

RCCongress 2010 Workshop: Join the Coalition!

Social Justice Needs Media Justice

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Why are we here?

Media influences every aspect of our lives – values, ethics, personal interactions, public policy.

Media reform is about creating the infrastructure for social justice.

Emerging technologies
are shaping our communication and
information systems.

Our goal: Use the media you have, but
create the media you want.

Tell us - Why are you here?

- a. Worried that journalism is disappearing.
- b. Already active in media reform advocacy, want to do more.
- c. Haven't been active but want to understand what is influencing our media and how we can change it?
- d. I want my church or house of worship to get better media coverage.
- e. What else??

What's wrong with the media?

- Not representative of our society.
- Reinforces power disparities.
- Centralized and highly concentrated decision-making for mass dissemination of content.
- Opportunities to create are expanding, but some content is still clearly more equal than others, and threats might erode the freedom to create on the Internet.

Through media justice, we assure a more democratic society and social, political, and economic equity.

As people of faith we have been on this journey for some time.

Highlights of Church & Media History

- World Association for Christian Communication formed in 1968.
- Media Action Research Center with the United Methodist and Church of the Brethren creates Television Awareness Training in 1977.
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops creates the Catholic Communication Campaign in 1979.
- ECUFILM's issues The Power of Image, impact of television 1990.

Highlights of Church & Media History

- NCCC Policy Statement on Violence in Electronic Media and Films 1993.
- NCCC Policy Statement on Global Communications for Justice 1993.
- NCCC Policy Statement on the Churches Role in Media Education and Communications Advocacy 1996.
- Center for Media, Religion, and Culture founded in 2006 in the School of Journalism and Communications, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO.

Impact of Faith Community: One Example

- Starting in 1959, UCC communications director Everett C. Parker talks with Martin Luther King.
- Begins campaign to improve TV stations in the south to end blackout of civil rights news.
- Monitors TV stations in dangerous times.
- Pursues extensive legal proceedings at the FCC and court to establish the public's right to hold broadcasters accountable.
- FCC required to take away license of WLBT-TV in Jackson Mississippi because of racist actions.

So what can we do?

- Educate ourselves and our congregations. The impact of media is as invisible as the air we breathe unless we take time to notice.
- Changing public policy at the Federal Communications Commission and Congress can put media in the hands of social justice advocates and can help regular people hold corporate media accountable.
- Speak out as moral voices when we see unacceptable behavior.

So We might See

- New interfaith media justice coalition.
- Our campaigns include:
 - Spare Kids the Ads.
 - Violent media fast.
 - Bring Betty Broadband.
- Members include:
 - Catholics, Muslims, Presbyterians, Lutherans, National Council of Churches, Disciples.
- www.sowemightsee.org

Junk Food Marketing to Kids

- In ten hours of television programming, a child will see 55 commercials for the least nutritious food, compared with only one highly nutritious food advertisement.
- 25% of all food marketed to children contained more sugar than their nutritional guidelines recommend, and that only 6% of foods contained the appropriate amount of whole grains.
- Asked food and media companies to be part of solution, not part of the problem.



- www.sparekidstheads.org

Violent Media Fast

- Invite families and individuals to refrain from consuming violent media-television and video games.
- Daily devotions and discussion topics online.
- Ask policy-makers to make it easier for families to control the media they see.
- Last year focus on raising our moral voice against hate speech directed toward immigrants.

Bring Betty Broadband

- The Internet is a new opportunity to build the media we want without the problems of the current system.
- Without high speed Internet access today, participation in civic life from getting a job to an education is more and more difficult.
- We can become media creators, not just consumers.

Internet is a necessity??

- Five states limit unemployment insurance applications to online.
- Most visited web site in suburban Washington DC is the local public school web site. Grades, assignments, teacher communications are all on line.
- Large employers like Wal-Mart, Target and Family Dollar take applications online. But application takes 40-50 minutes to complete, and many libraries impose a 30-minute limit on use and are often closed in the evening.
- Libraries and community centers offering access are suffering budget cutbacks in tough economic times.

Socio-economic factors and digital exclusion

- More than two-thirds of whites have access, but less than half of Blacks and only 40 percent of Hispanics have broadband access at home.
- Eighty-four percent of those with college degrees had broadband access at home, but only 28 percent of people with less than a high school diploma do.
- Recent study of lower income people of color commissioned by the F.C.C. revealed that most people valued high speed Internet at home more than cable television.
- Lack of access limits people's ability to overcome other challenges.

Freedom to Create

- The process leading up to this is complex, but since 2005 there is no legal protection to create whatever you want and to communicate with whoever you want.
- As Internet companies get bolder, they will begin to charge us to reach listeners and viewers, just like in the old media. Some media will be more equal than others.
- “**Net neutrality**” policies are essential for the new future.

Media Justice— How Can You Help??

- ❑ Participate individually on-line.
- ❑ Write letters, call legislators.
- ❑ Leadership roles:
 - ❑ Include these issues in your communications.
 - ❑ Education and outreach in congregations.
 - ❑ Create materials—sermons, prayers.
 - ❑ Volunteer to organize others.
 - ❑ Meetings or workshops in your home community.

What do you think?

Thanks!

- Find out more:
- www.uccmediajustice.org
- www.sowemightsee.org
- Sign up for our electronic updates.
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