CHAPTER 2

Déjà Vu
What Happened to Previous Censored Stories?

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History, despite its wrenching pain,
Cannot be unlived, but if faced
With courage, need not be lived again.
—Maya Angelou (April 4, 1928–May 28, 2014)

As in previous Censored yearbooks, this year’s Déjà Vu chapter reviews a handful of stories featured in prior years’ Top 25 lists. These reviews focus on the stories’ subsequent coverage, assessing the extent to which they have become part of broader public discourse, or whether they remain “censored” by establishment media and marginal to public attention. Drawing on the insights of Maya Angelou, we revisit previous years’ censored and underreported news stories in the belief that, with adequate public understanding, they “need not be lived again.”

Typically, the stories featured in Project Censored’s Top 25 list have one of two fates, as far as corporate media coverage goes. Either the corporate media continue to ignore these important news stories, or there is a time lag of approximately eighteen to twenty-four months from when independent journalists break the story and the corporate news media catch up and begin to cover it themselves.1 For those sto-
ries that do finally receive corporate coverage, we typically find a significant degree of “spin” or framing, as will be highlighted in analyses of several of this year’s featured Déjà Vu stories.²

Project Censored seeks to “uncensor” topics that remain elusive—or illusive—in corporate coverage of news. Were it not for independent journalists choosing to cover important stories, even when they know that aspects of those stories may bar them from achieving prominence in corporate outlets, we at Project Censored would have nothing to report. However, due to the committed—and often courageous—efforts of independent journalists, Project Censored has been flooded with a wealth of crucial, independent news stories over the past thirty-eight years. And, in turn, Project Censored has provided its readers with a steady flow of underreported news stories, presented fairly, researched and validated by students, faculty, and a diverse panel of media scholars across the United States. This year’s Déjà Vu chapter features stories on whistleblowing, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the looming health risks of wireless technologies, Israel forcing birth control on Ethiopian immigrants, and a special update on Fukushima by Brian Covert.

**DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN: SUPPORTING OFFICIAL NARRATIVES BY ATTACKING THE COUNTER-NARRATORS**

Two of this year’s Déjà Vu stories address what we at Project Censored have called a war on journalism and whistleblowers. The clouds of propaganda emanating from corporate media on these topics underscore the importance of reviewing and updating stories that expose government secrecy and illustrate corporate media shortcomings. In essence, this entails a meta-critique, as we examine how the corporate news media report stories that involve free press issues, and how government officials and policies influence that coverage. Unfortunately for the free press, both government and corporate media continue their assault on those who challenge status quo notions of what counts as “news,” how it gets reported, and by whom.

Given that those in the so-called Fourth Estate (corporate media journalists who rely on government and establishment sources) tend to shape and disseminate official narratives, it should not be surprising
that these outlets and their sources are often biased against those posing counter-narratives (independent journalists and whistleblowers). On occasion, government and corporate media representatives resort to attacking the messengers rather than addressing their actual messages. Before we turn to this year’s Déjà Vu stories themselves, it is instructive to take a closer look at government and corporate media behavior on the matter of independent journalism and whistleblowing as a news story itself.

As we wrapped last year’s book, *Censored 2014: Fearless Speech in Fateful Times*, Chelsea Manning had not yet been sentenced, and the Edward Snowden story was just hitting the press. In recapping *Censored 2014* story #1, “Bradley [now Chelsea] Manning and the Failure of Corporate Media,” and #4, “Obama’s War on Whistleblowers,” we look at how Manning has continued to be underreported, but we pay particular attention to the ongoing Snowden case, his revelations about government secrecy, spying and data collection, and the ensuing public outcry, as this is one of the most significant stories of the past year. His story has garnered much media attention, including a spring interview on primetime network television (NBC). Although the problem with a lack of coverage of a particular story is obvious, when there is coverage by the corporate media, like with Snowden, it is important to assess how the story is covered.

The Manning story was ignored in large part, and much of the coverage looked at gender politics and other personal issues when not rhetorically asking if Manning was guilty of “aiding and abetting the enemy” (she was not). Snowden’s story has received far more coverage in comparison. However, as in Manning’s case, corporate frames have focused attention on Snowden himself, including his personality and motivations, rather than on the original documents about the National Security Agency (NSA) spying programs, their questionable legality, and how both the Bush and Obama administrations lied about them. Instead, the corporate media punditocracy reduced these complex issues to a simplistic either/or decision: hero or traitor? Some corporate coverage framed debate even more narrowly, musing as to whether Snowden was either traitor or criminal, excluding all other alternatives.3 Apparently any other consideration is unfit to be heard—in other words, censored from public view. The Big Brother society has been normalized in a post-9/11 world.
By now, it should be no secret that whistleblowers have been under attack by the Obama administration. During the Obama presidency, there have been eight government employees prosecuted under the Espionage Act, more than under every previous administration combined. That said, in addition to government officials attacking whistleblowers, they’ve also targeted those who report whistleblower information like Glenn Greenwald, Julian Assange of WikiLeaks, and others that support transparency and a free press. In fact, several high profile members of the corporate media have helped lead the charge.

Indeed, in terms of shooting the messengers, this past year was like Déjà Vu all over again for attackers and victims alike. Greenwald’s partner, David Miranda, was detained and searched when traveling abroad and, because of their journalistic pursuits, they have lived under constant scrutiny. Greenwald was publicly shamed on NBC’s Meet the Press for his role in helping to publish Snowden’s revelations. Host David Gregory thought it appropriate to ask Greenwald if he was in fact a “real” journalist. The fact that Greenwald has won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize and Polk Award for public service and national security reporting should put to rest the question of whether or not he is a “real” journalist, though that doesn’t seem to stop those trying to discredit him. Ironically, Greenwald had previously collaborated with NBC News to help write four stories using the very information Snowden leaked, which NBC seemed to have no trouble using despite its attacks on both men.

Upon receiving the Pulitzer, Greenwald remarked to the Huffington Post about the attacks against him, “That’s just part of, I think, what journalism is, is if you want to be adversarial to those who wield power, you have to expect that those who wield power aren’t gonna like what you’re doing very much . . . And not only doesn’t that bother me, I see that as a vindication that what I’m doing is the right thing.”

Highlighting how corporate news media cover free press issues—including the ongoing war on journalism and whistleblowers—matters deeply because the issues at stake in these stories impact how we find out about all other news stories: at their core, press freedom stories are about journalism and protecting the commons of human knowledge. Given the press freedoms identified in the First Amendment, these issues ought to be both readily available to all citizens
and prominent in our public discourse. Why, then, at every turn do we find policy created to stifle the public’s access to information and decision-making? Why do those who claim to represent the free press lead attacks against their more independent colleagues who want to report the most crucial information of our times? Perhaps those in government and the corporate press would rather Americans be kept in the dark: compliant, distracted, and easily controlled.

An educated public is capable of stronger collective action—better able to face those wrenching aspects of our shared history, which Maya Angelou and others remind us must be faced courageously if we aim to create a better future. We at Project Censored consider it our duty to continue to speak out against censorship and the injustices that those who employ it seek to hide, and we encourage readers to do the same. In this spirit, we offer updates to these previously censored stories.

*If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.*

—Desmond Tutu

**Censored 2014 #1**

**Chelsea Manning and the Failure of Corporate Media**

**SUMMARY:** United States military intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning confessed in court to providing vast archives of military and diplomatic files to the anti-secrecy group WikiLeaks. Manning wanted the information to become public “to make the world a better place” and hoped to “spark a domestic debate on the role of the military in (US) foreign policy.” The 700,000 released documents revealed a multitude of previously secret crimes and acts of deceit and corruption by US military and government officials. Among these was the infamous “collateral murder” video from July 2007, which showed US personnel in Iraq killing innocent civilians, including two Reuters reporters, and wounding two children. The soldiers mocked their victims during the unprovoked attack.

According to Manning’s testimony in February 2013, she tried
to release the Afghanistan and Iraq War Logs through conventional sources. In winter 2010, Manning contacted the Washington Post, the New York Times, and Politico in hopes that they would publish the materials. They refused, so Manning began uploading documents to WikiLeaks. Al Jazeera reported that Manning’s testimony “raises the question of whether the mainstream press was prepared to host the debate on US interventions and foreign policy that Manning had in mind.”

Corporate media largely focused on Manning’s decision to change gender, disregarding her First Amendment rights or the abusive nature of her imprisonment, which included almost three years without trial and nearly one year in “administrative segregation,” the military equivalent of solitary confinement. In a February 2013 court appearance, Manning pled guilty to twelve of the twenty-two charges. One of the remaining ten charges was the capital offense of “aiding and abetting the enemy.” At the time, Manning faced the possibility of a life sentence without parole.

UPDATE: The Manning trial came to an end on July 30, 2013. Pvt. Manning was convicted of twenty of the twenty-two charges she faced. She was sentenced to thirty-five years in prison for leaking
750,000 classified documents to the public via WikiLeaks, but was not convicted of one of the most serious charges against her, “aiding and abetting the enemy.” This is known as one of the largest caches of classified documents in US history. Manning was imprisoned for over three years before trial, subjected to illegal pretrial punishment, and put in solitary confinement. These and other mistreatments provide Manning’s legal team with significant grounds for appealing the convictions, though the military has preliminarily upheld Manning’s sentencing.

A day after sentencing, Manning announced that she wanted to live as a woman. Her attorney David Coombs told the Associated Press that Chelsea had known for some time that she wanted to live as a woman but did not want to release the statement during the trial and have it seem insincere. “People might think it was an effort to get further attention,” said Coombs. Manning knew that the army might not provide hormone treatments but was hoping that United States Penitentiary, Leavenworth, where she will serve her sentence, would allow it since she was diagnosed with gender identity disorder by an army psychiatrist who testified to this during her trial. Manning will be eligible for her first parole review after serving ten years of her sentence. However, she may be eligible after seven years because of the 1,294 days credited by the judge toward her sentence for mistreatment during her stay in prison before and during the trial.

Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning both came under scrutiny for leaking top-secret government documents and are often compared to one another in the media, yet they face different battles. Manning has been sentenced to thirty-five years in federal prison, while Snowden lives in an undisclosed location in Russia on (temporary) asylum. Both have been labeled whistleblowers, and both were awarded the Sam Adams Award. The award is given annually by the Sam Adams Associates for Integrity in Intelligence, a group of retired Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officers, to an intelligence professional who has taken a stand for integrity and ethics. Edward Snowden was publicly acknowledged and accepted his award. Snowden also acknowledged Chelsea and congratulated her in a YouTube video. Manning wrote a letter in acceptance and had her childhood friend Aaron Kirkhouse accept the award on her behalf.
In January 2014, the *New York Times* editorial board advocated that President Obama should grant clemency to Snowden. *Firedoglake*’s Kevin Gosztola’s praised the *Times*’ editorial board for its position but also challenged them, raising the question, “If Snowden is a whistleblower, what is Chelsea Manning?” *The Times* editorial said Snowden could not have gone through the “proper channels”—which, Gosztola wrote, had also been impossible for Manning. Manning offered documents to the *New York Times* and other establishment news organizations, but they never responded to these offers. Snowden has been hailed as a hero, a whistleblower, a dissident, a traitor, a criminal, and a patriot, ultimately receiving much more press coverage than Manning.

As Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) showed, media outlets such as *Time* magazine tended to take for granted—or outright ignore—the important information that Manning and Snowden leaked, while vilifying them through comparisons to figures such as Fort Hood shooter Nidal Hasan and Navy Yard shooter Aaron Alexis. Rather than discussing how the information Manning leaked has shifted our understanding of governmental procedures and actions, corporate news coverage details her gender identity and emphasizes the debate over whether she should receive hormones and/or a sex change while imprisoned, as ways to distract attention from the serious issues raised by the documents she revealed. It’s an example of what Project Censored calls News Abuse (discussed in the next chapter).

In addition to the Chelsea Manning Support Network, Manning has also been assisted by Courage to Resist, which has raised $50,000 toward her defense. She is now represented by Nancy Hollander and Vincent Ward in a case before the US Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces. Attorney David Coombs, who represented Manning throughout her trial, will continue to assist her in legal matters regarding her official name change and her fight to receive hormone therapy. Coombs had previously filed a pardon request with President Obama and a clemency request with the secretary of the army but was told that action needed to be taken by the convening authority and appellate courts before any consideration would be made regarding a pardon or clemency. Major General Jeffrey Buchanan, who under
military law has the power to approve or deny the decision of the trial judge, announced in April that he has denied the request for clemency and upheld the thirty-five-year sentence. Even though Manning supporters have sent over 3,000 letters in her support, this result came as no surprise.

The Chelsea Manning Support Network’s website hosts a petition that can be signed by anyone who wishes to express support for Manning to the White House and the court martial convening authority. Supporters have also marched in a peace parade in Boston each of the past three years to raise awareness of the need to continue to fight for Manning’s freedom. Manning was named the honorary grand marshal in San Francisco’s 2014 lesbian gay bisexual transgender parade. Her case, its aftermath, and the WikiLeaks documents themselves, have received less coverage overall than the more recent Edward Snowden case, which we examine next.

**SOURCES:**


(NDAA) furthering these protections in January 2013. However, his
NDAA signing statement also undermined these protections, stating
that those expanded protections “could be interpreted in a manner
that would interfere with my authority to manage and direct executive
branch officials.” Thus, in his signing statement, Obama promised
to ignore expanded whistleblower protections if they conflicted with
his power to “supervise, control, and correct employees’ communicat-
ions with the Congress in cases where such communications would
be unlawful or would reveal information that is properly privileged or
otherwise confidential.”

Despite rhetoric to the contrary, the Obama administration is tar-
geting government whistleblowers, having invoked the otherwise
dormant Espionage Act of 1917 at least eight times. Under President
Obama, the Department of Justice has also used the Intelligence
Identities Protection Act to obtain a conviction against Central Intel-
ligence Agency (CIA) whistleblower John Kiriakou for exposing the
waterboarding of prisoners, ironically making Kiriakou the first CIA
official to be sentenced to prison in connection with the torture program (but for exposing it, not for participating in it). And the justice department charged former National Security Agency (NSA) senior executive Thomas Drake with espionage for exposing hundreds of millions of dollars of waste.

The highly visible prosecution of Chelsea Manning has become what is arguably the most effective deterrent against government whistleblowers. Manning admitted to leaking troves of classified documents to WikiLeaks, but pleaded not guilty on counts of espionage. Since the Manning case, another whistleblower has been in the limelight, Edward Snowden, for leaking documents about NSA spying. The Snowden affair has eclipsed recent previous whistleblowing cases in media coverage, though that coverage, as we will see, has been quite skewed.

UPDATE: In late May 2013, Edward Snowden became the biggest name associated with whistleblowers since Chelsea Manning. After the release of NSA documents, he was called many things—a patriot, a traitor, a hero, a criminal, and a dissident, to name a few. Snowden, a computer specialist and former CIA employee who worked as an NSA contractor, believed it was his duty to alert the American public to gross constitutional violations by the US government.

On May 20, 2013, Snowden flew from Hawaii to Hong Kong, where he later met with journalists Glenn Greenwald and Laura Poitras and shared numerous classified documents. These documents exposed Internet surveillance programs such as PRISM, MUSCULAR, XKeyscore, and Tempora, and the bulk collection of US and European telephone metadata.

On June 14, 2013, federal prosecutors charged Snowden with espionage and theft of government property. After publicly denouncing the NSA’s practices of violating citizens’ privacy rights, Snowden left the country and, on June 23, was granted temporary asylum in Russia.

The 2012 change in the Whistleblower Protection Act complicated the ability of government intelligence employees to bring forward information without fear of prosecution. Although Snowden worked on behalf of the United States government, Booz Allen Hamilton,
a company that fulfilled NSA contracts, was his direct employer. As an employee of a private company, Snowden’s right to protection under the Whistleblower Protection Act was significantly limited. Although most federal workers fall under the Whistleblower Protection Act of 1989, a separate law aptly named the Intelligence Community Whistleblower Protection Act is generally regarded as a fairly weak protection act and is ambiguous. It allows for national security whistleblowers to release classified information to an inspector general or member of a congressional intelligence committee, but does not protect whistleblowers from retaliation. Snowden commented on his status as a employee of a private company (from the Washington Post):

“As an employee of a private company rather than a direct employee of the US government, I was not protected by US whistleblower laws, and I would not have been protected from retaliation and legal sanction for revealing classified information about law-breaking in accordance with the recommended process.” Snowden explained (from the Washington Post):

It is important to remember that this legal dilemma did not occur by mistake. US whistleblower reform laws were passed as recently as 2012, with the US Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act, but they specifically chose to exclude intelligence agencies from being covered by the statute. President Obama also reformed a key executive whistleblower regulation with his 2012 Presidential Policy Directive 19, but it exempted intelligence community contractors such as myself. The result was that individuals like me were left with no proper channels.

Lack of proper channels left Snowden with no course of action that the government would find acceptable if he chose to leak information, and no legal protection if he did so. This significant exception in the revised Whistleblower Protection Act has made it impossible for any intelligence officer to bring to light constitutional violations or other serious injustices, without putting his or her own careers at risk. The Washington Post, where Snowden was quoted on the matters, called this a “gray area” in the law.
In early March 2014, the US Supreme Court expanded the scope of whistleblower protections. Following the collapse of Enron Corporation, Congress enacted the Sarbanes–Oxley Act of 2002, which protected employees of public companies against retaliation from whistleblowing. In the case of *Lawson v. FMR LLC*, two former employees filed suits for wrongful termination against FMR, claiming the company had retaliated against them for whistleblowing. The plaintiffs argued that protection was granted to them through the Sarbanes–Oxley Act. FMR argued that the plaintiff’s lawsuits be dismissed, and that the claim of protection through the Sarbanes–Oxley Act did not hold because the act only protected employees of public companies, not private ones. On March 4, 2014, in a 6–3 decision the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and clarified the intent of the Sarbanes–Oxley Act of 2002. The Court’s decision extended the act’s whistleblower protections to include the employees of a public company’s private contractors and subcontractors.

NBC News aired their interview with Snowden on May 28, 2014, during prime time. He spoke of his duties while working for the NSA and why he felt it was important that the information he leaked be made public. He currently has a legal team that will begin negotiations with the US government to see what resolution can be reached. Controversy continued to swirl around the players and the issues. Glenn Greenwald, the journalist who brought forward Snowden’s findings, also appeared on the program to discuss his reaction to having access to Snowden and his information. Greenwald’s recent book, *No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the US Surveillance State*, details his journey with Snowden. Journalist Michael Kinsley (a liberal columnist), in a review of Greenwald’s book in the *New York Review of Books*, attacked him personally (and others like him), ultimately stating that when it comes to deciding what can be published by the press, “that decision must ultimately be made by the government.” Barry Eisler, writing for the Freedom of the Press Foundation, disagreed, noting that many establishment journalists piled on Greenwald and Snowden in agreement with Kinsley, further evidence that the media was more interested in personalities and attacks than substantive discourse and protecting a free press.

The primetime NBC interview was loaded with media spin and
hype. NBC encouraged viewers to tweet their own responses on whether Snowden was a “patriot” or a “traitor.” Upon return from each commercial break, NBC’s host, Brian Williams, offered clearly slanted perspective and commentary on Snowden’s remarks. A panel discussion on NBC’s Meet the Press framed the Snowden debate in even more negative terms, questioning whether he was a traitor or a criminal. Given the framing and propaganda of the corporate media, in the case of Edward Snowden, more coverage has not necessarily been a good thing. It has been mostly bread and circuses.13

Although some do call for prosecution of reporters, many civil liberties organizations continue to recognize the significance of the Snowden reports. In June 2014, the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) awarded the Guardian—the publication in which Greenwald broke the story—the Champions of Freedom Award for their coverage of the issue. As this volume went to press, Greenwald, who is a cofounder of a new online publication called the Intercept, stated that he will soon be making public more information from the Snowden files, including a list of whom the NSA targeted inside the US.14

As Censored 2015 was on its way to the publishers, several developments were afoot regarding whistleblowing—some good, some not. Over the past year, Congress has considered several calls for shield laws for journalists. One example, championed by senators Charles Schumer (D-NY) and Diane Feinstein (D-CA) and titled the Free Flow of Information Act, actually attempted to define who a journalist was rather than what journalism itself was, a move that clearly challenged the notion of a free press by restricting who was protected as an official journalist. Another example reported by Andrew Taylor at the Associated Press (AP), of an amendment proposed in the House by Representative Alan Grayson (D-FL), “would block the Justice Department from compelling journalists from testifying about confidential information or sources.” The House version was broader in its protections than the Senate version, though at time of this publication, no final vote had occurred on a reconciled version. While Congress debated the matter, new organizations formed around whistleblowing and protection of sources like the Freedom of the Press Foundation and ExposeFacts, which is supported by legendary whistleblower
Daniel Ellsberg, who exposed the Pentagon Papers by having them read into the public record. Additionally, Freedom of the Press Foundation worked to maintain late activist Aaron Swartz’s creation SecureDrop, which was adopted by the Guardian newspaper, among other organizations and publications like the New Yorker and ProPublica, as a means by which to protect sources in sensitive stories.

As noted, some of these developments may bode well for protecting whistleblowers, journalists, and their sources of critical information on controversial matters. However, other developments may not. In 2013, it was reported that the Obama administration had spied on numerous AP reporters and James Rosen at Fox News, and a year later, the Supreme Court ruled against the right of journalists to protect their sources in the case of New York Times journalist James Risen (not to be confused with Rosen). Regarding the ruling in the case, which involved former CIA officer Jeffrey Sterling as a source of classified information for Risen’s 2006 book State of War: The Secret History of the C.I.A. and the Bush Administration, Trevor Timm of Freedom of the Press Foundation wrote,
Make no mistake, this case is a direct attack on the press. While the fight for reporter’s privilege will certainly continue, and is by no means dead in much of the country, this case is another reminder that reporters can no longer rely on the legal process to protect their sources. Surveillance has become the government’s go-to tool for rooting out a record number of sources and chilling all kinds of investigative journalism. Out of the eight source prosecutions under the Obama administration, the Sterling case is the only one where a reporter was called to testify. As an unnamed national security official reportedly once said a year ago, “the Risen subpoena is one of the last you’ll see. We don’t need to ask who you’re talking to. We know.”

Those last passages are quite chilling, indeed. The US government is going so far as to liken journalists who claim privilege to protect confidential sources to criminals receiving drugs. But, in the cases of these journalists, the “drugs” they are receiving are often facts showing government corruption and wrongdoing, which would otherwise remain undiscovered. That’s a real problem in terms of holding those in power accountable for their actions.

SOURCES:


Censored 2014 #3

Trans-Pacific Partnership Threatens a Regime of Corporate Global Governance

SUMMARY: The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is a multinational trade agreement involving at least eleven Pacific Rim nations and over 600 corporations worldwide. If passed, it would be the largest trade agreement in history, and it would account for nearly 40 percent of the world’s gross domestic product (GDP). Leaked text from the thirty-
chapter agreement has revealed that negotiators have already agreed to many radical terms, granting expansive new rights and privileges for foreign investors and their enforcement through extrajudicial “investor-state” tribunals. There is almost no progressive movement or campaign whose goals are not threatened, as vast swaths of public-interest policy achieved through decades of struggle are targeted. Not only would this agreement govern global law on trade between nations, it would also place regulation of issues such as workers’ rights, freedom of speech, and financial regulation in the hands of corporate interests. Equally concerning is the fact that all of the TPP negotiations have taken place behind closed doors, without the knowledge of the American public or their elected representatives.

UPDATE: In November 2013, WikiLeaks published the secret negotiated draft text of an entire TPP chapter on intellectual property rights. WikiLeaks’ Julian Assange wrote, “If instituted, the TPP’s IP [intellectual property] regime would trample over individual rights and free expression, as well as ride roughshod over the intellectual and creative commons. If you read, write, publish, think, listen, dance, sing or invent; if you farm or consume food; if you’re ill now or might one day be ill, the TPP has you in its crosshairs.” The exposure of this crucial segment of the TPP galvanized public attention on the TPP.

The intellectual property rights chapter showed that the TPP would have significant negative effects on public health for all the nations involved in the treaty. By allowing big pharmaceutical companies to increase drug prices, the TPP would make it even more difficult for people in developing countries to get necessary medicines. For example, by allowing pharmaceutical firms that produce HIV/AIDS drugs to dictate prices and to determine what medicines are available for government health care systems, the TPP would grant multinational corporations the power to supply only the most profitable, proprietary versions of those drugs while barring competitors from marketing inexpensive generic versions of them.

The agreement would also allow corporations to sue a country’s government for profits lost due to restrictions on business required by a nation’s laws. This includes the right to sue governments for imposing environmental standards that might limit corporate profits.
In June 2012, Sojourners’ Elizabeth Palmberg released the list of 605 corporations that had official advisors participating in the TPP negotiations. From A to Z, the list read like a directory to the world’s largest corporations. Of course, each corporation seeks to influence the representatives involved in negotiating the TPP to include provisions that favor its interests.

Although much of this lobbying is taking place “under the table,” the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) and Pfizer are among the leaders in lobbying efforts, with more than forty reports mentioning the TPP. Other disclosures revealed that CitiGroup and Bank of America have sought to bribe the Obama administration’s TPP trade negotiators with multimillion-dollar bonuses.

President Obama has recently nominated Robert Hollyman, a former lobbyist for the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA), as a TPP lobbyist in hopes of moving the deal forward. As Fang Lee reported, this move is significant because leaked TPP documents “reveal that the US is seeking to resurrect portions of the SOPA bill through the TPP.” Lee quoted Susan Sell, a professor of political science at George Washington University, on how the United States seeks to advance intellectual property rules that “could not [be] achieved through an open democratic process.”

At the same time, it hardly seems a coincidence that the United States’ chief agriculture negotiator on the TPP is a former Monsanto lobbyist, Islam Siddiqui. Monsanto is the leading producer of genetically engineered seeds. The trade documents do not have a separate agriculture section but, as Barbara Chicherio and others have reported, rules affecting food are woven throughout the text. If this trade deal proves successful, countries with genetically modified organism (GMO)—labeling laws such as Australia, New Zealand, and Japan could no longer require that GM foods be labeled as such. Peru, which recently enacted a ten-year moratorium on all GMO plants and foods in order to protect local agriculture and ecological diversity, would arguably be the nation most affected by these proposed restrictions.

As impactful as the Trans-Pacific Partnership would be on the lives of millions of people around the world, it has received almost no coverage in the corporate media. For example, the nonprofit progressive research and information center Media Matters for America under-
took a content analysis of weekday evening news programs broadcast from 5:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M. on CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, ABC, CBS, NBC, and PBS from August 1, 2013, through January 31, 2014. Their research concluded that the three largest cable networks—CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News—had only covered the ongoing negotiations thirty-three times during that time period. Of those thirty-three mentions, thirty-two occurred on just one program, MSNBC’s The Ed Show. Network broadcasts completely ignored the TPP, while PBS NewsHour mentioned it just once. Overall, corporate media have failed to cover the developments of this story.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration and Democrats in Congress have attempted to fast track the TPP, going so far as to change how they refer to it, once the American public began to understand its far-reaching impacts. As Pete Dolack reported for CounterPunch,

The Democratic Party has responded to the resistance against ramming through new trade agreements by giving the process a new name. “Fast track” has been rebranded as “smart-track” and, voilà, new packaging is supposed to make us forget the rotten hulk underneath the thin veneer.

In January 2014, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) publicly stated his opposition to fast-tracking the TPP. If Reid in the Senate decides not to introduce the bill, then the TPP is virtually dead in the water. However, this would not stop future presidents from pursuing the deal.

For more on the TPP, see Censored 2015 story #3, “WikiLeaks Revelations on Trans-Pacific Partnership Ignored by Corporate Media,” in this volume.

SOURCES:

Censored 2014 #14

Wireless Technology a Looming Health Crisis

SUMMARY: As a multitude of hazardous wireless technologies are deployed in homes, schools, and workplaces, government officials and industry representatives continue to insist on their safety despite growing evidence to the contrary. Extensive deployment of “smart grid” technology hastens this looming health crisis.

By now, many residences in the United States and Canada are installed with smart meters—which transfer detailed information on residents’ electrical usage back to the utility every few minutes. Each meter has an electronic cellular transmitter that uses powerful bursts of electromagnetic radio frequency (RF) radiation to communicate with nearby meters, which together form an interlocking network. Such information can easily be used to determine individual patterns of behavior based on power consumption.

Utilities sell smart grid technology to the public as a way to “empower” individual energy consumers, allowing them to access information on their energy usage so that they may eventually save money by programming “smart” (i.e., wireless-enabled) home appliances and equipment to run when electrical rates are lowest. In other words, a broader plan behind smart grid technology involves a tiered rate system for electricity consumption that will be set by the utility, to which customers will have no choice but to conform.
UPDATE: Since the publication of “Wireless Technology a Looming Health Crisis” in Censored 2014, there have been new reports and studies further supporting the link between wireless technology and health hazards, especially cancers. Highlights of this research are reviewed in Censored 2015 story #14, “Accumulating Evidence of Ongoing Wireless Technology Health Hazards,” in this volume.

Dr. Martin Blank discussed electromagnetic frequencies (or EMFs) and the dangers they pose in his new book published by Seven Stories Press, Overpowered: What Science Tells Us about the Dangers of Cell Phones and Other WiFi-Age Devices. For example, Overpowered reviews the findings of a study conducted by Dr. Henry Lai and Dr. Narendra Singh. They wanted to know if non-ionizing radiation damages DNA, and specifically whether levels of EMF radiation considered “safe” by government standards had any such effects. Although there were conflicting interpretations of their study’s findings, Lai believes there is a cause for concern and that precautionary action is necessary. On EMF damage of DNA, Blank summarized, “The levels of radiation at which Lai and Singh demonstrate this damage are well below the limits set by the current safety standards for technologies like cell phones, WiFi networks, and microwave ovens.” In fact, earlier this year the French National Assembly banned WiFi technologies in preschools in their country and they are taking steps to further implement precautionary principles regarding wireless technology, including banning advertisements for WiFi devices that target children.

With many new and exciting applications of wireless technology, companies see opportunities for expansion and profit, while customers are promised Jetsons-like conveniences. In January 2014, for example, Google purchased Nest, a “smart home” company, for $3.2 billion. Privacy advocates questioned whether Nest intended to share customer data with Google. Google responded by assuring the public that its existing privacy policy “clearly limits” use of customer information to “providing and improving Nest’s products and services.”

But, as Jeromy Johnson and Regina Meredith alerted us, convenience comes at a steep price: the loss of privacy. “If you are concerned about privacy and surveillance now,” they wrote in a January 2014 article, “wait until everything you own and most of your activities are connected wirelessly to the Internet.” As Johnson and Mer-
edith reported, wireless “smart” electrical meters have served as the gateway for allowing EMFs—and companies—into our homes. However, as they also reported, “to the surprise of the utility companies, a global resistance has developed against smart meters.” In addition to privacy concerns, this movement also questions smart meters’ health effects and whether they will produce the customer savings and environmental benefits that their advocates tout.

For example, in British Columbia, BC Hydro has begun to install smart meters for all of its customers. BC Hydro claims that, after “decades of research,” there are no correlations between low-level radio frequency signals and health or environmental risks. According to BC Hydro, its customers should have no concerns about smart meters. BC Hydro consumers are not so sure. For instance, in a letter to the editor of the Maple Ridge–Pitt Meadows Times, reader Ron McNutt wrote, “BC Hydro, a government-established electrical monopoly, has without our knowledge or agreement made a material change in the way our electrical usage is monitored and controlled. A previously safe and CSA-approved analog meter is being replaced with the forced imposition of a wireless smart meter of dubious safety, with built-in privacy information and time-of-use billing capabilities.”

Customers in both Canada and the United States who have been subjected to the required installation of smart meters have begun to demand the right to opt out. However, many companies force customers who opt out to pay additional charges to do so. In California, for example, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) has begun its conversion to smart meters. PG&E has installed nine million smart meters in northern California, part of a $2.2 billion program. Customers of PG&E have an option to reinstall an analog meter, as the San Jose Mercury News reported in 2012, but in order to do so they must pay a one-time $75 fee and an additional charge of $10 per month, on top of the bill for their actual energy use. In August 2013, the PBS NewsHour featured a story on opposition to PG&E’s smart meters, focused on the community of Fairfax in Marin County. Although PG&E considered the meters noncontroversial “tools of the trade,” critics reacted otherwise. The NewsHour featured comments from Fairfax residents opposed to PG&E’s smart meters, including Mary Beth Brangan, who told PBS, “A lot of people consider it extortion to have to pay to not
have something on your house that can harm you.” Activists in Fairfax, California, and other communities continue to call for a moratorium on the installation and use of smart meters.

For more on health hazards associated with wireless technology, see Censored 2015 story #14, “Accumulating Evidence of Ongoing Wireless Technology Health Hazards,” in this volume.

SOURCES:


Censored 2014 #25

Israel Gave Birth Control to Ethiopian Immigrants Without Their Consent

SUMMARY: In January 2013, after previously denying the allegations, Israel admitted that medical authorities had been giving Ethiopian immigrant women birth control injections without their knowledge or consent. The Israeli Health Ministry’s director general, Roni Gamzu, ordered all gynecologists to stop administering the drugs that month. Israeli medical authorities had been injecting the Ethiopian women with Depo-Provera, a highly effective and long-lasting
form of contraception. Ali Abunimah, a writer for the Electronic Intifada, made the case that “this practice may fit the legal definition of genocide.” Racism in Israel has made it extremely hard for Ethiopian immigrants to find peace and acceptance in the community. Controversy began in May 2012 when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that illegal immigrants from Africa “threaten our existence as a Jewish and democratic state.”

UPDATE: In March 2014, Israel’s Health Ministry director general Roni Gamzu announced that he would resign in June of this year. Israeli news organizations, including the Jerusalem Post and Haaretz, covered Gamzu’s announcement and linked his resignation to a crisis in the management of the Hadassah hospital, but did not mention his role in the forced birth control scandal.

Perhaps because it would raise questions about the practice of forced birth control in the US, American corporate media have not addressed the Israeli case. As the Center for Investigative Reporting documented
in July 2013, from 1997 to 2010, at least 148 female prisoners in California were subject to unwanted tubal ligations, a permanent form of birth control. Corey G. Johnson reported that, according to a database of contracted medical services for state prisoners, the state of California paid doctors a total of $147,460 to perform the procedures.

Although it appears that Ethiopian immigrants to Israel are no longer subject to birth control without their knowledge or consent, immigrants from Ethiopia and other African nations continue to endure racist policies intended to maintain Israel as a Jewish state. In December 2013, the Knesset, Israel’s legislature, passed a new policy meant to curb illegal migration from Africa. The Entry into Israel Law makes it legal for state authorities to detain immigrants in prison for up to one year; in open facilities, immigrants could be detained even longer.

As David Sheen reported, to protest the new law and their treatment, on December 15, 2013, hundreds of non-Jewish African asylum-seekers left a detention center and refused to return from their twice-daily furloughs. The protesting asylum seekers walked through the desert during a winter storm to reach Jerusalem, where they protested against indefinite incarceration without trial. On December 24, an Israeli court indicted the first group of Sudanese refugees, who had peacefully protested in Jerusalem, in absentia. “In a chilling sign of government-sanctioned dehumanization,” Sheen wrote, “the indictment against the accused listed them by number rather than name.” Nevertheless, Sheen reported that, “Years from now, historians may look upon the final weeks of 2013 as the beginning of Israel’s black civil rights movement.”

Hostility toward immigrants is not exclusively the domain of the Israeli government. As shown in David Sheen and Max Blumenthal’s short documentary film, Israel’s New Racism: The Persecution of African Migrants in the Holy Land, many Israelis attack African immigrants, verbally and physically. Defending their actions against charges of racism, Israelis claim that they act to “protect Israel,” and if that is considered racist, then they are “proud” to be called that.

SOURCES:

Fukushima Disaster Worse than Anticipated
Update by Brian Covert

SUMMARY: Developing evidence from a number of independent sources suggests that the negative consequences of the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster are far greater than first acknowledged or understood. The Environmental Protection Agency’s radiation-detection network (RadNet) has serious drawbacks, including a lack of maintenance and equipment that is often improperly calibrated.

Censored 2013 also featured a chapter, “On the Road to Fukushima: The Unreported Story behind Japan’s Nuclear-Media-Industrial Complex” by the author of this summary and update, that looked into the broader historical context of the Fukushima disaster. In that chapter, I showed how Japanese news media played a key role in promoting and advancing nuclear power in the post–World War II era. The chapter spotlighted Matsutaro Shoriki, Japan’s first atomic energy commissioner and most influential owner of media companies, and his ties to the US government’s Central Intelligence Agency, as well as how the kisha club (reporters’ club) system, an institutionalized system of press self-censorship in Japan, helps to keep the truth about such crises as the Fukushima nuclear disaster from being fully and accurately reported.

UPDATE: Since last being covered in Censored 2013, the crisis at Fukushima has continued to drag on as the government of Japan and the nuclear power plant’s operator, the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), sought to gain some semblance of control over both
the physical decommissioning of the crippled plant and the flow of information to the public about the crisis.

A series of mechanical and human error problems plagued the Fukushima plant in 2013, not the least of which was 400 tons of highly radioactive groundwater leaking daily from the plant and into the nearby Pacific Ocean. In a mantra of sorts that would regularly emanate from the authorities—to be dutifully repeated by Japan’s compliant corporate media—such leakage of radioactivity from the Fukushima plant was not officially expected to harm human beings or nature in any way.

In September 2013, Tokyo was chosen to be the site of the 2020 Summer Olympic Games. Seemingly lost in all the celebratory press reporting in Japan was the fact that the Olympic site would be located only about 240 kilometers (150 miles) from the ongoing nuclear crisis at Fukushima.

A couple of months later in November, TEPCO began an unprecedented, highly dangerous operation of transferring about 1,500 fuel rods one-by-one from a Fukushima reactor to a separate storage pool. The operation was expected to take about a year, and if the slightest thing—human error, mechanical failure, forces of nature—went wrong within that year, potentially catastrophic levels of radiation could be released.

It can thus be considered no mere coincidence that right around this same time, the government of Japan also proceeded to ram a vaguely worded “state secrets bill” through its parliament that would, upon becoming law, make whistleblowing a crime of state that could result in a prison term of up to ten years. Any journalist who reported such a state secret could spend up to five years in prison.

The bill was passed into law a month later in December, with the blessing of the administration of US President Barack Obama and despite strong public opposition at home in Japan, as a necessary measure for protecting national security. Technically speaking, if the government of Japan wanted to prosecute a whistleblower or journalist for publicly exposing the sensitive operations at Fukushima, it now had the legal tools to do so.

As the third anniversary of the Fukushima disaster approached in March 2014, the authorities took media matters into their own hands.
TEPCO treated foreign and domestic news reporters alike to tightly controlled press tours of the crippled plant in an attempt to spin news coverage.

Three years after the Fukushima nuclear crisis began, the decommissioning process had barely gotten off the ground, tens of thousands of Japanese evacuees remained stranded in temporary housing, and both the government and TEPCO were moving to cut off compensation payments to victims of the accident. Some evacuees were being officially encouraged to return to their hometowns, despite serious concerns over lingering radiation there.¹⁵

From the local level in Japan to the international level, institutions were indeed anxious to move on, to put Fukushima behind them, and to regain the appearance of things returning to normal.

Both the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations issued reports in early 2014 on the Fukushima crisis. In its report, the IAEA—headed by Japanese career diplomat Yukiya Amano—praised the quote-unquote “good progress” that it felt Japan had made in getting Fukushima under control, while overlooking much evidence to the contrary.¹⁶ The UN’s controversial report downplayed the possible links between the Fukushima accident and future cancer levels, standing in stark contrast to documented cases of rising thyroid cancer rates among children from the Fukushima area.¹⁷

Citizens in Japan have filed several lawsuits against TEPCO, Japanese government officials, and the manufacturers of the Fukushima nuclear reactors. United States naval personnel filed their own lawsuit against TEPCO in 2012 (and again in 2014). The sailors say they have been suffering extreme health problems ever since the aircraft carrier on which they were serving duty, the USS Ronald Reagan, was exposed to high radioactivity while on a mission offshore from Fukushima in 2011 to help Japanese victims of the earthquake and tsunami.

As of this writing (April 2014), TEPCO is seeking to get the “wholly implausible” lawsuit thrown out of court. The US Navy, for its part, has dismissed the connection between the Fukushima radiation and the health issues of the nearly eighty US service members who have joined the class-action lawsuit—this despite evidence that has recently surfaced showing that some higher-ups in the navy apparently
knew at the time that the ship was getting hit by high radiation levels from Fukushima.\textsuperscript{18}

This explosive story has been picked by Project Censored and reported by both independent and corporate media in the US and elsewhere. Yet in-depth news coverage of the US sailors’ ongoing lawsuit against TEPCO remains largely missing from Japan’s corporate-dominated press reporting.

Meanwhile, some persons working in the fields of media, academia, and scientific research in Japan claim to have been pressured by their organizations not to speak or write critically of nuclear power in general and/or Fukushima in particular.\textsuperscript{19} In another case, a nuclear industry front group in Japan has reportedly filed a criminal complaint against an independent Japanese journalist/blogger in an attempt to silence her critical writings on Fukushima.\textsuperscript{20}

The censoring of school textbooks in Japan has long been a contentious political issue, due to Japanese military atrocities committed during World War II being officially wiped clean from the pages of history books. Now, it seems, Fukushima is facing a similar fate: only one government-approved science textbook scheduled to be used in Japanese primary schools nationwide starting in 2015 includes any reference to the Fukushima nuclear disaster and its aftermath.\textsuperscript{21}

For more on Fukushima, see \textit{Censored 2015} story #13, “Lawsuit Challenges Nuclear Power Industry Immunity from Liability in Nuclear Accidents,” in this volume.

\textbf{Sources:}


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Notes


9. In fact, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms freedom of the press as a trans-national right: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression;

10. For coverage of additional organizations engaged in these efforts, see chapter 4 of this volume. See also the Freedom of the Press Foundation, pressfreedomfoundation.org; and the new whistleblowing organization, ExposeFacts, exposefacts.org.

11. When Censored 2014 went to press, Manning had not yet publicly stated the wish to be known as Chelsea. Thus, although Censored 2014 refers to Bradley Manning, following her wishes, we use Chelsea Manning here.


13. By contrast, over the past year, daily news broadcasts by Abby Martin of Russia Today’s Breaking the Set and Amy Goodman of Democracy Now! provided some of the best independent coverage regarding the ongoing war on whistleblowers and journalists.

14. There are additional controversies surrounding Glenn Greenwald’s work, the creation of the Intercept, and his financial backer, Pierre Omidyar of eBay. Omidyar’s financial ties to establishment types and the Democratic Party, as well as his involvement in the Ukraine and his interests in various political issues, have some people questioning how the Intercept may differ from other private media outlets. Some whistleblowers like Sibel Edmonds and Kevin Ryan question the motives and how they affect Greenwald’s delay of the release of more Snowden files, while others question whether or not Snowden was a government operative on a disinformation campaign. When this volume went to press, questions about First Look Media and the Intercept, Greenwald’s funders, and Snowden’s intentions, while important to note and ask, were based on circumstantial and speculative claims. Time will tell what influence Omidyar has over what is published at the Intercept, and we should all remain vigilant when examining sources of information, even (perhaps especially) if we are inclined to trust and agree with them.


