Déjà vu
What Happens to Censored Stories from Years Past?

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It’s like déjà vu all over again.
—YOGI BERRA

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.
—GEORGE SANTAYANA

Each year, Project Censored looks back on its past in an effort to discover what may have become of some of its previous years’ stories. Have they seen the light of day in the corporate media? Have they been reported and explored in detail, and become part of public discourse in democratic society? If so, how and to what degree? Further, why does this matter? Let’s examine some of last year’s top stories, as well as a few of the more significant ones from years past, to see if there truly are déjà vu moments in terms of media revelation—or continued censorship.

Censored 2010 #1

US Congress Sells Out to Wall Street

Federal lawmakers responsible for overseeing the US economy have received millions of dollars from Wall Street firms. Since 2001, eight of the most troubled firms have donated $64.2 million to congressional candidates, presidential candidates, and the Republican and Democratic parties. As senators, Barack Obama and John McCain received a combined total of $3.1 million. The donors include investment bankers Bear Stearns, Goldman Sachs, Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch, Morgan Stan-
ley, insurer American International Group (AIG), and mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

Some of the top recipients of contributions from companies receiving Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP) money are the same members of Congress who chair committees charged with regulating the financial sector and overseeing the effectiveness of this unprecedented government program. In total, members of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, Senate Finance Committee, and House Financial Services Committee received $5.2 million from TARP recipients in the 2007–08 election cycle. President Obama collected at least $4.3 million from employees at these companies for his presidential campaign.


**Update:** Though there has been mainstream corporate media coverage on Congress selling out to Wall Street, there has been no specific coverage about members of Congress receiving contributions from the main banks that were awarded TARP funds. Publications in the corporate press that did cover the issue were *Newsweek* and the *Washington Post*. Both mentioned the cycle of funds occurring between political officials and bailout beneficiaries.

Open Secrets, the Web site for the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP), has continued to update and expose the issue, reporting that the CRP, which tracks how money affects and is used in US politics, found that “companies that have been awarded taxpayers’ money from Congress’s bailout bill spent $77 million on lobbying and $37 million on federal campaign contributions. . . . The return on investment: 258.449 percent.” In turn, “some of the top recipients of contributions from companies receiving TARP money are the same members of Congress who chair committees charged with regulating the financial sector and overseeing the effectiveness of this unprecedented government program.” In other words, the banks that are receiving the bailout money are awarded that aid by the same political officials they finance. Despite a few reports, this has gone seemingly unnoticed in much of the corporate media.


**Censored 2010 #2**

**US Schools are More Segregated Today than in the 1950s**

Schools in the United States are more segregated today than they have been in more than four decades. Millions of nonwhite students are locked into “dropout factory” high schools, where huge percentages do not graduate, and few are well prepared for college or a future in the US economy.

Our nation’s segregated schools result from decades of systematic neglect of civil rights policy and related educational and community reforms. According to a University of California–Los Angeles (UCLA) report, what is needed are leaders who recognize that we have a common destiny in an America where our children grow up together, knowing and respecting each other, and are all given the educational tools that prepare them for success in our society. The author maintains that if we are to continue along a path of deepening separation and entrenched inequality, it will only diminish our common potential.


**Update:** Since *Censored 2010*, the conversation about segregation, along with the UCLA findings, has become more public. In particular, California has received the harshest criticism from commentators regarding
segregation. But the inability of Americans to see the connection between racial and economic segregation has caused a laissez-faire attitude toward solving the problem. Commentators and critics have not drawn a clear picture of how poorly funded schools offer a less rigorous education and under-equipped staffs, and the coverage is chock-full of blame and finger pointing without possible solutions.

The 2009 UCLA study concluded that segregation is the worst in the West, a finding affirmed by a 2010 national report card that found that three of the five states to tie for the lowest reading scores in the nation came from the western United States, including California. San Francisco responded; the New York Times reported in 2010 that the San Francisco Unified School District planned to revamp and fix its student-assignment system in an attempt to relieve segregation. Critics of the proposed plan, though, noted that economic segregation could grow worse if San Francisco’s districts were divided to stop racial divide while ignoring economic factors.

In early 2009, Sonoma State University (SSU) professor Dr. Peter Phillips also released a faculty report that lambasted SSU for its application process, which has led to segregation along both racial and economic lines. The report demonstrated how SSU’s attempt to create an upper-class and wealthy college has resulted in “the whitest college” in the California State system. Meanwhile, SSU administrators have con-
continued to assert that its campus is very diverse despite information to
the contrary.

Students have not been blind to the growing problem in public edu-
cation; on March 4, 2010, they protested across the US in opposition to
nationwide budget cuts. Sadly, the US will never be able to thoroughly
discuss these issues unless government and community leaders begin a
dialogue aimed at explaining that education is a right as important as
any other. Education should be granted to all Americans in the best pos-
sible—and most equal—fashion no matter what the cost, as the cost of
ignorance and illiteracy is simply too high.

This topic has been highlighted in the mainstream corporate media,
especially in California, the area noted as specifically segregated, and it
has also been covered by the independent press. But the debate about
what to do must continue, with particular attention paid to the right of
all people—including those most disenfranchised—to be educated.

**Corporate Sources:** Jesse McKinley, “New Plan on School Selection, but Still
schools split by race, study finds,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 5,
2010; “The Bay Area is bucking a national trend of racial segregation in
charter schools, according to a new national study,” *Oakland Tribune*, Feb-
ruary 17, 2010; Jill Tucker, “State shares rock bottom in U.S. reading
cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/03/24/MNCHICKMAA.DTL; Connie
Llanos “Charter schools too segregated,” *Daily News Los Angeles*, February

**Sources:** Connie Llanos, “Charter schools too segregated,” *Inland Valley
Daily Bulletin*, February 4, 2010; Sonja Sharp, “Charter Schools Segre-
gated Just Like Public Schools,” *Mother Jones*, February 5, 2010,
http://motherjones.com/mojo/2010/02/charter-schools-segregated-just-
public-schools; David Moltz, “Not So White Noise About Diversity,”
com/news/2009/02/25/sonoma; “Iraq War Spending vs. Education
Spending,” *Education Portal*, July 16, 2007, http://education-
portal.com/articles/Iraq_War_Spending_vs_Education_Spending.html;
articles/story/building-a-public-ivy.
Censored 2010 #3

Toxic Waste Behind Somali Pirates

The international community has come out in force to condemn and declare war on the Somali fishermen pirates, while discreetly protecting the illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fleets from around the world that have been poaching and dumping toxic waste in Somali waters since the fall of the Somali government eighteen years ago.

According to the High Seas Task Force (HSTF), there were over 800 IUU fishing vessels in Somali waters at one time in 2005, taking advantage of Somalia’s inability to police and control its own waters and fishing grounds. The IUUs poach an estimated $450 million in seafood from Somali waters annually. In so doing, they steal an invaluable protein source from some of the world’s poorest people and ruin the livelihoods of legitimate fishermen.


Update: Since this story was featured in Censored 2010, there have been no changes in the way the mainstream media covers the actions of Somalia’s fishermen. Though the Washington Post did manage to touch on the issue, most mainstream corporate media continues to deem Somali fishermen as “pirates.” Described as a “17th-century crime” by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, these fishermen have been protecting Somalia’s natural resources and providing national defense since the government’s collapse and subsequent civil war almost two decades ago. Yet, despite international attention after attacks on the merchant vessels Maersk Alabama and Liberty Sun in spring 2009, the corporate media remains one-sided, continually ignoring the root cause of the problem (exploitation by European and Asian companies in the wake of a collapsed Somali government with no coast guard or navy to protect the coast) and highlighting only the Somalis’ misdeeds. Certainly the taking of hostages is unjustifiable, but it remains the corporate mainstream media’s sole point of interest regarding Somalia and its people.
Likewise, there have been no changes in the situation in which these fishermen find themselves. Illegal poaching and toxic waste dumping along Africa’s longest (and largely unprotected) coastline have ruined Somali lives. These people continue to be demonized in much of the Western press, even after a 2004 tsunami uncovered frightening amounts of toxic waste, which produced illness among the coastal population and posed an ongoing environmental hazard. The United Nations continues to ignore appeals and instead encourages military aggression against these “pirates”; Nicholas Kralev of the Washington Times reports “unprecedented military cooperation among NATO forces, Russia, China and other countries” in order to “decrease the number of pirate attacks” in the Gulf of Aden.

Finally, there have been no changes in the way Somalis themselves view these “pirates.” Although the majority of the world views them as criminals, therefore justifying military protection of an integral waterway in the world’s oil supply and economy, many Somalis see them as protectors against the illegal actions of foreign nations that are threatening Somalia’s sovereignty.


**Sources:** Firoz Osman, “For many Somalis, these ‘pirates’ are marine police,” Star (South Africa), June 30, 2009.

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**Censored 2010 #4**

**Nuclear Waste Pools in North Carolina**

One of the most lethal patches of ground in North America is located in the backwoods of North Carolina, where Shearon Harris nuclear plant is housed and owned by Progress Energy. The plant contains the largest radioactive waste storage pools in the country. It is not just a nuclear-power-generating station, but also a repository for highly radioactive spent fuel rods from two other nuclear plants. The spent fuel rods are transported by rail and stored in four densely packed pools filled with circulating cold water to keep the waste from heating. The Department of Homeland Security has marked Shearon Harris as one of the most vulnerable terrorist targets in the nation.
The threat exists, however, without the speculation of terrorist attack. Should the cooling system malfunction, the resulting fire would be virtually unquenchable and could trigger a nuclear meltdown, putting more than 200 million residents of this rapidly growing section of North Carolina in extreme peril. A recent study by Brookhaven Lab estimates that a pool fire could cause 140,000 cancers, contaminate thousands of square miles of land, and cause over $500 billion in off-site property damage.


**Update:** In May 2010, officials from five different local governments around the Shearon Harris nuclear plant asked for an investigation into possible wrongdoing by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), involving the top safety issue at the nation’s reactors. Along with three watchdog groups, the local governments say that the NRC is ignoring its own regulations; it is also under criticism from numerous fire science experts. Thus far, the Common Dreams Web site had been one of the only media outlets to report on the safety issues at Shearon Harris and its waste storage pools, in an attempt to raise awareness and concern, though in May, after the investigation request, the Web site for the local television station WRAL reported that the NRC wants to hear from neighbors of Shearon Harris. The NRC has scheduled a meeting, which will include a question-and-answer session. Outside of these two small outlets, there has been no coverage on Shearon Harris, its nuclear waste pools, or the safety issues that continue to affect the plant. No mainstream corporate media coverage has exposed the hazards present at Shearon Harris.

Censored 2010 #6

Business Booms for Lobbyists

According to a study by the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP), special interests paid Washington lobbyists $3.2 billion in 2008—more than any other year on record. This was a 13.7 percent increase from 2007 (which broke the record by 7.7 percent over 2006).

The CRP calculates that interest groups spent $17.4 million on lobbying for every day Congress was in session in 2008, or $32,523 per legislator per day. Center director Sheila Krumholz says, “The federal government is handing out billions of dollars by the day, and that translates into job security for lobbyists who can help companies and industries get a piece of the payout.”


Update: In 2009, the CPR reported that special interests paid Washington lobbyists around $3.47 billion; this breaks the record set the previous year, at $3.2 billion. This record has been set and broken each year since 2006. CPR also calculates that special interests spend $19 million per day in Washington when Congress is in session.

The first quarter of 2010 doesn’t bring any better news from the lobbyist front; so far, $903 million has been spent, compared to last year’s first quarter at $811 million. This is an 11 percent increase from the first quarters of the previous two years. The total in the first quarter of 2010 is a 7 percent decrease from that of the final quarter of 2009, which was $970 million. The overall total for 2010, considering the amount in only the first quarter, is likely to shatter the previous record set in 2009.

Despite the current recession, businesses, health interests, energy companies, and Wall Street firms invested more than $123 million in the first quarter of 2010. The business sector spent $139 million, winning first place; a close second was the health sector, which spent $138 million. The top three spenders in the health sector are Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) ($7,010,000), American Medical Association ($6,360,000), and Pfizer Inc. ($4,340,000).
The energy and natural resource sector is the third highest spender at $128 million; this sector’s top three spenders and PG&E Corporation ($25,820,000), ConocoPhillips ($6,408,978), and Edison Electric Institute ($4,160,000). Last but not least is the finance, insurance, and real estate sector at $123 million; the highest payer is the National Association of Realtors ($4,320,000). The highest spending organization overall is the US Chamber of Commerce at $30,897,500.

Outside of the Open Secrets Web site, which posted the CPR’s study, there is little mainstream coverage of the increasing amount spent on Washington lobbyists. Dan Eggen, journalist for the Washington Post, mentioned this rise in two articles published within the first two weeks of April 2009. Though lobbyist spending broke a record in 2009, and 2010 is on a path toward beating it, Eggen’s were the last articles to report on this issue.


Censored 2010 #8

Bailed-Out Banks and America’s Wealthiest Cheat IRS Out of Billions

Story #8 in Censored 2010 covered the use of offshore tax havens, to evade taxation, by top US companies who had received TARP funds by financial institutions such as Goldman Sachs, American International Group (AIG), Bank of America, and Citigroup use offshore subsidiaries in places like the Cayman Islands, Luxembourg, and Hong Kong to hide their profits from the US government and cheat the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Corporations sell products and/or services to offshore subsidiaries at reduced rates, then use the subsidiaries to resell these products and/or services to customers for actual market rates. Thus, these corporations make their profits in a tax-free or low-tax environment. In addition, corporations can record losses from these deals by selling to their subsidiaries at below cost, allowing them to write off the loss in the US, thus avoiding the taxes that would be levied on the parent company’s profits.

Original Sources: Christine Harper, “Goldman Sachs’s Tax Rate Drops to 1% or $14 Million,” Bloomberg, December 16, 2008; Thomas B. Edsall,

**Update:** Panama is one of the largest tax havens in the world with over 350,000 foreign-registered companies. Corporations that have received TARP funds—such as Morgan Stanley, Citigroup, and AIG—have subsidiaries in Panama, where they can avoid paying their US taxes. The Panama Trade Promotion Agreement (PTPA), which is awaiting approval by the US Congress, is a North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)—style trade agreement that would allow these subsidiary companies to file suit against the US government for the loss of notional future profits incurred as a result of regulatory action, or the imposition of new regulation, in the US. The loss of notional future profits is referred to in these trade agreements as “indirect expropriation.” Protocols governing compensation for indirect expropriation are now a standard part of trade agreements.

According to a report put out by Public Citizen, a nonprofit consumer rights advocacy organization, the PTPA would prevent the US from treating Panama and Panamanian financial services differently from nontax havens, in terms of regulation of financial interactions and trade. The proposed agreement would prevent limitations on financial transactions (except in a few special circumstances), limitations that are an essential tool for preventing tax evasion and money laundering. PTPA would secure market access in the US for banks and other entities based in Panama. This would limit the US government’s ability to regulate its financial system. It would also put a system into place that would allow foreign investors and subsidiaries of multinationals based in Panama to challenge US regulation of goods and services passing between the two nations, a provision that could stall regulation of US markets for as long as the challenge process takes. It could ultimately cause the overall derailment of US regulatory action, which stems from the collapse of the financial markets, by the very entities that caused the financial collapse—without any input by the taxpayers that bailed out said entities. No updates on PTPA bailouts and other key aspects of this issue have gone unreported by corporate mainstream press.

Censored 2010 # 9 & #11

US Arms Used for War Crimes in Gaza; Private Corporations Profit from the Occupation of Palestine

Stories #9 and #11 both covered the ongoing controversies regarding the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Story #9, specifically, focused on the Israeli firepower that was unleashed largely on Palestinian civilians in Gaza during the three-week attack starting December 27, 2008, and which was fueled by US-supplied weapons and paid for with US tax dollars. Washington provided F-16 fighter planes, Apache helicopters, tactical missiles, and a wide array of munitions, including (illegal) white phosphorus and dense inert metal explosive (DIME). The weapons required for the Israeli assault were decided upon in June 2008, and the transfer of 1,000 bunker-buster GPS-guided Small Diameter Bombs (GBU-39s) were approved by Congress in September. The GBU-39 bombs were delivered to Israel in November (prior to any claims of Hamas cease-fire violation) for use in the initial air raids on Gaza.

Story #11 is largely about how Israeli and international corporations are directly involved in, and profiting from, the occupation of Palestine. Along with various political, religious and national interests, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights is fueled by corporate interests. These occupying companies and corporations lead real estate deals, develop the Israeli colonies and infrastructure, and contribute to the construction and operation of an ethnic separation system, including checkpoints, walls, and roads—in other words, an apartheid system. They also design and supply equipment and tools used in the control and repression of the civilian population under occupation.


Update: On December 27, 2008, the Israeli military campaign “Operation Cast Lead” left 1,387 Palestinians dead, 773 of whom were civilians. The Israelis lost four civilians and ten soldiers. In September 2009, the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, led by former South African judge Richard Goldstone, concluded that both Hamas and Israel committed crimes against humanity, though these crimes were disproportionate. Goldstone very meticulously looked at Israel’s aggressions and based his recommendations for international investigations on the testimonies and the destruction inside Gaza. Hamas—and other political groups—fired rockets and killed four civilians. Of the nine soldiers killed, five were by friendly fire attacks. The Israeli response to this, as indicated, was massive.

US Representatives Howard Berman (D-CA) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) introduced H.Res.876 “calling upon the president and the secretary of state to oppose unequivocally any endorsement or further consideration” of the Goldstone report. The resolution was passed by the House under “suspension of the rules” on November 3, 2009. Simultaneously, Israel continued to deny any firing of white phosphorus, and the United States was never questioned or implicated by the corporate media regarding its involvement in the distribution of weapons to Israel. In early 2010, Israel admitted using white phosphorus in the Gaza War, blaming two officers for “exceeding their authorities,” though with no mention of the United States’ role in the attacks.

There has been little coverage of US corporations profiting from the occupation of Palestine in the corporate media, with only minor coverage free of in-depth analysis in early 2010. In protest of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, University of California (UC)–Berkeley students attempted to have a campus bill approved, to divest from two US com-
panies—General Electric, which manufactures helicopter engines, and United Technologies, which manufactures Sikorsky helicopters and F-16 aircraft engines. The bill looked further into responsible investment for the UC system. The initial divestment bill passed by a 16–4 vote in the student senate, but Will Smelko, UC president of the student union, vetoed the bill a week later, after pro-Israel groups and Washington lobby groups such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) became involved in an aggressive campaign to equate the bill with “anti-Semitism,” to therefore delegitimize its intent.

In February 2010, independent journalist Nora Barrows-Friedman wrote in Truthout that the Obama administration had doubled its previous commitment to store American weapons stockpiles on Israeli soil, with the caveat that “Israel, after approval from the US government, would be able to access the American weapon and ammunition stockpile in case of a military ‘emergency.’” The terms and definition of such an “emergency,” including against whom the weaponry could be used, remained unclear.

Barrows-Friedman wrote that this agreement came on the heels of Obama’s recent signing of a $30 billion, ten-year agreement for an expanded military aid package to the Israeli government. The first installment of the aid package, $2.775 billion, was signed over in December [2009] by President Obama, and was earmarked completely for Israel’s military budget instead of the prior allocation to both civilian and military infrastructure. This massive military package is over and above the annual $3.1 billion in loan guarantees to Israel that the Obama administration plans to continue.

She revealed, “As a part of the ten-year agreement, Israel is required to contract 75 percent of the package toward the purchase of American-made military equipment and ammunition, intended to further subsidize US weapons manufacturers.”

For more on Barrows-Friedman’s coverage of Palestine, see chapter 8 of this volume.


**Censored 2010 #13**

**Katrina’s Hidden Race War**

A shocking report in the Nation magazine exposes how white vigilante groups patrolled the streets of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, shooting at least eleven African-American men. While the media portrayed African Americans as looters and thugs, it is now clear that the most serious crimes were committed by gun-toting white males.

*Democracy Now!* footage showed that dead bodies were left, sometimes for weeks, to rot in full view of Homeland Security, state troopers, army personnel, private security guards, and police who “secured” the streets of New Orleans in the aftermath of Katrina.


**Update:** In late summer 2009, London’s the Guardian wrote of journalists’ unwillingness to expose the murders of black citizens by the New Orleans Police Department and white vigilante groups in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The New York Times, however, soon ran the headline “New Orleans Police Facing Katrina Investigations.” The article included a report that police opened fire on the Danziger Bridge, wound-
ing six and killing two, including a mentally challenged man. Dozens of officers were under investigation by the FBI for murder, including for the murder of Henry Glover, who was shot by vigilantes and brought to police by passerby William Tanner. It was Tanner who was then handcuffed and beaten. His car was confiscated by police, then was later discovered burned, with Glover’s charred remains inside. The story remains under investigation.

In February 2010, the New York Times published the story “First Charge in U.S. Inquiry into New Orleans Police Shootings after Katrina,” reporting that Lt. Michael Lohman was charged with one count of conspiring to obstruct justice when an investigation determined that he was involved in a police coverup—planting a gun on the Danziger Bridge to make the police shootings appear justified. In April 2010, USA Today reported that the US Justice Department was considering suing New Orleans to force changes within the police department after another former New Orleans police officer, Michael Hunter, plead guilty to obstruction of justice, among other charges, during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The Times-Picayune (New Orleans), Frontline, and ProPublica have also been collaborating on the project “Law and Disorder,” which follows up on the police shootings of black citizens in the hurricane’s aftermath.

Since the Censored 2010 story, mainstream corporate media outlets have covered the race war following Katrina. They have worked to expose the injustice apparent in last year’s story, though more widespread reporting is still needed.


Sources: Rebecca Solnit, “Comment & Debate: Four years on, Katrina remains cursed by rumour, cliché, lies and racism: Ordinary people mostly behaved well. Those in power panicked, spread fear and fiction, and showed eagerness to kill,” Guardian, August 28, 2009.
Secret Control of the Presidential Debates

The Obama and McCain campaigns jointly negotiated a detailed secret contract dictating the terms of the 2008 debates. This included who got to participate, what topics were to be raised, and the structure of the debate formats.

Since 1987, a private corporation created by and for the Republican and Democratic parties called the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) has sponsored the US presidential debates and implemented debate contracts. In order to shield the major party candidates from criticism, CPD has refused to release debate contract information to the public. In 1986, the Republican and Democratic National Committees ratified an agreement “to take over the presidential debates” from the nonpartisan League of Women Voters. Fifteen months later, then—Republican Party chair Frank Fahrenkopf and then—Democratic Party chair Paul Kirk incorporated the Commission on Presidential Debates. Fahrenkopf and Kirk still co-chair the Commission on Presidential Debates, and every four years it implements and conceals contracts jointly drafted by the Republican and Democratic nominees.


Update: Other than the aforementioned sources and a few other alternative media outlets, nothing new has been reported on the secrecy of the CPD and the 2008 election cycle. This is an ongoing and important issue because control of presidential debates is held by a corporation that is private, lacks transparency and public oversight, and is not nonpartisan (it is bipartisan, which excludes many other political entities)—all of which is disturbing for democracy. Prior to the last presidential election, these stories were published and aired by some independent media, but were not picked up by the mainstream corporate media, which, in fact, still has not covered the issue: no stories of the secrecy of the CPD can be readily found through
mainstream news outlets. It is the role of the free press to inform the public, particularly in political matters, and especially regarding candidates’ views around election time. These reports about the corruption of the CPD contain crucial information that the public ought to know and understand if we are to participate more meaningfully in the next presidential election.

**Censored 2010 #7 & #22**

**Obama’s Military Appointments Have Corrupt Past; Obama’s Trilateral Commission Team— “Change” Rhetoric Rings Hollow**

Stories #7 and #22 both covered President Barack Obama’s appointments, some of which have a questionable impact on his platform for change. Story #7 focused especially on Obama’s retention of Robert Gates as secretary of defense, making Gates the first appointment from an outgoing administration of the opposing party to be kept in the position. Over the last two years of the previous administration, Gates was a key implementer of Bush’s Iraq War “surge” after he replaced Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who had opposed the escalation.

Story #22 covered Obama’s appointment of eleven members of the Trilateral Commission to top-level and key positions in his administration within his first ten days in office. This represents a very narrow source of international leadership inside the Obama administration, with a core agenda that is not necessarily in support of working people in the United States, and is inconsistent with Obama’s campaign mantra of “change.”

view.com/news_commentary/trilateral_commission/obama_trilateral_commission_endgame__update_i__20090127110.

**Update:** The mainstream corporate media has continued to use obfuscatory “change candidate” terminology when referring to Barack Obama’s presidency, while ignoring that his cabinet is filled with the same faces who oversaw, in past administrations, arguably disastrous military and economic policies that often exacerbated situations rather than yielded stated goals or solutions.

No corporate media outlets have been willing to discuss the connection between Obama’s cabinet and the Trilateral Commission, which dates back to 1973, because recognizing a connection would strip Obama of his title as the “change candidate.” The information necessary to report on these connections exists: the commission’s Web site releases a mission statement along with its members’ information, and Trilateralist co-founder and key Obama advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski has released books on his stance on global politics. In the introduction to *Censored 2011*, the quote from Brzezinski is instrumental to understanding Trilateral interests in strategically maintaining US global control (as is his 1998 book, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy And Its Geostrategic Imperatives*).

The corporate media continues to ignore the contradiction of Obama’s claims that Trilateralists in his cabinet, such as Paul Volcker, give a “fresh perspective.” In the Ronald Reagan era, Volcker presided over an economy in which the top 1 percent controlled nearly 50 percent of financial wealth. Trilateralist and Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg wrote Obama’s AIPAC speech, which asked for continued funding and support of the Israeli military—all while the Israeli military illegally used white phosphorus against Palestinian civilians. This is not a break in US policy on the Israeli/Palestinian issue.

Further, Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner is connected to the commission through his “informal group of advisors,” which includes E. Gerald Corrigan, Paul Volcker, Alan Greenspan, and Peter G. Peterson—all Trilateralists. Brent Scowcroft, also a Trilateralist, has been an unofficial advisor to Obama and was a mentor to Defense Secretary Robert Gates. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is married to former president Bill Clinton, a commission member, and a close political ally and confidante. The director of the White House National Economic Council, Larry Summers, is also a Trilateralist who served as
treasury secretary in the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations. With these usual suspects come many of the same ideas dating back to the Carter administration. These people close to Obama do not represent the change he seemed to promise on the campaign trail.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates’s past involvement with failed and corrupt military policy and the CIA has gone virtually unmentioned by the corporate mainstream press. Gates’s past—namely his involvement in the Iran–Contra scandal from the Reagan years—has been mentioned only briefly, and he continues to preside over the failed, secret “terrorist” war that he oversaw in the George W. Bush administration. William Lynn, Robert Hale, and Dennis Blair—also mentioned in the Censored 2010 stories—have had their military-industrial complex and lobbyist pasts almost completely ignored by the corporate press. In fact, the day after Obama signed an ethics pledge attempting to end the appearance of a revolving-door conflict of interest pattern between the public and private sector, he appointed William Lynn, a prominent member of the major defense contractor Raytheon, to the number two slot at the Pentagon. These aforementioned people all serve at Obama’s side under the banner of change, even though it appears business as usual is alive and well in Washington, DC.

Obama also appointed Harvard lawyer Cass Sunstein to head the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, despite Sunstein’s contradictory stance on the civil liberties he is appointed to protect. Sunstein called for the United States government to infiltrate and discredit private citizen groups that question and dispute the accepted, official accounts of recent historical events, particularly surrounding 9/11. Such an act directly conflicts with the responsibilities of his appointed position, which entails “overseeing policies relating to privacy, information quality . . .” This is also not a major change from the previous administration, which often violated civil liberty protections and had members of the Department of Homeland Security work with local law enforcement to infiltrate and attempt to disrupt lawful peace groups, in what can only be classified as a return to the days of COINTELPRO. (For more background, see story #14 in chapter 1 of this volume; as well as stories #1, #2, and #20 of Censored 2008; and stories #3, #5, #6, and #8 of Censored 2009.)

Robert Rubin, champion of ending the Glass–Steagall Act from the Clinton years, is a very important voice in Obama’s cabinet as he keeps alive the revolving-door pattern in fiscal affairs, between the private sector and government, advocating for the deregulation of banks and the creation of conditions that eventually led to the economic collapse of 2008. Rubin,
associated with both Citigroup (where he was forced out after economic implosion) and Goldman Sachs, meets regularly with Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner. Another prime example of the lack of change in Obama’s cabinet, Rubin’s past has gone largely unmentioned by the corporate press.

The mainstream corporate press, and thus the public at large, have failed to recognize that Obama is not a candidate of change. Though some corporate media outlets have addressed the issue of his appointees, they fail to expose, with adequate context and thoroughness, how his current administration is carrying on long-standing global dominance and pro-business agendas. The stripping of civil liberties and the continuation of war were issues Obama was elected to change. He has, however, maintained and expanded many previous policies with help from key figures from the past, with little mention in the corporate press.


**Censored 2007 #18**

**Physicist Challenges Official 9-11 Story**

Research into the events of September 11, 2001, by (now former) Brigham Young University (BYU) physics professor Steven E. Jones, concluded that the official explanation for the collapse of the World Trade Center (WTC) buildings is implausible according to laws of physics. Jones is still calling for an independent, international scientific investigation “guided not by politicized notions and constraints but rather by observations and calculations.”

Update: This story originally appeared in Censored 2007, and the subject has been revisited by Project Censored many times (in all subsequent Déjà vu chapters, and additionally in chapter 7 of Censored 2008; in story #24 of chapter 1, as well as chapters 11 and 14, of Censored 2009; in chapters 5 and 10 of Censored 2010; and in story #15 of chapter 1, as well as chapters 6, 7, and 11, of this work, Censored 2011. However, despite several opportunities over the years, the mainstream corporate media has failed to address these and later findings in detail.

In proposing a hypothesis of explosive demolition, Dr. Jones first presented his objections to the official theory at a seminar on September 22, 2005, at BYU, a private research university owned by the Mormon church and located an hour’s drive from Salt Lake City. The earliest coverage of this story came from local news on November 10, 2005: the Deseret Morning News, a Salt Lake City newspaper, and KUTV News, a television station serving the greater Salt Lake City metro area. Early national coverage came primarily from MSNBC’s The Situation with Tucker Carlson on November 16, 2005, with further coverage less than a week later in the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review and the Vermont Guardian.

Less than a year later, in September 2006—after controversy over a paper hosted on BYU’s Web site, in which Jones expressed his views—the university asked the professor to remove his paper and placed him on paid leave before his “retirement” in October (he was given an ultimatum by the university and chose to leave so he could continue his research). Yet, despite Jones’s own admittance that the hypothesis supported by these findings can be “proven wrong,” he and his colleagues’ results remain largely unchallenged by the scientific community and altogether unmentioned by the mainstream corporate media (as reported in Censored 2007).

In 2008 and 2009, Dr. Jones participated in several peer-reviewed studies, including papers in the Open Civil Engineering Journal, the Environmentalist, and the Open Chemical Physics Journal. The latter offers additional support for the explosive demolition hypothesis, as it pub-
lishes the discovery of a highly energetic explosive material amid WTC debris that could have been used to quickly remove the lower floors and allow the near free-fall speeds observed (as reported in Censored 2010).

In July 2009, Richard Gage—a member of the American Institute of Architects, a practicing architect for more than twenty years, and the founder of Architects & Engineers for 9/11 Truth—included this evidence in a series of public events and meetings with congressional representatives in Washington, DC. In February 2010, a column in the Concord Monitor mentioned this and other evidence as being the reason for asking New Hampshire’s congressional delegation to push for a reexamination of the events of September 11. Still, these stories, and others like them, continue to be ignored by the mainstream corporate media, and even by most alternative and progressive-leaning publications, in which academics and researchers that dare to ask these difficult questions are derided as “conspiracy theorists” in an effort to dismiss and attack them without actually looking at all the evidence. A truly free press would welcome such inquiry and debate—not ignore, ridicule, or shut it down.


DÉJÀ Vu Stories from Years Long Past Remain Relevant

Project Censored founder Dr. Carl Jensen still posts occasionally on the Project’s blog, the Daily Censored. This past year, Jensen wrote about a number of DÉJÀ vu stories and followed them all the way to the present; clearly, some stories remain censored for a very long time. Some highlights (or lowlights) include “America’s Secret Police Network,” dating back from 1978; “Censored Stories on Haiti,” from 1994; and “The Continuing Censorship of the Nuclear Issue,” from 1980. For more on these significant yet censored stories throughout the past few decades, visit www.dailycensored.com/category/censored-deja-vu. We at Project Censored really hope the corporate media will get a clue and begin more factual reporting on the issues that affect society the most. Until that time, there is much work
to be done and we must not rely on a failing corporate media system when there are so many valuable independent voices in journalism that are increasingly accessible.

The very fact that some stories remain in the dark for so long further illustrates the problems of censorship in a supposed free press culture. Journalism is oft considered the rough draft of history. Problems do not only exist in the present; much is rooted in the past, and the continued censorship of socially and politically relevant issues impacts how history is recorded, remembered, and ultimately interpreted. Where the public record becomes distorted on the most crucial matters for a society, the truth remains elusive, and understanding, obfuscated.

With that in mind, perhaps George Santayana was right: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” So, let us all get busy: not just remembering the past, but remembering more accurately and inclusively, so we can act more intelligently, and in a more egalitarian fashion, in the present. Our democracy and the vision of freedom and equality promised by America’s founders depend upon a true, vibrant, and unfettered free press. Let the facts be known and the truth telling begin.

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