

# Voices

## for Media Democracy



### Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press

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Martha Allen, Ph.D., Director

**Summer 2007**

### *Voices for Media Democracy*

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# WIFP Associates

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The following individuals are some of the hundreds of associates of WIFP. Many have been with us since the early days in the 1970s. Not all of those we work with are associates, but the network of associates helps us experience a continuity in our endeavors over the years. We've shared projects and ideas. We've lent each other support. We continue to look forward to the energies of the newer associates joining with us to bring about a radical restructuring of communication that will bring about true democracy in our countries.

Dorothy Abbott  
Jennifer Abod, Ph.D.  
Jo-Ann Huff Albers  
Martha Leslie Allen, Ph.D.  
Joy Allen  
Donna Caledonia Allen  
Mark Allen  
Ana Maria Alvarado  
Christian Barclay  
Maurine Beasley, Ph.D.  
Julia Beizer  
Biljana Bejkova  
Carolyn Bennett, Ph.D.  
Farika Fayola Berhane  
Eleanor Biddle  
Ester Bloom  
Kathy Bonk  
Marcia Boruta  
Denise Bostrom  
Pamela K. Bradshaw  
Jennifer Braudaway  
Carissa Brooks  
Susan Brownmiller  
Martha Burk, Ph.D.  
Sara Burns  
Carolyn M. Byerly, Ph.D.  
Dyannah Byington  
Lilia Cajilog  
Jo Campbell  
Patricia Campbell, Ph.D.  
Lydia Carey  
Joan Chernock  
Jessica L. Chesnutt  
Danielle Chynoweth  
Elayne G. Clift  
Nikki Craft  
Flora Crater  
Pamela J. Creedon  
Sena Christian  
Thelma Dailey  
Dorothy Dean  
Valerie E. DeMatteo  
Dana Densmore  
Alix Dobkin  
Ariel Dougherty  
Ruth Dropkin  
Madeline Duckles  
Valerie Eads  
Jane Esberg  
Caitlin Esch  
Daisy Fields  
Howard Fisher

Jo Freeman  
Mary A. Gardner, Ph.D.  
Sheila Gibbons  
Amanda Glensky  
Grace Goodeagle  
Ruth Gottstein  
Elaine F. Graves  
Heather Grimm  
Elsie Gutchess  
Alison Hardin  
Fann Harding, Ph.D.  
Francesca Harding  
Grace Haring  
Teresa Haring  
Sandy Hayden  
Doris Hess, Ph.D.  
Jasmine Hillyer  
Maureen Honey, Ph.D.  
Michael Honey, Ph.D.  
Natalie Hopkinson  
Fran Hosken  
Frankie Hutton, Ph.D.  
Navbahor Imamova  
Mal Johnson  
Margaret R. Johnston  
Laura Wede Kai  
Paula Kassell  
Susan Kaufman, Ph.D.  
Ann M. Keller  
Jean Kilbourne, Ph.D.  
Lucy Komisar  
Cheris Kramer  
Kimberlie Kranich  
Arlene Krebs  
Patti Krueger, Ph.D.  
Oksana Kuts  
Nancy Lang  
Katherine Lawrence  
Jennifer Lee  
Kristin Lee  
Cindy H. Lin  
Karin Lippert  
Joanne Lipson  
Alexis Luckey  
Tatyana Mamonova  
Lisa Kar-Wai Man  
Anyda Marchant  
Lucinda Marshall  
Nora Massignott -Cortese  
Paula McKenzie, Ph.D.  
Leila Merl  
Julie Mikalson

Paul Miller  
Sarah Misailidis  
Virginia Mollenkott, Ph.D.  
Dorinda Moreno  
Robin Morgan  
Karen Mulhauser  
Judy Murphy  
Susan Musukuma  
Doug Newsom  
Jenny Odintz  
Rebecca Peterson  
Susan Phillip  
Marge Piercy  
Valeska Populoh  
Dora Rak  
Lana Rakow  
Kathleen Rand Reed  
Ramona R. Rush, Ph.D.  
Diana E. H. Russell, Ph.D.  
Corinne Sabo  
Annette Samuels  
Bernice Sandler, Ph.D.  
Anna Sayre  
Marie Shear  
Elizabeth Shepard  
Andrea Singer  
Amanda Slaughter  
Willona Sloan  
Ann Snitow  
Gloria Steinem  
Cecily Swanson  
Kate Swift  
Elizabeth Thoman  
Julie Thompson  
Patricia Tobar  
Sister Margaret Traxler  
Emily Trostle  
Anita Varma  
Mary Ellen Verheyden-Hilliard  
Carmen Delgado Votaw  
Billie Wahlstrom, Ph.D.  
Danna Lynn Walker, Ph.D.  
Betsy Warrior  
Janet Weiss  
Frieda Werden  
Eun Jung Yi  
Marcia Yudkin  
Jonathan Zeitlin  
Zenia Allen Zeitlin  
Karen Zelermyer  
Ann Zill  
Jan Zimmerman

## **Some International Associates**

### **Canada:**

Milner Alexander, Ph.D.  
Mary-Catherine McIntosh  
Gertrude Robinson, Ph.D. Julia  
J. Jalloh

### **Denmark:**

Birgitt Jalloh

### **France:**

Maryvonne Lecuyer

Shere Hite

### **Germany:**

Frauke Richter

### **Indonesia:**

Dorothea Rosa Herliany

Yasmin Muntaz

### **Japan:**

Haruko Watanabe

### **Jordan:**

Mahasen Al Emam

### **Macedonia:**

Biljana Vejtkova

### **Nepal:**

Rojee Kattel

### **Netherlands:**

Senay Ozdemir

### **Palestine:**

Benaz Batrawi

### **Peru:**

Silvia Soriano

### **Poland:**

Ewa Fryzowska

### **Scotland:**

Bonnie Robertson

### **South Korea:**

Jin-A Yang

Eun Jung Yi

### **South Africa:**

Kashini Maistry

### **Ukraine:**

Oksana Kuts

### **United Kingdom:**

Margaret Gallagher

### **Uzbekistan:**

Navbahor Imamova

### **Zambia:**

Susan Musukuma

*([www.wifp.org/MoreAssociates.html](http://www.wifp.org/MoreAssociates.html))*

# News from Associates

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## Jennifer Abod

Jennifer Abod is currently working as an independent video producer. Her film “Look Us in the Eye: The Old Women’s Project,” released in 2006, was recently reviewed in the feminist magazine *Off Our Backs*.

In “Look Us in the Eye,” “Cynthia Rich, Mannie Garza and Janice Keaffaber take the stereotypes of an ageist culture and turn them on their heads. Wearing brilliant t-shirts that declare ‘Old Women are Your Future’ and carrying their giant multi-ethnic old woman puppet, POWER (Pissed Old Woman Engaged in Revolution), The Old Women’s Project refuses invisibility and proclaims that old women are part of every social justice issue.” Visit [www.jenniferabod.com](http://www.jenniferabod.com) for more information.

## JoAnn Albers

JoAnn Albers has decided to retire from her position at Western Kentucky University, where she taught in the school of journalism and broadcasting, in order to move closer to her family. She can still be reached through email at [joann.albers@wku.edu](mailto:joann.albers@wku.edu).

## Carolyn Bennett

Dr. Carolyn Bennett has come out with another important book: *Missing News and Views In Paranoid Times*, which opens minds to new perspectives on current affairs and world events – people, politics, peace and the press. This anthology features coverage of international issues, events, people and politics – against the backdrop of Middle East war, and through a lens censored in mainstream news and current affairs coverage. The in-depth stories and analyses comprise three years of Bennett’s hard-hitting, sometimes humorous prose, sometimes a poet’s pain, never manipulative, never inspiring pity or cheap sentiment. *Paranoid Times* is a magazine of sources never quoted, faces never seen, voices rarely heard, analyses with irony and juxtaposition all tied to current affairs, politics and controversy. A wide audience of readers – including students, journalists, analysts, educators, politicians – will find *Missing News and Views In Paranoid Times* a deeply informative, compelling and striking read that invites readers to shed the paranoia and understand current events with this independently-voiced, thought-provoking exposé.

## Carolyn Byerly

Dr. Carolyn M. Byerly, Howard University’s Department of Journalism, received a grant in the amount of \$8,150 in June 2007 from the Shorenstein Center at Harvard University, to conduct a baseline study on women owners of broadcast stations in the United States. The funds are derived from the Carnegie-Knight Foundation.

Carolyn Byerly has been tenured at the rank of associate professor in the Department of Journalism, John H. Johnson School of Communications, Howard University, Washington, DC. She joined the Howard faculty in 2004. She teaches

graduate-level courses in mass communication theory, research methods, media effects, political communication, and research writing. She completed her MA and PhD degrees at the University of Washington, Seattle, and her BS at University of Colorado.

## Elayne Clift

Elayne Clift’s book *ACHAN: A Year of Teaching in Thailand*, will be published late this year by Bangkok Books. Her email address is [eclift@vermontel.net](mailto:eclift@vermontel.net).

## Flora Crater

Flora Crater has been publishing *The Woman Activist*, “an action bulletin for women’s rights since 1973, when the Equal Rights Amendment was passed in the congress and sent to the states for ratification.” Please contact her at [wmactivist@aol.com](mailto:wmactivist@aol.com) to receive a sample copy.

## Jo Freeman

Jo Freeman’s new article “The Woman Who Ran for President,” available on her website at <http://www.jofreeman.com/politics/womprez03.htm>, examines infamous and lesser-known female campaigns for the U.S. presidency over the last two centuries.

## Sheila Gibbons

Sheila Gibbons is the editor of the newsletter *Media Report to Women*, founded in 1972. She has been writing many articles recently. Visit [www.mediareporttowomen.com](http://www.mediareporttowomen.com).

## Ruth Gottstein

A publisher emerita, Ruth Gottstein writes that her Volcano Press “is gathering information for an update of its book entitled *Family Violence and Religion: An Interfaith Resource Guide*, first published 11 years ago. The new paperback edition will contain additional chapters on the Islam, Mormon and Seventh Day Adventist faiths, which had not been originally included. Because of the increasing interest in faith-based domestic violence issues, the update will meet the needs of many concerned clergy, agencies and professionals. For information on the forthcoming book, contact [volcanopress.com](http://volcanopress.com).”

## Michael Honey

Dr. Michael Honey, Professor at the University of Washington, Tacoma, has a new book out, entitled *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King’s Last Campaign*. This narrative of one of the most important and least told stories of the civil rights movement discusses the ways that the mass media distorted, inflamed, or ignored black labor and civil rights issues, leading to the 1968 strike in which Dr. King was murdered. The book traces how the African-American community created its own media through mass meeting, the black church, and the mass

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movement, finally changing the plantation mentality that ruled Memphis.

This account is a riveting, thorough, fascinating story that weaves history, politics, and social justice issues together seamlessly. It is the story of Memphis in 1968 when the civil rights struggle was focused on Dr. Martin Luther King and the sanitation workers who undertook a courageous strike due to dire conditions. It tells of those who worked hard to improve conditions and bring about justice, and those whose lives were affected. A refreshing account that seeks to bring hope and light to the events and conditions facing workers in Memphis, the over 500 pages keep you pulled in. This is the way history should be told. (W.W. Norton, NY, 2007)

### Robin Morgan

Ashley Judd announced that she has bought film rights to Robin's historical novel *The Burning Time*, about witches and the inquisition. The book is now in development for a major motion picture and announcements have appeared in the publications *Movie News* and *ShowBiz*. The prolific author can be reached through her website, [www.robinmorgan.us](http://www.robinmorgan.us).

### Senay Ozdemir

Senay Ozdemir, our newest WIFP Associate, is the Editor-in-Chief and founder of *SEN Magazine*, which advocates for young women of Islamic backgrounds living in the Netherlands. *SEN Magazine*, which Ozdemir founded in March 2004, features successful Mediterranean women working as lawyers, artists, engineers, and businesswomen as well as an advice column, which highlights very serious and modern issues. Seven months after it was launched, *SEN* was elected "Best New Magazine of 2004" by *De Volkskrant*, one of the leading newspapers in the Netherlands. By 2005, *SEN*'s monthly circulation reached 20,000 issues, and in 2006 the magazine expanded into Belgium. *SEN* became an entirely online publication in January of 2007 and can be accessed at [www.senmagazine.com](http://www.senmagazine.com). The content of the website is primarily in Dutch.

Senay is a former television producer and presenter. She founded Medusa Media productions in 2003 and was a columnist for several women's magazines. She now manages a staff of editors, directors, designers, photographers and writers.

### Joy Simonson

WIFP mourns the loss of associate Joy Simonson, a feminist foremother, educational equity pioneer, and former National Council of Women's Organizations steering committee member, who died on June 24th at age 87.

Joy was a fearless fighter for women's rights, particularly on behalf of Title IX. She served as executive director of the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs (NAWEP) from 1975 to 1982, preparing some of the first reports on women's studies, sexual harassment, and the first edition of the *Handbook for Achieving Sex Equity through Education*. In 1982, Reagan appointees to the

Council removed Ms. Simonson from her position because of her support for the Equal Rights Amendment. Her firing became a cause celebre and a rallying cry for the women's movement.

Joy Simonson served as chairman of the D.C. Alcoholic Beverage Control Board from 1964 to 1972. She was the first woman to hold that position. From 1982 to 1990, she worked as an oversight investigator for the House Employment and Housing Subcommittee. At her retirement, Joy was the oldest staff member in the House of Representatives. In 1992, Joy was elected to the District of Columbia Women's Hall of Fame.

Joy's daughter and sons have asked that, in lieu of flowers, contributions be made to the Older Women's League (OWL), where Joy was a long and devoted Board member.

### Patricia Vega

The Schijnheilig Gallery in Amsterdam held an exhibition of Patricia's work in July of 2007. The exhibition, entitled "Any Given Fiction," explores the limits of image and text in the global city. Visit [www.schijnheilig.org](http://www.schijnheilig.org).

### Frieda Werden

"Frieda Werden of WINGS: Women's International News Gathering Service is pleased to remind WIFP associates that they can listen to back editions of this weekly radio program online now, courtesy of the University of South Florida Women's Studies Association. Visit [www.wings.org](http://www.wings.org) and click on the word Archive to connect to 3+ years of radio programming by and about women around the world. Windows Media Player is required. Frieda also invites you to read and to submit reviews for the blog [www.feministbook.blogspot.com](http://www.feministbook.blogspot.com). She recently figured out how to upload pictures to this site!

"Besides WINGS, Frieda has been working nearly five years as Spoken Word Coordinator at the campus-community radio at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC, Canada (just East of Vancouver). She immigrated to Canada in November 2002, already hired for this very interesting job that keeps her on her toes and introduces her to lots of new technology and sensible Canadian social ideas. In 2006, she became the first recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from Canada's National Campus and Community Radio Association.

"Internationally, Frieda has been very active with media NGOs. She served as Vice President for North America of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters ([www.amarc.org](http://www.amarc.org)) from 2002 to 2006, and in September will finish a two-year term as President of the International Association of Women in Radio and TV ([www.iawrt.org](http://www.iawrt.org)) In IAWRT, she has had the pleasure of working closely with another WIFP associate and longtime friend, Mal Johnson.

"Frieda also recently had a bio published in "Feminists Who Changed America," the book edited by Veteran Feminists of America's Barbara J. Love (<http://www.vfa.us/>

WomenChangedAmerica.htm ). She sends fond greetings to all the other veteran and rookie feminists in the WIFP network.”

### Jin-A Yang

Jin-A Yang has been traveling in Cambodia working on a project to eradicate illiteracy. Her organization began a small library project in Nepal, Cambodia and Russia. She has been very interested in improving conditions in developing countries. This year Jin-A has returned to school doing graduate work in public policy. Even though it is always a challenge to study and work together, she enjoys being a student again.

### Gertrude J. Robinson

Gertrude J. Robinson is an emeritus professor and past director of the Graduate Program in Communications at McGill University, Montreal where she was involved in the institutionalization of the Canadian field. At McGill she helped set up the first Canadian Ph.D.; then became the first female president of the Canadian Communication Association and subsequently the first female editor of the *Canadian Journal of Communication*.

Robinson received a BA “magna cum laude” in philosophy and political science from Swarthmore College, an MA in philosophy from the University of Chicago and a Ph.D. in communications from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana.

Honors and awards include: Phi Beta Kappa, Kappa Tau Alpha, Dodi Robb Award (Media Watch); Canadian Who’s Who (1998); Dictionary of International Biography (Cambridge 26th Ed); YWCA Women of the Year Award in Communication (2001); Aubrey Fisher Mentorship Award, ICA (2004).

Robinson has published nine books and more than fifty articles in national and international journals. They include: *Constructing the Quebec Referendum: French and English Media Voices* (1998); *Women and Power: Canadian & German Experiences* (1990); *News*



Dr. Maurine Beasley

*Agencies and World News: Methods and Data* (1981) and *Tito’s Maverick Media: The Politics of Mass Communication in Yugoslavia* (1977).

### Maurine Beasley

Dr. Maurine Beasley, former reporter for *The Washington Post* and acclaimed historian of women in media, has recently been interviewed by the Center for New Words on the historical role of women

in the media and what possibilities lie in the future. The Center for New Words is an organization dedicated to strengthening and empowering the voice of marginalized women and creating a forum in which their ideas can be presented. Their choice to interview Ms. Beasley is a clear recognition of the historical strides she has made in the involvement of women in the media. She has published numerous books on the subject, including *Taking Their Place* and *The New Majority*, and has become the first woman to receive tenure at the Phillip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland where she has taught for over thirty years. The interview discusses Beasley’s first forays into the fields of journalism and media, specifically touching on what inspired her to become not only an educator, but a champion for women’s involvement in mass media. She also talks about the current state of women in media, what can be learned from the past, and what still needs to be done. It is clear that she holds hope for the future and is most grateful for her role in educating those who stand to make a change.

## ***Voices For Media Democracy***

E-Newsletter is available monthly on the WIFP website: [www.wifp.org/VoicesforMediaDemocracy.html](http://www.wifp.org/VoicesforMediaDemocracy.html)

Associates who would like to receive the online newsletter should send their e-mail address to [allen@wifp.org](mailto:allen@wifp.org).

*Please let us know when your e-mail address changes!*

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# 20th Anniversary of the National Women and Media Collection Celebrated in 2007

During July and August, 2007, the celebration includes an exhibit on Donna Allen, WIFP Founder.

In 2007 the Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Columbia, MO, has been celebrating the 20th anniversary of the National Women and Media Collection. As part of the celebration, they have had rotating exhibits in the lobby highlighting some of the more prominent collections. Donna Allen is being featured during July and August, 2007.

The culminating event will be on September 11, when they will host a panel discussion of women journalists and a lecture by Tad Bartimus, who worked for the AP for 25 years before becoming a syndicated columnist.



Thanks to: Jennifer S. Lukomski, Senior Manuscript Specialist

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# Women's Rights: Casualties of the War in Iraq

by Ellie Blalock, WIFP

American soldiers continue to die in a war that many argue is impossible to win, and innocent Iraqis are being killed every day as the country rapidly descends into sectarian violence and residential neighborhoods become veritable war zones.

There is no shortage of criticism to be made about the Iraq War. Understandably, the enormous loss of American lives tends to dominate arguments from the opposition in the U.S., overshadowing the immense sacrifices Iraqis have been forced to make. One aspect of Iraqi society given little attention in the media is the situation faced by women. While violence has made simple activities insurmountably difficult for all Iraqis, replacing Saddam Hussein's relatively secular government with new, superficially democratic leadership has allowed the recent influx of extremists to quickly turn once-progressive social attitudes on their heads. The situation is dire, and some groups like the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq are fed up and ready to affect change.

In a recent interview with truthdig.com's Kasia Anderson, Iraqi women's activist Yanar Mohammed (director of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq) explained how, despite Saddam Hussein's massive human rights violations and dictatorial nature, his government allowed women more educational, professional and social freedoms than does the current regime. This fact undercuts America's purported goal of creating democratic governance in Iraq.

With regard to U.S. policy, Mohammed does not mince words. She argues that the new Iraqi government may appear democratic on the surface, but in reality offers little representation to the people that need it, particularly women. "They preferred to bring decorative factors to the parliament,

where they look like women, but they all voted for a constitution that is against women," she says, speaking of the return to Islamic Sharia law instead of the old, secular constitution.

Mohammed returned to Iraq at the start of the war and has since focused her efforts on combating honor killings, ending human trafficking, and more recently on protecting female prisoners' rights. After the abuse scandal at the Abu Ghraib prison, Mohammed and her colleagues decided to investigate Iraqi women's prisons. When visiting with female prisoners, they encountered

"The police at work are being killed for sectarian reasons. So, you have to witness all sorts of atrocities just going back and forth to work." - Yanar Mohammed, Iraqi women's activist

women who had been repeatedly abused and raped by police officers even before arriving in prison.

The current situation in Iraq has led many families to seek refuge in neighboring Arab countries, most notably Syria, where they face economic hardships that often drive daughters and wives to prostitution. Young Iraqi girls can be found throughout Damascus working out of night clubs frequented by Saudi businessmen or soliciting sex in public, an act unthinkable in Arab culture, according to a recent New York Times piece by Katherine Zoepf. While some women have left Iraq with their families by choice, others were

smuggled into Syria or otherwise tricked into prostitution.

The difficulties facing women affect mundane tasks, as well. No longer can women feel safe even for a quick trip out of the house. The walk to the nearby university, office, or market can prove deadly. As Mohammed says, "many of the police at work are being killed for sectarian reasons. So, you have to witness all sorts of atrocities just going back and forth to work."

Mounting violence has caused many Iraqi doctors to flee the country, and pregnant women now find themselves in a bind. A Washington Post article from January, 2007 examined this issue: "spontaneous road closures, curfews and gun battles make even getting to the hospital a challenge for expectant mothers. Once they arrive, the women have no guarantee that they will receive adequate health care from a qualified physician," writes Post reporter Nancy Trejos. Women fear going into labor in the middle of the night (when a curfew is in effect and even ambulance drivers are afraid to venture out) and opt for Caesarean sections or for natural birth with the help of local midwives, whose abilities to help in the event of an emergency are very limited.

U.S. intervention has pushed Iraqi women's progress back by years, but Mohammed is still determined to make a difference. With the support of American women's groups like the Feminist Majority Foundation and Ms. Magazine, Mohammed is trying to teach impressionable Iraqi youth to see past Sunni and Shiite distinctions and realize that the fundamentalists who have put Iraq into its current state of chaos are not "the original people of the country." With an outlet to express peaceful ideas such as these, perhaps a more open-minded next generation will bring some relief to the chaos of modern Iraq.

Visit <http://www.equalityiniraq.com> to learn more about Mohammed's work and contribute a donation.

## Media Literacy

by Christian Barclay, WIFP

In a burgeoning world of media outlets it is often hard to escape the constant onslaught of numerous television shows, magazines, newspapers, movies, and advertisements. These various forms of media are meant to influence how we feel, what we buy, where we go, how we do things, and perhaps most importantly, how we think. Nowhere is this influence more apparent or detrimental than in the impressionable minds of young children and teenagers. Therefore we must take a proactive stance in teaching our young people fact from fiction and the many manipulative ways in which the media try to blur that line, or in most cases, disregard it entirely.

Media literacy is a rapidly growing field that examines the role media potentially, and actually, plays in our lives, ideas, and actions. It teaches people to analyze messages conveyed by the media, taking into account the commercial or political purpose of the image or message, who is responsible for it, and other ideas that it implies. It also aims to provide accurate and timely statistics on the culture of media. According to the Center for Media Literacy, there are five core concepts of media literacy:

1. All media messages are 'constructed'
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules
3. Different people experience the same media message differently
4. Media have embedded values and points of view
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power (<http://www.medialit.org>)

In addition, they list the five questions, that if pondered, can lead to a more media literate attitude and perception\*\*:

1. Who created this message?
2. What techniques are used to get

my attention:

3. How might different people understand this differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in or omitted from this message?
5. Why is this message being sent? (<http://www.medialit.org>)

To some, these considerations and questions seem elementary and almost second-nature, but to a child, such questions are irrelevant. Without knowledge of the way the media works, a child can develop not only a distorted view of themselves, but a distorted view of the world around them.

In a study concerning gender and racial disparity in childrens' television conducted by See Jane, it was found that 3/4 of all single speaking characters are white. And only 35% of characters in animated television were female (<http://www.seejane.org>). Such statistics are slightly alarming considering the fact that these shows can be crucial in a child's developmental task of integrating the differences between genders and races and how each one is represented in society. Television commercials and magazine ads are another hotbed of racial and gender stereotypes. A recent ad for EasyJet airline featured a woman's breast along with the words 'Weapons of mass distraction'. What exactly does a woman's breast have to do with air travel? Nothing. But the goal of the advertisement is to grab your attention and by using such an image, there is a guarantee that it will. One of the best skills that the media possess is an innate ability to identify their target audience and tailor their advertisements exclusively to this group. They specialize in calculated allure, drawing on cultural stereotypes and prescribed gender roles. Along with the controversy that this has created in regards to tailored cigarette ads to teenagers, a recent Georgetown University Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth found that African American teenagers saw 77% more alcohol, specifically distilled

The website of the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press provides many resources. A few of these include:

- \* online *Directory of Women's Media* (with no charge to access and no sign-up required)
- \* monthly online *Voices for Media Democracy*
- \* a history of women's media (1963-1983)
- \* women's media highlights
- \* media democracy resources and information
- \* focuses on media relating to women of color, hispanic women ("Nuestras Voces"), labor issues, women living under fundamentalism, the United Nations, women's rights and feminist media, violence against women, and more.
- \* resources and articles on pornography and the first amendment
- \* media philosophy of the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press and writings of WIFP Founder Donna Allen
- \* WIFP publications information
- \* Associate news and recent books
- \* media events internationally

[www.wifp.org](http://www.wifp.org)



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liquors, advertising in African-American magazines (ie., Ebony, Source, Jet) last year than their non-black peers (<http://www.reclaimyourculture.com>).

Another issue that further clouds media intentions is the fact that most media outlets are owned by for-profit organizations and conglomerates and are supported by corporate advertisers. These associations foster a compromised journalism industry, in both print and broadcast. This results in newspapers and journals that claim to be objective but are, in fact, controlled by an 'unofficial' partisan agenda. Such an agenda can lead to the sensationalism of news stories. With each media outlet fighting for its share of the ratings, the tendency to exaggerate stories and attack other points of view becomes a natural part of the news process. Big business sponsorship also carries over to colleges and universities, with monetary support being given in exchange for widespread advertisement around the campus. Channel One, which provides K-12 schools with a daily 12 minute television news program, gives schools free video equipment in exchange for a mandatory showing of their program each morning. While many schools have made the Channel One program a staple of their school day, there has been a sizeable backlash. The Channel One program includes over two minutes of commercials and a number of parents and teachers are upset by this blatant attempt to advertise to their children, in the least of all places, the classroom.

Outside of the United States, media literacy education has gradually become the norm in K-12 schools. Canada, in particular Ontario, seems to be at the forefront of the media literacy education movement. In 1987, it became a mandatory part of the education curriculum. Media Communication Skills is a requisite part of the English curriculum for grades 1-8 and Media Studies is one of four mandatory strands of the English program for grades 9-12 (<http://www.fepproject.org>). Both programs list detailed requirements in media analysis and production-oriented programs. Ontario's program remains to be the most developed and

concrete media literacy programs in the world. England is in many ways the birthplace of media literacy education. As early as 1929, the London Board of Education's Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers urged teachers to give children specific training in evaluating (and resisting) what it considered "the low standards of early movies" (<http://www.fepproject.org>). In France, media education is overseen by a subsidiary agency of the Ministry of Education, the Center for Liason Between Teaching and Information Studies. Western Australia, for over a decade, has required that a quarter of its English curriculum for grades 1-12 be dedicated to media education. And in South Africa, which has required media literacy education since 1995, the government's Film and Publishing Board began a National Media Education Initiative in 2003 empowering youth to be proficient and discerning users of the media.

Since there has been no significant allocation of funding for media literacy programs in the United States by any federal agency, most of the initiative lies in the hands of school districts, states, and non-governmental organizations. And while there has been a significant push for media education in the recent years, progress has been slow due to the grassroots nature of its support base and the lack of government support that is necessary to implement a country-wide program. In 2001, university-based and scholar led groups such as the Center for Media Studies at Rutgers University and the New Mexico Media Literacy Project united to form the Alliance for Media Literate America, stating that its goal was to "bring media literacy education to all 60 million students in the United States, their parents, their teachers, and others who care about youth" (<http://www.fepproject.org>).

State-level progress has been the most effective. Maryland was one of the first states to create a comprehensive media literacy curriculum in its public schools, although it is not officially mandated. Massachusetts has had a media strand of its English program in implementation since 1994 and is divided into two units: media analysis

and media production. Yet there is still a difficulty that most states face in incorporating media literacy education into the classrooms. In order for it to be mandatory within the state, there needs to be an agreed upon standard of requirements and expectations in regards to its teaching. Most states neither have the funding or the wherewithal to fully develop this new branch of curriculum and it is therefore left to the individual school districts and teachers to develop their own ways of teaching the subject. California remains the only state to have officially mandated a set of requirements and programs for the teaching of media literacy. In grade 4 Language Arts, students learn to "evaluate the role of media in focusing attention on events and in forming opinions on issues." By grades 11-12, the curriculum must cover the "strategies used by media to inform, persuade, entertain, and transmit culture," including "perpetuation of stereotypes." Secondary school social studies curriculum must address inaccuracies and biases in political advertising, radio, and film. And health courses require student essays evaluating family dynamics in a selected TV program, collages showing how advertisements convey messages about body image, and classroom discussions on "influences and pressures to become sexually active" (<http://www.fepproject.org>).

Media literacy education is not only important, it is imperative. The power and influence of media is strengthening every day. And while we cannot always expect the media to act responsibly when it is not in their best financial interest to do so, we can take the initiative to educate ourselves, thereby instilling in the younger generations an inquisitive and critical eye. As media literacy advocate Ernest L. Boyer says: "It is no longer enough simply to read and write. Students must also become literate in the understanding of visual images. Our children must learn how to spot a stereotype, isolate a social cliché, and distinguish facts from propaganda, analysis from banter and important news from coverage." (<http://www.edtech.sandi.net>)

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# Change for the Hip Hop Generation

by Desiré Vincent, WIFP

When rap music started, it operated in the belief of giving black America a voice to expose the ills of urban America. With songs like “the message” by Grandmaster Flash, Ice T’s “Killers” the atrocities that were not commonly known by middle/upper class America were exposed from their point of view. Today hip hop music has become very accepted in mainstream culture. Much of the music has turned to being more materialistic than ever. And more misogynistic because the ways in which the women are objectified. The way they are displayed in videos parading in little to no clothing, all with long curly hair, thin with very pronounced breasts and behinds adds to this ideal of materialism because they are just seen as objects of sexual desire and satisfaction and presents a standard of beauty that is not realistic.

And even as a result of this, some focus of sub-genres of hip hop music has turned from criticizing and exposing the ills of urban America to defending their art and taking the focus away from the people who are the fans and followers and making it an intra-group conflict. Thankfully, consumer choice in this case still exists to some degree, but there is a distinct divide within the community of artist, that I feel is important to be bonded in order to effect real change in the community of black America, regardless of socio-economic status.

Made popular by its use in Hip Hop music, The “N” now is used as a colloquial term among Black Americans and even non-blacks. I’ve heard it argued that the black race is taking the word back by appropriating it and by doing this the word loses its harsh value. The “N” word can never be appropriated. Although racism stills

exists today, we are not the generation that was called “N” while we were persecuted and lynched and when we were being publicly harassed, mistreated and beaten. As the parents and children in this hip hop generation I believe we do ourselves an injustice by not respecting our history, and at best when we can, letting it be just that....history; using those times of struggle for the race as fuel to continue to fight today.

In the genre of hip hop music with much to be said about the language, I think it is especially important to acknowledge the lack of respect given to women through the use of “girl,” “bitch,” “w(ho)re, and any other name

“Although racism stills exists today, we are not the generation that was called “N” while we were persecuted and lynched and when we were being publicly harassed, mistreated and beaten. As the parents and children in this hip hop generation I believe we do ourselves an injustice by not respecting our history.”

that they are called out of their own. To make progress, the damage of this is especially imperative to recognize when dealing with young women. Among its many purposes music serves a transmission of culture and as a form of media where people see and hear about themselves. Since hip hop music is most closely connected to today’s generations of young black America its important for the language to be changed when dealing with women to promote empowerment amongst the young women so they know they will not always be a girl, and they are not bitches, etc.

We could say consumers should be educated enough to understand hip hop music as entertainment value , we

could say the hip hop artists and the parties involved should not be viewed as leaders, we could say the artist should strongly consider the impact on the audience digesting the content of their music. We could say all of that, but on conscious and subconscious levels music is more than entertainment, artists are viewed as leaders, and some artists will just make what sells regardless of the content (or lack of) they’re feeding. And this will continue, because someone benefits from all of it. If that was not the case then it would persists as it does today.

So, who is responsible? It would be unfair to place the blame on one party, since there are multiple parties involved. There is the FCC, record companies, artists, and consumers. I think change would have to occur by each actor in order for there to be any real change in the music that is made and distributed, and thus changing the effects on communities and people.

What can I do? First, know yourself and the music you enjoy. Listen to the lyrics, and challenge some of the ideas presented by thinking about them, ask questions. Ask yourself why you hold the beliefs that you hold and how does your music help or harm them. Then, utilize your own form of media keeping in mind that its important to challenge the ideas presented, not the people. Write letters to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), express your concerns to the Hip Hop Summit Action Network, and write letters to the record companies, artist, representatives and senators. Say how the music affects you, whether it is positive or negative and what change you would like to see. And lastly, take pride in knowing that you always have the right to voice your concerns.

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# Commentary: Watching Hillary Clinton Run

by David Song, WIFP

There is something about the public perception of Hillary Clinton's personality that I keep seeing as she runs for president. She is too ambitious to be president, so the perception goes, having planned on running for the White House since 1999. Or she is too mechanical and calculating, relying too much on polls and statistics to gauge the electorate.

Arguments against Clinton formed on these premises are specious. Politicians—certainly the ones running for the highest seat in government—are going to have to be ambitious and shrewd to win an election. (Alternatively, as with our current president, they must inherit the right social connections and support networks.) In the eyes of people watching for the first time a woman run seriously for the presidency, “ambitious” in the public mind threatens to transform into “power-hungry”, “analytical” into “calculating”, “vocal” into “strident”. Jonathan Wallace has observed that our national anxiety about electing a woman, at this date, in the twenty-first century, divides us from all the other nations—Britain, Israel, India, Germany—that have had female prime ministers and chancellors, highlighting “[o]ur strange backwardness”[1]. Looking at Clinton this way often, as one woman puts it, “to me sounds an awful lot like ‘A woman is supposed to be warm and nurturing, not cold and calculating like a... a... a politician!’” The 2008 election with Clinton as the Democratic candidate will center around, perhaps more than people would like to admit, the fact that she is woman. We are unlikely to see the same tensions over race, even when an African-American is running, or over religion, when so are a Mormon and a Catholic. (I limit myself to Christian denominations when I refer to religion, however; should Obama win the candidacy we might hear much about madrassas and his middle name “Hussein”.)



There is something strange and lurid on Facebook when it comes to watching Hillary Clinton run, and a college networking site is not such a trivial thing in the election now. A CNN.com article asks, regarding next year's election, “is the Web the new battleground?”[2] Currently, the largest support group for Obama numbers at just over 300,000 members, whereas the largest for Clinton numbers at around 5,700. When we look at Facebook groups against candidates—there are plenty of them—the largest group against Obama numbers at 1,500, and the largest against Clinton numbers at over 350,000, and another stands at over 62,000. The staggering number of people against Clinton is no problem in itself; it is easier, after all, to rally against someone in politics than around someone, and she has been in the public eye for a long enough time to garner plenty of detractors.

What is most interesting, then, about the criticism of Clinton on Facebook is that it is constructed in such a way that implies that she is unwomanly, out of sync with the “correct” identity

*Photo from <http://www.wikipedia.org>*

of a woman, and therefore unfit to be president. In the anti-Clinton Facebook group, there are a number of pictures (doctored or not), of her in some ugly, unflattering appearance—bulging eyes, a too-wide grin, a vaguely masculine feature, or some other characteristic contrary to the physical image of an “ideal” woman. The problem is not that people are satirizing and mocking Clinton—the foremost people we should be able to satirize and mock are our elected officials and public figures. The problem is that these pictures carry the subtext of, “Hillary is running for president, Hillary does not have the qualities of a woman, and so a woman running for president is not really a woman”. It's a disturbing thought, that the most personal criticisms made against Clinton are not, as with many of those made against George W. Bush, tied up in her intelligence or competence, but in her gender.

The internet is a marketplace of ideas, but sites like Facebook, given how many users they serve, is a surprisingly

inadequate place to exchange meaningful political thoughts. Too often the argument is reduced to a picture, a slogan, an oversimplification, an appeal to the lowest common denominator; it is a site that can rally voters and pre-voters, raise awareness about issues all too pertinent today, but there is something lacking on Facebook—and all over the internet on similar online social networks—in terms of meaningful, complex discussion.

When Ann Coulter used the word “faggot” to refer to John Edwards, Anna Quindlen wrote with respect to political pundits, “Everywhere there’s talk that this may be the most momentous race in our lifetime, that it’s clear that the

“Electing a president on the basis of intelligence, experience, and competence means that we will have to look past the spin—presented by both the pundits and the people, from both the top and the bottom— on personality, gender, and politics.”

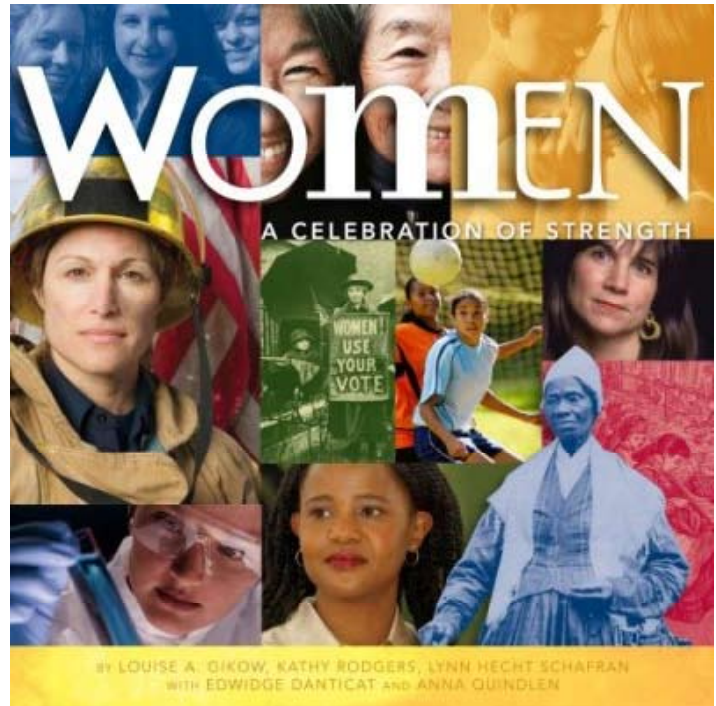
country is teetering on the cusp of something, good, bad or cataclysmic... This election is not a joke; this moment deserves more than playground-bully punditry. The people who pontificate for pay need to rise to the level of their audience” [3]. The internet is a place where serious discussion about politics can be held, where we have access to news sources outside the mass media; groups on Facebook, however, also prove that voters themselves need to rise above preconceived qualities of Clinton—heartless ambition, calculating coldness. (As if one shouldn’t vote for a presidential candidate who has been planning for years to run for president.) Electing a president for this election on the basis of intelligence, experience, and competence means that we will have to look past the spin—presented by both the pundits and the people, from both the top and the bottom—on personality, gender, and politics.

If you don’t want me to vote for Clinton, tell me it is because you don’t want to see a chain of Bush-Clinton-Bush-Clinton presidencies, or because she will further partisan sentiments, or because of her ties to business. But please don’t tell me about her personality or identity as a female politician; being able to judiciously elect a female candidate means being able to look past women in outdated roles, to look at women as more than a collection of body parts.

1. Wallace, Jonathan. “A Woman President”. *The Ethical Spectacle*. February 2007. <<http://www.spectacle.org/0207/hillary.html>>

2. Rawlinson, Linnie. “Will the 2008 USA election be won on Facebook?” *CNN.com*. May 29 2007. <<http://edition.cnn.com/2007/TECH/05/01/election.facebook/>>

3. Quindlen, Anna. “Quindlen: Political Pundits Must Rise Up.” *Newsweek*. March 19 2007. <<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17551452/site/newsweek>>



## **Book Review: *Women: A Celebration of Strength***

**by Christian Barclay, WIFP**

*Women: A Celebration of Strength* is a delightfully informative book chronicling the historic challenges and achievements of women. From Susan B. Anthony to Nancy Pelosi, it details over an entire century of women’s history. It is published by Legal Momentum, the nation’s oldest non-profit organization for women’s advocacy and its authors are a variety of accomplished women, ranging from authors to lawyers. The book includes removable facsimiles and pop-up pictures which provide for a colorful and entertaining format. It is divided into topic-based chapters which include At the Top of Her Class, Trailblazers for Change, and Freedom from Violence. Each chapter includes timelines, pictures, and fact tables which make the information accessible to readers of all ages. The book is an interactive history lesson that guides the reader through the history of the women’s rights movement, paying particular attention to the groundbreaking legislation and major figures of the movement itself.

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# Gardasil: Our Best Option?

by Ellie Blalock, WIFP

In a society that worships the quick fix, vaccines seem nothing less than perfect. One trip to the doctor early in life can save a child from death or a lifetime of suffering with history's most crippling epidemics. Polio, measles, and smallpox have been virtually eradicated worldwide through vaccination campaigns requiring minimal effort from the general public. Is it conceivable then that universal inoculation against HPV might not be our best option in the fight against cervical cancer?

This question has caused much recent debate among women's groups and the medical community as numerous states and the District of Columbia consider bills which could require girls as young as 13 to show proof of inoculation with Gardasil, a new and not extensively-tested vaccine. While parents will be able to "opt out" of having their child receive the vaccine, the conditions under which this will be allowed are still unclear.

The major question that remains unanswered is how effective Gardasil would be even if required universally. Most cases of infection from HPV (around 90%) will disappear on their own within two years. Rarely does the HPV virus develop into cancer, and even more rarely is cervical cancer actually fatal. In fact, the cancer is considered to be largely preventable if women receive frequent pap smears. According to the Canadian Women's Health Network, the incidence of cervical cancer among women in the United States has dropped by 74% between 1955 and 1992, almost exclusively due to the introduction and increased availability of pap smears. Those who are still dying of cervical cancer today, says Sherrill Sellman of "Total Health" magazine, "are those who do not get screened (for whatever reason, be it financial, cultural, socioeconomic, or other access issues).

Gardasil, though it prevents infection from the two strains of HPV responsible for 70% of cervical cancer cases, is not foolproof. There are over 100 strains of HPV, 15 of which can cause cervical cancer. That leaves 13 (or 30%) of the cancer-associated strains unblocked. Even after receiving the HPV vaccine, women must still have regular pap smears to ensure they do not develop cancer from contracting the

HPV virus before receiving the vaccine or from a strain not blocked by Gardasil.

There is limited research on the long-term safety of the HPV vaccine, particularly for pre-teen girls, who stand to benefit the most from its use. It seems at the least a bit suspicious that Gardasil is being advocated by legislators when there are still potential safety issues to resolve. Feminist blogger Lucinda Marshall of [feministpeacenet.org](http://feministpeacenet.org) offers her own explanation, writing that "Merck, the company that manufactures the vaccine, has provided very significant funding to many of the legislators that are pushing the vaccine." Gardasil has also been "blessed" by the CDC, meaning that Merck, which stands to profit upwards of a billion dollars from mandatory use of its newest vaccine, can not be sued for any injuries sustained from the drug.

Marshall also links the current push for widespread use of the HPV vaccine to similar support for hormone replacement therapy (HRT), which "is probably responsible for a significant percentage of breast, endometrial and ovarian cancer deaths," in earlier years.

Gardasil's high cost makes the case for mandatory vaccination in schools

even weaker. Sherrill Sellman of "Total Health" magazine reports that at \$360 for a series of three injections, the HPV vaccine is the most expensive in history, and would certainly stretch public health budgets supported by tax-payer money.

A vaccine which could safely and cheaply prevent cervical cancer would be wonderful news for the women's health community, and to oppose it would be downright absurd. Unfortunately, this is not what we have in Gardasil. There is considerable evidence that the drug is simply not appropriate for mandatory use yet, and that public healthcare dollars would be better spent elsewhere. Greater access to gynecological services for marginalized groups, safe-sex campaigns, and even efforts for better public nutrition could all help to reduce the incidence of cervical cancer with none of the possible downsides or high costs associated with Gardasil. In the rush for a quick fix, it is necessary for governments to at least consider that there might be a more effective, sustainable, and non-invasive option out there than yet another new vaccine.

"There is limited research on the long-term safety of the HPV vaccine, particularly for pre-teen girls, who stand to benefit the most from its use. It seems at the least a bit suspicious that Gardasil is being advocated by legislators when there are still potential safety issues to resolve. "

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# Student Activism? Present and Prospering

by Christian Barclay, WIFP

A lot of things can be said for the Generation Y: we watch too much reality television, we spend too much time on the computer, we don't respect our elders. Yet we, as a generation, are responsible for one of the biggest booms in student activism that this country has ever seen. We have taken the torch from our Vietnam Baby Boomer parents and have made significant strides toward ensuring that not only are our voices heard, but that they matter.

Campus Progress, the student-g geared subsidiary of the Center for American Progress, is an organization that prides itself on fostering the voice of America's progressive youth. In other words, you'll be hard pressed to find a Republican at any of their events, unless they're willing to sit through a very heated Q&A session. Campus Progress Chapters on college and university campuses all across the country where they support progressive student publications, sponsor campus speakers, and coordinate events of social and political importance such as film screenings and fundraisers. The culmination of their efforts is the annual National Student Conference where the best and brightest of America's progressive youth convene in Washington, DC for a three-day tour de force of information sessions, activism, and networking. Over a thousand students were present for this year's conference, representing all fifty states and over 250 different colleges and universities. The actual conference itself is a one-day event that brings together a wide range of activists, politicians, and cultural icons to participate in numerous panel discussions concerning the issues affecting the country. The Third Annual National Student Conference took place at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Washington, DC on June 26, 2007. "Our Time is Now" was the theme, and for everyone in attendance, truer words were never spoken.

The conference drew a good number of politically progressive heavyweights including Wisconsin Senator Russ Feingold, Congressman Keith Ellison of Minnesota, and former Presidential candidate Ralph Nader. They talked about the importance of the youth vote in the upcoming 2008 election and commended the students on their dedication towards a more progressive America. Topical issues of youth such as universal healthcare, the war in Iraq, and college affordability were a touchstone of many of the morning reception speeches. The students were urged to take the difficult, yet necessary steps toward peace by demanding that their leaders use their power to unite, rather than to divide. The keynote was Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi whose parting words, "the future belongs to you, you are the future", served as an affirmation

of the conference's theme. The morning was concluded with a Foreign Policy Discussion with Seymour Hersh, moderated by Wall Street Journal Reporter and Daniel Pearl colleague, Asra Q. Nomani.

Hersh lambasted the Bush administration for their conduct in the war and issued a particular criticism against the press for their lack of speculation.

The afternoon consisted of numerous break-out discussion panels and training sessions. The Queer Rights as Civil Rights and Human Rights discussion panel assessed the state of the LGBT community within the context of same sex marriage, discrimination, and heteronormative policy. Panel members included college students from LGBT clubs, Freedom to Marry campaigners, and numerous gay rights advocates. A discussion on feminism brought together an informative and encouraging panel of young feminist activists who discussed the changing face of feminism and the need for more young

"The future belongs to you, you are the future."  
-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi addressing students at the National Student Conference

women to get on board. Two particularly timely discussion panels, Confronting Genocide & Mass Atrocities and Katrina: Fighting

Poverty in Post-Katrina America drew some of the largest crowds. A former Georgetown University student Erin Mazursky, founder of Students Taking Action Now: Darfur (STAND), talked about ways of channeling student activism into a monumental movement. In her words, "we are not only looking for an immediate change, but a change in policy". All of the discussions were aimed particularly at issues that affected or will affect America's youth topics such as first-time voters, the environment, labor rights, affirmative action, and healthcare. The Skills Seminars offered introductory lessons aimed at broadening the students' political and social awareness and enhancing their activist roles. These sessions included: Mobilizing the Youth Vote, Media Bootcamp, Starting on Online Revolution, and Issue Campaigns that Win. The panels for these sessions included campaign directors, politicians, and journalists who offered the students a variety of ways to become "progressively proactive" in forms that would appeal to their peers.

With the goal of educating America's youth and empowering their voice, Campus Progress's National Student Conference proved that Generation Y is indeed ready to step up and take action. It was an event of the utmost seriousness but it was infused with that sense of enthusiasm and hope which is so characteristic in the young. Having spent an entire day in the midst of America's next young leaders, I can assure you that we're in good hands.

# Solving the Ultimate Whodunit: “Sisters in Crime” Tackle Discrimination in Mystery Writing

by Ellie Blalock, WIFP

With 48 chapters worldwide including “Mavens of Mayhem” based in Glenmont, New York, the “Cowtown Crime Solvers” in Forth Worth, Texas, and “KangaRuse” of Brisbane, Australia, Sisters in Crime, an advocacy group for female mystery authors, brings its own brand of energy and camaraderie to a unique frontier in the fight for gender equality.

Founded in 1986 by author Sara Paretsky, Sisters in Crime originally sought to combat the growing use of graphic sadism against women in crime fiction as well as the lack of female mystery authors being nominated for awards. Now, having just celebrated its twentieth anniversary, complete with celebratory displays in bookstores nationwide, the organization has grown to 3,400 members (one-third of whom are published authors as well-known as Mary Higgins Clark) who work to eliminate discrimination against women crime writers and promote their professional advancement.

Sisters in Crime dedicates itself in large part to providing crucial resources for its own members. The group publishes a quarterly 16-page newsletter as well as an annual membership directory and list of books by member authors. They also maintain a presence at national and regional book events and conduct an on-going mystery review project, which monitors media coverage of male and female authors. In addition to T-shirts featuring their logo, Sisters in Crime also produces and sells helpful books for women writers such as *Breaking and Entering: A Guide to Selling Your Manuscript, Finding an Agent, and Other Mysteries of Publishing*.

“Murder, She Writes” a Christian Science Monitor article from 2006, examines gender inequality in mystery authorship, relying heavily on quotes and information from former Sisters in Crime President Libby Hellmann. Hellmann discusses women’s progress in the piece and the fact that almost half of the 1500 or so mysteries published yearly are now written by women, who bring a unique influence to the genre. Female authors more frequently center their stories on female sleuths in domestic, relatable contexts, and focus more on character development than the graphic violence favored by men.

There have been many obstacles to overcome, one of which is the unequal exposure given to male authors through newspaper book reviews. Since reviewed books typically sell more, and books that sell more receive more reviews, women have had trouble breaking this vicious cycle. However, a Sisters in Crime press release revealed that books by female authors accounted for 47% of all crime novel reviews examined in the first quarter of 2006, though some newspapers have made greater progress than others.

Sisters in Crime has done tremendous work for women crime writers, offering them a support network and resources which no doubt have helped to make things more equal in the publishing industry. The group’s accomplishments, however, are only one part of what makes it so unique and special. The passion its members share for crime novels, specifically for those by female authors, is quite inspiring. Sisters in Crime is the perfect example of what can be accomplished in terms of gender equality when women unite behind one issue, however small it might seem.

The website of Sisters in Crime is [www.sistersincrime.org](http://www.sistersincrime.org), where those interested can join the group and gain access to its extensive resources, including information about upcoming events and a members-only discussion board.

## Book Review: *Feminists Who Changed America 1963-75*

by Ellie Blalock, WIFP

This collection, edited by Barbara J Love, includes 2,200 biographies of feminists whose work in the second wave women’s movement of the 1960s and early 1970s was instrumental in expanding the rights of women. The women featured are as diverse as they are inspiring, with contributions ranging from ensuring girls access to sports, science and math programs in schools to fighting for tax deductions for home and childcare expenses. The mini-biographies list each woman’s major contributions, yet manage not to read like dry laundry lists or dull timelines. One really gets a sense of the personality and purpose of each feminist from her entry, though some are as brief as one paragraph.

Love collected entries for her collection mostly by networking and circulating questionnaires, and she admits that the book is not exhaustive. However, as Love explains in her introduction, the book was a necessary first step toward communicating to future generations the immense womanpower and dedication it took to achieve change in leaps and bounds within a short period of time. By producing the collection now, Love has allowed most of the featured feminists to provide first-hand accounts of their own work and, hopefully, to inspire today’s young feminists to adopt the same fiery social conscience that fueled the great changes of the 60s and 70s.

## Associate Book Review: *Going Down Jericho Road*

by Ellie Blalock, WIFP

Michael Honey's recently-published book recounts the 1968 sanitation worker riots in Memphis, Tennessee. Amid the "plantation mentality" that defined the south at the time, black workers were kept in poverty by white supervisors and trade brotherhoods that were able to force them into the lowest-paying positions, with few options for social mobility. Anger reached a crescendo on February 1, 1968, when two sanitation workers were killed by a trash compactor after seeking shelter inside of a truck during a downpour. This event led to a strike, beginning on February 12, of almost 1,300 workers. The strikers faced great obstacles, one of which was the danger in arguing for workers' rights amid the anti-communist sentiment of the 1960s and 70s. Martin Luther King, Jr. adopted the Memphis conflict as his own, eventually giving his life for the cause, which would prove instrumental in turning the tide of white supremacy.

Honey's work is extremely engaging, addressing the sequence of events while seamlessly incorporating the histories of key players in the struggle as well as the social and cultural environment of the time.

Honey's fluid prose will not disappoint those seeking a great piece of non-fiction, but his greatest strength is his ability to draw attention to the lesser-known actors who fueled the Memphis strike. Honey's is an important book for anyone who wishes to understand the complexity of the civil rights movement and how it affected all levels of American society. *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign*, was published by W.W. Norton & Company.



Michael Honey speaks in D.C. on May 15, 2007.

## Migrant Women Domestic Laborers: The Media's Responsibility

by Nina Shah, WIFP

"I never went outside, not even to dump the garbage. I was always inside, I didn't even go to the market. I felt like I was in jail.... I was not allowed to turn on the radio either.... I could only see the outside world when I hung clothes to dry.... My employer said, "Don't speak to anyone. Don't speak to friends or to the neighbors." I wasn't allowed to contact my relatives. I worked for three years. I had nobody to talk to. I asked my employers if I could return to Indonesia, and they said no. They said, "You have to make sure you finish your contract before you go back."... Even if I needed a panty liner, one of the children would be sent down to buy it for me." [Human Rights Watch, *Swept Under the Rug: Abuses against Domestic Workers Around the World*, Vol. 18, No. 7 (C), July 2006]

Meet Sri Mulyani. Such is a glimpse, a peek, into her life of forced confinement, hardship and injustice after she migrated from Indonesia to Singapore to work as a live-in domestic worker. While women and girls such as Sri Mulyani migrate from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka to the Middle East, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Taiwan to work as domestic helpers in the universal human quest for a better life, they are indiscriminately viewed and treated by society solely as objects, goods to be purchased rather than as human beings.

There are many detractors who would contend that migrant domestic labor is a boon not just for the employees of such labor, but arguably even more so for the migrant laborers themselves. Migrant domestic labor provides economic opportunities for low-skilled women from developing countries and such opportunities can help bolster the economy and living standards in the migrants' home country. While there is indeed potential for migrant domestic labor to provide financial stability and opportunity for low-skilled women, this potential has not come to fruition in most cases because of the unregulated and black market nature of migrant domestic labor. By drawing public and government attention to the conditions suffered by migrant domestic laborers, the media is uniquely positioned to take the first step towards restoring the dignity of and economic opportunity for domestic migrant laborers around the world.

As it is structured today, overseas employment is a risky undertaking. Workers face adjustment challenges in the new social, economic and political framework of the foreign country, in addition to apprehension about the contractual nature of their overseas employment. These problems are only exacerbated when these migrants are females, particularly domestic workers who, by residing with their employer and family, live and work in highly vulnerable environments, completely dependent on the employer for the most basic



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needs such as food and shelter. While there are undeniably some migrant domestic workers who have enjoyed positive experiences, many more suffer physical, psychological, and sexual abuses from their employers and labor agents. In fact, according to a 2006 Human Rights Watch report on child labor, “domestic workers, who often make extraordinary sacrifices to support their families, are among the most exploited and abused workers in the world.” [Human Rights Watch, Child Labor, 2006 <http://hrw.org/children/labor.htm>]

As Sri Mulyani described, these women are kept as prisoners within the walls of their employers’ homes, slaves to the whims of their employers. Living in such forced confinement and working in an unregulated, isolated environment makes it virtually impossible to escape abusive situations or to seek outside help. In this way, serious exploitation of young migrants is hidden from the public eye.

Much of this abuse also occurs because the governments of most labor-importing countries do not even consider these migrant domestics to be real workers and exclude them from labor protection laws [Human Rights Watch, Swept Under the Rug: Abuses against Domestic Workers Around the World, Vol. 18, No. 7 (C), July 2006]. To further exacerbate their situation, exorbitant labor agency fees leave migrant domestic workers heavily indebted and increase their vulnerability to exploitation. Employers and labor agents subject women migrant domestic workers to deplorable working conditions replete with intimidation, violence, sexual abuse, restrictions on the freedom of movement, non-payment of wages, and excruciatingly long working hours with no rest days, among other egregious abuses that have transformed their humble dreams into nightmares. [Human Rights Watch, Swept Under the Rug: Abuses against Domestic Workers Around the World, Vol. 18, No. 7 (C), July 2006]

In all, their gender, isolation, lack of legal protection,

indebtedness, and education levels render migrant women domestic workers particularly vulnerable to maltreatment [American Civil Liberties Union: Trafficking and Exploitation of Migrant Domestic Workers by Diplomats and Staff of International Organizations in the United States, January 2007]. Furthermore, the public is largely ignorant about the atrocities committed against these domestic migrants, allowing governments to sit idle.

This is where the media can intervene, for it uniquely can raise the issue to an important place in the public consciousness such that governments and the public will be spurred to act to alleviate the conditions that migrant domestic workers face. With this in mind, the media should undertake awareness campaigns to expose the public on issues related to the human and labor rights of domestic workers.

While labor agencies must reform the unfair recruitment fees and associated salary deductions, and while governments and legislation must amend and extend key labor protections to domestic workers, the international and regional press also has a responsibility to raise popular attention to the atrocities that many migrants suffer. An informed and outraged public can provide the needed stimulus to international organizations and governments.

By no means should domestic service, or migrating for domestic work, come to an end. In fact, migration is an important way for many women to earn money to support their families, not to mention the benefits migrant labor provides to both labor-importing and exporting countries. However, action must be taken to ensure that women migrant domestic workers’ rights are respected. To this end, the media is pivotal in efforts to stop the mistreatment of migrant domestic workers and to ensure that they may all enjoy successful and safe experiences working abroad.

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# The Relationship Between Women and the Media in Ghana

by Erin Conroy, WIFP

It is vital that women's voices are heard around the globe, and both their struggles and triumphs documented by an unbiased and free media. With greater access to education, technology, and subsequent opportunities for employment, women are more likely to express themselves independent of the frameworks, institutions, and sources which attempt to stifle their concerns and neglect the pertinent issues affecting their lives. When many Americans envision Africa, they most often conjure up an image of extreme destitution, violence or disease – rarely considering the status of the media and its impact on the women in the 53 countries which comprise the continent. Though our own media may only depict a limited reality of the great diversity that spans Africa, it is vital to examine the progress that activists, journalists and leaders in many African countries are making from all different levels of society. It is also necessary to realize the extent to which gender, power, and status are all interwoven to influence the media – and the toll this takes on women in African countries.

I recently returned from Ghana where I volunteered as a teacher's assistant in a local public school in the city of Kumasi. Throughout my trip, I continuously viewed my experiences through the lens of gender, noting the stark differences between the roles of men and women in everyday life. It was evident that gender played a substantial role in all facets of Ghanaian livelihood, as women grossly outnumbered men in the informal sector jobs such as selling fruits and vegetables in the marketplace. I will never forget the images of strong women carrying huge baskets atop their heads – majestically gliding the hazy streets as though they were transporting nothing at all. Though men did partake



*Photo from <http://www.britishcouncil.org>*

Women from the Virtual Newsroom Project display their newspaper, *Africawoman*. This advocacy group helps to train women for media occupations in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

in some forms of marketplace activity, it was predominately a female domain.

I also will never forget the first time I learned that girls in Ghana are much more likely to drop out of school than are boys, and, consequently, that girls' educations are more often sacrificed if families are unable to educate both sexes. According to the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, a "political document" outlining the issues most adversely affecting women in Ghana while simultaneously endorsing policy level solutions, 44% of Ghanaian women receive no formal education, compared to only 21.1% of men. In addition, there are many traditions within certain Ghanaian cultures which view women as naturally inferior to men and deserving of different treatment within society. These factors which

marginalize women and relegate them to lower positions in society also increase the risk of women becoming dependent on unsafe counterparts, living in poverty, and contracting diseases (such as HIV/AIDS, which more commonly plagues women). More importantly, women are denied the necessary freedom of expression which depends on access of media and technological resources (<http://www.abantu-rowa.org/docs/WM%20for%20Ghana.pdf>).

For women in Ghana, having their voices heard is a continuous struggle due to the small number whom occupy high ranking positions, both within the government and media institutions. According to the report, Ghana NGO Alternative Report For Beijing + 10, assembled by the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana in 2004, only 5.7%

of women held formal sector jobs, compared to 15.8% of men. In addition, women held less than 10% of public positions: only 2 women held cabinet seats, and women comprised just 7% of the assembly members, 16% of the Council of State positions and 9% of the parliament seats (that is only 19 women out of the 200 person parliament). More recent figures from 2006 cite the number of women in parliament still around 10% (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/percent.htm>). However, despite the disparity of men and women in decision making positions, it is very important to credit the many women's rights organizations which have gained leverage over the years and have succeeded in advancing women's representation throughout the country. With the adoption of Ghana's Constitution in 1992, Article 17 mandates the equal rights of men and women. Article 17 also criminalizes any kind of gender discrimination on all grounds. Since the Constitution's implementation, there has been more focus on gender equity, though many argue that a national gender policy has yet to be created and made a priority. Regardless, it is encouraging that so many women leaders and activists collaborated to outline their concerns in the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, and there is ample evidence that women will continue to fight for greater representation throughout all aspects of Ghanaian society.

For the country as a whole, the liberalization of media has been an important topic in Ghana's post colonial trajectory, which officially began in 1957 when Ghana became the first African country to gain independence from the British. Many organizations are actively involved in improving the media institutions that currently exist within Ghana, such as the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), a nonprofit which is "committed to the concepts and basic values of social justice, political participation and the labour movement." FES has paired with the National Media Commission (NMC), the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), and

the School of Communication Studies (SCS), to ensure that the media continues to operate free from government intervention and regulation by providing mass communication to citizens (<http://ghana.fes-international.de/index.htm>). Women in particular continue to be the special focus of these organizations with the realization that they are under-represented due to the male domination of media enterprises. It is widely known that women in Ghana continue to face adversity while striving to get jobs in mass communications and journalism, making it difficult to bring their concerns to the public. Currently, negative stereotypes and images of women as inferior permeate the media, and further the opinions that women are less adequate, less capable, and less entitled to the same respect as men. Progressive organizations are cognizant of such challenges affecting Ghanaian women and continue in leading the battle to enable women to break the constrictive barriers denying them their constitutional right to freedom of expression and equal access to utilize the media in improving their unfavorable conditions (<http://www.abantu-rowa.org/docs/WM%20for%20Ghana.pdf>).

As Ghana gets closer to closing the gap between men and women in terms of gender equity, more women will continue to enter media related



*Photo from <http://www.treasury.gov>*

professions. In time, they will also have the socioeconomic means to aspire to higher level positions within their own societies and hold greater political clout amongst the majority of male leaders. Though the standards outlined in the Constitution call for equal opportunity among men and women, there remain many challenges which currently are being tackled by a variety of organizations, political officials and activists seeking greater status for women, particularly in the media. Accurate and equal representation for women in Ghana is a necessity for living a safe and prosperous life – a goal to which all great nations aspire. Women are an integral part of Ghana's future, as they have been in the past. Let us lend support for their voices to be heard around the world.

# Review: *Gender, Journalism and Equity: Canadian, U.S., and European Perspectives*

by Erin Conroy, WIFP

In light of today's shortage of widespread sociological documentation focusing on gender equity within the workforce, Gertrude J. Robinson's work entitled *Gender, Journalism, and Equity* is revolutionary. Published in 2005, this ethnography provides a platform from which readers can more effectively analyze the influential role gender plays in the journalistic profession. Robinson carefully compares the differences that men and women encounter in journalistic practices across Canada, the US, and Europe while highlighting the corresponding "systemic biases" which affect women within this occupation. She elucidates the gender ideologies and subsequent gender segregated roles that pervade the profession, highlighting the fact that such culturally ascribed strictures of women are not biologically determined. Though inspiring amidst attempts to advance gender equality, Robinson points out that there remain many informal barriers which continue to leave women in disadvantaged positions with lesser opportunities for achieving the same success as their male counterparts. Robinson is a pioneer in many ways, most notably for her determination in providing readers with more accurate and up to date information about the additional challenges women face due to attitudes and discrimination based on perceptions of gender. Her work is crucial in understanding how male domination of the media continues to exist despite higher levels of education and training among female professionals today.

It is widely known that women of the 21st century are more greatly represented in the journalistic field than they were at any other time in history. In a sense, the "glass ceiling" which commonly refers to women's inability to occupy higher level professional positions, has been raised according to

many, though it is very far from being completely shattered. According to Robinson, the oversimplified definition of "glass ceiling" remains unrepresentative of the numerous "social practices"

which affect women in the workforce. As she explains, "there are barriers to advancement at every level of the hierarchy, not only at the top and there may also be differential speeds with which

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females and males are promoted, as well as the differential monetary benefits associated with promotion for the two genders (96).” In addition to these key factors, Robinson documents the substantially higher number of women who face the “dual-role strain” of balancing career and family life, and the toll this takes on their job evaluations. Not surprisingly, it seems that men are more likely to “have it all” as the expression goes, while women struggle to do the same, often compromising responsibilities at home and/or at work. Cultural expectations of women’s responsibilities within the home and familial dynamics continue to shape Canadian, American and European frameworks in the journalistic profession as “masculinist career models” remain hegemonic and serve to “penalize females, but not males, for work interruptions (83-84). Despite their disproportionate contributions within the household, Canadian women are negatively evaluated for taking time off to raise children or tend to families, while men are positively evaluated for taking breaks such as vacations which are viewed to advance their careers. As discovered, there are both implicit and explicit mechanisms that continue to be used to discourage women from reaching the same positions in journalistic professions.

Instead of blaming women for their lack of participation and representation in this field (as many continue to do), Robinson realizes the underlying problems which perpetuate the difficulty women face in media related professions. It is especially noteworthy that women occupy a designated “minority status” within the occupation, though demographically, they account for 52% of the population (7). As such, women must fight harder than men to cover hot stories, have their ideas and concerns addressed, and influence what is delivered to the public.

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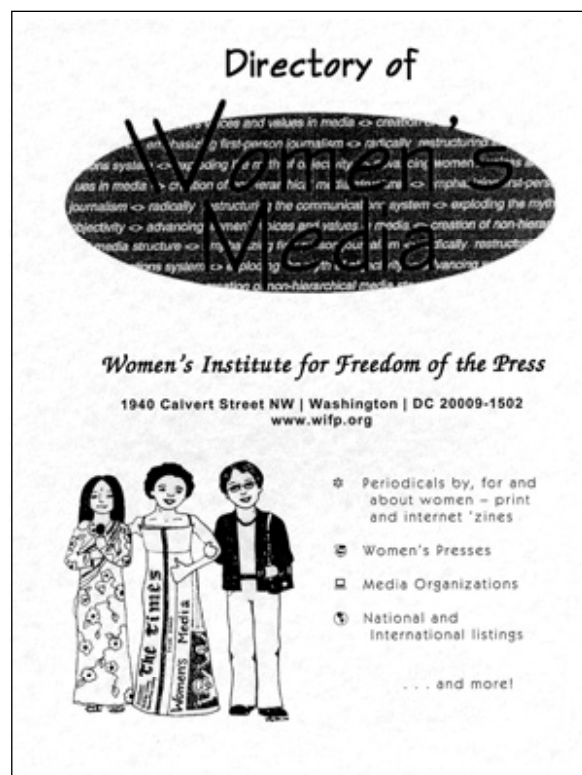
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## Directory of Women’s Media

(annual print editions)

### Women’s Media:

- |                       |                           |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Print Periodicals     | Music Groups              |
| Internet Periodicals  | Theatre / Art Groups      |
| Publishers            | Media Websites            |
| Media Organizations   | Media-Related Directories |
| News Services         | Bookstores                |
| Radio Groups          | E-mail Lists              |
| Film and Video Groups |                           |



Also, check out the online **Directory of Women’s Media** that resides on the WIFP website—no charge to access and no need to sign up!  
[www.wifp.org](http://www.wifp.org)  
[dwm@wifp.org](mailto:dwm@wifp.org)

# Female Directors Find Closed Doors in Hollywood

by Ellie Blalock, WIFP

When famed director Jane Campion was honored at the annual Cannes film festival this year, the most salient issue on her mind was not her own success, but the fact that she is sadly still an anomaly within the industry. Campion, the only woman ever to receive the Cannes Palme d'Or award, produced a short film for the occasion which depicted a woman dressed in an insect costume getting stomped upon inside a movie theater. The symbolism is painfully obvious, and was echoed when Campion spoke later, noting that in the film industry "men control the money, and they decide who they're going to give it to." Campion's recent comments highlight the fact that, even as feminism has changed society and the media radically, the film industry remains remarkably stuck in the past. The U.S. Senate, in fact, is more progressive in terms of gender equality than Hollywood. Currently, women comprise 16 percent of senators whereas, according to a study by Martha Lauzen of San Diego State University, women made up only seven percent of directors of the top 250 movies in 2005. Those who write on this issue feel that the inequality can be explained through prejudice from mostly-male studio executives and subconscious self-sabotage from women themselves. Whatever the reason, the lack of women in film is a problem that can only be solved by greater support for female directors who, if given more power, could help create greater legitimacy for women as artists and share through their films the realities of the female condition.

Lauzen's study, aptly named "The Celluloid Ceiling," examines the extent to which men continue to dominate movie-making. Going beyond directing, Lauzen shows that the percentage of women employed in "key behind-the-scenes roles" has remained static at around 17 percent between 1998 and 2005. This is certainly not for lack of trying, argues Michelle Goldberg of the online magazine salon.com. Film schools, she says, now graduate equal numbers of men and women. The reasons why these women do not reach success in Hollywood are "a complex mix of economics, sexism, the tastes of executives and even self-sabotage," says Goldberg. Prejudice against females often begins in film school, where

male professors discourage female students simply because they can not relate to their work.

Another roadblock for the potential female director is finding a financier within the film industry's "old boys' club," where attempts at networking are often seen as flirting. Male executives also tend to look for "fantasy images of their younger selves" in both the people and the films that they finance, says Mary Harron, director of the documentary "I Shot Andy Warhol." This means it is extremely difficult for a film directed by a woman, particularly if it examines female issues or centers on a female character, to grab the attention of a wealthy male executive when other directors are offering highly-marketable action movies instead.

Many studio executives offer as an excuse the false notion that movies with a female focus make less money and that women, who they say see fewer films, are a less lucrative audience. Lauzen counters that "the notion that films made by women don't earn as much just doesn't hold up." According to Goldberg's piece, adult women are in fact the biggest market in the world. She adds that the support of teenage girls was critical in making 1997's "Titanic" such a hit. Women themselves are also to blame somewhat for their own lack of success. Allison Anders, another director, writes that many women fail to "strike while the iron is hot" by not already having a new project in the works should a current

one find success. Other barriers such as a defeatist view on the potential for success or the need to balance work with family life, an issue that is typically much less pressing for men, can also hold women back.

The advancement of women in the media has helped to broaden perspectives offered to the public and in turn to create even greater gender equality. Greater female representation in film could be just as powerful. In an effort to help female directors struggling in the industry, we should all look to the First Weekenders Group, which maintains an e-mail list of over 1,600 women whom it notifies whenever films directed by other women open in theaters. Support through greater attendance on opening weekends could give women directors the clout they need to find financing and then success in Hollywood. As Campion herself explained at Cannes, "the feminine is such a strong and important aspect to our humanity," an aspect that deserves to be integrated more fully into art and film.



## NowPublic.com

by Christian Barclay, WIFP

Too often do we receive our news from stiff talking heads or short, distorted scrolls at the bottom of a television screen. Or perhaps we are lucky enough to read an article in one of our illustriously touted newspapers about an economic disaster in Mongolia, which is surely informative and important, but unlikely to be written by a Mongolian, or anyone living in the midst of such a matter. What can be said for the current state of major news media organizations is that there is often a sense of detachment and the stories being covered, for many reasons, are either biased or uninformed, clearly clashing with the stated 'objectivity' of most national news sources.

NowPublic.com employs such conditions as a call-to-arms of sorts, encouraging the common civilian to reclaim the news, as it is 'now public'. The Vancouver-based web company was created in February 2005 by Michael Tippett, a prominent Canadian Internet and technological entrepreneur, and describes itself as 'a participatory news network which mobilizes an army of reporters to cover the events that define our world'. (NowPublic.com) It boasts over 92,000 members in over 140 countries and the numbers keep growing. It joins other Web 2.0 companies like Myspace.com, Youtube.com, and Wikipedia as a site based on crowd-powered media, only in this case, the focus is on citizen journalism.

The website allows registered members to post their news stories, comments, blogs, videos, and photos on its pages. Areas of coverage include local, politics, people, weather, culture, and places. Members are encouraged to report on any and all news that they find interesting or relevant. A browse through the site finds articles on Australian elections, ethnic tensions in Lebanon, a LA bus crash, an invasion of cicadas in Chicago, and the commencement of Fleet Week in New York City. The pictures and videos range from artistic to informative. In a news media society where international relations

and big money politics are often the headlines, NowPublic allows citizens to read and write about stories and events that are usually not recognized by the big names in news. It makes no qualms about front-page relevancy and with the speed and scope of the Internet, events can be reported on as soon as they happen. For example, during Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, NowPublic had more reporters on the scene than most American news organizations have on their entire staff.

A fascinating and extremely useful part of the website is the recent addition of the highlight tool. This tool enables users to highlight any other news headlines and excerpts and use them as a jumping-off point for their own story. But no fear, the highlighting tool immediately encloses the quote in a shaded box and sources it automatically at the bottom or top of your article. And while NowPublic is a site that exists on very few rules and regulations, it does include a Code of Conduct. Citizen journalists are advised to avoid plagiarizing and writing stories that deliberately obscure their vested interests. If you have a specific viewpoint on an issue, let it be clearly stated in your article, rather than hidden behind false reports. Citizens are also encouraged to be accountable for their writing, creating a follow-up when they feel it necessary, and to write with the idea of promoting interactivity and dialogue.

On February 9, 2007 NowPublic joined with the Associated Press in a partnership that will see both companies working together to bring NowPublic's network of news contributors in collaboration with Associated Press's breaking news coverage stories. A first of its kind, this partnership offers unparalleled distribution opportunities for citizen created content.

### WIFP Interns Summer 2007

Top Row: David Song, Nina Shah,  
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# Restructuring the world's communications system on the basis of democracy: Six points

by Donna Allen, Ph.D., WIFP founder

1. Democracy is:

1) EVERY PERSON having an equal opportunity to be heard so their information (opinions, experience, perspectives) can be taken into account in the decision-making, which enables them to participate in self-government as political equals—the very definition of democracy.

2) SOCIETY needs everyone's information in order to reach viable decisions—the goal of democracy.

2. The present media structure does not meet either of these two requirements:

1) Fewer than 1% of the population is able to reach the general public with their information. (In the U.S., owners of the four main TV networks alone reach 98% of American households 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. And all mass media owners, small or large, do not total more than 2 million people, less than 1% of the population.)

2) Society's decisions cannot be viable if made primarily on information selected for us by an unrepresentative 1% wealthy white males of our population.

3. But people worldwide are now building a new communications structure that can meet the needs of democracy. The long-unheard people of the world are creating a new communications structure which enables them to speak for themselves, using new technologies from World War II's offset press which made print media affordable for anyone (giving rise to the "underground press" and new people's movements for the environment, civil rights, peace, women's equality, and more) to the now even more accessible and affordable electronic media that reaches an estimated 70 million people worldwide with 20 million users of over 10 million World Wide Web sites, and with internet and data traffic growing at a rate of 80% a year. America Online alone serves over 80 million E-mail messages per day. In early 1999 women became the majority of online users.

4. New information heard now by the public for the first time is bringing new decisions redefining society's values.

For example, after thousands of years of the belief that violence to women was a minor problem, or man's right, it took only two decades of women speaking for themselves in their own media to communicate enough new information to pass in 1994 a U.S. federal law condemning violence to women and appropriating over \$2 billion to begin taking steps to eliminate it. Similar efforts worldwide were supported by the 188 nations meeting in Beijing at the September 1995 U.N. Fourth World Conference of Women, and further progress is

continuing at a steadily increasing rate in every part of the world, resulting in progress for women in four major issue areas: 1) survival issues: health, safety, and peace; 2) independence issues: economic equality, education; 3) political issues: equality in participation and representation; and 4) communication issues: providing equal access to the whole public by all of us speaking for ourselves.

5. But it is still our responsibility as citizens to correct the present media structure's violations of democracy. While we build our own communications system, it is still our citizen duty in a democracy to correct the undemocratic favoritism to a minority on the basis of their wealth, color or gender. Proposals on how to do this need to be offered, circulated, discussed, and supported; conferences held, legislation sought, and regulations petitioned for change, as for example, in licensing the airwaves, protecting micro-radio, and in other ways to apply common-carrier status to all communications media, especially to protect the new technologies for increased equal and open communication of all people.

We need to restore the equal protection of our US Constitution's First Amendment free press right as the citizen right originally intended as part of the Bill of Rights for individuals, and to directly challenge its interpretation as a corporate property right when the Supreme Court stated in 1886 that a corporation was a "person" under the Constitution. We need to launch a class action suit to overturn the 1886 ruling and affirm the First Amendment as a citizen right.

6. It is the majority's job to make democracy work—and thus is as the world's majority the special task of women. Creating a communications structure in which people can speak for themselves has long been a primary goal of women, as both the majority in the world and the majority of every race, creed, color, or other identity. Women have made communication equality their priority task especially since the 1960s, in building their own media with the then-new technologies, and now electronic media. Key among eight characteristics that distinguish women's media from men-owned media are qualities that indicate that women can offer suitable leadership to restructure media and increase democratic equality of communication for all people based on women's characteristically non-attack, non-competitive, non-hierarchical, open forum media approach.

Women see democratization of communication as "women's work" to nurture more diversity of information that will result in decisions that are more peaceful and more respectful of others as needed in a democratic society.

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