volunteers until the mid-1990s, though they made money to support the foundation by pitching their programming on free-speech Pacifica Radio. That was the deal. It was a tacit agreement—Pacifica provided opportunity and access while producers agreed to pitch on-air pledges. By far, the largest percentage of financial support for Pacifica still comes from listener donations.

This model changed when the National Federation of Community Broadcasters, under Lynn Chadwick and David LePage, adopted the so-called Healthy Station Project. (Chadwick later moved to Pacifica as executive director during a disastrous 1999 shutdown and police raid at KPFA.) The Healthy Station Project called for reducing the power of volunteers, professionalizing on-air sound, and adopting more paid on-air producers. A model more like National Pubic Radio (NPR) than community radio, it was designed to increase listenership and revenue, and to increase the amount of money the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) might potentially give the stations. And it was a tacit control strategy designed to moderate Pacifica’s radical message.
CPB has had close connections with known US mechanisms of propaganda including Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and Radio and TV Martí. Personnel move through a revolving door among these agencies. After almost destroying Pacifica, Lynn Chadwick landed a job at CPB.58

At the time the Healthy Station Project was being foisted on community radio, the CPB was headed by Bob Coonrod, deputy managing director of Voice of America. And at the helm of National Public Radio was Kevin Klose, formerly director of the International Broadcasting Bureau, which oversees Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and Radio and TV Martí. The revolving door goes round and round.

The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 requires that the CPB operates with a “strict adherence to objectivity and balance” in all programs of a controversial nature, and so the CPB regularly reviews national programming for objectivity and balance. When Pacifica agreed to take money from the CPB, it engaged in self-censorship for dollars. Of course, concern for objectivity and balance is extremely subjective, and when it came to the Gulf Wars, such sentiments counted for nothing at NPR and “mainstream” corporate media. Community radio was one of the few places one could hear an opposing point of view—one that turned out to be presciently accurate.

As a result of the CPB’s relationship to Pacifica, programming was “professionalized” and moderated. The presentations were less abrasive, the music more homogeneous and consistent—ideas derived from NPR programming consultants—with the mission to smooth the rough radical edges. The same consultants would go on to advise Pacifica when, in November 1996, Pacifica—led by former KPFA manager and then executive director Pat Scott—rolled out Vision for Pacifica Radio Creating a Network for the 21st Century—A Strategic 5 Year Plan.

The strategic plan was impractical and showed little understanding of the realpolitik of the five stations. It led to more expenses and more need to raise money to feed the beast and make the payroll. And the more money the station garnered from listener support, the more it received from the CPB. It also created a two-tiered system of paid and unpaid staff, encouraging a them-and-us culture in which volunteers subsidized paid staff; volunteers paid their own expenses as they
pitched during fundraising periods, while paid staff received salaries and health benefits. It was and continues to be unfair. The old hippie paradigm of diverse programming and volunteer-based management has disappeared. Today at Pacifica, paid staff call the shots and the community is less a part of community radio than it used to be.

The Healthy Station Project didn’t go over well with community radio volunteers. In 1996, the Grassroots Radio Coalition emerged as a reaction against the increasing commercialization of public radio and the lack of support for volunteer-based stations. The coalition is now stronger than ever, and grassroots community radio presses on, while Healthy Station Project stations like the Pacifica network are floundering.

Today, the five Pacifica stations revolve in a loose, sometimes wobbly orbit around the Pacifica mothership. The Pacifica Foundation owns the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licenses for all five stations, whose local boards elect the foundation’s board of directors. This current unwieldy and expensive governance structure that emerged in the new millennium, following the removal of Pacifica board chair Mary Frances Berry and executive director Lynn Chadwick, has created slates and factions within Pacifica. Pacifica boards of directors comprise truculent political diehards with little radio experience who have not done much to improve programming, revenue, or audience numbers.

Yet, Pacifica retains a most valuable asset: its intellectual capital, past, present, and future. It is the seed germ and should be protected. Pacifica continues to be an incubator for many important broadcasters and programs like Democracy Now!, Counter Spin, Flashpoints, Explorations with Michio Kaku, and now the Project Censored Radio Show. Radio crosses over to the Internet to become a transmedia system with opportunities for international distribution, video streaming, interactivity, and e-commerce. Creating and being a part of these transmedia systems is the future.

I fear that the more things change, the more they remain the same. A popular KPFA general manager, Nicole Sawaya, whose controversial firing by Lynn Chadwick precipitated the crisis at KPFA in 1999, was subsequently twice selected as Pacifica executive director in 2007 and 2008. In her September 24, 2008, departure letter in the form of a letter to late Pacifica founder Lewis Hill, Sawaya wrote:
. . . Sadly, it [Pacifica] is no longer focused on service to the listeners but absorbed with itself and the inhabitants therein. I call it Planet Pacifica, a term I coined during my hiring process. There is an underlying culture of grievance coupled with entitlement, and its governance structure is dysfunctional. The bylaws of the organization have opened it up to tremendous abuse, creating the opportunity for cronyism, factionalism, and faux democracy, with the result of challenging all yet helping nothing. Pacifica has been made so flat, that it is concave—no leadership is possible without an enormous struggle through the inertia that committees and collectives . . . can engender.

Pacifica calls itself a movement, yet currently it behaves like a jobs program, a cult, or a social service agency. And oftentimes, the loudest and most obstreperous have the privilege of the microphone. There are endless meetings of committees and “task forces”—mostly on the phone—where people just like to hear themselves talk. . . .

Can Pacifica change, or is it too late? Has Lew Hill’s experiment been supplanted by the Internet and smartphones? At a time when the need for community radio and citizen journalism seems more important than ever, can Pacifica adapt and change? Unfortunately, the prognosis is not good. Ironically, should Pacifica finally collapse, it will be in large part due to the Healthy Station Project, which ripped the heart out of community radio. Let’s hope for a revitalized Pacifica, for true free speech radio in the years to come.

A native of Australia, ANDREW LESLIE PHILLIPS spent seven years in Papua New Guinea as a government patrol officer, radio journalist, and filmmaker before coming to New York in 1975. He produced award-winning investigative radio documentaries on a wide range of environmental and political issues for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and WBAI community radio in New York City. He taught journalism, radio, and “sound image” as an adjunct professor at New York University for ten years. He is a permaculture teacher and interim general manager at KPFA, Pacifica Radio, in Berkeley.
THE HISTORY AND POLITICS OF BLOCK REPORT RADIO
by The Minister of Information JR

One of my earliest recollections of my hometown of Oakland, California, is of police beating up young, unarmed Black men in the streets and stripping them of everything in their pockets, including their dignity, in what people are now calling nationally “stop and frisk,” and what people in other countries call “occupation.” This rather common experience of police and government terror in the Black community is the root of what Block Report Radio (BlockReportRadio.com) was created to combat.

In 2003, I created Block Report Radio to be the fighting-back voice of an international group of people who were being oppressed all over the planet—low-/no-income Black people. The name of the show comes from a rap recording called “the Block Report.” That name spoke to exactly what I was trying to do: truly educate Black people, who have been discarded by capitalist society on the neighborhood blocks and in the cellblocks.

I think that a true education about the society in which we live, and our position in it, is almost as important as food, clothes, and shelter. A tree without roots is dead. If we can’t understand where we’ve been, it is impossible to chart where we are and where we need to go.

Although the idea for the radio show came from the streets of East Oakland, the people of Los Angeles, Philadelphia, New Orleans, London, Port-au-Prince, Rio de Janeiro, Harare, Tripoli, and Kinshasa are also in need of unfiltered broadcasted voices that speak to the politics and cultures governing our lives. We believe that having access to the creation of media should be a human right because otherwise, in such a highly technocratic society, to many people we wouldn’t exist, we’d be literally dispensable.

The mission of Block Report Radio is two-pronged: to be the frontline voice of an international community that is under the rifle’s scope, and to teach people outside of our community about the campaigns, ideas, art, media, and community voices that are important to us. In a society born out of white supremacy, the Bryant Gumbels, Al Sharptons, Michael Eric Dysons, Van Joneses, and Cornel Wests are given the nod from society’s puppet masters, including mainstream
and “alternative” media, to misrepresent us. But this doesn’t need to be the case.

Some of the unique voices that we have featured on the Block Report recently have included people like Danika Chatham, the mother of unarmed nineteen-year-old Kenneth Harding, who was murdered by San Francisco Police Department in July 2011 because he failed to pay for a two-dollar Muni (municipal transit) ticket; Mac Gaskins, a former prisoner of Red Onion State Prison in Virginia, where a hunger strike is now taking place to combat the torture by guards on a regular basis; as well as former US congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, who has been around the world investigating and talking about the evils of imperialism in Libya, the Congo, Haiti, and Palestine, to name a few of the places that she concentrates on. We have also featured linguist Dr. Ernie Smith to talk about the history of Ebonics; musician Seun Kuti, son of the legendary Fela Kuti; political prisoner and journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal; and Leo Sullivan, one of Bill Cosby’s partners in creating the 1970s cartoon *Fat Albert.*

The most obvious hardship in maintaining a media platform of this caliber is an economic one. Most people in today’s society have not been conditioned to pay for the type of media that they support and that supports them. I often meet people who give two thumbs up to the work of the Block Report, talk on and on about what they have learned from it, but who never offer any financial help, as if they assume that someone else will foot the bill. These same people don’t think twice about forking over seventy dollars a month for cable that mostly entertains without offering any substantive resonating content.

The first lesson in high school economics is “there is no such thing as a free lunch.” If we fail to financially support the innovative, cutting-edge work of Block Report Radio, it may one day soon cease to exist, be it that there are costs involved with survival, and with getting to and from places to cover stories.

Anyone can become a part of the Block Report Radio listening family by tuning in online at BlockReportRadio.com. People could also become supporters by donating online, buying our debut literary work, *Block Reportin’,* or purchasing one of our many documentaries, including *Block Reportin’ 101,* which is about the journalistic politics of Block Report Radio, and *Haiti Rising from the Ashes,* which is our
look at the island one month after the catastrophic 2010 earthquake. I would like to also extend a special thanks to Project Censored for allowing me this space to voice my views on media and the world.

J. R. Valrey is cohost of the Morning Mix and is the minister of information for Block Report Radio.

WORK WEEK RADIO COVERS STORIES ON THE ATTACK ON WORKERS, WHISTLEBLOWERS, AND THE COMMUNITY
by Steve Zeltzer

Work Week Radio (WorkWeekRadio.org) reports and publicizes news and analysis relevant to Labor and the working class. In 2011–12, Work Week Radio (WWR) covered life and death issues facing working people in the US and abroad, including biotech contamination, attacks on public education, and nuclear energy whistleblowers. Here is some of what WWR covered in 2012.

In March, WWR focused on the contamination of US biotech workers who have been injured due to improper protections in US biological laboratories. As part of its coverage of an international conference on the Bay Area Bio Lab and synthetic biology, WWR interviewed biotech workers who talked about their own injuries and the deaths of fellow workers.

When Becky McClain, a top-flight scientist and molecular biologist for Pfizer, noticed fumes from a biological cabinet at the company’s Groton, Connecticut lab, she complained, only to be told by Pfizer that it would do no more than required by law to protect the employees at its 6,000-scientist facility. After officially filing Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and health and safety complaints, McClain was harassed and ultimately fired by Pfizer. In April 2010, a federal jury awarded $1.3 million in damages to McClain, based on her case against Pfizer, but she has not yet received any of this money, or justice, from her former employer.

We also interviewed AgraQuest biotech worker David Bell who worked at a Davis, California, firm owned by former Monsanto pesticide director Pam Marrone. Work conditions sickened Bell, but the
company, which produces genetically engineered pesticides, denies responsibility, even though examinations have identified seventeen patented materials in Bell’s body.

Finally, we interviewed former University of Chicago virologist Joany Chou. Her husband, the professor Malcolm Casadaban, was killed by a strain of plague used in research at the university, a fact that came to light after Chou demanded an autopsy. The university refused to pay for Professor Casadaban’s funeral, although this is required by Illinois workers’ compensation law.

These cases show systemic health and safety problems in the biotech industry, and lack of proper oversight. They also show that OSHA and the National Institute of Health, along with the Obama administration, have refused to properly protect the American people.

In May, WWR investigated the case of California Commission on Teacher Credentialing lawyer Kathy Carroll. At the commission, which is run by Governor Jerry Brown’s office, Carroll began to see evidence of a campaign of intimidation against public educators. Carroll discovered systemic corruption and conflicts of interests not only by members of the state commission, who were also running or representing charters, but also at dozens of school boards and in other government positions, where officials illegally voted on funding for charters in which they had financial interests. She began to connect the dots, linking this conduct to the Gates Foundation, the Broad Foundation, the Kaplan Foundation, WestEd, and the publisher Pearson, each of whom push testing, online education, and other programs that produce profits for them.

First dozens, and eventually hundreds, of teachers contacted Carroll to share their experiences of being denied credentials and harassed on the job for similar reasons. (For more on the scapegoating of public education, see Censored story #13, “Education ‘Reform’ a Trojan Horse for Privatization,” in chapter 1.)

WWR uncovered the harassment of nuclear plant whistleblowers, including former General Electric (GE) inspector Kei Sugaoka. Prior to the March 2011 disaster at Fukushima, Sugaoka inspected their facilities and found health and safety problems. After filming a cracked dryer, he was forced to edit his videotape, even though this is illegal. When he went public, he was never hired again by GE. Dozens of GE-designed plants have similar designs.
WWR reported on efforts by Japanese government officials and the managers of Tokyo Electric Power Company to deny that there were serious health problems. We also covered the story of Japanese railway workers who refused to be sent out to a contaminated area and went on strike with the support of the community.

On similar cases of discrimination at the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station in California, WWR was there to report, while the corporate media were apparently elsewhere. Southern California Edison’s plant has the worst record of health and safety among US nuclear plants. Whether in Japan or the US, the protection of health and safety nuclear plant whistleblowers is of critical importance to the workers and the communities. (For more on official cover-ups of the Fukushima disaster, see Censored story #3, “Fukushima Nuclear Disaster Worse than Expected,” in chapter 1.)

Though corporate news regularly reports on the economy from the perspective of big business, this coverage typically excludes the standpoint of Labor or the working class. Work Week Radio plays a crucial role in breaking this information blockade, reporting real news and perspectives that champion workers’ interests and challenge corporate rule.

Steve Zeltzer is a longtime labor activist and producer of Work Week Radio.

Notes
1. For more on the Fair Share of the Common Heritage see http://fairsharecommonheritage.org.


42. May 2012 figures.


53. For Paulo Freire, language was inextricably tied to power, and reading and writing were thus essential tools in his project: “To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming.” Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970), 88.


56. KPFA circa 1949, Berkeley; KPFK circa 1959, Los Angeles; WBAI circa 1960, New York; KPFT circa 1970, Houston; WPFW circa 1977, Washington, DC. There are approximately 170 affiliates that take Pacifica programming, which is distributed over an Internet portal.

57. About 80 percent of support for Pacifica radio comes from listeners.


59. There are almost two dozen members on the Pacifica National Board, representing local station boards.